# Reinvesting in America's Youth: Lessons from the 2009 Recovery Act Summer Youth Employment Initiative

February 26, 2010

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# ABSTRACT

On February 17, 2009, President Barack Obama signed the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act into law. Passed in response to the 2008 recession, the Act's purpose was to create jobs, pump money into the economy, and encourage spending. Through the Act, states received $1.2 billion in funding for the workforce investment system to provide employment and training activities targeted to disadvantaged youth. Congress and the U.S. Department of Labor (DOL) encouraged states and local workforce investment areas charged with implementing these youth activities to use the funds to create employment opportunities for these youth in the summer of 2009.

To gain insights into these summer initiatives, DOL's Employment and Training Administration contracted with Mathematica Policy Research to conduct an implementation evaluation of the summer youth employment activities funded by the Recovery Act. As part of the evaluation, Mathematica analyzed (1) monthly performance data submitted to ETA by the states, and (2) qualitative data collected through in-depth site visits to 20 local areas. This report describes the national context for implementation, provides an in-depth description of the experience of selected local areas, and presents lessons on implementation practices that may inform future summer youth employment efforts.

## DISCLAIMER

This report was prepared for the U.S. Department of Labor (DOL), Employment and Training Administration, Office of Policy Development and Research by Mathematica Policy Research, Inc., under contract number DOLU091A20968. The views expressed are those of the authors and should not be attributed to DOL, nor does mention of trade names, commercial products, or organizations imply endorsement of same by the U.S. Government.

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# EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The American economy lost an estimated 7.9 million jobs between the end of 2007 and the fall of 2009 (U.S. Department of Labor 2009b). Joblessness was high for many groups, but for young adults, unemployment was particularly high and could have lasting effects. In May 2009, the jobless rate for teenagers was 22.7 percent, more than double the national unemployment rate of 9.4 percent (U.S. Department of Labor 2009b). This joblessness could have lasting effects on the young adults' future careers. Funding for youth activities through the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act of 2009 (the Recovery Act) was designed as one part of the solution and aimed to reverse the steep decline in youth employment.

Through the Recovery Act, states received $1.2 billion in funding for employment and training activities targeted to the country's disadvantaged youth. Congress and the U.S. Department of Labor (DOL) encouraged states and local workforce investment areas to use the funds to create employment opportunities for these youth in the summer of 2009. Although summer employment is made available as a component of youth activities under the Workforce Investment Act (WIA), many local areas did not provide summer jobs for significant numbers of youth after the transition to WIA in 2000 (Social Policy Research Associates 2004). Local areas had from mid-February 2009, when the Recovery Act was signed into law, to the beginning of May 2009 to design their summer youth employment activities and prepare for implementation.

To gain insights into the design and implementation of these initiatives, DOL's Employment and Training Administration (ETA) contracted with Mathematica Policy Research to conduct an evaluation of summer youth activities funded by the Recovery Act. Although summer employment is only one component of WIA youth activities and is not funded as a separate program, the opportunities offered by local areas with Recovery Act funding in the summer of 2009 are referred to as the Summer Youth Employment Initiative (SYEI) throughout this report. The implementation study draws upon state performance data and in-depth site visits to 20 selected local areas (hereafter referred to as the study "sites"). The report aims to describe the national context for SYEI implementation, provide an in-depth description of the experiences of selected sites, and present lessons on implementation practices that may inform future SYEIs.

## The Recovery Act Allocation for WIA Youth Activities

Although Recovery Act funds could be spent on youth activities up to June 30, 2011, Congress expressed a strong interest in the funds being used to create employment opportunities for youth in the summer of 2009. Youth would be placed in summer work experiences with local public, nonprofit, and private employers and their wages would be paid with Recovery Act funds. The Act also contained two key provisions for the WIA youth activities funded under it. First, it extended eligibility from youth ages 14 to 21 years to include those from 22 to 24 years. Second, it stated that only one key indicator—achievement of work readiness goals—would be used to measure program performance. Local areas were also required by ETA to report another performance indicator—the number of youth completing summer employment experiences. Provisions for specific aspects of initiative design included:

- **Work experience should be "meaningful" and age appropriate.** Work experiences should be age appropriate and lead to youth meeting work readiness goals. ETA encouraged local areas to expose youth to "green" (environmentally friendly) educational

and career pathways. Local areas were also encouraged to match worksites with participants' goals and interests.

- **Local areas had flexibility in using classroom-based learning activities.** Local areas could decide whether to link classroom-based learning, such as occupational training, with youth's work experiences. Such a linkage was recommended for younger youth in need of basic skills and career exploration.
- **Registered apprenticeships were encouraged.** ETA suggested that local areas take advantage of local apprenticeship programs to create pre-apprenticeship opportunities.
- **Performance would be measured by one work readiness indicator.** Local areas could determine how to define the indicator but were provided with a definition for achieving work readiness goals. To encourage continued services for older youth, states could request a waiver to use only this indicator for youth who were 18 to 24 years old and who, after the summer months, participated only in work experiences.
- **WIA youth program elements were not required.** Local areas could determine which of the 10 WIA elements of youth programs to offer to participants funded by the Recovery Act. For example, this permitted local areas to determine whether or not to provide supportive services or follow up with participants for at least 12 months after receipt of services
- **Certain groups should receive priority.** The priority service groups for WIA programs—including veterans and eligible spouses of veterans—were also priority groups for youth activities funded by the Recovery Act. As for the regular WIA youth programs, at least 30 percent of Recovery Act funding for WIA youth activities had to be spent on out-of-school youth.
- **Local areas could request waivers for contractor procurement.** States were permitted to request a waiver from the WIA requirement for service providers to be selected through a competitive procurement process, but were still required to follow state or local laws that could not be relieved by federal regulations.

## Overview of the Evaluation

Six major research questions guided the evaluation. By addressing each of the following questions, the study provides policymakers, administrators, and stakeholders a better understanding of how the SYEI unfolded in 2009:

1. How did the selected sites plan for and organize summer youth initiatives with funding from the Recovery Act?
2. How did selected sites identify, recruit, and enroll at-risk youth?
3. What were the characteristics of participants nationwide?
4. What services were offered during the summer months in selected sites?
5. What types of work experiences were offered to participating youth in selected sites?
6. What lessons can be drawn about the implementation of summer youth initiatives?

To answer these questions, the evaluation draws upon two key data sources: (1) state performance data submitted monthly to ETA through December 31, 2009 that covers all youth participating in services funded by the Recovery Act from May through November 2009, and (2) in-depth site visits to 20 selected sites during July and August 2009. The state performance data describe the national scope of the initiative and provide context for the implementation experiences of the 20 selected sites. The data collected during site visits include qualitative interviews with a total of 601 individuals across the 20 sites, including 373 administrators and staff, 79 employers, and 149 youth.

The 20 local areas listed in Table 1 were selected for the study from a list of 40 local areas nominated by ETA national and regional staff as offering innovative or potentially promising approaches. ETA and the evaluation team selected the final 20 local areas using three key criteria: (1) having at least three local areas from each region; (2) choosing areas that planned to spend at least 50 percent of Recovery Act funds during the summer of 2009; and (3) including rural, urban, and suburban sites.

**Table I. Sites Selected for In-depth Visits**

| Region | Local Workforce Investment Board | City, State |
|---|---|---|
| 1 | Regional Employment Board of Hampden County | Springfield, MA |
| 1 | The Workplace, Inc. | Bridgeport, CT |
| 1 | Workforce Partnership of Greater Rhode Island | Cranston, RI |
| 2 | Lehigh Valley Workforce Investment Board, Inc. | Lehigh Valley, PA |
| 2 | Three Rivers Workforce Investment Board | Pittsburgh, PA |
| 2 | Western Virginia Workforce Development Board | Roanoke, VA |
| 3 | Eastern Kentucky Concentrated Employment Program | Hazard, KY |
| 3 | Northeast Georgia Regional Commission | Athens, GA |
| 3 | Workforce Investment Network | Memphis, TN |
| 4 | Denver Office of Economic Development | Denver, CO |
| 4 | Montana State WIB, District XI Human Resource Council | Missoula, MT |
| 4 | Workforce Connection of Central New Mexico | Albuquerque, NM |
| 5 | Minneapolis Employment and Training Program | Minneapolis, MN |
| 5 | Workforce Development, Inc. | Rochester, MN |
| 5 | Workforce Resource, Inc. | Menomonie, WI |
| 6 | Community Development Department of the City of LA | Los Angeles, CA |
| 6 | Madera County Office of Education | Madera, CA |
| 6 | Oregon Consortium and Oregon Workforce Alliance | Albany, OR |
| 6 | Workforce Development Council of Seattle-King County | Seattle, WA |
| 6 | Worksystems, Inc. | Portland, OR |

Note: The city and state reflect the location of the local area's central office.

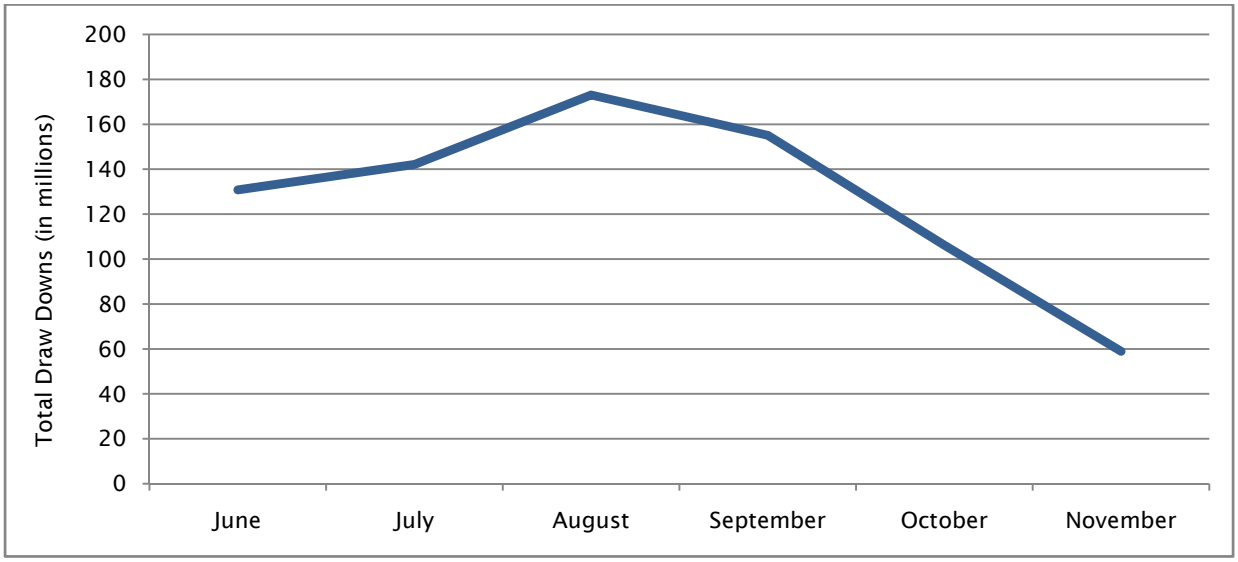
## The National Context

Enrolling more than 355,000 youth nationwide, states and local areas drew down more than $717 million through November 2009, or almost 61 percent of the national allocation of $1.2 billion in Recovery Act funds for WIA youth services. Of these participants, over 345,000 enrolled during the summer months of May through September, and 314,000 were placed in summer jobs. By

comparison, local areas served a total of slightly more than 250,000 youth through comprehensive services offered by the regular WIA formula-funded youth program during the entire 2008 program year, at a cost of $966 million (U.S. Department of Labor 2009a). The higher cost for the regular WIA youth program likely results from the fact that youth receive comprehensive services for significantly longer periods of time.

States heeded the guidance provided by Congress and the ETA to focus efforts on summer employment. Large numbers of youth began enrolling in the spring, with 164,000 participants—46 percent of all youth enrolled through November—enrolling in May and June. Enrollment continued heavily through July and fell sharply in August and September, as initiatives focused on providing services to those already enrolled. Local areas also drew down funds heavily during the summer (see Figure 1). National draw downs averaged $128 million per month during the summer, peaking in August at $173 million for the month.

**Figure I. National Draw Downs of WIA Youth Recovery Act Funds in 2009**




Source: Monthly draw-downs of WIA Youth Recovery Act Funds.

Notes: Draw downs reflect the actual cash drawn daily by grantees from the financial system. By comparison, expenditures are the costs reported quarterly on an accrual basis, and therefore include all services and goods received by the end of the quarter, whether or not they have been invoiced or paid. As a result, draw downs may not account for all expenditures during the reporting period.

Data from March through June were only available in aggregate and are reported under the month of June.

The 2009 summer employment initiative enrolled a diverse array of youth (see Table 2). The majority of participants were in-school youth, a group largely composed of those ages 18 or younger. States also succeeded in enrolling a large number of out-of-school youth, a population that WIA has struggled to reach in the past but has made significant progress enrolling in recent years (U.S. Government Accountability Office 2004; U.S. Department of Labor 2009). A total of almost 9 percent of all those enrolled through November, or nearly 31,000 participants, fell within the newly added 22- to 24-year-old age range. It was challenging to enroll veterans—only 671 veterans were enrolled nationwide, or less than 0.2 percent of all enrollees through November 2009.

Employment was the main focus of local areas' efforts to expend their Recovery Act allocations. As mentioned earlier, nearly 314,000 youth, or slightly more than 88 percent of all participants enrolled through November, were placed in a summer job (see Table 2). In addition, almost 13 percent of all enrollees were placed in work experiences outside the summer months. This percentage could include participants who were also placed in summer employment, who were enrolled in services during the summer but did not work during the summer months, or who only enrolled in the WIA youth activities funded by the Recovery Act in the fall.

**Table 2. Selected Characteristics of Youth Served and Services Received Under the Recovery Act Through November 2009**

| | Number of Participants | Percentage of All Participants |
|---|---|---|
| Total Number of Participants | 355,320 | 100.0 |
| Characteristics of Youth | | |
| School Status | | |
| In-school | 224,798 | 63.3 |
| Out-of-school | 127,869 | 36.0 |
| Not reported | 2,653 | 0.7 |
| Age at Enrollment | | |
| 14–18 years | 228,921 | 64.4 |
| 19–21 years | 84,539 | 23.8 |
| 22–24 years | 30,594 | 8.6 |
| Not reported | 11,266 | 3.2 |
| Eligible Veterans | 671 | 0.2 |
| Services Received | | |
| Placed in summer employment | 313,812 | 88.3 |
| Placed in work experiences outside the summer months | 45,407 | 12.8 |

Source: State performance reports for WIA youth initiatives supported by the Recovery Act submitted to the U.S. Department of Labor as of December 31, 2009.

Notes: Data on age could not be broken into smaller subgroups.

ETA defines the summer months as May through September.

These figures do not include the 3,763 youth served by Indian and Native American grantees as a result of reporting procedures.

To streamline implementation, Congress only required states and local areas to report on one performance measure. States had to report on the percentage of participants in summer employment who attained a work readiness skill goal. Nationwide, local areas reported that just under 75 percent of youth achieved a measureable increase in their work readiness skills while participating (see Table 3). Beyond work readiness, states and local areas were also required by ETA to report on the proportion of youth who completed their summer work experience. State reports indicated a completion rate of more than 82 percent among those for whom data were available.

**Table 3. Performance Outcomes of Youth Served Under the Recovery Act Through November 2009**

| | Number Reported as Achieving Outcome | Number for Whom Data Are Available | Percentage Achieving Outcome |
|---|---|---|---|
| Increase in work readiness skills | 235,043 | 314,132 | 74.8 |
| Completion of summer work experience | 242,827 | 294,842 | 82.4 |

Source: State performance reports for WIA youth initiatives supported by the Recovery Act submitted to the U.S. Department of Labor as of December 31, 2009.

Note: These figures do not include the 3,763 youth served by Indian and Native American grantees as a result of reporting procedures.

Data were not available for youth who were still participating in services at the time of data reporting. In addition, data were not available for some participants due to delays in state reporting.

## Experiences of the 20 Study Sites

The experiences of the study's 20 selected local areas provide a rich description of the activities that underlie these national figures. The sites covered each of the ETA regions and encompassed populations of different types and sizes. Although more than half of the sites included a city, the majority had areawide populations of less than 750,000. All experienced the effects of the recession, with more than half reporting unemployment rates above 8 percent in July and August 2009. Although not representative of local areas nationwide, the sites include a diverse array of local areas and provide a picture of the SYEI in sites that ETA staff believed might offer innovative and promising approaches to disadvantaged youth.

## The SYEI Goals, Context, and Organization

Selected sites reported that their primary goals for the SYEI included (1) serving as many youth as possible, (2) spending the Recovery Act funds quickly, and (3) providing meaningful summer experiences to participating youth. More than three-quarters of sites planned to spend 75 percent or more of their Recovery Act funds on the SYEI. Using those funds, they expected to enroll between 120 and 5,500 youth during the summer, with more than half of the sites planning to serve 500 or more youth.

To plan their SYEIs, the selected sites drew on their experiences providing summer work opportunities through recent programs funded by regular WIA formula funds and other resources, as well as programs under the Job Training Partnership Act (JTPA, the predecessor to WIA). Administrators in 17 sites reported that their local area had continued to provide summer work experience to youth using WIA formula funds after WIA replaced JTPA. At least nine communities also had programs that had placed more than 200 youth in summer jobs using non-WIA funds from state or local government or private sources. Most sites took the opportunity provided by the Recovery Act to expand their existing programs and make modest modifications.

Planning for the SYEI was challenging given the short timeframe and gaps in key information. More than half the sites mentioned that planning such a sizable initiative in only a few months affected their initiative designs. One-third reported that, as they started to plan for the summer, they

did not know the amount of their Recovery Act allocation for WIA youth activities or were still unclear about the requirements for identifying providers.

All 20 sites, however, did successfully identify local providers and implement the SYEI. Almost half used a competitive process to identify providers. In the sites that held open procurements, some organizations that were new to WIA services received contracts. The remaining 11 sites relied on longtime providers of WIA services, either exercising waivers for the provider competition, extending existing contracts, or offering services directly through the lead agency.

## Youth Recruitment and Intake Activities

An expanded SYEI required sites to quickly scale up their youth recruitment and intake activities. Sites used both media campaigns and targeted recruitment with help from local organizations to successfully reach large numbers of eligible youth. Most sites also leveraged the workforce investment system by encouraging youth already engaged with WIA to enroll in SYEI and urging adults who used One-Stop Career Centers to tell family and friends about the initiative. Sites also sought partnerships with a wide range of agencies and social service organizations that served at-risk youth, including welfare agencies, the juvenile justice system, foster care agencies, local homeless shelters, and the agencies that oversee programs such as the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program.

All but one site reported receiving applications from more eligible youth than they could accommodate. Sites reported that between 40 and 80 percent of applicants ultimately enrolled. Among those who did not enroll, 10 to 30 percent were clearly ineligible because their incomes exceeded the eligibility cutoff. Another 10 to 30 percent were potentially eligible but did not complete all paperwork. A majority of sites maintained waiting lists of eligible youth who could not be served, enrolling youth from the list only when an existing participant dropped out or was removed from the initiative. Two sites with excess demand did not maintain waiting lists but instead referred youth who could not be enrolled to other agencies or service providers in the area.

Although recruitment efforts were successful overall, sites had difficulty reaching some targeted populations, including veterans and their spouses, older youth, homeless and runaway youth, foster youth, and juvenile offenders. Nine sites reported a lack of success recruiting veterans and their spouses despite targeted recruitment efforts. Six sites also experienced challenges recruiting older youth because they were often no longer in school and thus were difficult to locate. Three sites said homeless and runaway youth were difficult to enroll due to lack of documentation and difficult to keep engaged in services due to their mobility. Two specifically mentioned troubles recruiting juvenile offenders and foster youth.

Nearly all sites had difficulty processing the large volume of applicants. Common challenges included the tight timeframe, the amount of paperwork involved, and difficulty collecting documentation from youth and parents. Nearly three-quarters of sites hired temporary staff to help with the intake process. Sites also used prescreening of youth and links with partners to streamline eligibility determination. At least 11 sites prescreened applications before scheduling youth for an intake appointment to weed out those likely to be ineligible. In addition, seven sites asked schools and state and local social service agencies to help verify youth's eligibility.

## Youth Preparation and Support

Given the diverse array of youth enrolled in the SYEI, sites had to determine how to best prepare them for a successful work experience. Many participants had never held a job for pay and therefore did not fully understand the attitudes and skills necessary to succeed in the workplace. Even among those who had worked before, many had not explored potential career paths.

ETA required sites to conduct assessments and develop an individualized service strategy (ISS) for each SYEI participant, but gave the sites flexibility to determine what type of assessment and ISS was appropriate for each youth. Fourteen of the 20 sites used academic and career-related assessments to learn about youth's skills, interests, and needs. The six remaining sites reported not using assessments either because of the limited time available to work with youth or the lack of need since youth would not receive any services other than work placement. Across the 20 sites, a different set of 14 sites completed an ISS with every participant to get to know youth and identify their needs. In four more sites, at least one provider completed an ISS with each participant. The remaining two sites reported that the length of the summer initiative was too short to necessitate an ISS.

Although not a federal requirement for the SYEI, 16 of the 20 sites required youth to attend work readiness training. These training sessions were intended to equip youth with basic workplace skills, expose them to diverse career interests, and prepare them for the responsibilities that lay ahead. Training time in sites that used standardized curricula ranged from eight hours to two weeks. In some sites, training occurred prior to worksite placement but at others it took place throughout the summer. Some youth were assigned to work readiness tracks based on their characteristics, such as age, experience, offender status, or disabilities. Youth in almost all sites reported that this training was one of the most useful aspects of the initiative.

Nearly all sites also offered supportive services to participants once they were placed on a job. Transportation to worksites and help paying for work supplies were the most common supports. Help paying for child care was less commonly offered because sites reported that few youth required child care assistance and, if they did, other funds were available to meet this need.

## Recruitment and Involvement of Employers

Employers were important partners in sites' efforts to provide youth with successful summer experiences. Though employers were receiving a summer employee whose wages were paid with Recovery Act funds, they were voluntary partners with their own interests that sites needed to address. Site staff had to recruit enough employers to place a large number of youth with wide-ranging interests and still be mindful of ETA guidance on ensuring appropriate and meaningful experiences.

Sites identified many interested employers in the public, private, and nonprofit sectors. Half of the sites focused their recruitment on a specific sector. Of particular interest, four sites heavily targeted private sector employers largely because they felt that private firms were more likely to offer participants regular positions after the summer. Almost half reported that they recruited more employers than they needed. Employer recruitment began early, often before sites began enrolling youth. Sites contacted employers they knew from previous summer programs and the regular WIA youth program, conducted media campaigns, and made direct contact with employers new to the workforce investment system.

Sites focused on carefully screening employers and orienting them to the initiative. Formal screening processes could involve a review of an employer's application (conducted at 10 sites), a visit to the worksite (conducted by at least 11 sites), or signing a worksite agreement (developed by 9 sites). Three sites chose to use all three of these techniques. More than three-quarters of sites also held formal or informal orientations with worksite supervisors to inform them of their SYEI roles and responsibilities.

Employers were eager to participate to advance their businesses but also to make a difference for youth and their communities. Respondents in nine sites reported that employers perceived the SYEI as free training of potentially permanent employees. In addition, many employers were either facing hiring freezes during the summer or could not afford to hire the extra staff they needed and thus appreciated the contributions that SYEI participants could provide. Finally, nearly all employers and staff also reported that employers felt that summer employment could improve the chances that youth would be engaged in productive work and stay out of trouble.

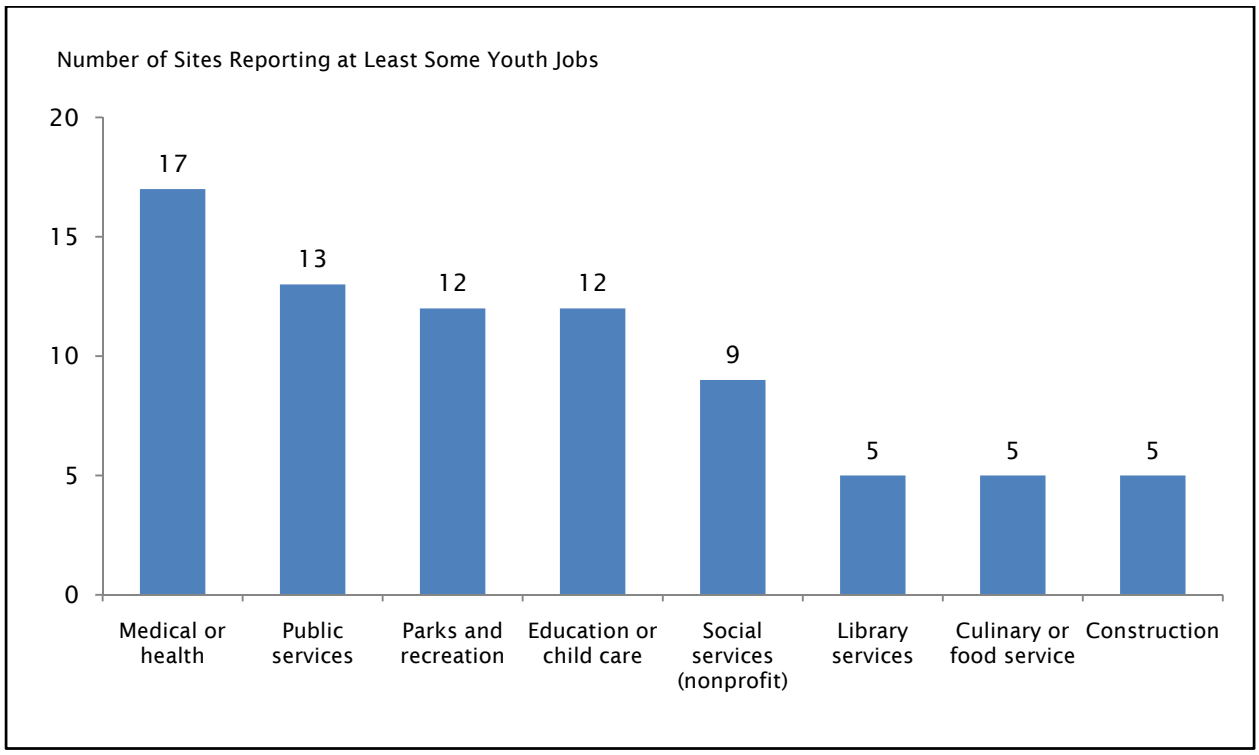
## Youth's Summer Experiences

The heart of the summer experience did not begin until after the tremendous effort to recruit youth and employers, determine their suitability for the SYEI, and prepare them for the workplace. Although some youth were placed in academic services in the classroom, most were placed in employment. About one-third of sites emphasized work, offering few other services beyond work readiness training. The remaining two-thirds offered academics to at least some youth. Few sites offered any of the other 10 program elements required by the regular WIA youth program but optional for the SYEI funded by the Recovery Act.

Academic offerings ranged from occupational skills training to recovery of school credits. Occupational skills training was offered by 10 sites, with the training most commonly targeted to the health care, manufacturing, culinary, and construction industries as well as entrepreneurship. Less common academic programs included recovery of school credits, GED preparation programs, and remediation. Most youth were placed in jobs either after or while participating in academic offerings. However, some youth—often younger participants between 14 and 16 years of age—in five sites spent the entire summer in the classroom.

Youth worked in a wide range of industries. The most common reported by sites in the study included health care, public service, parks and recreation, and education or child care (see Figure 2). Seventeen sites placed youth in the health industry with jobs in hospitals, nursing homes, mental health centers, dental offices, and other medical facilities. Another 13 had youth working in public services with county and municipal government agencies such as the town hall, the Chamber of Commerce, the public housing department, the fire department, Veterans Affairs, or public works.

**Figure 2. Common Industries for Summer Work Experiences**




Source: Site visit interviews in 20 selected sites.

Notes: This table includes only industries mentioned by five or more sites. Industries cited by fewer than five sites include agriculture, legal services, retail, workforce development, automotive, computer services, media, hospitality, and finance. Green jobs were not categorized as a separate industry but were included in the most closely related industry listed above. These jobs are discussed in detail later in this document.

N = 20 sites.

Within this wide range of industries, youth typically held entry-level jobs often involving administrative or clerical work, landscaping and outdoor maintenance, janitorial and indoor maintenance, and construction (see Table 4). Sixteen sites involved youth in administrative or clerical tasks, such as answering phones, filing, completing paperwork, and word processing. This was common within the top two industries, namely health care and public services. Another 14 sites reported that at least some youth were conducting park reclamation, green space protection, and urban forestry. Day-to-day tasks in these areas often included weeding; raising plant beds; planting flowers, bushes and trees; digging and laying recreation trails; raking; trimming bushes; and cleaning and restoring playgrounds.

Notably, youth and staff both reported that, although the daily tasks performed by participants may have been entry-level, youth were nevertheless exposed to the world of work, the work process, and careers within the industry in which they were placed. For example, a youth filing paperwork at a doctor's office learned about HIPAA regulations, observed health care workers interacting with patients, and experienced the general operations of a health care facility. Two sites also reported that some older and more experienced youth were placed in higher-level positions or supervisory roles in a range of different industries.

**Table 4. Common Tasks Performed by Participating Youth at Worksites**

| Task | Number of Sites Reporting at Least Some Youth Performing This as Primary Task |
|---|---|
| Administrative or clerical duties | 16 |
| Park reclamation, landscaping, and outdoor maintenance | 14 |
| Janitorial or indoor maintenance | 12 |
| Construction | 11 |
| Recycling computers, paper and other materials | 10 |
| Child care, senior care, counseling at summer camps or playgrounds | 10 |
| Weatherization and energy efficiency | 8 |
| Agriculture, community gardening, and urban gardening | 8 |
| Food service | 7 |
| Service, sales, or hospitality | 7 |
| Computer repair or maintenance | 6 |

Source: Site visit interviews in 20 selected sites.

Note: This table includes only tasks mentioned by five or more sites. Additional tasks cited by fewer than five sites include health care tasks, automotive repair and maintenance, and pet grooming or care.

N = 20 sites.

More than half the sites reported at least some success placing youth in green industries and jobs. The most common green jobs were in park reclamation, recycling, weatherization, and agriculture. A lack of guidance about what constituted a green job, however, created confusion within and across the sites, with respondents using varied definitions. For example, some referred to green jobs as those directly related to occupations in renewable energy, environmental consulting, and energy-efficient construction. Others included non-green jobs—such as administrative or maintenance tasks—within green industries or organizations. Still others talked about green exposure within non-green jobs, such as the use of recycling and environmentally friendly products in day-to-day business.

## Matching Youth to Worksites

Ensuring a solid match between youth and employer was critical to both satisfying the employer's needs and maximizing the likelihood that the youth had a meaningful experience. Site staff reported four key considerations when matching youth to worksites: (1) the youth's personal interests expressed through their application, orientation, or meetings with staff; (2) direct employer feedback after a formal interview; (3) the youth's age, experience, and skills; and (4) transportation needs or other logistical issues.

Twelve sites had all or some youth formally interview with employers to simulate a real interview experience, ensure the employer was comfortable with the match, and allow the youth to become familiar with the potential work environment. Once staff members determined a potentially good employer match, most interviewing involved one-on-one personal interactions between the employer and the interested youth. Respondents in the eight sites that chose not to conduct

interviews said either that the timeframe was too short or that it would have been logistically too challenging to have all youth interview.

## Youth's Hours and Wages

Across the 20 sites, summer work experiences lasted an average of seven weeks at an average of 28 hours per week. Hourly wages averaged $7.75, with half the sites offering the federal minimum wage of $7.25 per hour, allowing youth to earn an average of about $1,500 if they completed summer services from start to finish. Summer experiences ranged from 3 to 20 weeks in length, with youth working 16 to 40 hours per week.

More than three-quarters of sites experienced payroll challenges due to the increased volume of workers. Logistical problems in the flow and functioning of the payroll process occurred during timesheet collection, processing of paychecks, and distribution of paychecks. Although most sites had already begun to remedy these problems by the time of the site visits, some were still considering alternative strategies to help stem the problems in future summer initiatives.

## Assessing Youth Progress

Sites developed procedures to assist youth both during and after their job placements and to track their progress over time. Youth at all but one site were connected with an adult mentor—typically the worksite supervisor, a colleague, or a frontline SYEI staff member—at the start of their summer experience.

Once youth were placed in jobs, sites monitored worksites both formally and informally through in-person visits by staff. Formal visits, conducted by 11 sites, generally involved a standard protocol or monitoring checklist. Staff spoke with supervisors, spoke with youth, and observed working conditions. Informal visits, conducted by 17 sites, were more casual and typically occurred as staff picked up youth timesheets or dropped off paychecks. Staff unanimously agreed that ongoing monitoring through in-person visits was essential to ensuring high-quality experiences and heading off problems between worksite supervisors and youth before they became serious.

Every site dealt with at least some youth who performed poorly on the job. When problems could not be resolved through mentoring or guidance, youth were typically moved to a new worksite or other program activities. Despite staff efforts to mediate performance issues, all sites reported that a small portion of youth were terminated by the program, quit their jobs, or dropped out of the program.

Sites were also responsible for formally measuring growth in youth's work readiness skills for federal performance reporting requirements. Administrators and frontline staff were overwhelmingly appreciative of the limited requirements in this area for the SYEI. The flexibility given to the states and local areas, however, created inconsistency across and sometimes within sites. Most, but not all, sites measured work readiness skills before and after youth participated in activities, thereby capturing some assessment of growth or increase in skills. However, sites varied substantially in the timing of these assessments, the methods of capturing data (such as through staff observations, employer feedback, and tests of youth), and the types of skills assessed.

## Overall Impressions of the 2009 Summer Experience

This evaluation documents the experiences of selected sites, paints a detailed picture of SYEI implementation, and gives a voice to the youth and employers who were at the core of this effort. Drawing from the detailed data collected, it identifies overall impressions of implementation from the perspective of local implementers, youth, and employers.

It took enormous effort to get this large initiative up and running in a short period of time. Parties at all levels of the workforce investment system—including Federal, state, and local levels—had to act quickly to ensure that the SYEI could get off the ground in time. The size of the initiative and the quick timeframe affected every aspect of planning and implementation. As a result, some sites reported having to make compromises along the way, including curbing the extent of innovation and implementing practices without exploring all possible options. Despite these limitations, administrators and staff reported pride in their accomplishments in the summer of 2009.

Although there were inevitable challenges, the SYEI was implemented successfully without any major problems. Sites were able to recruit sufficient numbers of youth to fill the program slots, to place them in employment, and to provide additional services.

Administrators and staff in the study sites reported that the SYEI had a threefold effect. First, they got money into the hands of needy families. Second, youth and their families spent the disposable income earned through SYEI jobs in their depressed local economies. Third, youth gained valuable work experience, increasing their human capital and long-term job prospects.

Youth valued the opportunity to hold a job, gain work skills, and build their résumés. They also valued the exposure to professional environments and mentoring adults. Many were enthusiastic about having money and being able to help their families in these tough economic times. In the absence of the initiative, many reported they would be competing for jobs with more experienced adult workers or doing nothing productive over their summer break. Although youth had some important feedback on key ways to improve the summer initiative, their most common complaint was that the initiative was too short and offered too few work hours.

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

## Challenges and Lessons Learned

Despite the positive feedback from staff, youth, and employers, implementation of the SYEI was not without its challenges. Based on discussions with local staff, employers, and participants, as well as observation of program practices across all 20 sites, the study identifies challenges and lessons in seven key areas from implementation of the 2009 SYEI.

### 1. Enrollment and Eligibility Determination

Staff across all sites struggled to handle the increased volume of youth, particularly the process of determining their eligibility. For future summer initiatives, local areas should consider providing more training to less experienced staff members to prepare them for summer tasks. As did some sites in 2009, local areas should also consider relying more heavily on experienced staff to perform

more complex tasks, such as eligibility determination. Local areas should also examine other possible strategies to reduce workloads and maximize staff resources such as streamlining intake procedures through prescreening applications and coordinating with schools and social service agencies to determine youth eligibility.

### 2. Recruitment of Veterans and Older Youth

Although overall youth recruitment efforts proved very successful, sites had difficulty reaching older youth between the ages of 22 and 24 as well as veterans and their spouses. Sites should think beyond "youth" when designing and promoting youth activities, given that many veterans and young adults have children, household responsibilities, and significant work experience. Sites reported that it was important to avoid alienating older youth by characterizing the SYEI as a youth program. Local areas should also consider developing new partnerships or reframing old partnerships with organizations that already serve these young adults. Finally, they should consider implementing strategies to differentiate services based on the unique needs of these older participants.

### 3. Recruitment of Private Sector Employers

Although federal guidance encouraged the involvement of private employers, some sites were hesitant about including them. Sites raised three concerns: (1) the advisability of choosing one private employer over another for a government-subsidized job, (2) the lack of sufficient information on the quality of private sector jobs, and (3) the age and background restrictions imposed by private employers. While not necessarily appropriate for all youth, the private sector can be a good source of high quality jobs for many participants, particularly older, more experienced youth. Most sites did successfully engage at least some private employers, and the private employers involved in the study appreciated the opportunity to participate and support local youth. About one-third of sites felt that private employers were more likely to hire participants permanently and were a better fit based on youth interests. In addition, sites did not report any problems or conflicts related to equity among local businesses. With sufficient planning time, local areas can address concerns about the quality of private sector jobs by sufficiently vetting potential employers and training worksite supervisors to ensure that they can provide quality tasks and professional mentoring.

### 4. Green Jobs

While more than half of sites reported at least some success placing youth in green industries and jobs, administrators and staff across sites and even within sites often did not use a common definition for green jobs. Respondents in three sites explicitly expressed confusion over the definition. To further expand youth opportunities in this emerging field, sites require additional guidance from ETA on what constitutes a green job. The Bureau of Labor Statistics as well as several states, foundations, and private organizations have already begun efforts to define the concept of green jobs more clearly and conduct inventories of these jobs across the country.

### 5. Job Matching

Some sites felt—and youth agreed—that job matching of youth to employers could have been improved by either aligning employer recruitment to the interests of youth or more closely considering data from youth intake and assessments when determining the most appropriate employer. To the extent possible, local areas should match youth to employers based on their

interests and career goals to help maximize the potential for a valuable summer experience that may lead to better employment opportunities. To help achieve this goal, sites should consider using information on the types of jobs that best suited the interests of youth enrolled in the summer of 2009 to help focus initial employer recruitment efforts in future summers. In addition, if sites chose to recruit employers before enrolling youth, they should consider continuing employer recruitment as needed once youth are enrolled to accommodate the interests of as many participants as possible. Given that all matches may not be ideal, staff should also work to ensure that both employers and youth have reasonable expectations for the summer experience. In particular, staff should stress to youth that, no matter what their work assignment, they will be able to build their résumés and can learn important work skills.

### 6. Measurement of Work Readiness Increases

Sites varied dramatically in their measurement of work readiness increases among youth and sometimes used different approaches within a site. These inconsistencies make it difficult to assess the true meaning of the national performance measure. To ensure the use of a valid measure across all local areas, sites require additional guidance from ETA on standards and best practices in measuring increases in work readiness skills. This includes guidance on the timing and frequency of youth assessments, the most appropriate sources of data on youth performance, and the types of skills that should be assessed.

### 7. Innovation

Variations in the local infrastructure and economy of study sites clearly affected their implementation of the SYEI. For instance, one site reported denying services to some youth who did not live near a participating employer because the youth's community lacked a good public transportation system. However, other sites with youth in similar situations either developed their own van routes or recruited businesses within the communities where youth lived to allow them to participate. As another example, administrators in some areas said they could not place significant numbers of youth into green jobs given the lack of green industry in their local economies. Other sites in similar situations, however, developed their own green projects or tapped into the public sector for green opportunities. Addressing local circumstances may require innovation. When encountering an implementation challenge, administrators should consider new or innovative models, including looking to other sites with similar local circumstances for potential solutions.

## Looking Beyond Summer 2009

Although the SYEI of 2009 was a monumental effort, it was not the end of the road for participating youth. Many participants came out of the summer initiative looking for new opportunities to expand on their experiences. How they fared beyond the summer and what effect the SYEI had on their employment prospects can only be determined through long-term follow up or better efforts to track future participants. However, some sites had already begun reflecting on what worked and what could be improved for future summers.

Many youth who participated in the SYEI hoped to transition to new opportunities in the fall. The largest proportion of participants planned to return to school. Some youth could receive additional services from the workforce investment system, including the regular WIA youth and adult formula-funded programs, and from other organizations within the community. Still other youth sought to move into permanent jobs. Respondents, however, mentioned several issues that

might have limited these opportunities. Although the regular WIA programs for youth and adults could serve some youth, some of these programs already had waiting lists due to excess demand. In addition, while every site expected at least some youth to enter permanent jobs, the state of the economy may have limited the number of permanent placements for youth.

Sites appeared prepared to offer summer opportunities to significant numbers of youth in 2010. During the summer of 2009, sites worked through many challenges inherent in the implementation of a new initiative and learned lessons that can be used to inform future efforts. Sites looked forward to offering summer work opportunities to youth in 2010 if funding is available. Even if dedicated funding is not available, a few sites felt the success of the SYEI in helping youth gain a better understanding of the world of work would prompt them to consider dedicating a larger portion of their regular WIA formula funds to develop summer opportunities for youth.

# I. INTRODUCTION

The American economy lost an estimated 7.9 million jobs from the end of 2007 to the fall of 2009 (U.S. Department of Labor 2009b). Joblessness was high for many groups during this period, but for young adults, unemployment was particularly high and could have lasting effects. In May 2009, the jobless rate for teenagers was 22.7 percent, more than double the national rate of 9.4 percent (U.S. Department of Labor 2009b). The funding for youth activities through the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act of 2009 (the Recovery Act) was designed as one part of the solution to address this situation and reverse the steep decline in youth employment.

Through the Recovery Act, states received an additional $1.2 billion in WIA Youth funding for employment and training activities targeted to disadvantaged youth. Congress and the U.S. Department of Labor (DOL) encouraged states and local workforce investment areas charged with implementing youth activities to use the funds to create employment opportunities for these youth in the summer of 2009. Although summer employment is a component of youth activities under the Workforce Investment Act of 1998 (WIA), many local areas did not provide summer jobs for significant numbers of youth after the transition to WIA in 2000 (Social Policy Research Associates 2004). Local areas had from mid-February 2009, when the Recovery Act was signed into law, to the beginning of May 2009 to design their summer youth activities and prepare for implementation.

To gain insights into the design and implementation of these initiatives, DOL's Employment and Training Administration (ETA) contracted with Mathematica Policy Research to conduct an evaluation of the summer youth employment activities funded by the Recovery Act. Although summer employment is only one component of WIA youth activities and is not funded as a separate program, the opportunities offered by local areas with Recovery Act funding in the summer of 2009 are referred to as the Summer Youth Employment Initiative (SYEI) throughout this report. As part of this evaluation, Mathematica® analyzed state performance data and qualitative data collected through in-depth site visits to 20 local areas. This report describes the national context for SYEI implementation, provides an in-depth description of the experiences of selected sites, and presents lessons on implementation practices that may inform SYEIs.

## A. Policy and Economic Context

On February 17, 2009, President Barack Obama signed the Recovery Act into law. The Act was passed in response to the economic crisis that began in December of 2007 with a housing crisis, a credit crunch, and rising unemployment across the country (U.S. Department of Labor 2009b). From December 2007 to November 2009, the number of unemployed persons in the nation rose from 7.5 million to 15.4 million, and the national unemployment rate rose from 4.5 percent to 10.0 percent (U.S. Department of Labor 2009b). With a total value of $787 billion, the Act's purpose was to create jobs, pump money into the economy, and encourage spending (U.S. Congress 2009). A key aspect of the Act was its urgency, as reflected by its enactment shortly after the start of the new Congress and administration.

In this weakened economy, youth employment rates have been at historic lows (Center for Labor Market Studies 2009). Although these rates appeared to be due to the recent economic crisis, youth employment had been decreasing steadily since 2000 (McLaughlin et al. 2009). Between 2000 and 2009, the summer employment rate for teens between the ages of 16 and 19 fell from 45 percent to 29 percent. Employment rates decreased for all gender and ethnic groups in this period, though some groups were harder hit. Although employment rates were similar for male and female

youth in 2000, male employment fell by more than female employment. By 2009, the female youth employment rate was 31 percent compared with the male rate of 28 percent. African American males have historically had the lowest employment rates, and in summer 2009, African American male youth had an employment rate of 17 percent.

The dual purposes of the Recovery Act provisions targeting youth were to spur local economies and to provide employment experiences to disadvantaged youth. These employment opportunities were meant to put money directly into the hands of youth, who could both help support their families during the recession and help stimulate demand in local economies through their spending. Providing young adults with employment opportunities through the Recovery Act could also help make up for the loss of employment opportunities during the economic downturn. Without these experiences, young adults may be unable to explore future career opportunities and will be less familiar with the expectations of the world of work (Oates 2009).

## B. The History of Summer Youth Programs

Starting in 1983, before the Workforce Investment Act of 1998 (WIA), the Job Training Partnership Act (JTPA) provided federal funding for employment programs aimed at disadvantaged youth. Title II-B, the Summer Youth Employment and Training Program (SYETP), was the larger of the two programs. In program year 1990, Title II-B received an allocation of $871 million and Title II-C, providing for year-round programs, received $130 million. Eligibility was restricted to low-income youth ages 14 to 21 for summer services and ages 16 to 21 for year-round services.

SYETP reflected a long-standing federal commitment to providing summer work experiences to youth (Social Policy Research Associates 1998).[1] SYETP services included basic and remedial education, on-the-job training, paid work experience, employment counseling, occupational training, preparation for work, and assistance in searching for jobs. The early 1990s witnessed a change in the program's focus from exposing youth to the world of work to linking work experiences to the youth's academic achievement. This translated into a requirement to assess the basic skills of each youth and plan a service strategy based on those assessments (Social Policy Research Associates 1998). The Title II-C year-round program provided services similar to the summer program but also provided help with transition to the working world, preventing students from dropping out of school, and mentoring.

Recognizing JTPA's lack of demonstrated success in improving youth's post-service outcomes (Social Policy Research Associates 2004; Bloom et al. 1993), WIA mandated a major refocus of youth programs. WIA required more comprehensive services focused on long-term outcomes and better aligned with youth development theory and practices. Most notably, rather than treating summer employment as a stand-alone intervention, WIA integrated it into a comprehensive program. Thus, summer work experiences became only one of 10 required elements for youth participating in programs funded under the WIA. Following the transition to WIA, a 2004 study found that youth enrollment in summer programs dropped 50 to 90 percent in most local areas (Social Policy Research Associates 2004).

[1] JTPA's predecessor, the Comprehensive Employment and Training Act (CETA), also provided for summer youth employment through block grants to state and local governments.

Under WIA, local areas must make each of these 10 elements available to eligible youth:

1. Summer employment opportunities linked to academic and occupational learning
2. Tutoring, study skills training, and instruction leading to secondary school completion
3. Alternative secondary school offerings
4. Paid and unpaid work experiences
5. Occupational skill training
6. Leadership development opportunities
7. Supportive services
8. Adult mentoring for at least 12 months, either during or after participation
9. Comprehensive guidance and counseling
10. Follow-up activities for at least 12 months

To participate in WIA programs, youth must meet three eligibility criteria. They must be between 14 and 21 years old, qualify as low income according to WIA Section 101 (25) (U.S. Congress 1998), and meet one of six barriers to employment: being (1) a school dropout; (2) deficient in basic literacy; (3) a homeless, runaway, or foster child; (4) a parenting or pregnant teen; (5) an offender; or (6) someone who needs help completing an education program or securing and maintaining employment. In addition, WIA requires that at least 30 percent of the youth funds be spent on out-of-school youth.[2] As performance indicators, WIA enacted seven statutory measures, and DOL also added and implemented three common measures that were developed by the Office of Management and Budget (OMB)—including youth's placement in work or education, attainment of diplomas or credentials, and improvement in basic skills.

## C. The Recovery Act Allocation for the WIA Youth Program

The congressional explanatory statement for the Recovery Act and ETA's Training and Employment Guidance Letter No. 14-08 (U.S. Department of Labor 2009d) laid out the key provisions for the Recovery Act's allocation of WIA youth funds. The Act indicated that the $1.2 billion be used toward youth activities. Although the use of funds was not restricted and funds could be spent through June 30, 2011, the congressional guidance for the Act expressed a strong interest in the funds being used to fund summer employment opportunities for youth. Similar to the SYETP, youth would be placed in summer employment experiences with local public, nonprofit, and private employers and their wages would be paid with Recovery Act funds.

The Act contained two other key provisions for the WIA youth activities funded under it. First, it extended eligibility to youth up to 24 years of age. Second, the Act specified that only one indicator—achievement of work readiness goals—would be used to measure the performance of

[2] An out-of-school youth is an eligible youth who has either dropped out of school or received a high school diploma or General Educational Development (GED) credential but is deficient in basic skills, underemployed, or unemployed (U.S. Congress 1998).

youth activities funded by the Recovery Act. Local areas were also required by ETA to report another performance indicator—the number of youth completing summer employment experiences.

ETA provided further guidance to states and local areas on the use of the Recovery Act youth funds during the summer months, defined as May 1, 2009 through September 30, 2009 (U.S. Department of Labor 2009d). These provisions included the following features:

**Work experiences should be "meaningful" and age appropriate.** Work experiences should be age appropriate and lead to youth meeting work readiness goals. ETA encouraged local areas to incorporate experiences in "green" (or environmentally friendly) work and skills and to introduce youth to green educational and career pathways. Local areas were also encouraged to match worksites with participants' goals and interests as much as possible.

**Local areas had flexibility in using classroom-based learning activities.** Local areas could decide whether or not to link classroom-based learning, such as occupational training, with youth's work experiences. Such a linkage was recommended for younger youth in need of instruction in basic skills and career exploration. Local areas could decide if the linkage was beneficial based on the circumstances of each youth, but were asked to consider academic linkages for youth without a high school diploma.

**Registered apprenticeships were encouraged.** Given the growing trend in registered apprenticeships, local areas were encouraged to take advantage of local apprenticeship programs to create pre-apprenticeship opportunities. These programs link out-of-school youth to technical skills training that can be translated to experience at a worksite, thus preparing the youth for formal apprenticeship programs upon completion of the summer work experience.

**Performance would be measured by one work readiness indicator.** Local areas could determine how to define indicators of work readiness and measure changes in the indicator but were provided with a definition for work readiness skill goals. States could request a waiver to use this indicator also for youth aged 18 to 24 years who participated in only work experiences during October 2009 through March 2010. If youth in that group received additional services during the post-summer period, they would be included in the regular WIA performance measures.

**WIA youth program elements were not required.** Local areas could determine which of the 10 WIA youth program elements to offer to participants funded by the Recovery Act. For example, this provision permitted local areas to determine whether or not to provide supportive services or follow up with participants for 12 months after receipt of services. ETA also provided some flexibility regarding other design elements. While WIA requires a comprehensive assessment and individualized service strategy (ISS) for each youth participant, the Recovery Act allowed local areas to determine what type of assessment and ISS to complete for each youth that participated in the summer months only.

**Certain groups should receive priority.** The priority groups for WIA programs—including veterans and eligible spouses of veterans—were also priority groups for youth activities funded by the Recovery Act. ETA also noted that the extension of eligibility to 24 year olds could make more veterans eligible for summer employment. As with regular WIA youth programs, at least 30 percent of Recovery Act funding for WIA youth activities had to be spent on out-of-school youth. ETA also encouraged local areas to focus their services on groups of the neediest youth.

**Local areas could request waivers for contractor procurement.** States were permitted to request a waiver from the WIA requirement for service providers to be selected through a competitive procurement process, but were still required to follow state or local laws that could not be relieved by federal regulations (U.S. Congress 1999). If granted, the waiver would permit local areas to extend existing contracts for WIA services or to conduct a competition among a limited number of providers for the summer youth initiative.

## D. Overview of the Evaluation

In conjunction with ETA, Mathematica designed the evaluation of the Recovery Act SYEI to provide rich information about its implementation and potential for improving the work readiness of disadvantaged youth. ETA expressed interest in learning about local areas' efforts to quickly implement a large initiative and the resulting experiences for youth, employers, and communities. However, compiling data on these experiences for all local areas was not possible within the study's scope. Thus, the study team worked with ETA national and regional staff to identify 20 areas for in-depth study (herafter referred to as the study "sites"). These sites were selected based on early indications that they could offer potentially promising approaches to delivering summer employment experiences to youth.

Although this approach limits the study's ability to draw conclusions about SYEI implementation across the country, it does provide important insights into the issues and challenges involved in providing summer work experiences to a large number of youth. In addition, the study provides information based on state-reported performance and draw down data to give some national context for the experiences of the 20 selected sites.

Furthermore, this study focused on sites' experiences preparing for and providing the work opportunities to youth during the summer of 2009. It was not designed to capture the overall quality of youth's experiences or to assess youth's outcomes as a result of their participation. Still, the information captured about the selected sites' experiences provides valuable lessons for policymakers and administrators considering implementing summer youth initiatives in the future.

### 1. Research Questions

Six major research questions guided the evaluation. By addressing these questions, the study gives policymakers, administrators, and stakeholders a better understanding of how the SYEI unfolded in the summer of 2009:

1. How did the selected sites plan for and organize their summer youth initiatives?
2. How did selected sites identify, recruit, and enroll at-risk youth?
3. What were the characteristics of participants nationwide?
4. What services were offered during the summer months in selected sites?
5. What types of work experiences were offered to participating youth in selected sites?
6. What lessons can be drawn about the implementation of summer youth programs?

Appendix A lists the comprehensive set of sub-questions for each major research question.

## 2. Selection of Study Sites

To learn about SYEI implementation, 20 local areas were selected for data collection and analysis. Based on their knowledge of local areas that offered innovative or potentially promising approaches, ETA national and regional staff nominated a total of 40 local areas for inclusion in the study. The evaluation team and ETA narrowed the list to 27 local areas using three key criteria: (1) including at least three sites from each region; (2) choosing only those sites that planned to spend at least 50 percent of Recovery Act funds during the summer of 2009; and (3) including rural, urban, and suburban sites.

In July 2009, the evaluation team conducted telephone calls with administrators in these 27 local areas to collect more information about their initiatives and discuss the feasibility of an in-person site visit. Based on these discussions and consideration of the selection criteria, Mathematica and ETA determined the final set of 20 study sites (see Table I.1).

**Table I.1 Sites Selected for Visits**

| Region | Local Workforce Investment Agent | City, State |
|---|---|---|
| 1 | Regional Employment Board of Hampden County | Springfield, MA |
| 1 | The Workplace, Inc. | Bridgeport, CT |
| 1 | Workforce Partnership of Greater Rhode Island | Cranston, RI |
| 2 | Lehigh Valley Workforce Investment Board, Inc. | Lehigh Valley, PA |
| 2 | Three Rivers Workforce Investment Board | Pittsburgh, PA |
| 2 | Western Virginia Workforce Development Board | Roanoke, VA |
| 3 | Eastern Kentucky Concentrated Employment Program | Hazard, KY |
| 3 | Northeast Georgia Regional Commission | Athens, GA |
| 3 | Workforce Investment Network | Memphis, TN |
| 4 | Denver Office of Economic Development | Denver, CO |
| 4 | Montana State WIB, District XI Human Resource Council | Missoula, MT |
| 4 | Workforce Connection of Central New Mexico | Albuquerque, NM |
| 5 | Minneapolis Employment and Training Program | Minneapolis, MN |
| 5 | Workforce Development, Inc. | Rochester, MN |
| 5 | Workforce Resource, Inc. | Menomonie, WI |
| 6 | Community Development Department of the City of LA | Los Angeles, CA |
| 6 | Madera County Office of Education | Madera, CA |
| 6 | Oregon Consortium and Oregon Workforce Alliance | Albany, OR |
| 6 | Workforce Development Council of Seattle-King County | Seattle, WA |
| 6 | Worksystems, Inc. | Portland, OR |

Note: The city and state reflect the location of the local area's central office.

## 3. Data Sources

To provide a complete picture of SYEIs in the summer of 2009, the evaluation draws upon two key data sources: state performance data and in-depth site visits. The state performance data provides the national scope of the initiative and additional context for the experiences of the 20 selected sites. During site visits, the study team collected detailed information on how the sites implemented their initiatives. Data collection for each source focused on the summer months.

***State performance and draw down data.*** States delivered monthly performance reports to ETA for all youth participating in Recovery Act services at all local areas across the nation. The study obtained performance data submitted to ETA as of December 31, 2009 that covers implementation from May through November 2009. The data include statistics on the number of youth enrolled, their demographic characteristics, the services they received, and key performance outcomes. ETA also provided the study with data on monthly draw downs from state funding allocations for the same period of May through November 2009.

***In-depth site visits.*** The study team completed visits to the 20 selected sites during July and August 2009, while youth were being served. Each visit, conducted by one member of the study team, lasted an average of 2.5 days. Site visitors spoke to a total of 601 individuals across the 20 sites, including 373 administrators and staff, 79 employers, and 149 youth. Appendix B provides the demographic characteristics of the youth who participated in focus groups. The interviews and focus groups conducted during these site visits were the main source of information for this study.

## 4. Analytical Approach and Limitations

The two data sources required different analytical approaches. For the state performance and draw down data, the analysis was intended to provide a larger picture of SYEI implementation across the country. The analysis was purely descriptive. State-specific statistics were aggregated to produce national frequencies. The team also analyzed enrollment patterns over time. Given that states provided only aggregate data, analyzing subgroups was not feasible.

For the in-depth site visits, the analysis focused on the study's key research questions as the evaluation team searched for themes, patterns, and relationships that emerged both within individual sites and across sites. The analysis considered models of program organization, outreach, and recruitment; similarities and differences in service offerings; approaches to work readiness; and the range of summer work experiences. The study also looked across sites at the common lessons learned, challenges faced, and suggestions for structuring an improved SYEI.

The analysis of qualitative data went beyond the national data and explored, in great detail, the experiences of a subset of local areas. Throughout the analysis, the site served as the unit of analysis, even when multiple providers or employers at a site reported different approaches or opinions. We account for these differences by reporting when a particular practice occurred site-wide and when it varied from provider to provider within a site. Given that the evaluation team was not always able to meet with representatives from all local providers, the analysis does not include the full range of site experiences. In addition, employers and participants were purposefully selected by the principal contact in each site and are not representative of all those involved in the initiative. Despite these limitations, the study gathered the perspectives of a large number of diverse respondents.

Throughout the report, local practices and youth perspectives are highlighted in text boxes. The practices described in these boxes are not intended to represent promising or high quality strategies. Instead, they provide concrete examples of the general trends across sites or unique practices adopted by one or more local initiatives. Sites are referenced by the city and state where the central office is located although practices are generally implemented in the wider service area. Similarly, the quotes provided by youth from focus groups are not intended to be representative of all youth, but rather to enable the reader to hear the voices and perspectives of some youth participating in the initiatives.

## E. Organization of the Rest of the Report

The purpose of this report is to provide a rich description of the implementation of SYEIs funded by the Recovery Act in the summer of 2009. The report continues in Chapter II with a snapshot of the initiative nationwide, using state performance and draw down data. The remainder of the report focuses on the implementation experiences of the 20 selected sites. Chapter III describes the selected sites and their strategies for organizing and planning the summer initiative Chapter IV describes the sites' effort to reach out to prospective youth participants and their processes for enrolling participants. Chapter V examines the strategies used to prepare eligible youth for the worksite placements. Chapter VI discusses the recruitment of employers to provide summer jobs. Chapters VII and VIII explore the range of summer experiences and how local areas monitored youth progress. Finally, Chapter IX provides lessons about the successes and challenges that local areas experienced in implementing the summer youth initiative.

## II. THE NATIONAL CONTEXT

Nationwide, local areas served more than 355,000 youth through November 2009 using Recovery Act funding. To document the use of these funds in a timely fashion, ETA required that each state and outlying area[3] submit monthly performance reports on their youth initiatives. Although the overall number of data elements was kept to a minimum to reduce the burden imposed on state and local areas, the data provide an overview of how the summer youth initiative unfolded nationally. The evaluation gathered youth performance data submitted to ETA by the states on youth activities from May through November 2009.

Although the rest of the report discusses qualitative findings from 20 sites, this chapter uses national data to look at the SYEI across all local areas. It examines the use of Recovery Act funds, how many and what types of youth were served, what services they were provided, and what outcomes the youth experienced. Section A begins by examining the monthly trends in national funding draw downs and enrollment in youth employment initiatives. Section B examines who was served in these initiatives during the summer of 2009[4] and the extent to which key target populations, such as veterans, were reached. Section C looks at the types of services youth received that summer, including summer employment, education services, and other supports. Section D concludes with outcomes experienced by the youth served by these initiatives.

### Key Findings: The National Context

- **States and local areas enrolled more than 355,000 youth nationwide from May to November 2009 using Recovery Act funding.** Enrollment was heaviest in May, June, and July, reflecting the fact that states and local areas heeded federal guidance to focus efforts on summer employment opportunities. By comparison, the regular WIA youth program served slightly more than 250,000 youth during the entire 2008 program year.
- **National draw downs totaled more than $717 million through November 2009, accounting for almost 61 percent of the nearly $1.2 billion in Recovery Act funds.** The proportion of funds drawn down by each state within this timeframe varied from 33 to almost 93 percent.
- **Out-of-school youth accounted for 36 percent of participants nationwide.** The economy as well as the decision to expand eligibility by allowing enrollment of young adults up to age 24 may have contributed to this success.
- **More than 88 percent of participants were placed in summer jobs.** Of those in summer jobs, states reported that over 82 percent completed their summer job experience. States also reported that 75 percent of all youth achieved a measureable increase in their work readiness skills.

[3] Washington, D.C., and Puerto Rico are counted among the states. Outlying areas include American Samoa, Guam, Northern Marianas, Palau, and the Virgin Islands. Indian and Native American grantees were also required to report on program performance.

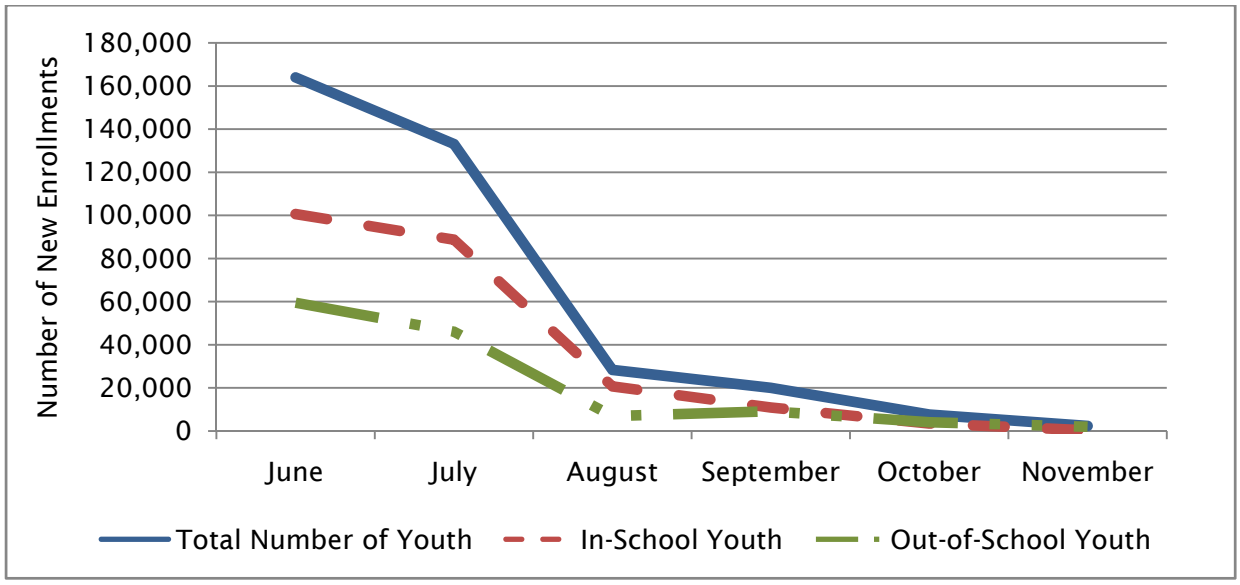
[4] ETA defined "summer" as May 1 through September 30 (U.S. Department of Labor 2009d).

## A. National Patterns of Enrollment and Draw Downs

Enrolling more than 355,000 youth nationwide, states and local areas drew down more than $717 million through November 2009, or 61 percent of the $1.2 billion in Recovery Act funds targeted for WIA youth services. The proportion of funds drawn down by states varied dramatically from a high of 93 percent in Idaho to a low of 33 percent in Hawaii (see Appendix C). By comparison, local areas served a total of slightly more than 250,000 youth through the regular WIA program during the entire 2008 program year with a budget of $966 million (U.S. Department of Labor 2009a).[5]

As shown in Figure II.1, states heeded the guidance provided by Congress and ETA to focus efforts on summer employment initiatives rather than comprehensive services. Large numbers of youth began enrolling in the spring, with 164,000 youth enrolling in May and June.[6] This initial enrollment accounted for 46 percent of all youth enrolled through November. Enrollment continued heavily through July with another 133,000 youth entering the initiatives. New enrollments fell sharply in August and September as initiatives focused on providing services to those already enrolled; in many cases, initiatives only enrolled new participants in these months by taking youth

**Figure II.1 WIA Youth Enrollment in 2009 Under the Recovery Act**




Source: State performance reports for WIA youth initiatives supported by the Recovery Act submitted to the U.S. Department of Labor as of December 31, 2009.

Note: States submitted their first performance reports in June with aggregate data for youth enrolled in May and June.

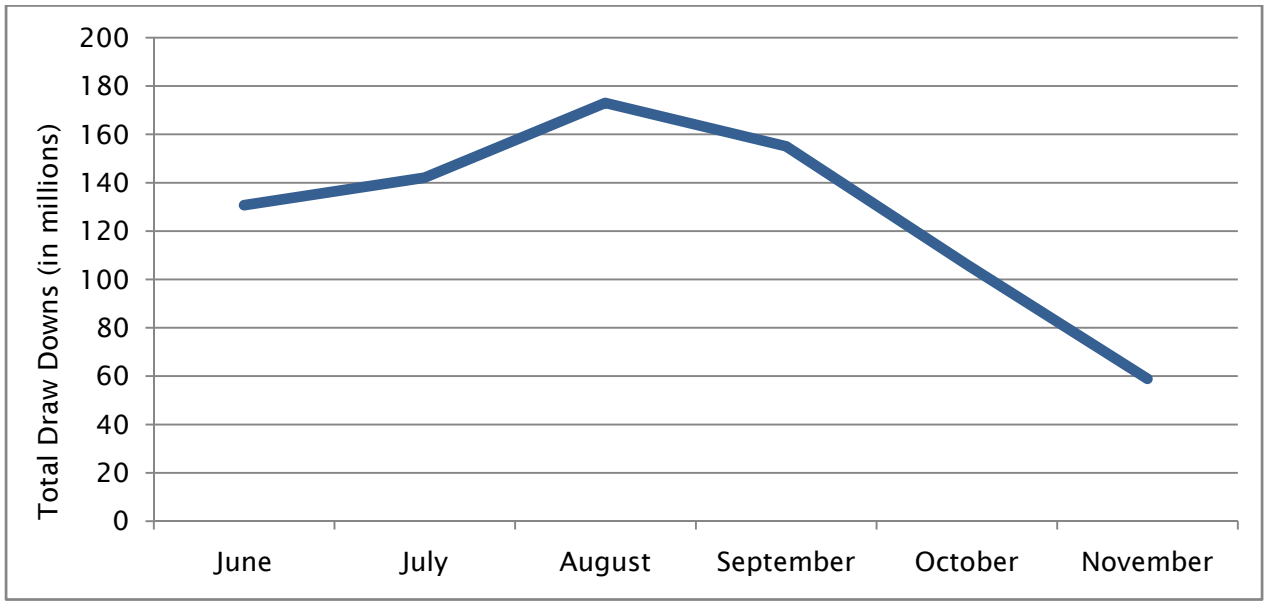
[5] Dividing total expenditure by the number of enrolled youth results in a higher cost per participant for the regular WIA youth compared to Recovery Act youth. This may result from the fact that most of the youth served by the Recovery Act participated only during the summer months, whereas the regular WIA youth program serves youth for significantly longer periods of time. Note that some youth enrolled through the Recovery Act may continue to be served beyond November 2009, increasing the actual cost per participant.

[6] States submitted their first performance reports in June with aggregate information for May and June.

from waiting lists when participating youth dropped out. As discussed in Chapter IV, administrators from selected local workforce investment areas reported beginning recruitment of youth as early as March and April, often before local funding allocations were made by states, although official enrollment often did not begin until May and June.

National draw downs averaged $128 million per month during the summer period and peaked in August at $173 million per month (see Figure II.2). The peak in draw downs trailed enrollment slightly. This likely reflects the fact that local areas incurred significant costs in youth wages only after youth were officially enrolled, took part in early preparation activities, and were placed at worksites.

**Figure II.2 National Draw Downs of WIA Youth Recovery Act Funds in 2009**




Source: Monthly draw downs of WIA Youth Recovery Act Funds.

Notes: Draw downs reflect the actual cash drawn daily by grantees from the financial system. By comparison, expenditures are the costs reported quarterly on an accrual basis, and therefore include all services and goods received by the end of the quarter, whether or not they have been invoiced or paid. As a result, draw downs may not account for all expenditures during the reporting period.

Data from March through June were only available in aggregate and are reported under the month of June.

## B. Characteristics of Youth Participants

The 2009 summer employment initiative enrolled a diverse array of youth, in terms of gender, race, education level, and age (see Table II.1). Females and males participated at similar rates. African Americans made up 45 percent of all participants through November 2009. Whites were the second largest racial group, comprising 38 percent. Other ethnic groups made up less than 5 percent of participants. The racial background of more than 12 percent of participating youth is unknown. States also reported that nearly 25 percent of participants were of Latino or Hispanic origin. The majority of participants were in-school youth, a group largely comprised of those ages 18 or younger (see Table II.1).

**Table II.1 Characteristics of Youth Served Under the Recovery Act Through November 2009**

| | Number of Participants | Percentage of All Participants |
|---|---|---|
| Total Number of Participants | 355,320 | 100.0 |
| Gender | | |
| Male | 175,239 | 49.3 |
| Female | 179,496 | 50.5 |
| Not reported | 585 | 0.2 |
| Race | | |
| Black or African American | 158,914 | 44.7 |
| White | 136,563 | 38.4 |
| American Indian or Alaska Native | 7,145 | 2.0 |
| Asian | 6,329 | 1.8 |
| Hawaiian Native or Other Pacific Islander | 2,149 | 0.6 |
| Not reported | 44,220 | 12.4 |
| Latino or Hispanic Origin | 86,859 | 24.4 |
| School Status | | |
| In-school | 224,798 | 63.3 |
| Out-of-school | 127,869 | 36.0 |
| Not reported | 2,653 | 0.7 |
| Age at Enrollment | | |
| 14–18 years | 228,921 | 64.4 |
| 19–21 years | 84,539 | 23.8 |
| 22–24 years | 30,594 | 8.6 |
| Not reported | 11,266 | 3.2 |
| Education Level at Enrollment | | |
| 8th grade or under | 45,302 | 12.7 |
| 9th to 12th grade | 204,378 | 57.5 |
| High school graduate or equivalent | 81,372 | 22.9 |
| 1–3 years of college or full-time technical or vocational school | 20,506 | 5.8 |
| 4 years college or more | 1,366 | 0.4 |
| Not reported | 2,396 | 0.7 |
| Individuals with Disabilities | 45,125 | 12.7 |
| Eligible Veterans | 671 | 0.2 |

Source: State performance reports for WIA youth initiatives supported by the Recovery Act submitted to the U.S. Department of Labor as of December 31, 2009.

Notes: Data on age could not be broken into smaller subgroups.

These figures do not include the 3,763 youth served by Indian and Native American grantees as a result of reporting procedures.

Analysis of data on those served during the summer months of May to September 2009 result in differences of less than one percentage point in all categories when compared with November statistics presented in the table.

States also succeeded in enrolling a large number of out-of-school and older youth. Out-of-school youth included dropouts as well as youth who had received a high school diploma or its equivalent but were not enrolled in postsecondary education and needed assistance securing or holding employment. ETA placed particular emphasis on this population by requiring that states expend a minimum of 30 percent of their funds, both Recovery Act funds and WIA-formula funds, on this group. The WIA program has struggled to reach this critical high-risk population in the past (U.S. Government Accountability Office 2004). However, the program has made significant progress enrolling out-of-school youth in recent years, with this group accounting for 42 percent of youth served during program year 2008 (U.S. Department of Labor 2009).

Using Recovery Act funds, out-of-school youth accounted for 36 percent of those enrolled through November. Although this proportion remained relatively steady through the early summer months, it began to rise to nearly 50 percent in September (not shown). This suggests that out-of-school youth received additional priority as in-school youth returned to the classroom. Success with out-of-school youth recruitment may have resulted from the increase in unemployment among youth due to the recession. The Recovery Act also expanded eligibility to allow young adults between the ages of 22 and 24 to enroll. In fact, nine percent of all those enrolled through November—nearly 31,000 participants—fell within this age range. Site visits to selected areas suggest that most of these older participants were not attending educational programs at enrollment.

As expected given the high proportion of in-school youth, 70 percent of enrolled youth had less than a high school diploma (Table II.1). Another 23 percent had received their high school degree or equivalent. Local areas were also able enroll a portion of more highly educated participants: the remaining seven percent of participants had at least some postsecondary education at enrollment.

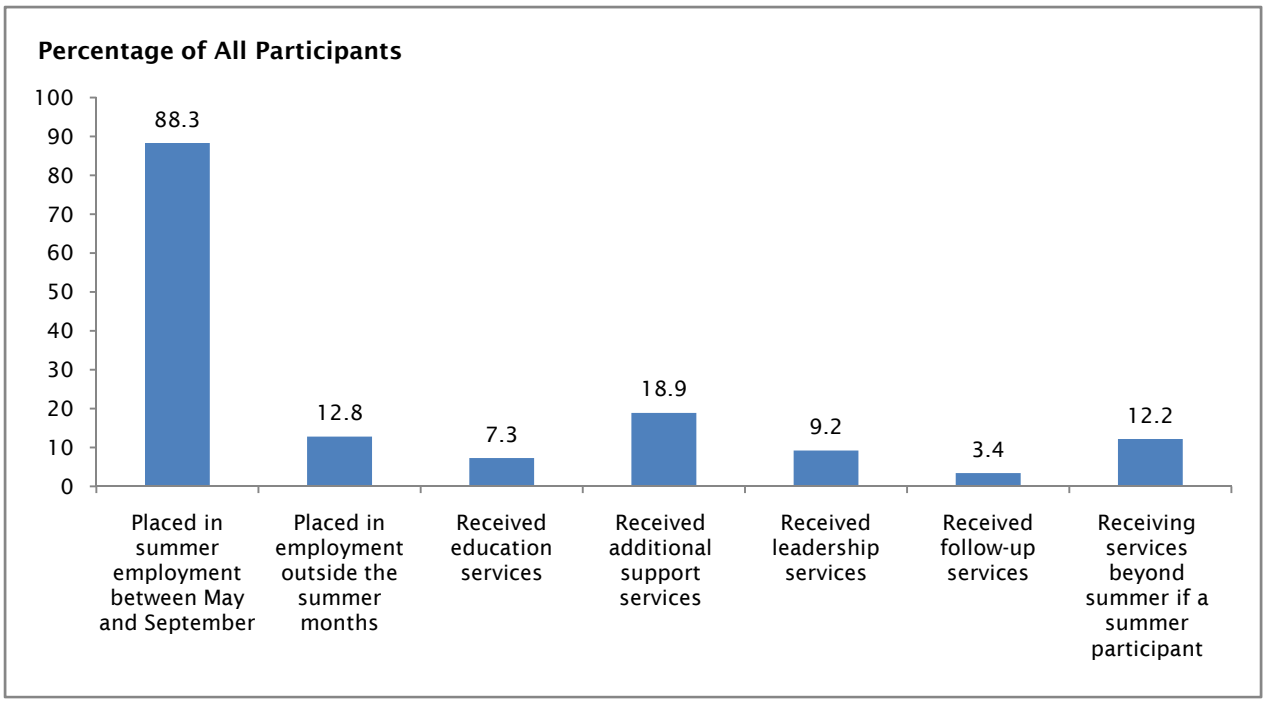
Youth with disabilities accounted for about 13 percent of participants. As defined for performance reporting, a disability is "a physical or mental impairment that substantially limits one or more of the person's major life activities." These activities can include a wide range of functions such as "caring for one's self, performing manual tasks, walking, seeing, hearing, speaking, breathing, learning, working, and receiving education or vocational training" (U.S. Congress 2000).

Veterans and their spouses were given priority of service as a result of the high incidence of unemployment immediately upon discharge from the military. Evaluation site visits revealed that this was one of the most challenging populations to reach. State data reflects this pattern, with only 671 veterans, or less than 0.2 percent of all participants, enrolled nationwide. ETA did not require states to report on the number of participants who were spouses of veterans, so such data are not available.

## C. Patterns of Service Receipt Among Participating Youth

Youth employment clearly served as the focus of local efforts to expend Recovery Act allocations. Nearly 314,000 youth—88 percent of participants—were placed in a summer job (see Figure II.3). In addition, 13 percent of all participants were placed in work experiences outside the summer months. This percentage could include participants who also were placed in summer employment, those who participated in WIA youth activities funded under the Recovery Act but did not work during the summer, and those who did not enroll until the fall. Although the data does not allow for subgroup analyses, patterns of enrollment suggest a surge in fall work experience placements among out-of-school youth as in-school youth returned to school. Appendix D provides employment rates and other key statistics by state.

**Figure II.3 Youth Services Received Under the Recovery Act Through November 2009**




Source: State performance reports for WIA youth initiatives supported by the Recovery Act submitted to the U.S. Department of Labor as of December 31, 2009.

Notes: ETA defines the summer months as May through September.

Data on those "placed in employment outside the summer months" can include participants who were also placed in summer employment.

N = 355,320;.data on those "receiving services beyond the summer if a summer participant" pertain only to 345,394 youth who participated during May through September.

These figures do not include the 3,763 youth served by Indian and Native American grantees as a result of reporting procedures.

Smaller proportions of youth were exposed to a range of other services. As mentioned in Chapter I, of the 10 youth service elements associated with the regular WIA youth program, ETA only required work experience for these summer initiatives. However, many local areas chose to provide at least some other services—including education services, support services, leadership development, and follow-up services—to a proportion of youth.

Educational services were provided to a small proportion of youth. Slightly more than 7 percent of youth received education services, including but not limited to "tutoring, study skills training, and instruction leading to secondary school completion" (U.S. Department of Labor 2009e). As discussed in Chapter VII, evaluation site visits suggest that the some of the most common educational activities included occupational skills training, GED preparation, recovery of school credits, and remediation.

Additional service offerings included support services and leadership development activities. Almost 19 percent of youth received some sort of support service. ETA guidance allows for a broad interpretation of support services but provides examples such as adult mentoring and comprehensive guidance and counseling. As discussed in Chapter V, local areas involved in the

study appeared to use this category mostly to capture transportation assistance, clothing and tools, and child care. Slightly more than 9 percent of youth also participated in leadership development activities. These types of services aim to "encourage responsibility, employability, and other positive social behaviors." (U.S. Department of Labor 2009e) Leadership development activities also include service learning projects, peer-centered activities, and teamwork activities.

Local areas continued to track very few summer participants into the fall. Chapter VIII suggests that few local areas chose to exercise the option to follow summer participants for 12 months after enrollment to assess their progress over time. Nationally, local areas report formally following only 3.4 percent of youth served under the Recovery Act as of November 2009.

A larger fraction of summer participants, however, continued to receive at least some services beyond September. Specifically, 12.2 percent of participants enrolled during the summer months received services in the fall through either Recovery Act initiatives or regular WIA programs. This could include WIA youth services for those aged 14 to 17, WIA adult services for those aged 22 to 24, or either youth or adult services for youth falling in the middle range of 18 to 21.[7] As a way of encouraging states to continue providing services to older youth, states were allowed to apply for waivers on performance reporting requirements through March 2010 for summer participants between the ages of 18 and 24 who participated in work experience from October 2009 through March 2010.

## D. Short-term Outcome Measures

To streamline implementation, Congress only required states and local areas to report on one performance measure for youth served with Recovery Act funds. States had to report on the percentage of participants in summer employment who attained a "work readiness skill goal." Nationwide, local areas reported that almost 75 percent of youth achieved a measureable increase in their work readiness skills through summer employment (see Table II.2).

**Table II.2 Performance Outcomes of Youth Served Under the Recovery Act Through November 2009**

| | Number Reported as Achieving Outcome | Number for Whom Data Were Available | Percentage Achieving Outcome |
|---|---|---|---|
| Increase in work readiness skills | 235,043 | 314,132 | 74.8 |
| Completion of summer work experience | 242,827 | 294,842 | 82.4 |

Source: State performance reports for WIA youth initiatives supported by the Recovery Act submitted to the U.S. Department of Labor as of December 31, 2009.

Notes: These figures do not include the 3,763 youth served by Indian and Native American grantees as a result of reporting procedures.

Data were not available for youth who were still participating in services at the time of data reporting. In addition, data were not available for some participants due to delays in state reporting.

[7] Although older youth can also be considered for the WIA dislocated worker program, few are likely to be eligible to be classified as dislocated workers, given the criteria used for each program.

To provide context for this statistic, ETA guidance specifies the following:

> "A measurable increase in work readiness skills includ[es] world-of-work awareness, labor market knowledge, occupational information, values clarification and personal understanding, career planning and decision making, and job search techniques (resumes, interviews, applications, and follow-up letters). The[se skills] also encompass survival/daily living skills such as using the phone, telling time, shopping, renting an apartment, opening a bank account, and using public transportation. They also include positive work habits, attitudes, and behaviors such as punctuality, regular attendance, presenting a neat appearance, getting along and working well with others, exhibiting good conduct, following instructions and completing tasks, accepting constructive criticism from supervisors and co-workers, showing initiative and reliability, and assuming the responsibilities involved in maintaining a job. This category also entails developing motivation and adaptability, obtaining effective coping and problem-solving skills, and acquiring an improved self image." (U.S. Department of Labor 2006)

ETA gave local areas discretion over how and when to measure this outcome. A report on the use of Recovery Act funding by the Government Accountability Office (U.S. Government Accountability Office 2009) suggests that this flexibility may limit the usefulness of the data as it impairs the comparability and rigor of the data. Chapter VIII discusses the issue further and provides details on how the 20 selected local areas chose to measure increases in work readiness.

Beyond the Congressional requirement, ETA also required states to report the proportion of youth who completed their summer work experience. Although data were not available for all 314,000 youth who participated in summer employment, state reports indicate that more than 82 percent of those for whom data were available completed their summer job. Site visits suggest that the remainder of summer work participants either dropped out or were terminated for worksite performance issues.

# III. THE SYEI CONTEXT AND ORGANIZATION

The previous chapter presented the national picture for the SYEI; this chapter begins the focus on the 20 selected sites through information collected during in-depth site visits. Similar to local workforce investment areas across the country, the selected study sites brought their particular characteristics and past experiences to bear in developing their Recovery Act SYEIs. Reflecting the study's selection criteria, the sites represented all regions of the country as well as different service delivery models. For example, local areas' Workforce Investment Boards (LWIBs) could choose to deliver SYEI services directly to youth or contract out the services to youth providers. In part, these decisions reflected areas' existing organizational structures for the WIA youth program.

Before turning to key aspects of the sites' SYEIs, this chapter provides the background for the selected study areas. Section A presents a few select characteristics, such as the population size and economic situations, of the selected sites. Section B discusses the planning phase, including when the initiatives were designed and by whom, the influence of sites' previous experiences on program design, and the challenges the sites faced. Finally, Section C presents four models of how the SYEI was organized across the sites and how sites worked with providers and staffed the initiative.

### Key Findings: Context and Organization of Study Sites

- **Planning for the SYEI was challenging given the short-time frame.** Sites dealt with this challenge by leveraging existing relationships and ensuring open communication with new implementation partners.
- **The LWIB or its administrative agent led the planning efforts.** Youth Councils provided the most input into local sites' plans; youth providers and employers were rarely involved.
- **SYEI providers included a mix of new and experienced WIA youth providers.** Three sites chose to administer the program solely through the LWIB or its administrative agent. The remaining 17 sites contracted SYEI services to local providers, including 9 that contracted with at least some providers that were new to WIA.

## A. Characteristics of Selected Local Areas

Reflecting the evaluation's site selection criteria, the study's local sites were diverse on several dimensions. In addition to representing each ETA region, the sites encompassed populations of different types and sizes. As Table III.1 indicates, more than half of the sites encompassed a city, although most of these also provided services to youth in neighboring counties. Respondents in sites with a city and surrounding counties often reported that the counties had very different characteristics from their major central city. For example, the Central New Mexico workforce investment area includes the city of Albuquerque but also three rural counties. These differences could have implications for the worksites that are available and accessible to youth. A majority of sites had area-wide populations of less than 750,000.

**Table III.1 Selected Characteristics of Study Sites**

| Characteristic | Number of Sites |
|---|---|
| **Type of Area** | |
| City | 3 |
| City and surrounding county(counties) | 8 |
| Suburban towns / communities | 3 |
| Rural counties / communities | 6 |
| **Population of Area (estimate)** | |
| Less than 500,000 | 8 |
| 500,000-749,999 | 3 |
| 750,000-999,999 | 5 |
| 1,000,000 or more | 4 |

Source: The primary source of data for "area type" is local respondents. "Population size" data are from the U.S. Census Bureau 2009.

Note: N = 20 sites.

All of the sites reported experiencing the effects of the current recession. Most sites described large businesses failing and the resultant toll on the community. However, respondents in about a third of the sites reported that the consequences for their areas were not as severe as elsewhere either because a diverse economy helped them weather the current downturn or because the local economy was already suffering when the recession started. While respondents in almost half of sites reported local unemployment rates of 8 to 10 percent, about a third reported unemployment rates of over 10 percent. By comparison, the national unemployment rate reached 9.4 and 9.7 percent in July and August 2009, respectively.[8]

Echoing recent research on the effects of the recession on youth employment (Center for Labor Market Studies 2009), respondents in over half the sites volunteered that youth employment opportunities had become more limited due to the recession. In particular, the jobs that would traditionally be offered to youth were being offered to underemployed or unemployed adults. Employers were not willing to hire inexperienced youth when experienced adult workers were also looking for work.

## B. Planning for Recovery Act SYEIs

Following enactment of the Recovery Act in February 2009, sites began an intensive planning period. They had only a few months to gear up to provide work experiences to many more youth than had been served in recent summers. The short planning time and federal guidance affected sites' goals for the summer initiative, their plans to scale up existing programs or to create new ones, and the level of involvement of stakeholders.

[8] The study used respondents' reports on their sites' area types and unemployment rates because many of the local workforce investment areas do not directly correspond to census areas for which systemically collected information is available.

**Table III.2 Study Sites' Plans for their Recovery Act Youth Allocations**

| Characteristic | Number of Sites |
|---|---|
| **Number of Youth Planned to Serve** | |
| Fewer than 250 | 3 |
| 250-499 | 6 |
| 500-999 | 5 |
| 1,000-2,499 | 3 |
| 2,500 or more | 3 |
| **Proportion of Allocation Planned to be Spent on SYEI** | |
| Less than 75 | 4 |
| 75-89 | 4 |
| 90-99 | 4 |
| 100 | 8 |

Source: Site visit interviews in 20 selected sites.

Note: N = 20 sites.

### 1. Goals for the Summer of 2009

The goals of the 20 selected sites for their Recovery Act–funded SYEI tended to mirror the goals set in the congressional explanatory statement and ETA's guidance for the use of the funds. First, the pressure on sites to spend their allocations in the summer of 2009 was linked to the number of youth they targeted to serve. Several sites reported that they did not know their allocation until late spring. However, prior to learning their allocations, sites projected how many youth they could serve, given the basic parameters of their summer youth initiatives, such as length of summer work experience and average wages. The 20 selected sites planned to enroll a total of 22,600 youth, with the smallest targeted enrollment of 120 and the largest of 5,550. Nine areas planned to serve fewer than 500 participants, while six planned to serve more than 1,000 (see Table III.2). According to estimates obtained during site visits, the sites were well on their way to reaching their goals by July and August 2009. All 11 sites with actual enrollment statistics at the time of the site visits had surpassed their enrollment targets.

Second, as discussed in Chapter II, states and local areas nationwide responded to the federal guidance by spending a majority of their allocation by November 2009. Study sites' commitment to spending a majority of their Recovery Act youth allocation in the summer of 2009 is shown in Table III.2. Indeed, they were initially selected, in part based on their plans to spend at least 50 percent of their allocation during that summer. In addition to complying with federal guidance, administrators were intent on helping their local youth, families, and economy by injecting Recovery Act funds into their communities. For these reasons, 12 sites indicated that they planned to spend 90 percent or more of their youth allocation in the summer of 2009.

Administrators' other goals for their SYEIs also drew on the federal guidance they received. One goal mentioned by administrators in 11 sites was to provide the youth with a meaningful summer work experience in which they could either explore career interests or become able to put actual work experience on their résumés or both (see Table III.3). An administrator in one of these 11 sites stated that one of the site's major goals was to provide youth with a "life-changing opportunity." Similarly, in citing goals for their SYEIs, site administrators acknowledged the Recovery Act's one required indicator, achieving work readiness. WIA administrators in 7 sites

**Table III.3. SYEI Goals Cited by Site Administrators**

| Goal | Number of Sites |
|---|---|
| Serve as many youth as possible | 12 |
| Spend Recovery Act money quickly | 12 |
| Provide a meaningful summer work experience | 11 |
| Improve participants' work readiness | 7 |
| Transition older youth to additional opportunities | 7 |
| Involve private employers | 3 |
| Provide employers with positive experiences | 2 |

Source: Site visit interviews in 20 selected sites.

Notes: N= 20 sites.

In each site, several administrators responded to an open-ended question about their goals for the SYEI, and each administrator often cited multiple goals. The analysis categorized these responses into the seven different goals identified in the table and, if any administrator in a site mentioned the goal, the site was counted as having that goal.

identified improving participants' work readiness skills through training or work experience as an important goal or emphasis. Other goals mentioned by administrators in a smaller number of sites included involving the private sector in work experience opportunities, transitioning older youth into permanent work or other meaningful activities after the summer, and providing employers with positive experiences with the area's youth.

### 2. Previous Summer Experiences

To plan their SYEIs, the sites drew on their experiences providing summer work opportunities through recent programs funded by regular WIA formula funds and other resources, as well as programs under the Job Training Partnership Act (JTPA). As discussed in Chapter 1, until the summer of 2000, when WIA was implemented across the country, JTPA had funded a stand-alone summer youth employment and training program. Under WIA, summer work experiences became one of the 10 components that local areas were required to make available as part of youth programs. Administrators in 17 study sites reported that their local area continued to provide summer work experiences to youth using WIA formula funds after the transition from JTPA. These experiences were not generally offered as part of a separate program, but were opportunities extended to youth served through the regular WIA program. By and large, these programs were small. Although data were not available from all sites, 11 of the 17 sites with data reported an average of 184 youth served in summer work experiences through WIA-formula funds.

Summer work opportunities were also available to youth in the study areas from other sources. At least 9 communities had programs that placed more than 200 youth in summer jobs using funds from state or local government or private sources. In about half of these communities, the same agency that led implementation of the Recovery Act SYEI was involved in these programs. In the remaining communities, a different entity, such as a separate city agency, had responsibility for the summer initiative. For example, Los Angeles and Seattle both offered sizable programs to help youth find jobs (see Box III.1). Respondents in other communities mentioned other smaller programs, most often offered by local providers.

**Box III.1: Summer Youth Programs with Non-WIA Funding Sources**

*Los Angeles, CA.* The Summer Youth Employment Program, which is one component of a city initiative called HIRE LA to help youth find jobs, had historically received city and county funding. The program was run by the city's WIA administrative agency and placed 10,000 youth in subsidized and unsubsidized employment in the summer of 2008. The mayor began the initiative in 2005 to combat high rates of youth unemployment in the city.

*Seattle, WA.* For at least 12 years prior to passage of the Recovery Act, the city of Seattle, a 2009 SYEI contractor, funded a summer youth program that provided approximately 300 jobs each year. The program was targeted to in-school youth, and focused more on academics than on employment, including dropout prevention and preparing youth for entering college to gain job-related skills.

Most sites with existing programs took the opportunity provided by the Recovery Act to expand those programs. For example, the 11 sites that reported serving an average of 184 WIA-funded youth in prior summers planned to provide summer work experiences to an average of 1,033 participants in the summer of 2009 with their Recovery Act youth allocations alone. About half of these 11 sites also continued to fund the summer work experiences for youth enrolled in the regular WIA program using WIA formula funds. This included one site that continued to provide jobs to about 250 youth enrolled in the regular WIA youth program services and planned to offer work experiences to 850 additional youth through the Recovery Act. In other sites, administrators reported that the Recovery Act paid for all summer work experiences, as WIA-formula funds were reserved for providing other services to youth enrolled in regular comprehensive services. For example, administrators in one site reported that they shifted the WIA-formula funds to hire staff to implement the SYEI.

In addition to increasing the number of youth served by existing summer youth programs, sites took the opportunity provided by Recovery Act funding to modify existing programs. For many sites, program changes were modest. For example, one site added a pre-apprenticeship program that it could not afford previously (discussed in more detail in Chapter VII), and another offered office-based experiences in addition to the conservation-related experiences that had been part of the program in previous summers. Another site reported offering the same basic opportunities as in previous summers but stated that Recovery Act funding allowed it to increase the number of weeks that youth could participate and to add academic courses to the curriculum. Four sites changed their employer focus: one site focused more on opportunities for youth in high-demand industries and three sites focused more on private, for-profit employers than they had before.

Two sites took unique approaches to developing their SYEIs in light of their own past experiences. One site used the Recovery Act funds to invigorate its summer program and encouraged providers responding to a request for proposals to be innovative. As a result, youth in this site had the opportunity to participate in diverse activities such as indoor and outdoor maintenance work, high-tech digital arts, and entrepreneurship. Administrators in the second site decided to leverage the existing city-funded summer program instead of scaling up the WIA-formula funded summer program (see Box III.2). As a result, the joint program funded through the city and the Recovery Act was able to fund approximately 3,300 youth, extend the weeks of a youth's experience from 6 to 10, and extend eligibility to counties beyond the city limit.

**Box III.2: The Memphis Summer Youth Program**

Prior to the Recovery Act summer youth program, the LWIB fiscal agency and the city of Memphis had separate summer youth programs. The LWIB provided a four- to six-week summer work experience to about 250 regular WIA youth participants. The city summer youth program, begun in 1993, annually served 500 to 600 youth who were selected by lottery. In the city program, following an orientation, older youth received a work placement while younger youth were placed in a school-based program.

The LWIB and city joined together to administer the 2009 SYEI using a combination of city and Recovery Act funds. The city took responsibility for the younger youth in the school-based experiences and the LWIB for the older youth in work experiences. However, the LWIB funded both older and younger youth meeting the WIA eligibility requirements, while the city funded youth who were not eligible for WIA. As a result of this joint effort, about 2,700 youth were supported through Recovery Act funds and 600 through the city funds.

### 3. Planning for the SYEI

The SYEI planning process started for a majority of sites as they witnessed passage of the Recovery Act in February 2009. More than half the sites reported that they began planning in February or March, shortly after the bill was signed into law. Several other sites started planning even earlier, either in response to the expectation of a federally funded program or because they intended to revamp an existing program. One site reported starting planning as late as April.

Generally, the LWIB or its designated administrative agency (hereafter referred to as the "lead agency") led the planning process with help from other stakeholders.[9] Administrators in all sites but one said the Youth Council had some role in the Recovery Act–funded SYEI. In more than half these sites, the Youth Council's role was largely advisory. For example, administrators in one site described the role of the Youth Council as providing some feedback and advice as the WIA administrative agency moved forward with its plans. In other sites, the Youth Council had a larger role. Administrators in these sites reported that their Youth Council was involved in the process of procuring contractors for the SYEI by reviewing proposals and recommending which providers should be awarded contracts. For example, the lead agency in one site worked directly with the Youth Council to procure youth providers for the SYEI. A subcommittee of the council reviewed and commented on a request for proposals developed by the lead agency. The subcommittee also reviewed and ranked all proposals before presenting the top proposals to the full council for approval.

The SYEI timeline did not appear to provide much opportunity for states to provide additional guidance to local areas. Although sites mentioned taking part in conference calls and webinars with state officials, only five reported that their state required or strongly recommended any specific program components. One reason for the lack of state input, as mentioned by one administrator, was that the lead agency had to move quickly in order to implement the initiative and could not wait to receive formal guidance from the state.

[9] Within a local area, the Workforce Investment Board (WIB) can hire professional staff and be the administrative and fiscal agent for WIA funds. Alternatively, the LWIB can designate one or more contractors to operate the WIA program. For simplicity, unless otherwise specified, the remainder of this report uses the term "lead agency" to refer to either the LWIB or the administrative agency operating the SYEI.

Youth providers tended to have a minor role in planning the SYEI, if they played any role at all. Youth providers had an early role or say in the design of the SYEI in only five sites, according to administrators and provider staff. Three of these sites were those with one main provider, and the LWIB appeared to rely on that provider for its expertise. In the other two sites, the providers' role was smaller, giving the lead agency feedback on its plans through provider focus groups.

Employers were also not an integral part of the planning process. In eight sites, respondents mentioned that employers were involved only in their capacity as LWIB or Youth Council members. Administrators in two other sites reported that they did a quick survey of employers to learn about job availability before the summer began. Respondents in other sites did not report any employer involvement during the planning phase.

### 4. Planning Challenges

Administrators identified two key planning challenges. The first involved the pressures of planning a sizable initiative in only a few months. More than half the sites mentioned that the tight time line affected the initiative's design phase and its implementation. However, all sites did successfully implement the SYEI. Administrators in one site said that they were still able to implement the initiative because they enjoyed a positive relationship with the existing provider of youth programs. Respondents in another reported that the short time frame prevented them from developing as strong a classroom training component as they would have liked, and those in a third did not involve the Youth Council as fully as they would have done had more time been available.

A second challenge affecting initiative design was gaps in information. About one-third of sites reported that they lacked information needed to effectively design their initiatives. Of these sites, four mentioned that they did not know how much money they would receive until after planning had begun, with one receiving substantially less than expected and another receiving twice the expected amount. Another three sites reported being unclear during the planning phase about the requirements for identifying providers through a competitive procurement process and how the funds were to be used.

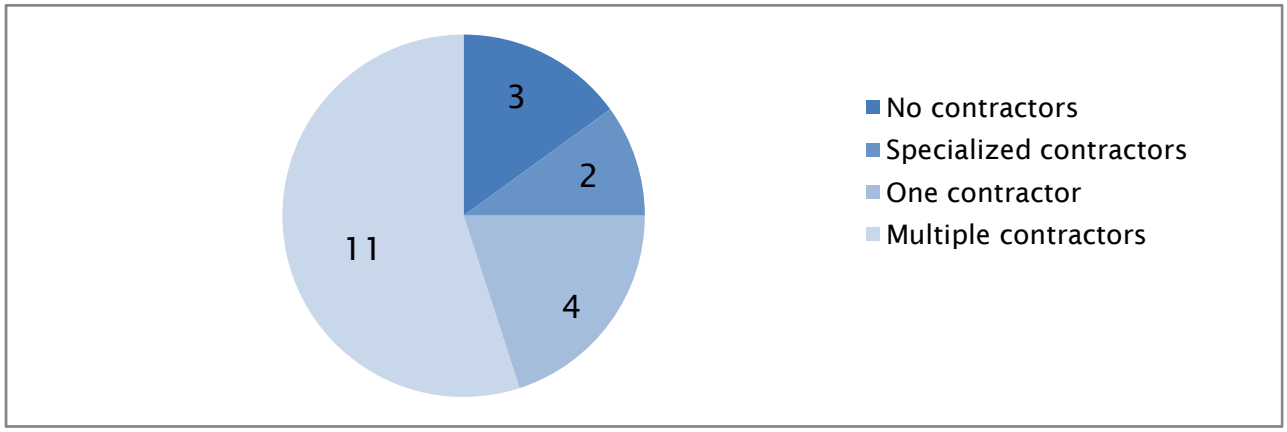
## C. The Organization of the Recovery Act SYEI

Although most sites had some experience providing summer work experiences to youth, they still needed to determine how to organize the much larger summer 2009 initiative. Their decisions largely followed their existing structure for providing services to regular WIA youth. However, even though ETA's guidance permitted states and local areas to apply for waivers to dispense with normal competitive bidding processes, many local areas chose to hold open competitions, often engaging organizations that were new to the workforce investment system. All sites also hired new temporary staff to scale-up implementation of their initiative.

### 1. Organizational Models

Local sites had flexibility in organizing their SYEIs. Administrators of the lead agency could decide to directly provide all or most services to youth or to contract with one or more providers to deliver the services. Based on these decisions, the 20 study sites fell into one of four organizational models in which the lead agency: (1) provided direct services with no contractors, (2) provided some direct services and used contractors to deliver specific services, (3) contracted with a single provider to deliver services, and (4) contracted with multiple providers (see Figure III.1).

**Figure III.1 Study Sites' Organizational Models**




Source: Site visit interviews in 20 selected sites.

Note: N= 20 sites.

Each of the four models is described in the following list:

1. **No contractors.** The lead agency in three areas did not contract with providers, opting instead to deliver the services directly. For all three sites, this is the same model used for their regular WIA youth program.
2. **Specialized contractors.** The lead agency in two sites delivered most services directly but contracted with providers for specific functions. In one site, three providers ran two-week health and manufacturing academies to a subset of participants before those youth were placed at their worksites. The lead agency, however, was responsible for placing the participants at the worksites and monitoring their work there. In the second site, five outside providers offered a one week 15-hour work readiness training to participants while the lead agency directly provided all other services.
3. **One contractor.** Four areas elected to contract with one provider to administer the SYEI. In all of these sites, this contractor was also the main contractor for the provision of regular WIA youth services. One of these contractors used subcontractors to administer a subset of services.
4. **Multiple contractors.** More than half the sites (11 out of 20) contracted with multiple providers to deliver most SYEI-related services. The number of providers ranged from 2 to 23, with an average of 11. Box III.3 describes two sites with multiple contractors.

The 17 sites that contracted out some services used an average of eight contractors. Nine sites had six or more contractors (Table III.4). There did not appear to be a direct relationship between the planned number of SYEI participants and the number of contractors. Of the three largest sites, one had 15 contractors, another had 9 contractors, and the third provided services directly.

**Box III.3: Sites with Multiple Providers**

*Minneapolis, MN.* Minneapolis Employment and Training Program (METP) is the fiscal and administrative entity for the Minneapolis LWIB, known as the Minneapolis Workforce Council. Through an open procurement process, METP contracted with 11 nonprofit organizations to provide SYEI services. All providers were on METP's preexisting master contract list and had executed METP contracts in the past. Some had served as regular WIA youth providers; others had contracted with METP to provide other youth or adult services. All providers had implemented similar programs in the past and knew what to expect during the summer. In addition, they all had existing networks of youth and employers. The providers had sole responsibility for recruiting youth and worksites. Each of these 11 providers focused on recruiting youth and employers from a certain neighborhood or section of the city in order to maintain METP's commitment to community-based service delivery. Two of the providers were contracted to provide services to Somali and Hmong youth.

*Portland, OR.* Worksystems, Inc. (WSI), is the operating agency for the Portland LWIB. Under an ETA procurement waiver for the Recovery Act SYEI, WSI contracted with the 12 providers that had been operating their regular WIA youth program. Many of these local providers were alternative high schools or organizations with GED programs, and all but one offered comprehensive education components as part of their SYEI. Though WSI gave overall guidance about the program, local providers had relative autonomy in terms of program design. Providers were largely responsible for youth and worksite recruitment, although WSI did conduct some site-wide recruitment activities.

**Table III.4 Number of Contractors**

| | Number of Sites |
|---|---|
| **Number of Contractors** | |
| 0 | 3 |
| 1 - 5 | 8 |
| 6 - 10 | 3 |
| 11 - 23 | 6 |

Source: Site visit interviews in 20 selected sites.

Note: N= 20 sites.

## 2. Identification of Summer Providers

Acknowledging the pressures on local areas to implement a summer initiative in a few short months, ETA encouraged states and local areas to explore emergency procurement processes or to apply for a waiver allowing local areas to extend existing contracts or to hold a competition with a limited number of providers (U.S. Department of Labor 2009d). Alternatively, local areas could move ahead with a competitive selection process or directly provide services, as did the three sites that followed the first model described previously.

Almost half of the study sites completed a competitive request for proposal (RFP) process to identify providers for the SYEI (see Table III.5). Of these nine sites, three held a competition for SYEI providers even though their states applied for a procurement waiver. An administrator in one of these sites explained that they moved forward with the RFP out of concern that they would not

**Table III.5 Sites' Processes for Identifying Summer Providers**

| Process | Number of Sites |
|---|---|
| Competitive procurement process | 9 |
| Waiver | 5 |
| Extended contracts with existing provider(s) | 3 |
| None (provides services directly) | 3 |

Source: Site visit interviews in 20 selected sites.

Note: N= 20 sites.

hear in time to conduct the process if the waiver was denied. In the end, this site awarded the contract to its regular WIA youth contractor, which was the only provider that submitted an application. From discussions during site visits, it appears that the other two sites went ahead with a procurement process because they were not certain of the federal requirements for procuring providers for the SYEI.

Sites that conducted a procurement competition often completed the process shortly before the summer months, leaving little time for selected providers to start their initiatives. Seven of the nine released their RFPs between March 13 and April 15, and one released its RFP in May. Most awards were made in May. However, in at least one site, a contractor reported not receiving the signed contract until July 14. The ninth site released its RFP in October 2008 in anticipation of its regular summer youth program. Because of delays in approval of its annual WIA plan, however, contracts at this site were not awarded until the beginning of July 2009.

About half the sites that used a competitive procurement effort reported that the RFPs generated a lot of interest among local organizations. For example, in Rhode Island, 200 organizations attended a bidders' conference jointly run by the state's two LWIBs. According to administrators, the Greater Rhode Island LWIB received 18 high-quality RFPs and funded them all. Two sites were able to fund less than half of the submitted proposals. In Lehigh Valley, 130 organizations attended the bidders' conference, and 15 of 70 applications were funded. Administrators reported that the response was "unprecedented." Minneapolis funded 11 of 36 applications. The other half of sites with procurement processes had fewer than 10 applicants and funded all or most of them.

Sites that exercised a waiver in place of issuing RFPs stated that they had recently held a competition or knew that there were no providers other than those with which they had active contracts. For example, one site had just completed the competition for its five-year procurement cycle in 2008. An administrator of the LWIB administrative agency in another site reported that, through the two-year procurement cycle, the agency had developed a strong set of youth providers that were knowledgeable about the WIA program. To allow other organizations the opportunity to compete for an SYEI contract, the administration said the RFP process would have had to begin in January to allow sufficient time for new providers to prepare a credible bid.

Administrators in three remaining sites neither exercised a waiver nor used a competitive procurement process. Administrators in these sites reported that they had recently held a

competitive procurement process or that their service areas did not have viable providers other than those with which they already contracted.[10] All three of these sites were in largely rural areas.

### 3. Characteristics of Summer Providers

The 17 study sites with at least one contractor engaged a total of 130 providers. Eight of these sites continued to contract exclusively with their regular providers of WIA youth programs. Not surprisingly, these sites included seven that exercised a waiver or claimed they did not need one. Also among these eight sites was the site described above that conducted an RFP process for a subset of services but contracted with its main WIA youth provider for the bulk of SYEI services. Contracted providers in these eight sites accounted for 31 percent of the total of 130 providers.

The remaining nine sites contracted with a combination of existing WIA providers and some new to the WIA system.[11] For example, the Pittsburgh site funded 12 organizations that had provided WIA services before and 5 that were new to WIA. In Denver, two of the three providers had previous contracts for regular WIA youth programming; the third was a new contractor. Eight of the 15 providers in Los Angeles were also regular WIA youth providers, but all 15 had experience contracting with the city.

Providers across the sites included nonprofit organizations, schools and school districts, and government agencies. Five sites had contracts only with nonprofit organizations, such as community action agencies, and one only contracted with government agencies. The other 11 sites contracted with a combination of providers. For example, the 14 providers used by one site included a government agency, a hospital, a community college, three technical schools, five community-based organizations, a union, and two public school systems.

### 4. Relationships Between Lead Agencies and Providers

Regardless of the site's organization model, the LWIB or its administrative agency supervised the SYEI. From discussions with site administrators, it appeared that the LWIB in seven sites was active in the ongoing administration of the SYEIs. In five of these sites, the LWIB was the administrative agency for the WIA program and directly provided services or supervised the SYEI providers; in the other two, the LWIB set policies for the administrative agency to carry out. In the remaining 13 sites, the administrative agency appeared to be the driving force of the SYEI, although recommendations and advice were provided by the LWIB and Youth Council.

Typically, the relationship between the lead agency and the providers was smooth. As described above, many of the sites had existing relationships with all or some of their contractors prior to creation of the SYEI. In addition, most areas employed a youth services coordinator (or a staff member in an equivalent position) who was in regular contact with providers to discuss the ongoing operations of the SYEI and address any issues that arose. Respondents in four sites reported that a

[10] Although administrators in these study sites stated that they had not exercised a waiver, two of the three sites were located in states that had been granted procurement waivers.

[11] These included one site that exercised a waiver. In this site, the WIA administrative agency operated the summer youth program and also contracted with three providers—one of which was new to the WIA procurement system—to run two-week academies.

key to their success was strong collaboration between the lead agency and providers and between the providers themselves. In one of these areas, the youth services coordinator called each provider weekly for updates and met monthly with providers to discuss their progress. The coordinator reported that these regular interactions were invaluable.

In three sites, however, at least one provider felt that more collaboration would have improved the initiative. Providers in two of these sites reported that they had never met before the site visit's provider focus group and had missed opportunities to benefit from each other's experiences. As a result, problems were not uncovered and handled promptly or consistently for all providers. In the third site, one provider felt that better communications would improve the quality and consistency of service provision in the future.

**5. Summer Staffing Arrangements**

The increased scope of the 2009 SYEI, compared with past summer programs, required organizations in every study site to hire temporary staff. This included as few as a single hire in one area to as many as 63 in another. In the former site, the administrative agency hired the summer youth program coordinator to oversee day-to-day operations and manage the lead agency's relationship with the providers. The site's local providers did not hire temporary staff but borrowed staff members from other programs. In the latter site, the administrative agency hired one temporary staff person to oversee the SYEI and the local providers hired 62 temporary staff, including clerical staff and worksite supervisors and monitors.

Two types of individuals were commonly hired as temporary SYEI staff. At least four sites hired teachers or school district staff to work during their summer recess. One of these sites hired staff that were laid off from the Head Start program for the summer. Another common source of temporary staff was college students or recent graduates. Seven sites mentioned recruiting these individuals, in part as an extension of their mission to provide work experiences to young entrants into the workforce. Only one site reported targeting dislocated workers for the temporary SYEI positions.

Sites hired temporary staff to fill a variety of roles, including oversight and clerical positions. Nine sites hired temporary staff to be involved in the worksite experiences by working as monitors, job coaches, or crew leaders. A different set of nine sites also recruited temporary staff to assist in the upfront tasks of the SYEI, including assisting with youth recruitment, intake, assessment, and orientation. Additional information about staff roles in upfront and work experience tasks can be found in Chapters IV and VII, respectively.

# IV. YOUTH RECRUITMENT AND INTAKE ACTIVITIES

An expanded SYEI required sites to quickly scale up their youth recruitment and intake activities. With only a few months of preparation, sites had to recruit the youth and determine the eligibility of each youth under WIA rules and regulations. They also had to reach out to key populations they had targeted for services as well as those identified in the ETA guidance. To ensure that these populations were served, they had to establish procedures for providing priority to members of these groups.

This chapter discusses how the study sites approached these tasks, the challenges they faced, and the characteristics of participants they recruited. Section A describes the flow of youth into the SYEI, from first finding out about the initiative to the point of being enrolled. Section B describes how sites recruited youth for the SYEI, and Section C describes how they determined youth's eligibility. Section D discusses some of the barriers youth in the study sites faced and their reasons for participating in the SYEI. Post-enrollment activities are discussed in Chapters V and VII.

### Key Findings: Youth Recruitment and Intake Activities

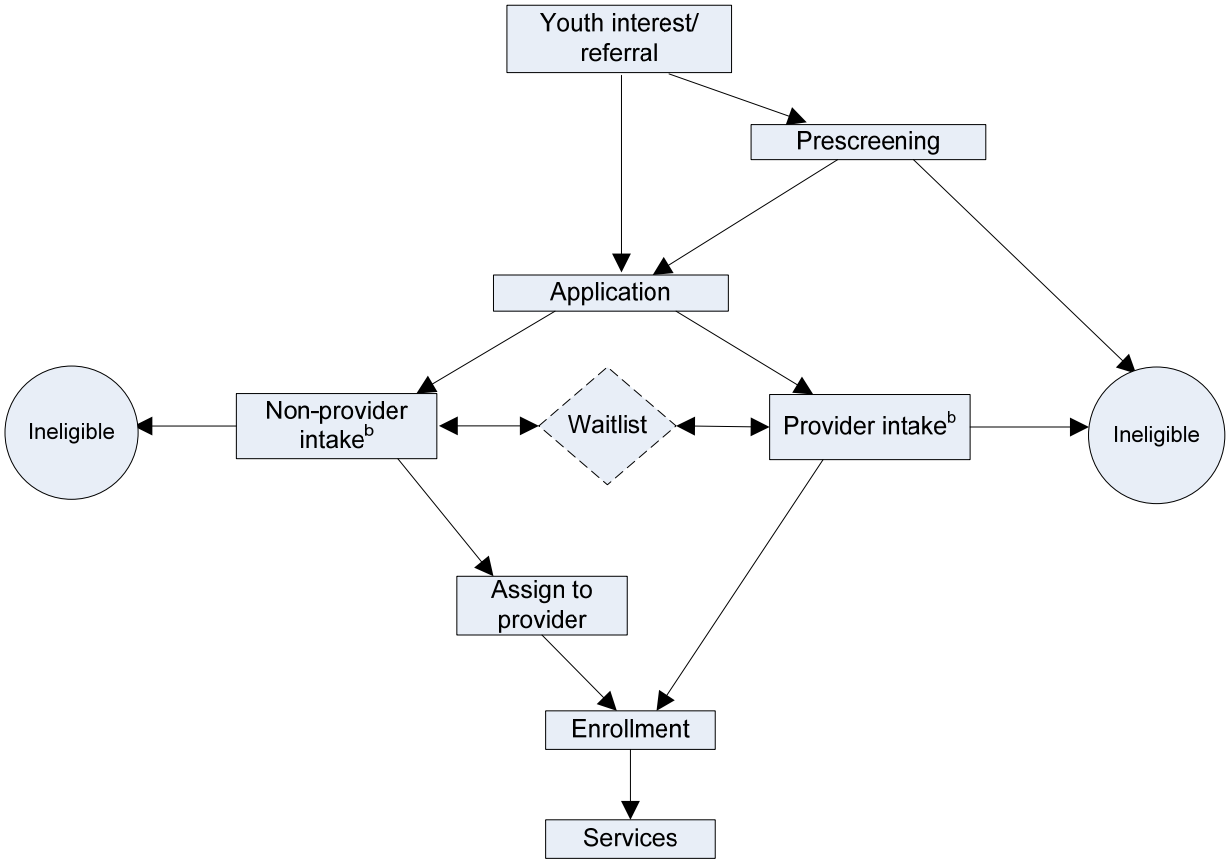
- **Except for some targeted populations, sites successfully recruited youth.** Staff used media campaigns and targeted recruitment with help from local organizations to successfully reach large numbers of eligible youth. However, some target populations, such as veterans and older youth, were difficult to recruit.
- **Nearly all sites found it difficult to process large volumes of applicants.** Strategies to deal with the number of applicants and the paperwork included hiring temporary staff, prescreening youth, and linking with partners to streamline eligibility determination.
- **SYEI participants expressed a need for financial support and work experiences.** Youth expressed appreciation for the SYEI, given their employment barriers and the tight labor market.

## A. The Flow of Youth into the SYEI

The entry of youth into the SYEI followed a similar pattern across the sites. Although no two sites implemented the exact same intake process, the processes shared many common elements. The types and number of local staff members that the prospective participant could meet along the way, however, varied with the site's organizational structure. For example, a prospective participant for a SYEI run by the LWIB or its administrative agency might only be able to apply for the initiative through one central access point. By contrast, an applicant for a SYEI contracted out to many local providers might apply through the lead agency or directly through a local provider.

Figure IV.1 depicts the flow of youth into the SYEI. The process began when a youth became aware of the SYEI and expressed interest in participating. In many cases, the youth's name and contact information were shared with a participating agency by a referring party such as a school counselor or case worker. At this point, an intake staff member at the lead agency or a local provider might prescreen the youth to determine his or her eligibility for the initiative based on

**Figure IV.1 Possible Routes of Entry into the SYEI[a]**




[a]This figure reflects the majority of scenarios in our 20 sites but does not capture all variations.

[b]A non-provider can be the WIB, WIB agent, or any entity not providing post-intake services to youth. A provider can be the WIB, WIB agent, or contracted provider that will be providing services to the youth after intake into the SYEP.

initial information, such as income and barriers to employment. If the youth passed this prescreening, then his or her application and required documents were reviewed more closely as a formal application.

Formal applications were processed either by a provider or non-provider agency. As discussed in Chapter III, the LWIB or its administrative agency served as the main provider in 5 of the 20 sites. The remaining 15 sites contracted with local organizations to serve as providers. These provider agencies often conducted intake directly. Those youth determined eligible were either enrolled or placed on a waiting list.

In cases in which the lead agency contracted out administration of the initiative to local providers, the lead agency (a non-provider) might also receive and process applications. These

agencies would either refer eligible youth to a provider for enrollment or place that youth on a waiting list.

## B. Recruitment of Eligible Youth

All study sites focused largely on youth recruitment during the early months of the initiative. Indeed, almost three-quarters of sites began recruitment by April. As discussed in Chapter III, regardless of whether sites already had administered a summer program, they had to recruit many more youth to fill the increased number of slots made available by the funding through the Recovery Act. Hence, they needed to start early. Local staff used multiple strategies to reach out to eligible youth, including particular target groups. Although these efforts were largely successful, sites found the time line and recruitment of particular populations to be challenging.

### 1. Targeted Youth Populations

Youth eligibility for SYEI generally followed the eligibility requirements for regular WIA youth programs. Eligible youth had to have low household incomes and demonstrate at least one of six barriers to employment. The six barriers included being (1) a school dropout, (2) deficient in basic literacy, (3) a homeless, runaway, or foster child; (4) a parenting or pregnant teen; (5) an offender; and (6) one who needs help completing an education program or securing and maintain employment. Sites had flexibility to define the sixth barrier to meet the needs of youth in their communities. In addition, 30 percent of regular WIA and Recovery Act youth funds was to be spent on out-of-school youth and both gave priority to eligible veterans and their spouses. However, the Recovery Act expanded eligibility from past WIA definitions of youth (ages 14-21) to allow the SYEI to serve young adults ages 22 to 24.

Within these eligibility parameters, local areas had flexibility to identify priority youth populations. In over half the sites, LWIBs, Youth Councils, or fiscal agents were involved in selecting key target populations. States were only cited as providing guidance by a quarter of sites. In addition, local providers often had some flexibility in determining which youth to target. In a few cases, the selection of specific providers helped the site target key populations. For example, providers in at least two sites were selected because of their history serving particular high-need populations, such as foster children or out-of-school youth.

Specific target populations were defined by youth's demographics, age, and socioeconomic characteristics. Sites did not limit their enrollment to the populations they targeted, but they did make special efforts to increase the participation of those populations. Table IV.1 lists populations that sites or providers mentioned as targeted groups.

About a quarter of sites also limited their recruitment and enrollment to certain age groups. Three sites excluded the youngest youth—those between 14 and 15 years old. Two of these sites had already moved away from serving the youngest youth in their regular WIA program. Another site chose not to serve youth older than 21 years of age. A fourth site excluded both 14–15 year olds and those older than 21 years of age. One administrator at this site reported that the site did not want to serve older youth who would normally receive services through the WIA adult program.

**Table IV.1 Target Populations Identified by Sites**

| |
|---|
| Abused children |
| Children of incarcerated parents |
| Children of veterans |
| Gang-affiliated youth |
| Indians/Native Americans |
| Latinos |
| Migrant and refugee |
| Persons with an individualized education program (IEP) or a disability |
| Sex workers |
| Specific age groups (e.g., 14-18 years, 16-21 years) |
| Substance abusers |
| Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF) recipients |
| Veterans and their spouses |
| Youth running out of unemployment insurance (UI) |
| Youth with limited English proficiency (LEP) |

Source: Site visit interviews in 20 selected sites.

Note: Populations are listed alphabetically and not in order of prevalence.

Defining the sixth eligibility barrier was another strategy for identifying the types of youth that would be targeted for the SYEI. A majority of sites defined this barrier to include more than one category of youth, ranging from very specific descriptions to more broad categories. Common interpretations of the sixth barrier included youth with a disability, those behind grade level in school, or those with a lack of work history or skills (see Table IV.2).

**Table IV.2 Sites' Interpretations of the Sixth Barrier to Employment or Education**

| Barrier | Number of Sites |
|---|---|
| Youth with a disability or IEP through the public school system | 11 |
| Behind one or more grade levels | 7 |
| Lack of work history/work maturity | 7 |
| Limited English proficiency | 6 |
| Failed high school graduation exam | 4 |
| Receiving public assistance | 3 |
| History of substance abuse | 3 |

Source: Site visit interviews in 20 selected sites.

Note: N = 20 sites.

### 2. Youth Recruitment Efforts

Outreach methods were diverse and relied on multiple organizations to reach targeted youth. Provider and agency staff recruited youth through formal advertising as well as by partnering with organizations such as the workforce investment system, other governmental agencies, and

community-based organizations. Initial outreach activities were apparently successful in generating a critical volume of interest given that 15 of the 20 sites reported that word-of-mouth became a significant source of referrals over time. Box IV.1 provides examples of specific recruitment strategies.

**Box IV.1: Innovative Strategies to Recruit Youth**

***Use of mass media***

*Hazard, KY.* The site designed a media blitz to cover the large geographic area they served. They produced six television commercials using youth volunteers and aired them during primetime programs, *The Tonight Show*, and televised coverage of the NCAA basketball tournament. The site also ran 60-second spots on local radio stations, and posted information on the internet sites MySpace and YouTube.

*Lehigh Valley, PA.* The LWIB designed a marketing strategy that would appeal to youth and create a fresh image for the program. They placed advertisements at bus stops and on buses and sponsored booths at local malls and popular music events. An electronic application was placed on the agency's website for the first time, making it easier for net-savvy youth to apply.

***Partnerships with community organizations***

*Pittsburgh, PA.* Administrative staff worked with local city officials to arrange for the city's welfare office to send letters to their clients notifying them about the SYEI. Letters were sent to all households on the welfare rosters that included youth of the eligible ages.

Responsibility for youth outreach depended on whether the initiative was contracted out to providers or administered through the lead agency. Of the 15 sites in our sample that contracted out operation of the program to providers, 6 sites mentioned that both the providers and the lead agency shared responsibility for reaching out to youth. In another seven of these sites, providers were solely responsible for recruiting youth, sometimes with help from city officials in developing media campaigns. The remaining two sites contracted with local organizations that had a sufficient volume of existing youth clients to fill Recovery Act slots. The lead agency was solely responsible for recruiting youth only in the five sites that had no major providers directly serving youth.

Three distinct approaches to outreach emerged across the sites. First, a total of 14 sites mounted publicity campaigns. These sites used the media to reach out to the public. Specific strategies included placing advertisements on local television and radio stations and in local newspapers; using social networking sites; staffing booths at music events or local malls; and distributing fliers or conducting mailings. Six of these sites also mentioned news coverage or press conferences that were designed to generate general community awareness.

Second, many sites leveraged the workforce investment system to recruit youth. As described in Chapter III, the lead agency for the WIA youth program was the main provider of SYEI services in five sites and the main contractors were also regular WIA youth providers in another eight sites. In other sites, a mix of new and experienced youth providers was involved. These organizational structures clearly gave many local SYEI recruitment staff access to youth already participating in the regular WIA program and to the families of potentially eligible youth. Adults who used a One-Stop Career Center were encouraged to tell their family and friends about the SYEI.

Finally, partners and organizations in the surrounding community were a significant source of potential participants in all sites. Local staff reported that promoting the initiative in schools was often the most effective method. Some public school districts, alternative schools, and colleges served directly as SYEI providers and were able to recruit from their own in-house programs. In areas where schools did not act as providers, lead agencies and WIA youth providers typically had strong relationships with K-12 and postsecondary schools. Local staff used their contacts with teachers, guidance and career counselors, principals, and other school officials to advertise the initiative. Staff also attended job fairs, set up information tables, or made presentations at schools and colleges to recruit youth to the initiative. For example, outreach staff at one provider set up information stations in schools before the second semester ended and handed out intake paperwork for students to complete while SYEI staff members were present.

Sites also sought partnerships with a wide range of social service organizations that served at-risk youth. Sites that targeted juvenile offenders worked to establish partnerships and referrals through the juvenile justice system. For example, they contacted truant and probation officers and sought out judges and case workers in juvenile and family courts. Sites that targeted homeless, runaway, and foster care youth contacted case workers at foster care agencies and local shelters. Sites also contacted local government agencies such as those providing rehabilitative services and benefits under Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF), Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP), and Supplemental Security Income (SSI). Local staff from various sites reported distributing fliers to these agencies and requesting referrals from staff and counselors. Staff also contacted nongovernmental organizations that provide social services to youth to obtain referrals and to spread the word about the initiative to eligible youth.

### 3. Hard to Reach Populations

Sites found certain key target populations—including veterans; older youth; homeless, runaway, and foster youth; and youth offenders—to be the most difficult to identify and recruit. Given the high unemployment rate among veterans returning to the civilian workforce, ETA designated veterans and their eligible spouses as a priority group for the SYEI (U.S. Department of Labor 2009c). The expansion in the maximum participant age to 24 years also increased the proportion of veterans who could be potentially eligible. Only one site, however, reported success enrolling a few veterans through its connection with the local office of the Department of Veterans Affairs (VA). Another nine sites reported a lack of success despite targeted recruitment. Staff in one of these sites reported reaching out to the local VA office but found that most veterans were not ready for or interested in employment services soon after discharge from the military.

Older youth were also challenging to reach. Six sites reported that older youth were often no longer in school and, thus, difficult to locate. Another reason may be that staff administering the initiative did not typically serve youth aged 22 to 24 years and therefore had fewer local recruitment contacts for this group. One site reported that, although older youth expressed interest in the initiative, many did not follow through with the application process. Several sites that reported some success with older youth found that it was important to avoid characterizing the SYEI as a "youth" initiative. Many older participants had children, household responsibilities, and significant work experience. The message that was given to these groups was critical in affecting their perception of the initiative and their willingness to participate. To specifically target this population, one site developed a special poster and displayed copies in tattoo parlors, bars, grocery stores, laundry mats, temporary housing, clothing stores, garages, pool halls, and anywhere they thought

older youth would congregate. Another reported that "walking the neighborhoods" and marketing through television and radio spots were more likely to attract older youth.

Smaller numbers of sites also mentioned difficulties recruiting homeless, runaway, and foster youth; and youth offenders. Three sites said that homeless and runaway youth were difficult to enroll due to lack of proper documentation to verify eligibility for services and keep engaged due to their mobility. Two sites mentioned difficulty recruiting youth offenders and foster youth.

## C. Youth Intake and Enrollment Process

The early part of the summer was an active time for all sites as they rushed to implement new or modified eligibility determination systems, establish eligibility of recruited youth, and reach their target enrollment numbers. These activities often occurred at the same time that sites were training new employees. Sites needed to find ways to efficiently handle the intense demand for services and the complex eligibility process. Key strategies that emerged from site visits included prioritizing certain youth, maximizing staff resources, and streamlining determination of applicants' eligibility.

### 1. Enrollment Numbers and Priorities

All but one site in our sample reported receiving applications from more eligible youth than they could accommodate. Sites reported that between 40 and 80 percent of applicants ultimately enrolled in the initiative. Among those who did not enroll, 10 to 30 percent were clearly ineligible because their incomes exceeded the eligibility cutoff. Another 10 to 30 percent were potentially eligible but did not complete all paperwork. At the time of the site visits, 10 sites stated that they had enrolled more youth than originally planned, and 4 additional sites were still enrolling youth.[12] The total number of enrolled youth varied tremendously across the 20 selected sites, from a low of 80 to a high of more than 5,500.

A majority of sites also had waiting lists of eligible youth. Sites generally enrolled a youth from the waiting list only when an existing participant dropped out or was removed from the initiative. Two sites with excess demand did not maintain waiting lists. Instead, these sites referred youth they could not enroll to other agencies or service providers in the area.

In choosing youth for enrollment, almost half the sites gave priority to certain populations during the intake process. Nine sites prioritized populations such as homeless and foster youth, youth offenders, youth with disabilities, or out-of-school youth. These groups generally reflected the sites' recruitment priorities. Nine other sites reported that they did not give priority to any groups and described their intake process as first-come, first-served. One additional site with multiple providers allowed those providers to set their own policies regarding priorities. The last site had a unique process. Eligible youth who applied before a certain date were sorted by zip code. Within each zip code, youth were assigned by lottery to the provider in that zip code or to a waitlist. After the initial lottery, youth were enrolled from the waiting list if a slot became available.

[12] It is important to note that higher enrollment numbers could indicate more demand than anticipated or higher drop-off rates of youth during the program.

Even though most sites reached their target enrollment numbers, providers in four sites reported that the income eligibility guidelines prevented them from meeting their enrollment targets. One site was able to fill only 75 percent of its available slots by July due to the high number of applicants ineligible on the basis of income. Another three sites met overall enrollment targets but individual providers reported having difficulty enrolling enough youth because of the income eligibility guidelines. In one of these sites, the slots that could not be filled by one provider were reallocated to providers that had youth waiting to be served.

### 2. Staffing Strategies for Youth Intake

In anticipation of much larger caseloads than they had experienced in prior summers, site administrators adopted one of three staffing approaches to handle intake and eligibility determination. First, nine sites hired temporary staff members to help existing staff conduct upfront activities such as meeting with youth and parents, documenting eligibility, and completing paperwork and data entry. At one site, two existing staff members worked part-time on SYEI, while four temporary hires conducted intake activities full-time. At a second site, most eligibility staff members were temporary hires.

Second, five sites hired temporary staff to conduct nonintake activities, freeing up existing experienced staff to focus on determining eligibility. For example, at one site, existing WIA specialists determined eligibility while the temporary hires handled logistics and dealt more directly with youth and employers during the summer. In explaining this staffing decision, administrators often cited the resources that would have been required to train new hires on WIA's complex eligibility rules.

Finally, six sites relied on existing WIA or other experienced staff to conduct SYEI intake. One site contracted with neighborhood centers that already served eligible SYEI youth to process paperwork and determine eligibility. Once determined eligible, the youth were assigned to a provider. Initiatives in the other sites relied exclusively on staff at existing WIA youth programs or One-Stop Career Centers to conduct intake and eligibility, calling on these workers either part- or full-time during the summer.

In addition to these three basic models, three sites added a second level of eligibility determination for quality-control purposes. In these sites, frontline staff processed paperwork and conducted initial eligibility determinations. However, the final determination of a youth's eligibility was done by a specialist at the lead agency who was experienced in WIA eligibility decisions. This approach served as a safety precaution given the high volume of applications being processed quickly and sometimes by inexperienced workers.

### 3. The Eligibility Determination Process

The eligibility determination process involved considerable paperwork and many types of documentation from youth participants and their families. As a result, sites and providers developed ways to facilitate the intake process. Most importantly, the initiatives sought to limit the amount of resources that had to be spent tracking down youth's paperwork. They often did so by relying on other government agencies and school staff instead of youth and their parents. Sites also used prescreening to winnow the number of applicants scheduled for intake appointments. Finally, sites offered evening and weekend hours to accommodate the school and work schedules of youth and their parents.

Seven sites reported using partnerships with other social service agencies to help streamline eligibility determination for youth (see Box IV.2 for discussion of two examples). At least one provider or the lead agency in six of these sites mentioned that SYEI staff sent lists of applicants to state and local agencies or schools to solicit help verifying eligibility. For example, one provider sent a list of SYEI applicants to the local Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program office to determine that the families were receiving assistance, automatically verifying the youth's income eligibility. Three of the six sites also mentioned working with schools to gather documentation, such as an IEP, which provided evidence of a disability. In the seventh site, the state welfare office provided SYEI staff with a list of individuals aged 14 to 24 whose families were receiving public assistance and might be eligible for the initiative. Staff could check an applicant against this list to verify that they were receiving assistance.

**Box IV.2: Streamlining Eligibility**

*Bridgeport, CT.* The LWIB worked with the local Department of Children and Families (DCF) to verify eligibility for SYEI applicants. LWIB staff provided DCF with a list of applicants who had indicated they were receiving services from DCF, and DCF provided a verification letter for each youth that indicated if he or she was receiving cash payments. DCF case managers regularly accompanied youth to their first SYEI intake appointments.

*Cranston, RI.* Youth center staff reached out to local schools to recruit youth and assist with documenting eligibility for applicants. Schools regularly had parents sign releases allowing the school to share information from a student's file, and the school could copy these documents for the youth center to prove a student's eligibility.

Prescreening also helped streamline the process of determining eligibility. At least 11 sites mentioned prescreening youth by making phone calls, using a preapplication, or reviewing an application before scheduling the youth for an intake appointment. The pre-application gathered basic information without documentation, such as the youth's date of birth, household income, educational background, work history, and job interests. Screening out youth likely to be ineligible reduced the number of youth that frontline staff would have to meet with and assess for eligibility. It also prevented the possibility of some youth and their families taking the time to assemble the necessary paperwork only to be found ineligible.

Beyond partnerships with other public agencies, six study sites added evenings or weekend hours to manage the increased workload and to provide more convenient times for youth or their parents to meet with staff. Extended hours allowed parents of minors to complete paperwork during non-work hours and youth to complete paperwork after school.

### 4. Intake and Enrollment Challenges

Administrators and frontline staff reported that it was often challenging to process paperwork for large numbers of youth given the short period and amount of paperwork required. Local staff described difficulties establishing eligibility for applicants and accessing key documentation from parents. Thirteen sites mentioned having at least one challenge related to income determination.

In seven sites, staff reported that the time frame was too short for the eligibility process, which was time-consuming and often plagued by many delays. Even if local staff were familiar with the WIA eligibility process, staff members were often using new forms created especially for SYEI and

dealing with a slightly different set of requirements than those for the regular WIA program. Staff in these sites felt the eligibility and enrollment process involved too much documentation for an initiative that provided participants with only a few weeks or months of services. In at least four sites, youth under the age of 18 also had to obtain a work permit before being assigned to a worksite.

Staff in 11 sites reported difficulty collecting documentation from youth and parents. Five of these 11 sites reported problems gathering financial information from parents or involving parents in the eligibility determination process at all. Income eligibility determination required public assistance documents, Social Security numbers, pay stubs, or other forms of documentation. These documents sometimes had to be produced for every adult member of the youth's household. This requirement often made the process time consuming for both staff and the families of applicants. Similarly, five sites reported challenges getting youth or parents to produce documents to show evidence of one of the qualifying barriers. This was particularly difficult when the documentation had to come from a local government agency, such as a welfare or foster care agency, as those agencies needed time to supply the needed documents. Sites in our sample estimated that between 10 and 30 percent of potentially eligible applicants dropped off without completing their paperwork.

### 5. Youth with No Documented Barriers

If a youth met the income requirements for the initiative, local staff members in some sites were likely to try to identify a qualifying barrier. Frontline staff in one site shared that youth were often unwilling to talk about their background or history, especially about situations that would normally be considered a disadvantage for a job, such as being homeless or a youth offender, but are eligibility criteria for the SYEI. As a result, staff would have to find other ways to identify barriers for those youth.

At least six sites had some applicants take academic aptitude tests in math or English or both that could document a basic literacy deficiency. These tests were often the only assessment done for youth. In most cases, this testing was reserved for income-eligible youth with no documented barriers. However, one site tested all youth prior to eligibility determination in case the scores could be used for eligibility. The tests commonly used were the CASAS, TABE, and WRAT tests (Comprehensive Adult Student Assessment Systems 2010; CTB McGraw-Hill 2010; Psychological Assessment Resources, Inc. 2010). More information on assessments can be found in Chapter V.

## D. Youth Characteristics

Based on discussions with staff in 20 sites and participating youth in 19 sites, many of the youth served by the study sites were disadvantaged and faced multiple obstacles to employment. On top of their personal challenges, these youth faced a market in which jobs were scarce and youth were competing for jobs against older, more experienced workers. Youth appeared to greatly appreciate the opportunities offered by the SYEI and welcomed the help finding summer employment or other opportunities.

### 1. Employment Barriers

The most common barriers for youth cited by site administrators and frontline staff included lack of education and basic literacy skills, criminal involvement, teen pregnancy, and lack of transportation. These barriers were cited by staff in at least half the sites studied. Other barriers

mentioned often but by less than half the sites included gang involvement, substance abuse, lack of work skills or work maturity, lack of work experience, being in foster care, and homelessness. Smaller numbers of sites also mentioned that youth with disabilities, youth in single parent homes, youth with limited English proficiency, and refugees and immigrants faced unique challenges. Most sites mentioned 5 or 6 different barriers, but two sites cited up to 10.

Information gathered from focus groups with youth reinforced several of these barriers.[13] Thirty-eight percent of youth in these groups reported never holding a job for pay before participating in SYEI. This was the case for 15 percent of the out-of-school youth and 45 percent of the in-school youth. Nine percent of the youth reported experiencing mental, physical, or emotional health problems that limited the kind or amount of work or training they could perform. Youth also said that their personal histories, such as a juvenile record, elicited negative responses from employers, creating a major challenge to being offered a job.

### 2. Youth's Reasons for Participating

Although focus group participants reported many reasons for enrolling in the SYEI, two primary reasons emerged. First, the wages earned from a summer job meant immediate cash in their pockets, often for the first time. The majority of youth in one-third of sites and at least several youth in all but one of the remaining sites mentioned that earning money was a primary motivation for participating. Second, many youth felt that exposure to a professional environment and mentoring adults could help them develop a résumé and lead them to a career.

Wages were especially important given the toll that the bad economy was taking on their households. Many youth reported having parents out of work or in risk of losing work and that summer employment was difficult to find. Youth in five sites specifically mentioned needing to earn money to help support family. In-school youth also reported needing to help their families pay for books, school supplies, and transportation when they returned to school in the fall.

**Youth Perspectives: Reasons for Participating in the SYEI**

*"I am in it for money, and also I heard they help you, they support you in all your dreams and goals, to reach your goals."*

*"Just having a job, trying to be responsible, to have my own money."*

*"It was a good way to make money over the summer, and it was just for the summer, so if we're still going to school, it kind of ends and gives a little break to get ready for school."*

*"Mainly the experience. . . . Because, I mean, the money is all right, but it's not gonna last that long . . . but if we get the experience and we can put that on a résumé and get a better job for more money, then that's fine, too."*

*"I joined the program to see what's out there, like different jobs, and seeing what I was capable of doing, and like my best ability."*

*"[To] find yourself. Like say if you didn't know what you wanted to do and you come to the program and you're like wow, I really like culinary arts or something, it gives you kind of a heads up of what you're good at and what maybe you should do in the future."*

[13] It is important to remember that counts from youth focus groups are not representative of all youth within the site. In addition, although moderators encouraged all focus group members to participate, time limitations and group dynamics may have prevented some participants from expressing their views.

**Youth Perspectives: Past Experiences Looking for Work**

*"I'd still be looking for a job, trying to figure out a way how to get a job and get around the felonies that I've got, and trying to go crazy to find a job and not knowing what to do to get one. . . ."*

*"There are older people, too, that lost their jobs and are now working at a lot of places where we used to work at. So, that's a big problem too."*

*"There's very little jobs for people who don't have high school diplomas. . . . I'm 17 and I've got to graduate still. So there's no jobs for me. And places I've applied, they want experience, but I can't have experience until they hire me, and they won't hire me because I don't. It's a vicious cycle."*

*"A lot of the reason why I couldn't get a job was I had a good job working with mentally disabled, taking care of them, but made a mistake, got a DUI, lost my job. Then because of that, it was hard for me to find jobs within my career path I wanted. . . ."*

Focus group participants also indicated that they applied for the initiative to build their résumés, explore careers, obtain references, network, and help them get a better job later in life. At least one youth in most sites reported that they were interested in gaining experience. As mentioned above, the SYEI work experience was a first job for many participants and, as a result, the start of their résumés. Youth in at least three sites reported their interest in obtaining permanent placement.

Beyond money and work experience, the youth mentioned other reasons for participating. One common reason was that it was a way to keep busy and stay out of trouble. Youth also mentioned the desire to develop soft skills, such as having a sense of responsibility, developing a strong work ethic, and learning to manage their time and money. In addition, youth mentioned that the initiative would help support their life goals and their desire to grow mentally and professionally.

### 3. Summer Alternatives to the SYEI

Although the study cannot know for sure what SYEI participants would have been doing without the initiative, it was able to collect focus group participants' impressions about their alternatives. Many youth did not think they would have been working had they not participated in the initiative. They mentioned looking for work prior to enrolling in the SYEI but were largely unsuccessful. Without SYEI, those same youth may have given up looking or continued to look for a job throughout the summer months without ever finding one. At least one youth from most of the sites reported that they would not be doing anything productive during the summer in the absence of SYEI. Youth commonly said they would be sleeping, watching TV, or hanging out. In more than half the sites, youth commented that they would still be looking for work but were not optimistic that they would have found a job. This latter appears to be a widespread sentiment. As one youth commented, "That's all everybody talks about: looking for a job." Youth in six sites indicated that they would probably have been taking classes if they were not participating in the initiative.

Focus group participants who thought they might have found work on their own believed these work experiences would have been less rewarding than the SYEI experience. Youth in eight sites speculated that they would have found jobs as retail cashiers, fast-food cashiers or food handlers, landscapers, lifeguards, babysitters, or manual laborers. Three youth reported that they would be working at previously held jobs, although their hours in these jobs would have been reduced and the work would not have been related to their career interests.

# V. YOUTH PREPARATION AND SUPPORT

Given the diverse array of youth enrolled in the SYEI, sites had to determine how to best prepare participants for successful participation in summer work experiences. Many participants had never held a job for pay and therefore did not fully understand the attitudes and skills necessary to succeed in the workplace. Even among those who had worked before, many had never explored potential career paths. As a result of these gaps of experience, sites found it important to prepare youth before sending them to worksites and then support them while they were on the job.

This chapter describes the sites' activities aimed at preparing and supporting youth in summer activities. Section A begins with the first activities that youth completed after they were recruited, as staff provided information and assessed their skills, interests, and needs. Section B turns to the training given to the youth to prepare them for work. Section C discusses the support services that initiatives provided the youth once they were placed in jobs.

### Key Findings: Youth Preparation and Support

- **In most sites, staff conducted assessments and developed an ISS for each youth.** Fourteen sites used academic and career-related tools to identify each youth's skills, interests, and needs. Across the 20 sites, a different set of 14 sites completed an ISS for each participant.
- **Although readiness training was not a federal requirement, most sites required youth to attend work readiness training sessions.** Youth focus group participants reported this training to be one of the most useful aspects of the program.
- **More than three-quarters of sites offered participants transportation services and access to work supplies.** Although providers tried to match youth to jobs in accessible locations, providers in 17 sites found that youth often needed help getting to work. Sixteen sites also helped youth purchase needed works supplies, such as clothes and tools.

## A. Initial Preparation Activities for Youth

Although the SYEI was a new experience for most lead agencies and providers, it was also a new experience for many participants. Many had not previously been enrolled in WIA programs and had little or no work experience. As a result, staff found that they needed to prepare many participants for the initiative and what would be expected of them at worksites. At the same time, staff often felt that they had to learn more about each individual participant to help make the summer rewarding for all, including youth, employers, and staff.

### 1. Youth Orientation Activities

Sites commonly held an orientation for new participants at the beginning of the initiative. The main goals of the orientation were to introduce the participants to staff, inform them of the initiative's requirements and expectations, and review a participant handbook. Half the sites met these goals through a stand-alone orientation, while six other sites integrated the goals into other activities, such as work readiness training (discussed later in this chapter). Although the practice was not standardized within the four remaining sites, at least one provider in each of these sites also reported offering a stand-alone orientation session.

In the sites with stand-alone sessions, orientation was structured as either a group or one-on-one activity. Sessions were typically held just before or after participants' eligibility was determined. The length of orientations varied widely, ranging from 15 minutes to 4 days.

Six sites chose not to set aside a specific time for orientation. Four of these sites indicated that their work readiness training served the purpose of an orientation. Two of the six sites made an effort to orient youth to the initiative during the intake session.

### 2. Academic and Career Assessments

Although ETA instructed sites to provide some form of assessment for all youth, some sites did not conduct any assessments. ETA's guidance stated that "although some level of assessment…is required, a full objective assessment…as specified in the WIA regulations is not required for youth served only during the summer months" (U.S. Department of Labor 2009d). Administrators in 14 sites reported that staff formally assessed youth at some point during SYEI enrollment. Six sites reported that they did not provide assessments to all of their participants, citing either the limited amount of time available to work with youth or the lack of need for formal assessments since youth would not be receiving any services other than work placement.

Of the 14 that conducted assessments, 12 sites assessed youth with tools that measured their need for services as well as their preparedness for and interest in work. These needs assessments included career and academic interest inventories, needs assessments, skills assessments, and goal planning tools. Site staff often used the results of these tests to place youth in appropriate work experiences or job readiness classes and to identify support services that might be needed by the youth or the youth's family.

Six of the 14 sites, including 2 of those sites that administered work- or service-related assessments, carried out academic assessments. Academic assessments could include tests such the Test for Adult Basic Education, the Wide Range Achievement Test, and tests developed by Comprehensive Adult Student Assessment Systems. As discussed in Chapter IV, some sites used testing results to qualify youth for the initiative under the eligibility criterion of basic skills deficiency. Others used assessments to determine the participant's need for education services offered through the SYEI.

### 3. Individual Service Strategies

As with assessments, not all sites reported completing an individual service strategy (ISS) for every participant, despite federal requirements. ETA specified that an ISS must include results from youth assessments and age-appropriate goals. However, local areas had the flexibility to design their own ISS for the SYEI. Respondents from 14 sites reported that all participants completed an ISS, and in 4 other sites at least one provider completed the ISS with its participants. The ISS often recorded youth's career and educational goals, academic and career interests, skill levels, and transportation or other support needs. Staff in these sites reported that preparing the ISS was useful both for getting to know the youth and for determining an appropriate work placement. Sites completed the ISS at various times—during intake, after eligibility was determined, during orientation, or during work readiness training.

In the two sites where no providers completed an ISS for participating youth, administrators reported that the timeframe of the SYEI was too short to necessitate an ISS. They felt that the enrollment process was already too time intensive to add another lengthy procedure. These two sites both enrolled large numbers of participants compared to most other sites; however, staff in sites that completed an ISS for participants reported spending only 5 to 30 minutes on each ISS.

## B. Work Readiness Training

Because the SYEI focused on placing participants in meaningful summer work, ETA suggested that sites consider strategies to help participants prepare for these experiences. Federal guidance acknowledged that many participants may need assistance "refining [their] attitudes, values, and work habits which will contribute to their success in the workplace" (U.S. Department of Labor 2009d). In addition, the Recovery Act specified that the work readiness indicator would be the only measure used to assess performance. For these reasons, sites worked to improve youth's work readiness skills during the summer months through formal workreadiness training provided in classroom settings.

### 1. Site Requirements for Youth Attendance at Training

In 16 of the 20 sites, all participants attended work readiness training. The lead agency of the four remaining sites did not require providers to offer work readiness training, although at least one provider in each site did so. Administrators in two of the sites that did not require training reported that, in light of the short timeframe, they chose to focus exclusively on providing high quality work experiences. A respondent from one of these sites stated that a key to the successful implementation of their initiative within the abbreviated timeframe was their focus on work experience. One provider in a third site chose not to offer any formal training because SYEI participants, many of whom were also participants of an in-house program, had already been adequately prepared for work through other services. Staff from two additional providers that did not offer work readiness training commented that preparing the youth too much for their work experiences "may take away from the experience itself." They also felt that youth would develop work readiness skills on the job.

### 2. The Use of Standardized Work Readiness Curricula

In half of the 16 sites that required training, providers used a common curriculum for all youth within the site (see Table V.1). In each of the eight sites with a standard curriculum, participants

**Table V.1 Work Readiness Training**

| Training | Number of Sites |
|---|---|
| Required | 16 |
| Type of Curriculum (across providers within site) | |
| Standard | 8 |
| Varied | 8 |
| Not required | 4 |

Source: Site visit interviews in 20 selected sites.

Note: N = 20 sites.

were exposed to the same content and hours of training, although sometimes at different stages in the initiative. Three sites used an off-the-shelf curriculum that the lead agency purchased, while the remaining sites used locally developed training materials. Training time in these eight sites ranged from eight hours to two weeks. In five of the eight sites with required training, all youth received the training at the beginning of the summer. One site offered training weekly throughout the summer. Youth in two other sites received training at different times. For example, in one site, staff at different locations had discretion to offer the two-day training before the youth started work, later in the summer, or over the course of the summer.

The curriculum varied across providers within the remaining eight sites. In these cases, the lead agency gave flexibility to providers regarding training design and administration. In three of these eight sites, the lead agency did, however, dictate the amount of work readiness training required. Providers in the remaining five sites had the flexibility to also determine the timing, duration, and intensity of the training. As a result, the training varied widely within some sites. For example, at one site, training ranged from informal one-on-one meetings with youth at one provider to a 16-hour training session at another. Work readiness training offered by providers at another site ranged from 6 to 48 hours. Five of these eight sites tended to hold the training at the beginning of the summer; and one conducted training throughout the summer. Timing in the remaining two sites varied by provider.

### 3. Work Readiness Tracks Based on Youth Characteristics

Participants came to the SYEI with different experiences. Some had previous work experience, but others did not. In addition, participants fell within an 11-year range, from young teenagers to adults. This resulted in mixed levels of maturity and life experience. At least one provider in nine sites accommodated this diversity by tailoring work readiness offerings based on participants' age, previous work experience, criminal history, or disability status.[14]

Across all 20 study sites, at least one provider in seven sites grouped youth for work readiness by age. In three of these seven sites, the training largely served as all or most of the younger youth's summer experience. In addition to classroom training, these youth participated in community service activities as their work experience (see Box V.1). The older youth in these sites participated in less formal training and spent most of their time at worksites. In two of the seven sites, all or some of the providers exposed all youth to the same curriculum, but focused the training differently depending upon the age of the youth. For example, in one site, the lead agency did not feel it was appropriate for 24-year-olds to attend the same training session as 14-year-olds, so they held two different training sessions using a modified curriculum. Since many of the older youth had some prior work experience, their training was more fast-paced than in the younger group and incorporated role-playing activities. Finally, in three of the seven sites, all or some providers reported grouping youth by age, although it was unclear how the youth's experiences in the training differed.

[14] Providers in three of these sites grouped youth by more than one characteristic.

**Box V.1: Work Readiness Training Served as the Work Experience for Younger Youth**

*Albany, OR.* Many 14- and 15-year-olds participated in camps designed to develop work readiness skills and provide career exploration activities. One provider offered a three-week program during which youth could chose three career clusters to explore. Youth also participated in field trips and community service projects such as landscaping at a community college and removing graffiti. The youth were paid a stipend of $150 per week. One provider noted that they chose this program model because they anticipated that it would be difficult to place younger youth with employers.

*Memphis, TN.* All youth aged 14 to 15 attended a career exploration program run by the city and participated in weekly community service projects such as volunteering at the food bank and working at a nursing home. The training, based on an off-the-shelf curriculum, ran 10 weeks, and youth were paid $7.25 per hour for participating.

*Menomonie, WI.* Many youth aged 14 to 16 participated in career academies operated by technical colleges and the Red Cross. The academies provided career exploration activities, job search training, and work readiness instruction focused on developing youth's self-confidence, teamwork, and interpersonal skills. Youth also volunteered at the humane society, a food pantry program, and Habitat for Humanity. The program ran 8 to 10 weeks, and youth were paid $7.25 per hour.

Although age was the most common characteristic by which youth were grouped for training, some youth in four sites were assigned based on other characteristics. In one site, different providers offered separate training sessions based on previous work history, offender status, and disabilities. For example, a modified work readiness training for youth with disabilities was taught by a certified teacher funded by the school district. One provider in the second site grouped youth with criminal histories to tailor the work readiness training to that population and to avoid mixing the youth offenders with other youth. In the two other sites, older youth with previous work experience could be exempted from training altogether.

### 4. Common Work Readiness Training Topics

Work readiness training covered a wide range of topics from basic interviewing tips to teen fitness. At least one provider in the majority of the 20 study sites addressed soft skills, job preparation, career exploration, and financial literacy during work readiness training (see Table V.2). Other less common topics included work orientation, basic skills, and green jobs. Box V.2 provides descriptions of training structure and content in two sites.

To capture the attention of youth, providers tried some unique approaches to delivering their main training messages. For example, one provider showed a 20-minute work readiness video made by youth participants from a previous summer program. The video discussed interviewing, dress, attitude, program expectations, timesheets, grievance policies, and payroll. In another site, a provider gave each youth a flash drive containing the résumé and cover letter that the youth developed during training as well as additional materials.

**Table V.2 Common Topics Addressed in Work Readiness Training**

| Topic | Areas Covered | Number of Sites[a] |
|---|---|---|
| Soft Skills | Communication, teamwork, decision making, problem solving, conflict resolution, business etiquette, work habits, responsibility, integrity, leadership, customer service, self-esteem, time management | 18 |
| Job Preparation | Résumés, job search, references, applications, cover letters, interviewing, entrepreneurship, how to dress, networking, goals, attendance, punctuality | 16 |
| Career Exploration | Interest inventories and career assessments, options after high school, further education, field trips, guest speakers | 13 |
| Financial Literacy | Budgeting, use of credit, opening a bank account | 11 |
| Work Orientation | Sexual harassment, employment law, payroll, expectations, schedules, taxes, cashing paychecks | 6 |
| Basic Skills | Computer literacy, math and reading skills | 4 |
| Green Jobs | Green industries, green aspects of jobs, environmentalism | 4 |
| Miscellaneous | Substance abuse/mental health education, community awareness, nonviolent social change, teen food and fitness, communication with police, advocacy | 4 |

Source: Site visit interviews in 20 selected sites.

Note: N = 20 sites.

[a]At least one provider in the site reported addressing the topic in the work readiness training.

**Box V.2: Examples of Work Readiness Training**

*Albuquerque, NM.* The Basic Skills Employability Training (BEST) curriculum for work readiness has been used and updated by the SYEI provider for the past 15 years. Each 10-hour class had 12–15 youth participants and was held during the first five weeks of the summer, mostly before work experiences began. Every youth was required to attend this training, but training time was unpaid. The classes included a mix of reading, interactive exercises, and hands-on experiences. Staff administered pre- and posttests to participants. The BEST curriculum includes the following modules: employer expectations, substance abuse and mental health education, career strategies, identification of occupations of interest, preparing a résumé, the job search, the interview process, basic computer skills, and sexual harassment.

*Rochester, MN.* Youth participants were required to attend the Blueprint for Success work readiness training program, held for two weeks at the beginning of the summer and administered by staff at a One-Stop Career Center. Youth were paid $200 for completing the training but were penalized for lateness or absences. Training took place in groups of 15 to 25 participants, separated by age groups or background. The curriculum for Blueprint for Success was designed to meet ETA's definition of work readiness, and includes a pre- and postassessment. The curriculum covered the following topics: self-discovery; managing your time effectively; realities of the job market; workplace skills for today's employee; effective communication; contacting employers; preparing for the job interview; getting hired: workplace issues, paperwork, and finances; and keeping your job.

### 5. Incentives to Encourage Attendance

Given the importance that sites placed on preparing youth for the workplace, sites devised strategies to encourage attendance at work readiness training. Site staff felt this was particularly important given that many in-school youth did not want to be in the classroom during their summer break. Although respondents in most sites reported little drop-off during work readiness training, staff in two sites reported that some youth attempted to skip these sessions.

Providers in 16 sites used incentives, such as hourly wages, stipends, gift cards, and certificates of completion to encourage youth to participate (see Table V.3). Providers in 14 of these sites offered an hourly wage or a stipend. In six of these sites, at least one provider paid youth a standard wage ranging from the minimum wage of $7.25 to $10 per hour for their participation. In six other sites, one or more providers gave youth a stipend—ranging from $25 to $200 and averaging $110—for participation in training. One provider offered a stipend of $450 to those youth for whom the training encompassed the majority of their summer experience. Two sites offered an hourly stipend of $7.25 per hour for training rather than paying regular wages so the earnings would not be taxed.

**Table V.3 Incentives Offered for Work Readiness Training**

| Type of Incentive | Number of Sites Offering Incentive[a] |
|---|---|
| Any Incentive[b] | 16 |
| Monetary Incentive | 14 |
| Type of Monetary Incentive[b] | |
| Wages | 6 |
| Stipends | 6 |
| Gift Cards | 3 |
| Nonmonetary Incentive | 8 |
| Type of Nonmonetary Incentive[b] | |
| Certificate of completion | 7 |
| Timed training to encourage participation | 3 |

Source: Site visit interviews in 20 selected sites.

Note: N = 20 sites.

[a] At least one provider in the site offered the incentive.

[b] In some sites, providers used more than one form of incentive.

In three sites, at least one provider gave youth gift cards for attending work readiness training. In one of these sites, the gift cards were used to encourage the youth to complete the homework assignments. In another site, one provider surprised the youth with gift cards following the training, so the cards served as a reward rather than an incentive. The $10 to $25 gift cards were often for local retail chains and restaurants and in one case for movie theaters.

Eight sites also used other nonmonetary forms of encouragement. From at least one provider in seven of the eight sites, youth received a certificate specifically created for the initiative. One provider noted that the certificate was designed to serve as a signal to potential employers that the youth was a good employment investment as a result of having work readiness training. As another form of encouragement, at least one provider in three sites scheduled training sessions so that youth would be obligated to attend. For example, several providers in one site held work readiness trainings on Mondays and Fridays. Since the youth picked up their timesheets on Monday and dropped them off on Fridays, this schedule motivated them to attend the training sessions to ensure timely payment of their wages. In another site, at least one provider distributed paychecks during work readiness workshops. According to youth from a third site, if they missed a work readiness workshop, they were not allowed to work the following week, although the provider manager reported that they gave the youth some leniency with regard to this rule.

**Youth Perspectives: Experiences in Work Readiness Training**

***Résumé Building***

*"I never knew what a résumé was until I actually did one, and I used to hear about it so much, and I'm a senior now and I'm like, "What is a résumé?" . . . There were some jobs I tried to apply for online and it says, "Please post your résumé." I'm like, "Résumé? What résumé?" . . . I actually learned it and I actually have one now."*

***Financial Literacy Training***

*"[In this economy]. . . you have to think about how you're going to manage your money and where it's going to go, and if you really need to spend it on something that you don't really need and stuff, so that helps."*

*"[I really liked] the two budgets. The first one was a large amount. The second was a lower amount, and the first one was for somebody who graduated college, and the other one was for somebody who didn't go to college. So that was real good because it really gave us a perspective."*

***Guest Speakers***

*"We had city officials. We had managers, owners of private businesses and entrepreneurs. Different people with different career paths who came in and told us about their stories, the choices they made and just basically told us the basic foundations for creating your own business or even just doing, you know, making correct choices, if you will."*

*" [My] supervisor tries to get people to come in and talk to us about . . . their majors and their jobs and what they're doing, what they're going to school for, and that gives us a little clue of what we might want to do. And we can ask questions to them too and we'll get answers. And it kind of like opens your eyes to other opportunities that way."*

***Other Activities***

*"We had the opportunity to rate yourself, like if you were a social person, artistic and things like that. So then you could look at the occupation and things like that and see what you worked best with, so that you could basically understand that it's important to get a job that you are interested in and not something that you're not, so that you have a good time as well."*

*"They taught us stuff like what type of communication person that you are. Like they had it separated up into several color groups, and depending on what color you were, what communication you were. And that's helpful to find out how your supervisor communicates, so that we know how to communicate better with that person. So that was interesting. "*

### 6. Youth Impressions of Work Readiness Training

Participants in the youth focus groups had mostly positive reactions to work readiness training. In almost all sites, youth reported that the training was one of the most useful parts of the summer initiative. Participants in about one third of the sites discussed the value of the specific soft skills they developed, citing enhanced communication, time management, and teamwork skills.[15] In five of the 11 sites that offered financial literacy as part of the training, the youth expressed appreciation for that part of the instruction. Participants of five focus groups also commented that they appreciated the opportunity to draft their résumé and cover letter and found interview tips and mock interviews helpful.

Even though they found the work readiness experience useful, participants from half the sites that discussed the training felt that improvements could be made. In particular, some participants reported that the training was boring, reflected simple common sense, or presented material they already knew through school or their participation in WIA programs. To address these issues, they suggested tailoring the training based on youth's previous work experiences (as some sites did) and grouping youth for the training by their work assignment.

## C. Supportive Services

Although sites were not required to offer supportive services to participants, many SYEI providers had extensive experience working with disadvantaged youth and recognized the need for additional support for youth to overcome their employment barriers. In the 20 study sites, staff most often reported helping youth to resolve transportation issues, to acquire appropriate work clothing and tools, and to gain access to child care. Providers from all but one site reported supplying youth with needed support services either in-house or through referrals to community partners. Administrators in the remaining site that did not connect youth with other services felt the summer focus on work left no time for other services or referrals.

### 1. Transportation and Work Supplies

Sites reported giving participants help getting to and from their worksites, purchasing needed work supplies, and gaining access to child care (see Table V.4). Transportation services were most common, with 17 sites reporting that they help youth get to and from their summer worksites. In most cases, these services were offered after an initial assessment of the participant's needs. Staff often reported trying to find worksites that were within walking distance of youth's homes, yet transportation was still either a common or major barrier for many youth. Youth in rural areas often did not have a driver's license, access to a car, money for gas, or available public transportation. Youth in cities often did not have disposable income to purchase bus passes or tokens, and public transportation was simply not accessible to some. A provider at one site even noted that the site considered the location of a youth's residence and his or her access to transportation as a factor for enrollment, denying enrollment to some youth who could not access available worksites.

[15] Work readiness training was not discussed in focus groups in two sites. However, these sites were two of the four that did not require work readiness training.

**Table V.4 Supportive Services Offered**

| Service | Number of Sites |
|---|---|
| Offered Services Directly or by Referral | 19 |
| Offered Transportation Support | 17 |
| Bus passes/tokens | 8 |
| In-house vans/gas money | 7 |
| Type of support unspecified | 2 |
| Offered Money for Work Supplies | 16 |
| Offered Help Obtaining Child Care | 10 |

Source: Site visit interviews in 20 selected sites.

Note: N = 20 sites.

Transportation assistance took several forms. Providers in eight sites issued bus passes and tokens. Since public transportation was not readily available in other areas, providers from at least seven sites provided youth with gas money or shuttled them to and from their worksites in vans. As discussed in Chapter III, some sites included both urban and rural areas. For that reason, providers in at least five sites offered both types of assistance, providing shuttle rides or gas money to some youth while giving bus passes to others. The remaining two sites that provided youth with transportation help did not specify the form this assistance took.

Other common supports included assistance purchasing work supplies and obtaining child care. Providers from 16 sites helped youth purchase needed supplies for work such as clothing, tools, boots, and safety goggles. These providers either directly purchased the materials for youth or referred them to partners, such as Dress for Success and Gentlemen's Closet. Providers from 10 sites stated that, when necessary, they helped youth obtain child care. However, most noted that, given the age of the participants, this was not often necessary. For example, staff in one site indicated that they could use other funds to help youth pay for child care but few needed it.

### 2. Local Emphasis on Supportive Services

Sites differed in their focus on supportive service. Several sites appeared to highlight them. For example, three sites included line items in providers' budgets for these services. In one of these sites, the providers' budgets included three line items for supportive services: one for a $100 work-support payment that each participant received upon completion of the work readiness training, one for transportation-related costs, and one for supplies. Providers at the other two sites could use the funds to help youth obtain any service need to be able to work successfully.

Providers from six other sites indicated that, if they had had more time, they would have placed a greater emphasis on connecting youth with supportive services. The youth services coordinator at one site thought that the workload was so high they did not have time to take a proactive approach to identifying and meeting supportive service needs.

# VI. THE RECRUITMENT AND INVOLVEMENT OF EMPLOYERS

Employers were important partners in sites' efforts to provide youth with successful summer experiences. Though employers were receiving a summer employee whose wages were paid with Recovery Act funds, they were voluntary partners with interests that could diverge from those of the sites. Thus, sites' recruitment efforts needed to address employers' reasons for participating. At the same time, site staff had to recruit enough employers, with sufficient jobs, to satisfy the large number of youth with wide-ranging interests while also being mindful of ETA guidance on ensuring appropriate and meaningful experiences.

This chapter discusses how sites succeeded in recruiting employers. Section A describes employer recruitment strategies, including when sites began this process, what employers and economic sectors they targeted, and some of the challenges they faced in this aspect of their initiatives. Section B reviews sites' processes for screening and orienting employers after recruiting them. Finally, Section C describes sites' understanding of employers' motivations for participating.

### Key Findings: Employer Recruitment and Involvement

- **Sites successfully recruited interested employers.** Sites contacted and recruited employers they knew and those new to the workforce investment system through direct contacts and broad media campaigns. More than half the sites focused their recruitment on particular sectors of the economy, and almost half reported that they recruited more worksites than they needed.
- **To ensure appropriate work experiences for youth, sites screened and oriented employers**. Formal screening processes involved such steps as reviewing an employer's application, visiting the worksite, and signing a worksite agreement. Most sites also provided worksite supervisors with an orientation to their SYEI roles and responsibilities.
- **Employers were eager to participate to benefit their businesses and their communities.** Employers reported appreciating the free summer help during lean times and the opportunity to mentor the youth.

## A. Employer Recruitment

Although many sites had existing relationships with local employers, all sites had to conduct some recruitment activities to generate the number of worksites needed for the expected volume of participants. In addition to determining when to conduct this recruitment, sites made decisions about how to reach out to the business community and whether to target specific sectors of the economy. Most sites reported that they recruited sufficient numbers of employers to accommodate participating youth.

### 1. Timing of Employer Recruitment

Staff of the participating organizations—often the lead agency along with their providers—began recruiting employers even before they approached youth about participating. In 15 sites, staff began their efforts early to have enough employer worksites to meet the expected demand for work placements. In 1 of these 15 sites, the lead agency required prospective providers to include a list of confirmed employer worksites in their bids to become a SYEI provider. In 5 of the 20 study sites,

one or more providers reported waiting to recruit employers until after they had begun recruiting youth.

At least eight of the study sites continued to recruit employers once they had started recruiting youth. Site administrators reported using this strategy because they had insufficient time to recruit enough employers before the initiative started or because they wanted the interests of enrolled youth to drive at least some of the employer options. For example, in one site, several participants indicated an interest in the law, which was not represented in the set of employers initially recruited. To meet this interest, staff successfully recruited local law firms.

### 2. Employer Recruitment Strategies

To recruit employers, sites relied on two main strategies: (1) reaching out to employers who had existing relationships with the workforce investment system, and (2) promoting the SYEI more broadly to the employer community. Sixteen sites reported capitalizing on their existing relationships with employers (see Table VI.1). They contacted employers that had previously worked with the LWIB or its providers, either as a youth employer or in some other capacity. To advertise the initiative to a wider range of potential employers, sites also reported asking members of the LWIB to reach out to their own employer networks and using employer listservs maintained by their own business services units.

**Table VI.1 Employer Recruitment Strategies**

| Strategy[a] | Number of Sites |
|---|---|
| Outreach to Existing Employer Contacts | 16 |
| Outreach to Broader Employer Community | 14 |
| Direct phone or in-person contacts | 14 |
| Broad media/other campaigns | 6 |
| Chamber of Commerce resource | 6 |

Source: Site visit interviews in 20 selected sites.

Note: N = 20 sites.

[a]Sites used multiple outreach strategies.

The lead agencies and providers also served as a potential source of worksites. In five sites, at least one provider served as the primary worksite for SYEI participants. These arrangements for youth job placements at the providers were agreed upon with the lead agency before the provider was awarded the SYEI contract. For example, a provider in one site was a nonprofit community action agency with its own organic farm that supplied meals and produce to families in need. The provider was able to employ all of its youth participants at the farm and farm stand and did not need to recruit any worksites. In another site, a local public university that was a long-time provider of summer youth placements assigned a majority of its participants to work within its own departments. To place the remaining youth, the provider recruited worksites from the surrounding community. In addition, many other providers from across the sites hired small numbers of youth to work in their own organizations doing clerical work or documenting the summer through marketing materials, while referring most youth to outside employers.

Most sites also reached out to the broader employer community. Fourteen sites reported directly contacting employers that they did not know to gauge their interest in participating in the initiative. One common approach was "cold calling" employers by phone, but, according to staff in one site, this was the least effective recruitment strategy. Another common strategy was to personally visit local businesses. At least one site felt that this was their most effective recruitment method. Six sites sought to recruit employers through marketing campaigns. They reported a range of promotional activities, including issuing press releases, placing newspaper and television advertisements, sending mass mailings and emails, maintaining a website, and distributing fliers. In addition, six sites reported that the local Chamber of Commerce was a helpful resource, and one site used a directory of social service organizations that serve youth to find potential employers. Box VI.1 provides an example of multiple employer recruitment strategies used in a single site.

**Box VI.1: Combining Multiple Strategies to Recruit Employers**

*Bridgeport, CT*. The recruitment of employers at the Bridgeport, CT, site was a joint effort between LWIB leadership, the youth coordinator at the LWIB, and the LWIB's marketing division. Information was sent to 5,000 employers that had had previous contact with the LWIB. Fliers were also distributed through the local Chamber of Commerce, and a PowerPoint presentation, along with a handout responding to frequently asked questions, was developed to be used in presentations to potential employers. The marketing materials presented the program as career exploration opportunities for youth and an opportunity for employers to train and vet possible employees. Staff highlighted that employers would bear no costs for the program.

Beyond broader outreach campaigns, city officials and union leaders provided support. According to administrators, unions rarely opposed offering youth summer employment experiences. Five sites reported that SYEI administrators had regular contact with union leaders and either kept them informed of initiative activities or received input from them on summer programming. Three sites reported successfully negotiating agreements with union representatives or members that allowed the site to place youth at particular worksites. In addition, 7 of the 20 sites reported that they received positive support from city mayors or other local politicians, and that such support was often instrumental in encouraging employers to participate in the initiative and the community to back it. One site made efforts to keep local officials informed about the progress of the initiative.

### 3. Efforts to Engage Particular Economic Sectors

Although all sites successfully recruited employers from the public, nonprofit, and private sectors, more than half of sites or their providers focused recruitment on one sector or another. Staff in eight sites reported a focus on creating meaningful experiences for the youth regardless of the employer's sector (see Table VI.2). (Note that some of these sites might have included targeting efforts that were not revealed during site visits because those individuals or providers who carried them out were not among those interviewed.) Thus, neither the lead agency nor the providers targeted any particular sector. Across the three economic sectors, youth could participate in jobs at employers ranging from city government to community action agencies to local construction companies. (Chapter VII discusses participants' work experiences in more detail.)

**Table VI.2 Targeting Employer Recruitment on Particular Sectors**

| Targeting | Number of Sites |
|---|---|
| No Targeting | 8 |
| Targeting Private Sector | 6 |
| Sitewide | 4 |
| By particular providers | 2 |
| Targeting Public and Non-profit Sectors | 6 |
| Sitewide | 5 |
| By particular providers | 1 |

Source: Site visit interviews in 20 selected sites.

Note: The data presented is based on interviews with staff of lead agencies and specific providers. Since all providers across the 20 sites were not interviewed, it is possible that particular providers in additional sites targeted sectors that were not accounted for in this table.

N = 20 sites.

By contrast, particular providers or the lead agency focused recruitment efforts on the private sector in at least six sites. Within these, the emphasis was sitewide in four sites and provider-specific in two others. One common reason given for this emphasis was that, in the current economy, staff considered private sector firms more likely to offer participants regular positions after the summer. Another reason given was that private sector worksites might also be more relevant to the long-term career interests of participating youth. For example, based on their conversations with youth, staff in two sites reported that most youth were not interested in working for nonprofits. The sites that targeted the private sector did not appear to have any particular characteristics that distinguished them from other sites, and, in fact, all sites had at least some private sector employers participate. All recruitment efforts in at least five sites and efforts of specific providers in least one other site targeted the public and nonprofit sectors. The reported reasons for focusing on these sectors ranged from general unease about choosing one private employer over another for a government-subsidized job, lack of sufficient information on the quality of private sector jobs, and restrictions placed by private sector employers on the age and background of the youth they were willing to hire. Sites also felt that public and nonprofit organizations were more familiar with occupational safety and child labor laws, had a better understanding of disadvantaged youth, and tended to be in more accessible locations. Staff in one site also felt that public and nonprofit employers had organizational missions that aligned more closely with the SYEI, making them easier to work with and more likely to offer youth placements.

### 4. Challenges to Employer Recruitment

Sites generally reported success recruiting a sufficient number of employers for the SYEI, although they faced challenges along the way. At least 7 of the 20 study sites reported recruiting more potential employers than actually needed. Only four sites reported not being able to match all youth to a worksite. As discussed in Chapter VII, three of these sites reported that some youth interviewed poorly with prospective employers and were unable to secure jobs despite the availability of positions, and the fourth site reported an insufficient number of employers given the volume of youth they ultimately enrolled.

Despite their success, at least some staff in 16 sites reported challenges due to employer expectations, the timing of the recruitment, and the economy. In nine sites, at least some staff

reported that employers had unrealistic or incompatible requirements for the youth they would be willing to hire. In particular, sites found it challenging to identify employers willing to hire youth under the age of 18. As a result, one site placed younger youth in camps where they were provided with work readiness training. (These camps are discussed in Chapter V.) Staff in four sites also discussed the difficulty of finding appropriate employers for certain types of youth. Three reported that it was hard to find employers to work with youth who had criminal records or could not pass a drug test. Another site found it difficult to recruit employers that would hire youth with a disability, such as autism.

Staff across the study sites also indicated that the initiative's short timeline affected their ability to recruit placements that were appropriate for youth. Because most employer recruitment occurred before youth enrolled, the staff did not know their eventual participants' abilities or interests. Three sites specifically mentioned this as a challenge, and interviews in other sites indicated that youth were sometimes placed at worksites that did not match their interests because of a lack of suitable choices.

Six sites mentioned that recent layoffs by employers in their areas hampered their ability to recruit employers. Because of the weak economy in many local areas, companies were either reducing hours for employees or laying off workers completely. Either of these situations made an employer ineligible for participation as an SYEI worksite, as discussed in the ETA guidance and the Workforce Investment Act (U.S. Department of Labor 2009d; U.S. Congress 1999). A seventh site also mentioned not being able to place youth at an employer that had recently laid off workers, but stated that single instance did not affect their recruiting strategy or the number of available worksites. Another site also reported some community concerns that SYEI youth were taking jobs away from workers, so staff asked employers to certify that this was not the case before accepting them into the initiative.

## B. Screening and Orienting Recruited Employers

Most participating employers, whether or not they had prior involvement with the workforce investment system, were new to the SYEI. As a result, site staff had to screen employers and their proposed work placements to ensure that they would be appropriate opportunities for participants. In addition, employers required guidance on what their responsibilities would be as part of the initiative. Holding an orientation session was the most common method for informing employers about these responsibilities.

### 1. Employer Screening Strategies

Most sites formally screened employers before accepting them into their initiative. However, sites appeared to be less stringent about screening employers who had hired youth in the past through other youth employment programs. In these instances, staff felt they had sufficient knowledge about the worksite and supervisors.

The employer screening process included from one to three different steps, including an application describing the potential work experience and work environment, an in-person visit to the employer, and the signing of a worksite agreement.

- **Application.** At least 10 of the 20 sites had an application or registration form for employers to use to express their interest in the SYEI. These applications typically asked

for a description of the worksite environment, the jobs to be given to youth, and the employer's requirements for those positions. At least three sites maintained the form on their website for electronic submission; staff in one of these site reported that online applications likely increased the number of employers that applied to the initiative. Other sites mailed applications to interested employers.

- **In-person visits.** In-person visits were part of the screening process for at least 11 sites. At least one provider or the key administrator mentioned vetting employers through these visits. This allowed staff to develop a personal relationship with the worksite supervisor and get a first-hand look at the work environment. Staff did not visit all employers; as mentioned earlier, staff often felt they were sufficiently familiar with employers that had hired youth in previous summers.
- **Worksite agreements.** Nine sites reported asking employers that passed the screening process to sign worksite agreements. The worksite agreement normally did not guarantee that any participants would be placed with the employer but described the employer and worksite supervisor's responsibilities should they receive any participants. The worksite agreement was either signed during an in-person visit or mailed to the employer for signature.

Through each of these steps, site staff used a range of criteria to assess the appropriateness of a worksite (see Box VI.2). Staff reported looking for meaningful experiences where youth could learn skills, have an effective mentor and attentive supervisor, and work in a safe and protected environment. Staff also considered whether there were recent layoffs at the site, the accessibility of the location, and the reasonableness of the employers' preferences for and expectations of the youth. Six sites had more specific criteria that employers needed to meet, such as a supervisor-to-youth ratio of one to five, compliance with labor laws, and assurances that assigned youth would not have family members employed at the same site.

**Box VI.2: Screening Employers for the SYEI**

*Madera, CA.* The provider at this site reported receiving about 225 responses to a mass mailing sent to approximately 3,200 local employers. All employer applications to the program were screened by staff to ensure that worksites were suitable for youth. Screening criteria included the worksite's location, required work hours, availability of adequate supervision, job description, layoff history, accessibility for individuals with disabilities, and previous experience as a youth employer. Staff called employers that passed the screening to discuss their participation and the nature of the job to ensure that the work would be meaningful to participants and help them develop marketable skills.

Although site staff generally appeared satisfied with their sites' screening process, some staff at two sites raised some concerns. These staff members reported that, in the SYEI's initial phase, they were more focused on recruiting sufficient numbers of employers than on the quality of worksites. Given more time, they said they could have been more selective and weeded out employers that were less likely to provide youth with meaningful experiences.

### 2. Employer Orientation and On-going Support

Relationships between local staff and employers were critical to the success of youth's summer experiences. Most sites felt it was important to discuss with employers their SYEI responsibilities

when youth were placed at their worksites. After youth began working, local staff typically maintained regular communication with worksite supervisors throughout the summer.

Employer orientation was commonly used to ensure that employers understood their roles and responsibilities. These orientations typically consisted of reviewing a supervisor handbook, timesheets, labor laws, wages, workers' compensation laws, supervision policies, and workplace safety, among other topics. More than three-quarters of the study sites held group or one-on-one orientations for employers who were assigned a participant. Ten sites oriented employers primarily through one-on-one sessions or during worksite visits, and five held larger group orientations. These five sites also held one-on-one orientations with those employers that were unable to attend the group sessions or were recruited after those sessions had been held. Only one site reported that the group orientation was mandatory for employers.

Four sites did not hold employer orientations. Of these sites, three provided printed orientation packets or a supervisor handbook. In a fourth site, at least one provider reported that they knew their employers through previous experiences so an orientation was not necessary.

Beyond orientation, employers in all 20 sites reported positive ongoing relationships with staff. Staff in most sites maintained regular contact with employers through regular monitoring visits to the worksites (see Chapter VIII for more details on such monitoring). Through these visits and phone availability, staff learned about problems, such as issues with participants' attendance or behavior, and could try to resolve them. One site also reported providing ongoing training and guidance to worksite supervisors given variation in their experiences working with youth. Another site made special efforts to maintain contact with employers at which disabled youth were placed (see Box VI.3).

**Box VI.3: Providing Additional Support to Employers Working with Disabled Youth**

In *Bridgeport, CT*, staff worked closely with employers at which disabled youth were placed to provide clear instructions on how best to work and support youth with disabilities. For example, staff asked an employer who hired a youth with a memory disability due to an accident to write down instructions rather than provide verbal instructions. As needed, these youth were also assigned a job coach to help support both the employer and the youth at the worksite. In one case, a job coach spent one hour each work day helping the employer acclimate and mentor two blind youth at their worksite location.

Despite an overall positive experience, discussions with selected employers indicated that communication processes could have been improved at some sites. For example, one employer thought that having input into the job-matching process would have improved the placements and helped supervisors become more familiar with their youth.

## C. Employer Motivation

Sites' efforts to engage employers in the SYEI benefited from an understanding of why employers would be willing to participate. Across the sites, employers were interested in the opportunity to help their communities and to support their own businesses. Employers felt that the experience was worth the effort of mentoring a new employee and almost unanimously agreed that they would participate again given the opportunity.

## 1. Employers' Reasons for Participating

Based on focus groups conducted with small groups of employers in each site and interviews with site staff, employers appeared to have been motivated largely by a desire to give back to the community and also by the wish to receive extra help in a tight economy. Of course, employers had varied reasons for participating, but employers from all sectors across all sites believed it would benefit the youth, their businesses, and the community as a whole.

The three most frequently mentioned reasons given for participation, according to staff and employers, were to help youth succeed, take advantage of subsidized summer help, and vet future employees without any commitment or cost. Staff reports echoed these same sentiments. First, respondents in 19 sites reported that employers wanted to mentor the youth and give them an opportunity to build their résumés and work skills. They felt that the disadvantaged youth served by SYEI might not otherwise have these opportunities to be engaged in productive work and stay out of trouble.

Second, although companies that recently experienced layoffs were generally not a part of the SYEI, many public, nonprofit, and private firms that were involved either faced hiring freezes during the summer or could not afford to hire the extra staff they needed. Administrators or employers in 17 sites reported that employers often needed the help that SYEI participants could provide. That extra help was a "life-saver," according to one employer. This sentiment prevailed even though employers recognized that hosting the youth meant closely supervising them and working with them to develop professionally. Staff in these sites also reported that having additional help at no cost was a strong motivator, though not the primary motivator for all. Employers also appreciated that the SYEI providers typically bore the responsibility for worker's compensation and general liability claims.

Finally, hiring a SYEI participant was ideal for the employers that planned on adding to their workforce and could afford to do so. Respondents in nine sites reported free training of potentially permanent employees was a motivation for employer participation. During the summer, the employer could evaluate and train the potential employee with no obligation to hire the worker and without incurring the costs usually associated with on-the-job training. Though detailed numbers were not available from most of the 20 sites studied, anecdotal reports suggest that some employers took advantage of this opportunity and hired their SYEI participants on a permanent basis after the summer. (See Chapter VIII for more information on permanent placements.)

To reinforce this last benefit to employers, 16 sites reported discussing the potential for permanent placements with employers during the recruitment process. For example, frontline staff at four of these sites encouraged employers to think of the youth initiative as free employee training. At the remaining four sites, permanent placements were either not an initiative goal or were not a salient issue given that the site primarily served younger youth still in school.

## 2. The Work Opportunity Tax Credit

In hopes of translating youth's summer experience into a permanent job placement, staff in four sites reported that they discussed the Work Opportunity Tax Credit (WOTC) with employers.

The WOTC is a federal tax credit that private businesses can claim if they hire employees from 12 designated groups that experience barriers to employment. A WOTC can be for as much as $2,400 for each eligible employee's first year of employment.[16] Employers would not be eligible for the WOTC while wages were subsidized by Recovery Act funds, but rather could claim the credit if they hired youth permanently. Two of the 12 eligible groups were covered under the SYEI funded by the Recovery Act: unemployed veterans and disconnected youth. ETA encouraged sites to recruit youth from these groups and to discuss the WOTC with employers as a benefit to hiring youth in these targeted groups as permanent employees.

Among the sites that promoted the WOTC, three mentioned discussing the credit with all employers. In the fourth, only one of providers mentioned discussing the WOTC. The provider that did discuss the WOTC, however, was unaware of the recent changes in the policy that applied to the SYEI. Despite holding these discussions, administrators in one of these sites thought that employers were unlikely to take advantage of the WOTC given the amount of paperwork involved. By contrast, an administrator in another site believed that the hiring of participants on a permanent basis would be significant—possibly 90 percent of for-profit worksites.

Staff in most other sites reported that they did not discuss the WOTC with employers either because they did not feel the WOTC was relevant to the SYEI employers or they lacked enough knowledge about the WOTC to present it to employers. Many staff said that the WOTC was not relevant for their public or nonprofit agencies or that the participating youth were not technically employed by their summer worksites. Staff in two sites acknowledged that the WOTC might become relevant if youth were hired after the summer but still did not feel it was necessary to discuss the credit with employers. In addition, staff said they did not discuss the WOTC with employers because they felt uninformed and unclear about the conditions or requirements. The SYEI coordinator in one of these sites felt that the WOTC was too difficult to understand and that there was a general negative perception that it involved too much paperwork.

[16] According to instructions on the Internal Revenue Service Forms 5884 and 8850, employers can claim up to $1,200 for a summer youth employee living in an empowerment or renewal zone and performing services between May 1 and September 15. However, employers participating in the SYEI would not qualify for this credit while Recovery Act funds were used to pay youth wages.

# VII. YOUTH'S SUMMER EXPERIENCES

The true heart of the summer experience did not begin until after the tremendous local effort to recruit youth and employers, determine their suitability for the SYEI, and prepare them for the workplace. Although some youth were placed in academic services in the classroom, most were placed in employment. These jobs were usually at entry level, but they had the potential to accomplish two important goals. One was to influence youth's views about the world of work, the work process, career development, and the need for further education. The other was to stimulate the economy by getting cash into youth's pockets.

This chapter explores the common patterns and unique variations in how sites developed and structured youth's summer experiences. Section A begins by discussing local strategies for serving youth through worksites, the classroom, or a combination of both. Section B describes the types of activities and tasks that youth were doing on a daily basis through the SYEI. Section C analyzes the strategies and factors that influenced how youth were matched to academic programs and employers. Finally, Section D discusses the hours that youth worked and the wages they received through Recovery Act funds.

### Key Findings: The Range of Summer Experiences

- **About one-third of sites emphasized work, offering few other services.** The remaining two-thirds offered academics to at least some youth. Few sites offered any of the other 10 program elements required by the regular WIA youth program but optional for Recovery Act programs.
- **Half of sites offered occupational skills training.** The most common industry covered by training was health care, followed by manufacturing, culinary, construction, and entrepreneurship. Other academic offerings included GED preparation, remediation, and recovery of school credits.
- **Health care, public services, parks and recreation, and education and child care were the most commonly reported industries for summer jobs.** Youth most often performed administrative or clerical tasks, landscaping and outdoor maintenance, janitorial and indoor maintenance, and construction work. Although youth's daily tasks may have been at entry level, participants were nevertheless exposed to careers within the industry where they were placed in a summer job.
- **Youth could work an average of 200 potential hours over seven weeks at $7.75 per hour.** This resulted in average potential earnings of $1,500 per youth over the course of the summer.
- **More than three-quarters of sites experienced at least some payroll problems.** The most common problems involved timesheet collection, paycheck processing, and paycheck distribution.

## A. Local Strategies for Serving Youth

The focus of summer initiatives administered through the workforce investment system has shifted over time. As discussed in Chapter I, the JTPA Summer Employment and Training Program focused initially on employment. However, the early 1990s saw a shift to ensure linkage between youth's work experience and their academic achievements. With the passage of WIA, summer employment became only one of 10 required program elements. In contrast, the Congressional

explanatory statement for the Recovery Act stated that "the conferees are particularly interested in these funds being used to create summer employment opportunities for youth." At the same time, ETA allowed "the flexibility to determine whether it is appropriate that academic learning be directly linked to summer employment for each youth" (U.S. Department of Labor 2009d).

### 1. The Focus on Employment

In identifying their service delivery strategies beyond work readiness training, sites took one of two approaches. About one-third focused largely on work experience, offering few other services beyond work readiness training. The remaining two-thirds offered work experience as well as academic experience to at least a subset of youth. Very few sites offered any of the remaining 10 service elements that are required through regular WIA youth programs but made optional for the SYEI funded by the Recovery Act (see Chapter I for a list of the 10 elements).

About one-third of sites chose to emphasize on-the-job experience through work site placements (see Table VII.1). Six of these seven sites offered jobs to all youth; one focused on work for older youth and required academic activities for all younger youth. Site administrators in these sites gave two common reasons for their choice of service model. First, they believed that the model complied with the true intent of the Recovery Act to stimulate the economy and put money directly in the hands of youth. Second, they felt the implementation time frame was too tight either to logistically coordinate an academic component with local partners or to ensure a reasonable impact on youth who participate for less than two months.

**Table VII.1 Local Strategies for Serving Youth through the SYEI**

| Strategy | Number of Sites |
|---|---|
| Employment with Few Other Services | 7 |
| Employment plus Academics | 13 |
| Extent of Academic Offerings[a] | |
| Offered site-wide to interested youth | 6 |
| Offered only to a subset of youth | 7 |

Source: Site visit interviews in 20 selected sites.

Note: N = 20 sites.

[a]Pertains only to those sites that offered employment plus academics.

### 2. Provision of Academics and Other Services

Thirteen sites offered some form of academics to at least a subset of youth. Six of these offered area-wide programs to all interested youth before they were placed in a job. Although available to all, sites typically reported that less than 10 percent of youth in these sites expressed interest and enrolled in academics. For those youth who did enroll in academics, either the summer began with occupational skills training before placement in a related employment opportunity or the skills training occurred simultaneously with a relevant job. Some sites also allowed youth to participate in remediation, recovery of school credits, or GED preparation while working in their summer jobs. Those youth who were not interested in academics were matched immediately to employment.

The academic offerings in the seven remaining sites varied by youth providers within sites and were not necessarily available to all youth enrolled across the site. In some cases, an emphasis on innovation resulted in service offerings that were dramatically different from one provider to the next. For example, a single site had one provider that offered entrepreneurship training, another that offered occupational skills training in computer technology, another that offered remediation, and yet another that offered high-tech digital arts education. Another site offered leadership skills training in one service location, CPR and first aid training in another, and fire suppression certification in another. The content, duration, and intensity of academic programs are discussed in detail below.

Beyond academics and work experience, the 20 sites offered few of the remaining 10 elements of the regular WIA program. Supportive services, discussed in Chapter V, served as the only other major service offering. Two sites offered summer components that involved leadership development opportunities. One site reported offering a behavioral adjustment program. Another offered dropout prevention, violence prevention, and fatherhood services. The evaluation revealed no sites offering mentoring beyond the worksite or counseling such as for drug and alcohol abuse.

Parent involvement was also limited, with 16 sites reporting that it was not encouraged beyond providing intake paperwork. Six of these sites, however, stated that some parents either contacted the site about youth paychecks or to check on their child's progress. Three of these sites also involved parents if youth had behavior issues or became involved in worksite conflicts. Of the remaining four sites, two invited parents to attend orientation and/or work readiness training. One of these plus another two sites also invited parents to a summer graduation, recognition, or culmination ceremony at the end of the initiative.

## B. The Content of Summer Experiences

To the extent possible, most sites tried to tailor these experiences to the needs and interests of each individual youth. Given this customization, it is important to understand not only the types of activities to which youth were exposed but also the day-to-day tasks they accomplished and their perceptions of the overall experience.

### 1. Types and Content of Academic Offerings

In those sites that offered classroom activities beyond work readiness training, academics ranged in both content and intensity. Some youth spent very few hours in academics before moving to a worksite; others spent the entire summer in the classroom and did not participate in summer employment. The content varied from occupational skills training to GED preparation and recovery of school credits.

At least some youth in five sites spent the entire summer in academic activities. As discussed in Chapter V, three sites reported that younger youth (aged 14, 15, and sometimes 16) spent the summer in work readiness training. A fourth site offered arts education to 12 youth as their summer work experience. This involved training in high-tech digital arts, including digital imaging, software programs, journalism, and desktop publishing. They worked on developing portfolios and documented a local music festival. Finally, a fourth site worked with a professor at a local four-year college to develop a college-level leadership development course for 21 youth. The program was based largely on team work activities and included work site field trips and community service projects.

Ten sites offered occupational skills training to a portion of participating youth. The most common industry covered by training was health care, followed by manufacturing, culinary, construction, and entrepreneurship (see Table VII.2). Box VII.1 provides an example of training in the healthcare industry. Training programs lasted between one and six weeks and were typically administered by community colleges or local nonprofit organizations that served as summer providers or subcontractors. Three of the sites administered their occupational skills training programs as a component of pre-apprenticeship activities, discussed later in this chapter. Although figures were not available from all sites, most sites reported that between 5 and 10 percent of youth attended occupational skills training. To encourage participation in academics, one site used strong financial incentives (see Box VII.2).

**Table VII.2 Industries for Occupational Skills Training**

| Industry | Number of Sites Offering Training |
|---|---|
| Health | 4 |
| Manufacturing | 2 |
| Culinary | 2 |
| Construction | 2 |
| Entrepreneurship | 2 |
| Renewable energy | 1 |
| Keyboarding, computer system building | 1 |
| Retail | 1 |
| Green career paths | 1 |

Source: Site visit interviews in 20 selected sites.

Note: Total number of sites offering training = 10.

**Box VII.1: Occupational Skills Training in the Health Care Industry**

One provider in the *Denver, CO,* site developed a "pre-professional occupations" program, which staff called "the health care academy." Nearly 50 students participated in the program, which was "designed to provide youth exposure to health occupations and the opportunity to become certified in various industry-recognized certifications that will attempt to facilitate future success within the health care sector." Youth spent time at two hospitals in the region over six weeks and completed the following components: (1) industry-recognized training and certification (including training in the Health Insurance Portability and Accountability Act (HIPAA), cardiopulmonary resuscitation—health provider, first aid, and blood-borne pathogens), (2) SafeServ certification, (3) wheelchair transport, (4) oxygen safety, (5) hospital/medical terminology, (6) scope of practice, (7) careers within health care, and (8) "other related work skills." The program also included job-shadowing opportunities, exposure within health settings (including emergency rooms, supportive programs, front desk ambassadors, environmental services, cardiology, pulmonary physiology, minimally invasive diagnostic center, nursing, rehabilitation, imaging and food services), and networking and career mentorship.

**Box VII.2: One Site Offered Strong Incentives for Participation in Summer Education**

The site in *Albuquerque, NM,* placed a strong emphasis on the importance of education. It accomplished this in two ways. First, all youth who were assessed below a 12th-grade level on the Test of Adult Basic Education were encouraged to participate in a Key Train remediation course throughout the summer experience. Second, the site encouraged participation in other academic programs through a monetary incentive. Youth were given an additional $1 per hour in summer wages if they enrolled in a GED preparation course, postsecondary education, or an academic program that would result in a credential from an acceptable institution. In addition, youth received a $100 bonus upon completing one of these programs and receiving the related certification. As of the evaluation site visit in August 2009, the site reported that 85 percent of youth enrolled in the educational incentive program.

**Youth Perspectives: Certifications from the Occupational Safety and Health Administration**

*". . . OSHA helped a lot of people realize . . . they were like, 'I didn't know that could happen.' So now I got my goggles on, my facemask and my gloves on, 'cause I'm not playing no games with chemicals and stuff."*

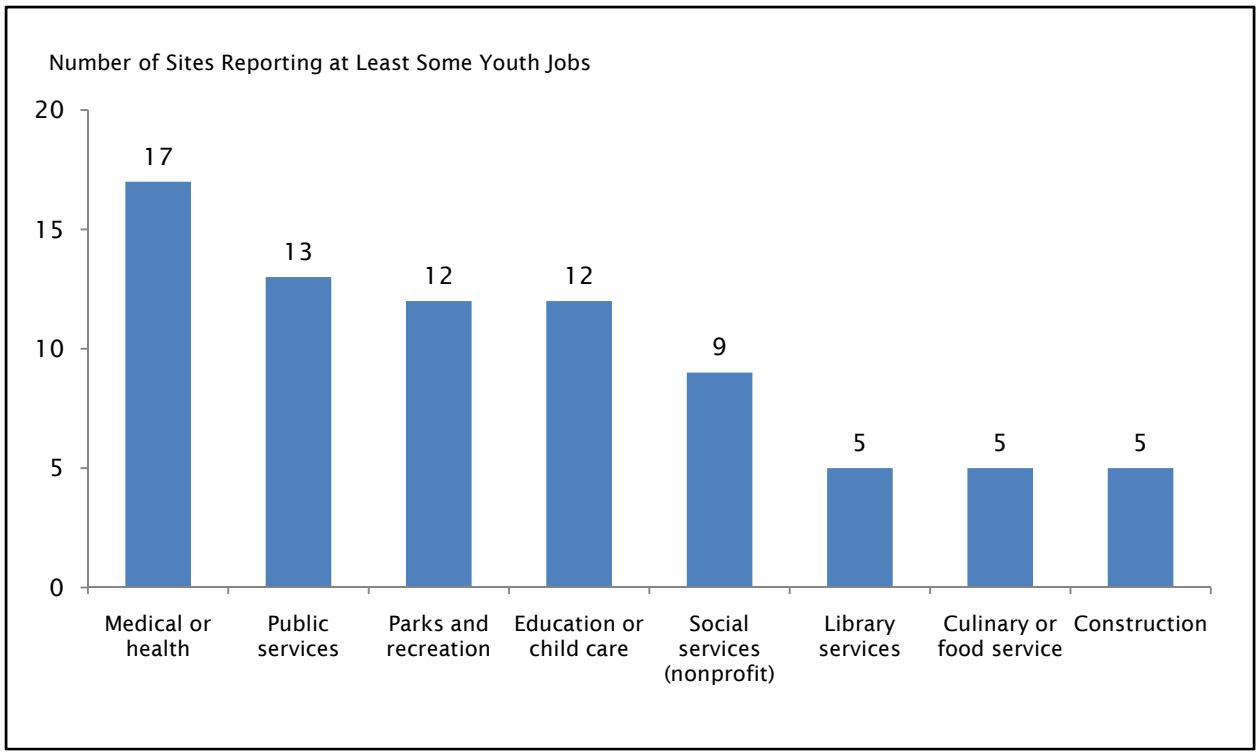
*"We got that certificate for doing OSHA. Like it makes you feel good, like you actually accomplished something, like you're not doing this for no reason."*

Other academic offerings were less common. Two sites offered recovery of school credits, two offered GED preparation, and one offered remediation. At least one provider in three sites offered participating youth the opportunity to complete a 10-hour training certification from the Occupational Safety and Health Administration (OSHA). One site offered other certifications as part of the summer experience, including training in CPR, first aid, and babysitting.

### 2. Industries and Tasks of Youth's Summer Jobs

Youth were placed in a wide range of industries and occupations during their summer work experiences. As mentioned in Chapter VI, sites targeted the public, private, and nonprofit sectors when recruiting employers. The most common industries reported by site visit respondents—including LWIB and provider administrators, case managers, worksite recruiters, worksite supervisors, and employers—involved health care, public services, parks and recreation, and education/child care (see Figure VII.1). Seventeen sites placed youth in the health industry, with jobs in hospitals, nursing homes, mental health centers, dental offices, and other medical facilities. Another 13 had youth working in public services with county and municipal government agencies such as town hall, the chamber of commerce, the public housing department, the fire department, Veterans Affairs, or public works. Twelve developed programs in parks and recreation, which are discussed below in the section on green jobs. A comparable number of sites placed youth in educational institutions such as the superintendent or board of education offices, high schools, alternative schools, middle and elementary schools, and child care centers.

**Figure VII.1 Common Industries for Summer Work Experiences**




Source: Site visit interviews in 20 selected sites.

Notes: This table includes only industries mentioned by five or more sites. Industries cited by fewer than five include agriculture, legal services, retail, workforce development, automotive, computer services, media, hospitality, and finance. Green jobs were not categorized as a separate industry but were included in the most closely related industry above. These jobs are discussed in detail later in this chapter.

N = 20 sites.

Within this wide range of industries, the most common duties that youth performed included administrative or clerical tasks, landscaping and outdoor maintenance, janitorial and indoor maintenance, and construction (see Table VII.3). Sixteen sites involved youth in administrative or clerical tasks, such as answering phones, filing, completing paperwork, and word processing. This appeared to be common within the top two industries: medical/health and public services. Another 14 sites reported that at least some youth were conducting park reclamation, green space protection, and urban forestry. Day-to-day tasks in this area often included weeding; raising plant beds; planting flowers, bushes, and trees; digging and laying recreation trails; raking; trimming bushes; and cleaning and restoring playgrounds. Two sites also reported that some older youth or youth with more work experience were placed in higher-level positions or supervisory roles in a range of different industries.

**Table VII.3 Common Tasks Performed by Participating Youth at Worksites**

| Task | Number of Sites Reporting at Least Some Youth Performing This as Primary Task |
|---|---|
| Administrative or clerical duties | 16 |
| Park reclamation, landscaping, outdoor maintenance | 14 |
| Janitorial or indoor maintenance | 12 |
| Construction | 11 |
| Recycling computers, paper and other materials | 10 |
| Child care, senior care, counseling at summer camps or playgrounds | 10 |
| Weatherization and energy efficiency | 8 |
| Agriculture, community gardening, urban gardening | 8 |
| Food service | 7 |
| Service, sales, or hospitality | 7 |
| Computer repair or maintenance | 6 |

Source: Site visit interviews in 20 selected sites.

Note: This table includes only tasks mentioned by five or more sites. Additional tasks cited by fewer than five sites include health care tasks, automotive repair and maintenance, and pet grooming or care.

N = 20 sites.

Information gathered from the youth who participated in focus groups mirrors these patterns quite closely. Among these youth, over 87 percent reported working as part of the summer initiative (see Table VII.4).[17] The most common industries included health care and social assistance, education services, and public administration. The most common job descriptions were office and administrative support; education, training, and library; and building and grounds cleaning and maintenance.

Notably, both youth and staff reported that although youth's daily tasks may have been at entry level, participants were nevertheless exposed to careers within the industry where they were placed in a summer job. For example, a youth filing paperwork at a doctor's office learned about HIPAA regulations, observed health care workers interacting with patients, and experienced the general operations of a health care facility. A youth answering telephones at a nonprofit agency learned about the needs of the agency's clients, the array of services available to meet those needs, and strategies that case managers used to match clients to the most appropriate services. These experiences were reported as valuable in exploring career options and considering future jobs.

[17] Focus group information forms did not capture the non-employment activities that the remaining 13 percent of respondents were engaged in. However, focus group discussions revealed that most of these youth were in education programs.

**Table VII.4 Summary Work Experiences of Focus Group Participants**

| | All Participants (Percentages) |
|---|---|
| **Working as part of the Recovery Act SYEI** | **87.9** |
| **Industry**[a] | |
| Healthcare, social assistance | 30.7 |
| Education services | 28.2 |
| Public administration | 9.7 |
| Arts, entertainment, recreation | 6.5 |
| Retail trade | 4.0 |
| Administration and support, waste management, remediation services | 2.4 |
| Accommodations and food service | 2.4 |
| Other | 4.8 |
| Not specified | 11.3 |
| **Occupation**[a] | |
| Office and Administrative Support | 27.4 |
| Education, Training, and Library | 24.2 |
| Building and Grounds Cleaning and Maintenance | 19.4 |
| Personal Care and Service | 5.7 |
| Health Care Practitioners and Technical and Health Care Support | 4.0 |
| Food Preparation and Serving Related | 3.2 |
| Sales and Related | 3.2 |
| Community and Social Service | 2.4 |
| Arts Design, Entertainment, Sports, and Media | 0.8 |
| Installation, Maintenance, and Repair | 0.8 |
| Transportation and Material Moving | 0.8 |
| Not Specified | 8.1 |
| **Sample Size** | **124** |

Source: Information forms completed by youth who participated in site visit focus groups.

Notes: Those who did not report working may have been enrolled in an academic program or may not have been assigned to an employer by the time of the site visit.

Data on industry were coded according to the North American Industry Classification System and occupations were coded based on the Standard Occupational Classification System.

[a] Data pertain only to those youth who reported working as a part of the Recovery Act SYEI at the time of the site visit.

### 3. Pre-apprenticeship Programs

Across the 20 sites, only three sites developed pre-apprenticeship programs to support youth development in the trades (see Table VII.5). The Seattle program built upon an existing relationship; Lehigh Valley and Roanoke developed new programs from the ground up. In describing the motivation for developing a new pre-apprenticeship program, one site administrator explained that the region expects widespread retirement among baby boomers to create more demand for skilled workers in the building and construction industry.

Each pre-apprenticeship program lasted seven to eight weeks and covered a range of building and construction trades (see Table VII.5). All three targeted older youth: one enrolled only 17- and 18-year-olds, and two enrolled only those 18 or older. The two new programs enrolled small numbers; the existing program in Seattle enrolled 100 summer youth.

**Table VII.5 Characteristics of Pre-Apprenticeship Programs**

| Site | Local Partner | Number Enrolled | Trades Covered During Training | Type of Work Experience |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| Seattle | South Seattle Community College and Manufacturing Industrial Council | 100 | Cement masonry, carpentry, drywall, energy auditing, weatherization, power utility work, heating and cooling, energy-efficient window-glazing | Private sector employers |
| Lehigh Valley | United Community Services | 12 | Building and construction trades | Visitors and field trips to worksites |
| Roanoke | Labor Local #980 | 10 | Electrical, brick laying, sheet metal, carpentry and concrete | Habitat for Humanity |

All three programs balanced classroom activities with practical hands-on experience. The Roanoke program consisted of four weeks in training followed by three weeks of on-site job training at a Habitat for Humanity construction site. The Seattle program involved three weeks of classroom training followed by worksite placements at private sector employers. Finally, the Lehigh Valley program involved two days per week in the classroom, one day per week with visitors who work in the field, and one day per week of hands-on activities during field trips.

Participants who completed two of these programs received an industry-recognized certification. In particular, one program included the 10-hour OSHA training that resulted in certification. The other site's program involved certifications in CPR and flagging for construction sites.

### 4. Green Jobs

Given the focus of the Obama administration on training workers for green jobs, the guidance provided by ETA placed a strong emphasis on "incorporating green work experiences" in SYEIs. This included both conservation and sustainable practices. Suggested areas included "retrofitting of public buildings, the construction of energy-efficient affordable public housing, solar panel installation, reclaiming of public park areas, or recycling of computers" (U.S. Department of Labor 2009d). Local areas were also encouraged to partner with community colleges to identify training opportunities or coursework that could be infused with green components.

Despite this guidance, study respondents across sites and even within sites often did not use a common definition for *green jobs*. What one person considered green, another did not. Administrators and staff in three sites explicitly expressed confusion over the definition. Many other sites categorized a range of different activities as green. For example, some sites considered green jobs to be those directly related to occupations in renewable energy, environmental consulting, and energy-efficient construction. Others discussed non-green jobs, such as administrative or maintenance functions, within green industries or organizations. Still others talked about green exposure within non-green jobs, such as the use of recycling and environmentally friendly products

through day-to-day business practices. This mimics the findings presented by the GAO suggesting that local areas were unclear about what constitutes a green job (U.S. Government Accountability Office 2009). As a first step in defining the concept of green jobs, the Bureau of Labor Statistics developed new O*Net occupational classifications, released in summer 2009, to define green jobs.[18]

Keeping in mind local variation in the definition of green jobs, nine sites reported little success in placing summer youth in the green sector. Four of these reported that because the local area contained very little green industry, they were unable to tap into an existing market. Three felt that the time frame for implementation was too tight to develop jobs in new industries, including the green industry. One site also said that 80 percent of job placements were made in the nonprofit and public sectors; most local green jobs were found in the private sector. The remaining two sites had planned to identify green jobs but could not report why it was not happening. Despite their reported lack of success, all these sites were able to engage at least a small number of youth in green jobs.

By contrast, 11 sites reported success in developing green jobs for the summer. Some were not able to identify as many as they had planned but were still pleased with the proportion of youth who were exposed to a green work experience. Specific reports were not available from all sites, but five reported placing between 10 and 48 percent of youth in green jobs. The site reporting 48 percent involved youth in a large conservation effort.

Green jobs across all 20 sites were identified within the private, nonprofit, and public sectors. For example, youth were placed at for-profit organizations such as environmental consulting firms, a manufacturing facility that makes products to aid in oil cleanup, retailers selling organic and recycled products, and a company selling energy-efficient two-wheeled vehicles. Nonprofit worksites that involved green concepts included urban gardens, an agency focused on the fair production and distribution of food, and community development organizations doing graffiti removal and neighborhood beautification. Other sites partnered with government agencies—such as Parks and Recreation, the Forestry Department, and the Bureau of Land Management—to develop green jobs. Three sites developed their own conservation corps to do community cleanup without the assistance of other agencies, and one site partnered with the public housing authority to do energy audits.

Across all 20 sites, the most common green jobs included park reclamation, recycling, weatherization and energy efficiency, and community gardening (see Table VII.3). Less-common jobs were in industries such as construction, manufacturing of green building materials, and the energy sector, including solar and wind energy. As discussed above, some of these jobs involved administrative or maintenance tasks within a green industry, but youth were nevertheless exposed to the field. Park reclamation and related jobs appeared to involve the largest number of youth across sites. Box VII.3 provides some examples of green jobs reported across the sites.

[18] Recognizing the growing emphasis on green jobs, recent public, nonprofit, and private sector efforts are under way to define the concept of green jobs more clearly. In addition to efforts by the Bureau of Labor Statistics, several states have conducted surveys and analytic studies of green jobs (Graybill 2009; Hardcastle 2009; Jolly 2008; Michigan Department of Energy 2009; New York State Department of Labor 2009; Oregon Employment Department 2009). Additional studies have been conducted by the Pew Charitable Foundation, Statistics Canada, and Eurostat (Pew Charitable Trusts 2009; Statistics Canada 2007; Eurostat 2009).

**Box VII.3: Examples of Green Job Placements**

The site in *Bridgeport, CT,* partnered with the mayor's office on a green initiative. Several youth accompanied city staff as they visited local residents from door to door. The team talked to residents about energy efficiency strategies and made simple conservation efforts such as changing light bulbs.

In *Springfield, MA,* 30 youth helped to turn a dump site into an outdoor amphitheater for local concerts and events. On the worksite, they performed cleanup, made art out of recycled junk, and helped with community gardening.

The site in *Albuquerque, NM,* partnered with a local housing authority that received Recovery Act funds to support weatherization of homes. Several youth were placed at this site to answer telephone inquiries from residents and help them complete applications to receive weatherization services.

In *Pittsburgh*, *PA*, 140 youth who were served by the Student Conservation Association spent the summer building a playground for a new green development that serves homeless mothers and their children, building new recreation trails through low-income neighborhoods, building rock steps and tinder bridges, removing invasive plant species, and using global positioning systems to plot different tree species.

Two youth in *Lehigh Valley, PA,* performed administrative duties at an environmental consulting group aimed at "building stewardship" by helping academic, nonprofit, and professional clients develop environmentally sustainable practices and facilities.

Seven sites also tried to reinforce green concepts during classroom activities. As discussed in Chapter V, four sites discussed green concepts such as recycling and energy conservation in the work readiness training provided to all participating youth. Another site offered an occupational skills training in construction that discussed green technology, materials, and building techniques. Another site worked with the local community college to offer a two-week training course on green career paths. Finally, one site developed a program where students could receive college credits for the exploration of water quality jobs.

### 5. Community Service Activities

Many participating youth contributed to community service projects through their worksite placements and training activities. For example, occupational skills training in one site and a pre-apprenticeship program in another culminated in a community service project. Youth in career academies in two sites also participated routinely in these projects throughout the summer. Two other sites reported that, as part of their paid work experience, some youth volunteered at the local senior center, humane society, food pantry, community arts center, and Habitat for Humanity. Most of the parks reclamation and community cleanup activities were also considered service learning opportunities.

Only two sites, however, actively encouraged service learning beyond the worksite and classroom. In particular, one site offered a wage incentive of an extra $1 per hour to those youth who committed to completing 20 hours of community service over the course of the summer. Front-line staff developed lists of potential community service sites by contacting local nonprofit organizations. They also encouraged youth to identify their own opportunities through local churches and schools. Youth were required to have the community service supervisor sign a log tracking the hours completed. A provider in the second site encouraged volunteering through its health care program. Youth were taught the importance of volunteering, and staff helped them fill

out a volunteer application at the local hospital so they could begin unpaid volunteer work outside their summer experience.

### 6. Youth Impressions of Summer Employment

Although the study is not designed to rigorously assess whether the tasks performed by youth provided "meaningful" work, youth in 19 of the 20 sites provided their perspectives during focus groups on the usefulness to them of their summer work experiences. Youth were largely positive, citing noticeable improvements in their soft skills, work performance, and resumes. They also expressed appreciation for the income. However, a smaller number of youth were unhappy with aspects of their summer jobs and suggested improvements to the summer initiative.

When asked what was most useful about their summer experience, at least some youth in 11 sites mentioned that it helped build their résumé and prepare them to find better jobs in the future. Youth in seven focus groups mentioned developing networking skills, contacts within the professional community, and solid references. Youth in six groups reported that their jobs were directly related to their long-term career goals. Finally, at least some youth in five sites were placed in jobs that were not related to their interests but felt that they still learned valuable lessons and skills.

Despite the largely positive response, at least one youth in seven sites expressed dissatisfaction with the work experience. Some complained that the work was boring, they did not like the work, or they did not have enough work to keep busy. Others said their jobs did not match their interests, and they were not learning useful skills. Two youth in one focus group also reported that they were paid less and worked fewer hours than they were promised during the application process. These

**Youth Perspectives: Perceived Benefits of Work Experience Include Connections to Career Goals**

*"I want to be a writer, and this documentary, or the things that they have me doing, gives me the opportunity to get comfortable with using my voice and putting my ideas and my views out there. So, just a great experience on so many levels."*

*"My major is pre-social work, and I want to work for an adoption agency or foster care. And at the children's home [where I work], they have an adoption program and foster care, and I have had the opportunity to learn about the adoption process there."*

*"Hopefully I will be like an anesthesiologist. So that's why I'm majoring in chemistry. It's pre-med. [This summer] is like a shadowing experience, because I actually do go in during different surgeries, and I get to like see firsthand if I could see myself doing this."*

*"I work in the resource room, and I'll help customers do job search, if they need to make résumés. I really love it because I get to help people who don't have jobs who are looking for jobs and who really need help. . . . It's not what I wanted to do, [but] I kind of think I can make a career out of this, 'cause I really do enjoy it."*

*"There are the people that study the immune system and find the vaccinations. So I've been working with CMV—that's herpes—and cancer. Just trying to like basically connect all the dots so that they can find the vaccinations for herpes right now. I'm interested in immunology, so that was neat that I got that job, because that's like specifically what I am interested in."*

*"I don't ever want to be a landscaper. . . . The way it did help me was, because of this experience, now I know I would never want to do that. . . . I don't think there are negative parts about the job. I mean, the work is hard, but we learned, like, this is not what we want to do in the future."*

**Youth Perspectives: Perceived Benefits of Work Experience Such as Increases in Professionalism, Interpersonal Skills, and Leadership**

"*This is like a perfect first job because like you learn like your responsibilities, you learn how to work with other people, your communication skills. . . .I'm like all excited about it. My first check came. It was exciting. . . .And I feel like after this I will find another job, since I have a reference.*"

*"It didn't help me exactly with the career field I want to do, 'cause I want to do something in the medical field. The OSHA helped a little bit with like the medical stuff, but like I think it's more of the experience. Like you learn to adapt to different situations and how to deal with different people and how to be professional, and that helps you in any career."*

*"Usually I talk to people that I have something in common with. And so, like, now I work with people that I don't know, that I don't have anything in common with, that I normally wouldn't even talk to. . . . So I kind of learned to interact with people I don't know and how to work well with them."*

*"I want to be a social worker, and working at the science center helps me interact with a lot of different people and learn a lot of different stuff. So when I work at the information desk, I get a good chance to interact and like see how I can handle different problems."*

*"I got some leadership skills since [my worksite supervisor] said that I was going to be the supervisor for my group. . . . I'm not really such a good leader type, and I was really surprised, and it's been good. Like, people actually listened to me. . . . I'm good at following directions but wasn't used to giving them."*

youth suggested that to help improve the summer experience, sites should work harder to find the right employer match given youth interests and ensure that there is enough interesting work at each employer to justify a summer job.

## C. Matching Youth To Summer Experiences

To ensure a high-quality summer experience, local staff had to identify the most appropriate mix of services for each youth and match him or her to an academic program, an employer worksite, or both. This process was not trivial, given the volume of youth and the range of local experiences that were available. Many factors drove local decisions, including the personal interests of youth, the availability of worksites, and employer preferences.

### 1. Strategies to Match Youth to Academic Programs

Among the two-thirds of sites that offered academic programs either in addition to or instead of work experiences, youth were generally enrolled in academics based on an expressed interest or need. To match youth with occupational skills training, GED preparation, or postsecondary education, staff often identified appropriate academics based on interest inventories completed during the intake or orientation process. For example, a youth who expressed interest in becoming a nurse or doctor might be referred to a health care academy or training opportunity. In some cases, staff reviewed IEPs submitted by the local school district as part of eligibility determination to decide whether a youth was in need of school credit recovery or remediation. As mentioned earlier, three sites also placed younger youth in classroom activities based on their age and skill level.

Aside from age-based programs that engaged large numbers of younger participants in academics, most sites offered academics to only a limited number of summer participants. Even so,

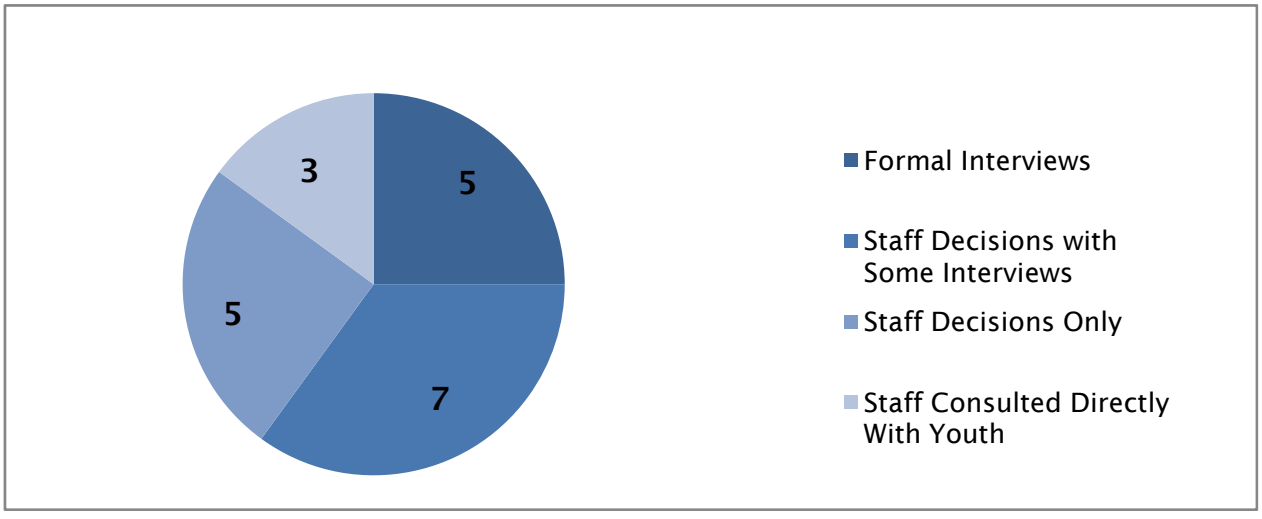
some sites had difficulty filling all of their academic slots. For example, one site offered up to 16 slots in each occupational skills training class but only enrolled 13 to 14 youth per class. Analysis of youth focus group transcripts suggest that some youth may not have been interested in attending school-based activities in a classroom setting during the summer months. Others appeared unaware of the availability of occupational skills training or other academic offerings.

### 2. Strategies to Match Youth to Summer Jobs

Ensuring a solid match between youth and employer was critical for both satisfying the employer's needs and maximizing the likelihood that the youth had a "meaningful" work experience. Sites reported that many employers had, for their new summer hires, specific requirements that had to be considered as sites determined their matching strategies. At least some providers in 10 sites reported that many worksites wanted older youth or youth with high school diplomas. As a result, it was more difficult to find placements for younger youth. Other employers had very specific requirements, such as hiring only youth residing in their municipality; youth with specific job skills such as computer literacy; youth with at least a 10th-grade reading level; or youth with a driver's license.

Given these factors and the volume of youth recruited for the SYEI, sites developed job-matching approaches that fell into four categories (see Figure VII.2). First, five sites required all or most youth to formally interview with prospective employers. Second, seven sites used matching processes that were driven largely by staff decisions but involved some interviewing based on employer requests. Third, another five sites empowered staff to match youth based on available information without any employer interviews. Finally, three sites had staff work directly with youth to select the most appropriate employer from the ones available.

**Figure VII.2 Job Matching Strategies**




Source: Site visit interviews in 20 selected sites.

Note: N= 20 sites.

Site administrators and staff in the 12 sites that conducted interviewing reported several reasons for using formal job interviews. The primary goals were (1) to simulate a real interview experience when applying for a job, (2) to ensure that the employer was comfortable with the match and was given the opportunity to choose the best candidate, and (3) to allow the youth to become familiar with the potential work environment.

Most interviewing involved one-on-one personal interactions between the employer and each interested youth. Site staff typically determined one or more potentially good employer matches for a given youth and then sent the youth on an interview with the worksite supervisor. The supervisor either hired the youth or asked to interview another candidate. One of these sites had staff accompany youth on their interviews to provide support, and two sites gave feedback to the youth based either on staff observation or the employer's feedback. In addition, two sites chose to hold site-wide job fairs for participating youth where employers interviewed multiple youth in the same day (see Box VII.4).

**Box VII.4: The Use of Job Fairs to Match Youth to Employers**

*Athens, GA* – At the start of the program, participating youth and employers attended a brief orientation session that ended with formal interviews. Youth were responsible for approaching worksite supervisors to initiate at least three interviews. Some interviews were held in small groups, while others were one on one. At the end of the job fair, each employer ranked his or her top three candidates. Staff then determined which youth would be placed with each employer.

*Denver, CO* – The site held three job fairs with the goal of having 95 percent of youth experience an interview. Youth were divided into groups by age and sent to a job fair with employers looking to hire from that age range. Employers were also color-coded by geographic region so the youth would interview with those close to their homes. During the job fairs, employers could either offer the job to a youth immediately or interview another youth.

Respondents in the eight sites that chose not to conduct interviews said either that the time frame was too short or that it would have been logistically too difficult to interview all youth. Instead, these sites relied on staff either to review each youth's information or to talk directly with the youth before matching him or her to the most appropriate employer. Factors contributing to this matching process are discussed in detail below.

### 3. Factors Influencing the Job Matching Process

When asked what factors influenced their decisions to match youth with worksites, site staff reported four key considerations. First, 14 sites reported that youth interests expressed during application, orientation, or meetings with site staff drove the choice of employer. Second, 12 sites reported that the matching process was influenced by the job requirements based on age, experience, or skills or the types of employers available at the time of the matching. Third, 11 sites reported that direct employer feedback on candidates through the formal interviewing process was a major factor. Finally, 10 sites considered transportation needs and limitations when placing youth.

Six sites were not able to match youth with employers based on youth's expressed interests. Interviews with site staff and administrators revealed five main reasons.

1. **Timing of Employer Recruitment.** As discussed in Chapter VI, recruitment of employers typically began before youth recruitment, so available employers were not always the best fit based on youth interests.
2. **First-come, First-served Structure.** Most sites recruited enough employers given the total volume of enrolled youth. However, job matching was treated as first-come, first-served which may have limited the types of employers available to youth enrolled later in the summer.
3. **Need for Quick Placements.** Some local providers felt pressure to place youth quickly, which limited their time to make the best possible match.
4. **Employer Age Restrictions.** There were more limited opportunities for younger youth due to employer requirements.
5. **Lack of Communication.** Three sites reported that lack of communication resulted in difficulties matching youth to appropriate employers. In two of these sites, local providers were not given youth's intake paperwork and therefore did not know their interests before they arrived for service. The third site reported that youth recruitment and employer recruitment were conducted by completely separate staff, who did not coordinate efforts. As a result, there was a significant mismatch between the types of jobs that youth wanted and the employers that participated.

### 4. Challenges to Placing Youth in Jobs

Once youth were determined eligible and enrolled in the initiative, at least some in four sites were, after receiving orientation and work readiness training, not placed in jobs. In three of these sites, these youth interviewed poorly and were not selected or hired by any prospective employers. The fourth site reported that they enrolled more youth than could be matched given the number of appropriate employers that were available. None of these sites were able to provide solid estimates for the number of youth who were not placed.

Most of these youth were not provided with additional services and were not referred to other services within the community. One site notified the youth by mail that they would not receive further services from the initiative. Another site, however, reported that a small number of youth who interviewed poorly were hired directly by local service providers. This helped ensure that the youth were given the extra mentoring and guidance needed to have a successful experience and prevented the site from turning the youth away altogether.

## D. Hours, Wages, and Process for Compensating Youth

The Recovery Act SYEI focused on putting money into the hands of youth. To balance their budgets, sites had to make trade-offs when identifying the number of youth to be served, the length of the summer initiative, the number of hours that each youth could participate, and the pay rate. Although generally successful when distributing their Recovery Act funds, most sites experienced at least some challenges in compensating youth.

### 1. Hours and Weeks Worked in Summer Jobs

The summer initiative ran from May through September 2009, for a total of 22 weeks. Most sites, however, did not begin serving youth until late June or early July. In determining the length of

their initiatives, sites ultimately needed to weigh the pros and cons of providing more youth with less intensive experiences that lasted for fewer weeks or fewer youth with more intensive experiences that lasted more weeks.

Two sites discussed the challenges of determining the right initiative length. The LWIB in one site had to negotiate with a local provider as a result of differences in their service philosophies and developed a compromise on the number of youth that would be served and the number of weeks they could participate. The provider was accustomed to working intensively with at-risk youth over long periods of time. However, given the guidance provided by ETA to focus resources on summer 2009, the LWIB wanted the provider to enroll more youth for fewer weeks than what the provider wanted. In the second site, a LWIB administrator reported that the primary goal was to serve as many youth as possible in summer 2009, limiting the total number of work hours available to each youth. If the site were to implement the initiative again, the LWIB expected to serve fewer youth who could work more hours to maximize the benefit of their experience.

On average, summer experiences lasted seven weeks if a youth participated from start to finish. All but one initiative ranged from a minimum of 3 weeks to a maximum of 20. The one exception involved a provider that planned to continue serving its summer youth with Recovery Act funds through February 2010 even though it was not a regular WIA provider. Another site allowed a subset of youth who successfully completed their six-week work experience to work for additional weeks so the site could spend the rest of their Recovery Act allocation before the end of the summer.

On average, youth could work about 28 hours a week at their job placements, accumulating an average of just under 200 potential work hours if they completed the full initiative. One site paid youth for only 16 hours per week; seven sites paid youth full-time for 40 hours per week. Total hours ranged from 66 to 400 across the 20 sites. In three sites, the available work hours varied based on the age of the youth, with younger youth working fewer hours. Another site commented that older youth who were not governed by as many employer regulations were also able to work evening and overnight shifts.

Information gathered during youth focus groups reflects these same patterns. Focus group participants had been working for an average of just over five weeks by the time of our site visits in late July and August (see Table VII.6). On average, they worked 27 hours per week. Forty-five percent were working between 20 and 29 hours per week, with another 44 percent working 30 hours or more.

At least some youth in nine focus groups discussed the desire to work more hours for more weeks. The two primary reasons were (1) to continue participating in productive activities through the rest of the summer, and (2) to gain more work experience. A less-common reason was to earn more income.

### 2. Youth's Wages and Potential Earnings

On average, youth received $7.75 per hour for their summer work experience. Half the sites paid most or all youth the federal minimum wage of $7.25 per hour; two sites paid the state minimum wage of $7.40 and $7.75 per hour. Youth in another seven sites typically earned between $8.00 and $8.55 per hour. One site paid all youth $10 per hour.

**Table VII.6 Work Hours and Wages of Focus Group Participants**

| | All Participants (Percentages Unless Specified) |
|---|---|
| **Weeks Worked to Date** | |
| 1-2 | 7.3 |
| 3-4 | 25.0 |
| 5-6 | 27.4 |
| ≥7 | 31.5 |
| Not Specified | 8.9 |
| Average (weeks) | 5.4 |
| **Hours Worked/Week** | |
| <20 | 11.3 |
| 20-29 | 45.2 |
| 30-34 | 25.0 |
| ≥35 | 18.6 |
| Average (hours) | 26.5 |
| **Hourly Wage** | |
| $7.25 | 26.6 |
| $7.26-$7.99 | 11.3 |
| $8.00-$9.99 | 22.6 |
| ≥$10.00 | 10.5 |
| Not Specified | 29.0 |
| Average (wage) | $8.33 |
| **Sample Size** | **124** |

Source: Information forms completed by youth who participated in site visit focus groups.

Note: Data pertain only to those youth focus group participants who reported working during the SYEI.

Subsets of youth in some sites, however, could earn more than their peers. For example, older youth sometimes earned more than younger youth. Two sites paid youth in supervisory roles additional wages, one offering an extra $1 per hour and the other offering between $9 and $12 for supervisors. Another paid some youth additional wages because one employer in the financial industry required a minimum of $12 per hour for entry-level positions. As discussed earlier, one site also paid an extra $1 per hour to those enrolled in a GED program or postsecondary education or agreed to conduct 20 hours of civic involvement.

Considering the average potential of 200 work hours, youth could earn total potential wages of about $1,526 over the summer.[19] Looking across sites, potential earnings ranged from a low of $986 to a high of $4,000 per youth. Seven sites had maximum earnings between $2,000 and $3,000. In 16 sites, however, the maximum earning potential varied across youth as a result of differences in the hours worked per week, the number of paid weeks, and the actual wage paid to each youth.

[19] These figures include hourly wages for both work and academic experiences but do not include additional supportive service payments or one-time stipends or incentives for the completion of academic activities.

Members of our focus groups reported earning slightly more than the typical youth enrolled across all 20 sites. As shown in Table VII.6, focus group participants earned an average of $8.33 per hour. Just over one quarter earned the federal minimum wage of $7.25 per hour, and over 10 percent earned $10 or more. This may result from the fact that focus group participants were recruited by site staff and are not representative of any larger group.

### 3. Challenges to Payroll Processing

Responsible for paying wages to a large group of youth who served as new "summer employees," sites had to identify the best strategy to organize their payroll processing. Three organizational models emerged. First, half the sites chose to have local youth providers collect timesheets and issue paychecks to participating youth. Second, eight sites had the LWIB or its fiscal agent maintain responsibility for the process payroll. Finally, the LWIB's fiscal agent and the providers shared responsibility for payroll in the remaining two sites.[20]

Within these three basic payroll models, one LWIB and three local providers across four different sites contracted with an outside vendor to process payroll. In addition, at least one provider in two sites required that employers pay youth wages directly. Employers supplied documentation to the provider and were subsequently reimbursed with Recovery Act funds.

Challenges in the payroll process emerged quickly. Three sites reported that at least one provider had difficulty with cash flow. Under cost reimbursement contracts, providers in these sites were required to pay youth with their own funds, document the payments, and submit an invoice for reimbursement by the LWIB. This proved challenging for some small community-based providers. Providers in one of these sites also reported that they would not be reimbursed until the end of the initiative and therefore had to spend the bulk of their operating budgets to continue paying youth throughout the summer. To help prevent this problem, a different site gave providers the option of a 20 percent advance to cover initial wages before reimbursements began.

Scaling up local payroll systems to accommodate the volume of youth caused difficulties in seven sites. Providers were responsible for payroll in three of these sites, and the LWIB or its fiscal agent was responsible in the other four. A doubling of payroll in some locations created large workloads and significant stress among payroll staff. A small number of sites also experienced software or systems problems as they began processing the large increase in the payroll. These problems were generally resolved quickly.

Logistical problems in the flow and functioning of the payroll process arose in nearly three-quarters of local sites. Among these, eight reported issues with timesheet collection. In particular, four had difficulty collecting timesheets from some youth and employers in a timely manner, which resulted in delays in the processing of some paychecks. Another four sites reported errors or lack of signatures on some timesheets. Thinking forward to future summer initiatives, respondents from two of these sites reported that they would provide a more detailed timesheet orientation for both

[20] In one of these two sites, the fiscal agent was an education agency and processed the majority of payroll. However, the agency could not assume payroll responsibility for those youth who did not clear a background check, so the providers were responsible for paying this subset. In the other site, most providers handled payroll, but the LWIB's fiscal agent processed payroll for two providers who did not have the internal capacity.

youth and employers. Respondents from another three sites also planned to consider electronic payroll systems or contracts with outside payroll vendors in the future.

Among those sites reporting logistical challenges, eight also experienced issues with paychecks. Three reported paycheck errors in the hours worked or amount paid to youth. Six of the eight also had problems distributing checks to youth. Among these, two reported that it was time-consuming and logistically challenging for provider staff to pick up paychecks from the LWIB's fiscal agent after payroll was processed and subsequently distribute checks to youth. Another reported that each youth had to sign a form documenting that he or she received the check. Two more sites reported that checks were often distributed late. Finally, one site said that youth did not receive their first paycheck until a month after the pay period ended. Most sites had already begun to remedy these problems by the time of the site visits; others were considering alternative strategies to help stem the problems in future summer initiatives.

When asked how they were able to process payroll without problems, the sites that did not experience challenges with payroll logistics simply reported that they had the existing infrastructure to handle the influx of youth or had efficient processes in place through previous WIA summer programming efforts. All of these sites required that employers sign youth timesheets. However, their processes for collecting timesheets varied with staff picking up timesheets from worksites, youth dropping off timesheets at the provider office, or employers sending or faxing timesheets to the provider. Paychecks were generally either distributed by staff through visits to the worksites or youth picked up their paychecks at the provider office.

Beyond payroll processing, 3 of the 20 sites reported that youth had to pay significant surcharges to cash their checks. In one of these sites, staff tried to educate youth about how to open a bank account to avoid these charges. However, staff reported that many youth were hesitant to do so either because of distrust of the banking system or concerns that their parents would access their wages through the account. Although many youth reported that their summer salaries helped support their household, staff members in another three sites also mentioned that youth expressed concern over the possibility that their parents would confiscate their wages.

# VIII. ASSESSING YOUTH PROGRESS

Because the SYEI represented a significant investment of public resources, it was incumbent upon local sites to assess their progress and the progress of participating youth. Since most youth had little or no work experience, they naturally had to work on developing the attributes of good workers. Recognizing this, sites established procedures to provide assistance to youth both during and after their job placements and to track their progress over time. Furthermore, they needed to ensure that employers were meeting the expectations set for them based on their agreement to participate in the initiative.

This chapter discusses sites' efforts to track and document the progress of youth who participated in the SYEI. Section A discusses strategies sites used to monitor youth activities and employer compliance while youth were at their summer jobs. Section B then turns to data collection efforts to assess increases in the work readiness skills of participating youth and to gather feedback on program performance. Finally, Section C discusses the efforts sites made to ensure a smooth transition of youth to new opportunities after the SYEI came to an end.

### Key Findings: Assessing Youth Progress

- **Staff felt that in-person visits were critical to youth's retention and success in the workplace.** Sites used a combination of formal and informal monitoring techniques to assess youth progress at their jobs and proactively prevent major problems that could result in termination or drop-off.
- **Flexibility in the measurement of increases in work readiness resulted in inconsistency across sites and sometimes within sites.** To assess growth, most, but not all, sites measured work readiness skills before and after youth participated in activities. However, sites varied substantially in the timing of these assessments, the methods of capturing data (such as through staff observation, employer feedback, and testing of youth knowledge), and the types of skills assessed.
- **Sites planned to use established linkages with schools, regular WIA services, and other community partners to transition youth to post-summer activities.** However, respondents reported that budget constraints and other factors may have limited the number of youth who could be transitioned to the regular WIA youth and adult programs.
- **Local administrators, staff, and employers feared that the weak economy would diminish the number of participants placed in permanent jobs.** However, because site visits were conducted during the summer, the study was unable to assess the actual rates of permanent placement among SYEI participants.

## A. Monitoring Worksite Experiences

Throughout the summer, staff spent significant time and energy following the progress of participating youth once they were placed at jobs. They sought to ensure that youth were receiving the mentorship they needed to learn and grow and were safe and productive in their workplaces. Although the study is not designed to measure their success in these efforts, site visit interviews examined the range of monitoring strategies that emerged across the sites.

**Youth Perspectives: Mentoring by Worksite Supervisors**

*"I'm thinking about being a teacher when I'm older, so right now like interacting with kids, and even the teachers there, they help me. They give me lessons on how I should, like, talk to the kids and stuff, so that's helping me out a lot."*

*"There's a bunch of psychologists that are already there. They invite us to lunch, and we just talk, and I go over what steps they took to get to the position that they're in. And, you know, what I can do."*

*"I'll be like a step ahead of the game. [My supervisors] want to, like, sit down with me and like show me what classes I should be taking and what colleges I should be going to. . . . I'll actually be, like, ready to just go straight to [the local university]."*

## 1. Adult Mentoring at Youth Worksites

Youth at all but one site were connected with an adult mentor at the start of their summer experience. At 12 sites, the worksite supervisor or a coworker at the job served as the youth mentor. At the other seven, worksite personnel and front-line staff shared responsibility for mentoring. As discussed in Chapter VI, sites discussed mentorship expectations with employers at the beginning of the summer, emphasizing that participants required more attention than regular employees. Many employers who were interviewed explained that their organizations had a vested interest in the success of these youth, and therefore they took their roles as mentors very seriously. Though the intensity of mentorship varied across sites, most youth were reported to interact with their worksite mentors daily and their program mentors less frequently.

Local staff and employers reported that mentoring relationships focused heavily on soft skills such as punctuality, work ethic, communication, and professionalism. Respondents felt that hard skills that were directly relevant for the job were easier to teach and, in some ways, less critical to the success of a youth's summer experience. Despite ETA guidance that participants should not be treated as "regular employees," respondents in seven sites stated that treating youth like "regular employees" was a valuable mentorship tool that taught them the importance of worksite performance and expectations.

## 2. Formal and Informal Monitoring of Worksites

To ensure that youth were having "meaningful" work experiences and receiving sufficient mentoring and oversight, sites expended significant staff resources monitoring youth activities once they were placed on a job. Although all 20 sites made in-person visits to worksites, two different approaches to monitoring emerged: (1) 11 sites used formal monitoring that involved site visits using a strict protocol, and (2) 17 sites used informal monitoring where staff informally dropped by employers to check in with youth and supervisors and to observe conditions at the site. Nine of these 17 used only informal monitoring; the remaining 8 used a combination of formal and informal.

Formal monitoring generally consisted of in-person visits to a worksite, during which a staff member used a standard protocol or monitoring checklist to assess quality (see Box VIII.1). Monitors followed three primary activities (1) speaking with the supervisor; (2) speaking with the youth, and (3) observing working conditions, safety, and compliance with child labor laws. The goal

**Box VIII.1: Example of Formal Worksite Monitoring Activities**

In *Hazard, KY, y*outh providers across the site hired a total of 21 temporary summer employees as site monitors. The site monitors were responsible for visiting the worksites weekly. The providers were asked to target college students for the site monitor positions to further the mission of providing employment opportunities to young adults. Though some college students were hired, the monitors were mostly older adults, including school teachers and retirees. Site monitors were trained as a group by the lead agency using a manual that described the rules governing worksites. Monitors have three main responsibilities.

**Worksite Checklists.** Monitors completed a visual checklist containing 16 questions about the type of work youth were performing, the availability of adequate equipment, the number of youth assigned to the worksite, the number of youth present during the visit, safety concerns at the worksite, and whether youth were on-task.

**Supervisor Interviews.** Monitors conducted a supervisor interview using a list of 32 questions developed by the lead agency. The interview covered safety, child labor laws, the work activities for SYEI youth, procedures in case of an accident, employers' benefits from the SYEI, and any performance issues and resolutions. The supervisor was interviewed once over the course of the SYEI, and the interview took 10 to 15 minutes.

**Youth Interviews.** The lead agency randomly selected about 10 percent of each provider's participants to interview. Monitors reported trying to schedule these interviews near the end of a youth's work experience. Questions included the type of work performed, how the youth heard about the program, whether their supervisor was always on location while they were working, transportation issues, and any problems experienced.

of these activities was to identify any workplace safety or compliance issues that needed to be resolved, as well as issues with the employer (such as inadequate supervision of youth activities), or the youth (such as chronic tardiness or poor attitude). One site also reported providing technical assistance to employers as needed. For example, one worksite lacked a sexual harassment policy, so the monitor helped the site develop one. At all but one of the sites that used this formal strategy, monitoring visits were the responsibility of the lead agency. In the last site, provider staff was responsible for monitoring activities.

Across the 11 sites that did at least some formal visits, only 3 sites visited worksites more than twice during the summer (see Table VIII.1). In these sites, visits occurred either weekly or every two to three weeks. In the other sites, visits occurred either once or twice over the course of the summer. In fact, four of these visited only 10 to 50 percent of participants' worksites. The remaining two sites did not specify frequency.

Informal monitoring was more casual and typically occurred as staff picked up youth timesheets or dropped off paychecks. While at the employer, monitors would ask both the employer and the youth if there were any issues or problems. They would also informally observe working conditions. Front-line staff from local providers in 15 sites and from the lead agency in 2 sites were responsible for these visits. Most monitoring visits took 30 minutes but took as little as 5 or as many as 90 minutes if there were issues at the worksite.

**Table VIII.1 Types and Frequency of Monitoring Visits**

| | Number of Sites |
|---|---|
| **Type of Monitoring** | |
| Formal Monitoring Only | 3 |
| Informal Monitoring Only | 9 |
| Both Formal and Informal Monitoring | 8 |
| **Frequency of Formal Visits** | |
| None | 9 |
| Weekly to each worksite | 1 |
| Every 2-3 weeks to each worksite | 2 |
| Twice to each worksite | 1 |
| Once to each worksite | 1 |
| Once to only a subset of worksites | 4 |
| Unknown | 2 |
| **Frequency of Informal Visits** | |
| None | 3 |
| Daily | 1 |
| Weekly | 4 |
| Biweekly | 5 |
| As needed | 5 |
| Unknown | 2 |

Source: Site visit interviews in 20 selected sites.

Note: N = 20 sites.

Though the frequency of informal visits varied across sites, most sites reported visiting worksites on either a weekly or a biweekly basis. One site did not visit all worksites; instead, staff visited employers with whom they had not worked in the past. Monitors from four sites reported that they would have liked either to visit more worksites or visit them more often. In two of these four sites, the sheer volume of youth and worksites prevented the intensity of monitoring that staff would have preferred. In the other two, monitors lamented that the rural nature of the local sites resulted in distances between employer locations that required up to three hours of driving, which made it difficult to visit worksites as often as desired.

Given the intensity of monitoring efforts, three sites hired new staff with the sole purpose of visiting and monitoring worksites. The monitors from at least two of these sites attended site monitor training and were furnished with a handbook. As discussed in Chapter III, another six sites hired staff members to serve as job coaches or case managers who also conducted informal monitoring visits as part of their responsibilities.

### 3. Importance of In-Person Monitoring Visits

Almost unanimously, respondents agreed that in-person visits to worksites were crucial to the success of the SYEI. Many sites described the visits as a way to proactively prevent major problems from occurring. Instead of waiting for a youth or an employer to contact staff with a large issue, staff were able to identify problems early and mediate to prevent youth from quitting or being removed or fired from a summer job. In addition to visiting worksites, many sites stayed on top of issues by maintaining regular phone or email contact with both employers and youth.

**Youth Perspectives: The Benefits of Staff Monitoring Activities**

*"It's been nice that [the worksite monitor] comes by about every two weeks, just to say hi and see how everything is going. So, I mean, if we had a problem, whatever that may be, then we would be able to say, 'Hey, let's talk,' and not have to go find her."*

*"When [our supervisors] try to boss us around and we don't go for that, then they look at [the worksite monitor]. . . . I mean, like, with the job we just finished up today, putting the tar down, the guy, he was rude, disrespectful, had an attitude, but today he was cool, after him and [the worksite monitor] talked, and [the monitor] let him know, 'They're kids,' you know. 'Some of them are kids. Some are young adults. You have to treat them with respect. They see things differently than you see things.'"*

Regular monitoring was also an effective way to build rapport with youth and employers. Staff reported, and employers confirmed, that most employers welcomed the help that worksite monitors could provide, including assistance with monitoring youth performance, tracking youth attendance, and addressing attitude issues. At one site, for example, provider front-line staff used the monitoring visits to discuss the potential for permanent placements for participating youth or additional training that youth might need.

None of the sites reported issues gaining access to worksites, with the exception of one instance in which a worksite was terminated for refusing to cooperate with the site's visitation policy. (This occurred before a youth was placed with the employer.) At most sites, providers told employers, either during employer recruitment and orientation or via the worksite agreement, that staff would be visiting throughout the summer. As a result, many sites reported being able to drop by worksites unannounced.

Only one site reported finding a major violation of an employer worksite agreement. A youth was being left unsupervised for long periods of time and had to be removed from the worksite. One site also encountered more minor violations that were quickly remedied, such as employer failure to post required child labor law posters or emergency evacuation routes. All other sites indicated that they did not encounter any violations.

To help prevent such violations, three sites also trained youth to identify worksite issues so they could serve as their own site monitors. These sites spent time explaining workplace safety and child labor laws to participating youth during orientation. They then instructed youth to contact staff if violations occurred.

### 4. Strategies to Handle Discipline and Poor Performance

Every site dealt with at least some youth who performed poorly on the job. However, these situations rarely resulted in youth being terminated from the initiative. As described above, sites made frequent visits to worksites and maintained regular communication with supervisors to help identify problems early and remediate them quickly. The most common worksite issues reported by staff were chronic tardiness, unexcused absences, poor work ethic, and poor attitude.

Sites addressed issues quickly, used conflicts as learning experiences, and gave youth second chances. When they encountered a workplace issue, staff worked with both the youth and the

employer to formulate a solution. Often talking with the youth about the issue and the importance of proper worksite behavior was enough to solve the problem. One provider used a "three strikes, you're out" policy for minor offenses to allow youth an opportunity to correct inappropriate behaviors such as lateness or talking back to superiors. Other sites used more intense measures to deal with problematic behavior. For example, one provider used a one-day suspension policy to help youth "cool off" and reflect on their mistake before returning to work.

If a performance situation did not improve, or if the issue could not be resolved with mentoring and guidance, or if a youth was fired by an employer, youth were typically moved to another worksite or program activity. Two sites had specific plans for youth who were not successful at their first or second employers. One provider placed youth in a job at their own organization so staff could watch them closely and provide more intensive mentorship. At the other site, youth with chronic work behavior issues were placed in a training program aimed at helping to make behavioral adjustments that would aid in employment success.

Despite these staff efforts to mediate performance issues, all sites reported that a small portion of youth were terminated by the initiative, quit their jobs, or dropped out. Half the sites reported terminating at least some youth. This typically happened only after they attempted mediation between staff, the youth, and the employer; a change in worksite; and other avenues. At least two of these sites, however, reported that certain offenses, such as stealing and use of drugs, resulted in immediate termination. A small proportion of youth in all 20 sites also chose to drop out or quit their jobs during the course of the summer. Although data were not available on the proportion of terminations and dropouts in the study sites, anecdotal reports appear consistent with the national data presented in Chapter II that 82 percent of youth completed their summer work experience.

Three sites credited their emphasis on quality job-matching for youth's generally good worksite performance. Though overwhelmed by the number of youth and quick initiative start-up, these sites indicated that taking the time to match youth with the appropriate worksites was crucial to the success of placements. At one of the sites, staff also arranged a meeting with the youth and the employer prior to the start of the summer work experience. At this meeting, youth disclosed physical challenges and skills deficiencies so that the employer was aware of his or her strengths and weaknesses on the first day of work. Another site reported working closely with employers during the recruitment phase so "they knew what they were getting into" and were prepared for behavior challenges resulting from youthfulness and inexperience.

## B. Assessment of Youth Experiences

To document their success in serving youth with Recovery Act funds, sites assessed the experiences of participants through a number of methods, including formal performance measures, additional data collection activities, and feedback from participants themselves. As discussed in Chapter II, ETA streamlined performance-reporting requirements so that sites were responsible for collecting only one outcome measure, namely the attainment of a work readiness goal. Sites were also required to report on the rate of completion of summer work experiences. Almost half the sites, however, chose to collect additional data beyond these two measures. More than three-quarters also solicited feedback from participants to promote continuous quality improvement.

### 1. Use of Standard Methods for Measuring Work Readiness Skill Increases

Administrators and front-line staff were overwhelmingly appreciative of the limited performance-reporting requirements for the SYEI. They often noted that the removal of other outcome measures made implementing the summer activities much more feasible. Given the tremendous effort required to ramp up efforts, engage youth and employers, and monitor youth activities, LWIB administrators reported that it would have been too difficult to track additional performance outcomes for such a large group of youth in such a short time. They also commented that the brevity of the summer initiative limited their ability to affect multiple dimensions of a youth's long-term success.

The measurement of success achieving work readiness goals was complicated and variable across sites.[21] The flexibility given to sites in the development of their work readiness measures resulted in inconsistency across and sometimes within sites. This was reported as an area for improvement in the GAO report, which suggested that "while many program officials, employers, and participants we spoke with believe the summer youth activities have been successful, measuring actual outcomes has proved challenging and may reveal little about what the summer activities achieved" (U.S. Government Accountability Office 2009). This study found similar results in the 20 selected sites.[22]

To maintain consistency, 15 sites established a standard measurement procedure for achievement of work readiness goals within their sites. Two additional sites individualized the work readiness measurement by youth based on needs for performance improvements. The final three sites allowed providers to decide on their measurement tool. Interestingly, these three sites involved a total of 25 providers, and thus potentially 25 variations in measurement. In describing the reasons for choosing this strategy, an administrator from one of these sites reported that it would be unfair to require providers serving special populations, such as English-language learners, to be judged on the same measure as other programs.

Among the 15 sites that used a standard measure, three administered the initiative through the lead agency with no subcontractors, two involved only a single subcontractor, and the remaining 10 contracted with multiple service providers. In those sites that involved multiple organizations, the lead agency typically defined the measurement tool and trained local staff either formally or informally on how to gather the appropriate information.

### 2. Timing of Work Readiness Skill Measurement

The work readiness outcome measure is intended to capture "a measurable increase in work readiness skills." To capture this increase, three-quarters of all sites performed pre-post tests of youth, where youth's work readiness skills were assessed initially as a baseline near the start of their participation and reassessed at a later stage to measure increases. Four sites used a post-only test,

[21] The ETA definition of this measure is presented in Chapter II.

[22] Given findings from the GAO and Mathematica studies, ETA began to gather input from local areas on potential improvements in performance measurement. ETA solicited feedback from local practitioners through two Recovering America's Youth Summits in fall 2009 and plans to provide further written guidance on performance measurement for future summer programs in spring 2010.

measuring work readiness skills at a single point in time near the end of the initiative. The final site conducted ongoing evaluations of youth performance throughout their summer experience to formally measure progress in work readiness skills. The obvious advantage of the pre-post design is the ability of sites to measure the difference in scores between two points in time using the same standard tool. Post-only tests do not include a consistent measurement of the youth's skills before participation in the initiative.

Despite the advantages of pre-post assessments, the timing of these assessments also played an important part in the quality of measurement. Five of the 15 sites that used pre-post tests conducted them at the beginning and end of the work readiness training component, generating results before youth were placed in a work experience. This could serve as an indicator of whether the youth was prepared for a worksite placement, serving as a "selling point" to potential summer employers. However, as a formal performance measure for federal reporting, this strategy could provide a reasonable assessment of whether youth learned the training material, but did not assess the youth's ability to implement that knowledge on the job. In addition, such testing practices could also measure learning from only a limited number of classroom hours, in some sites as little as 16 hours of work readiness training.

The remaining 10 sites that conducted pre-post tests assessed work readiness skills during the first or second week of the youth's participation and again toward the end of their work experience. Three of these sites also assessed skills at a midpoint in the initiative. The timing of tests in these sites potentially allowed sites to measure the gains in work readiness skills from both classroom activities, such as work readiness training and other academic experiences, and practical work experience at an employer.

### 3. Sources of Data for Work Readiness Skill Measurement

Staff, employers, and youth could each bring a unique perspective to the assessment of a participant's growth through the course of the SYEI. Administrators and staff across all 20 sites reported using different combinations of these three perspectives to assess youth progress (see Table VIII.2). First, 13 sites had local staff formally document observations or assessments of youth

**Table VIII.2 Types of Methods Used to Assess Youth Progress**

| Assessment Method | Number of Sites Using This Method to Assess Youth Progress | Number of Sites Using This Method in Formal Measurement of Work Readiness Increases |
|---|---|---|
| Observation or assessment by staff | 13 | 11 |
| Feedback from worksite supervisors | 17 | 9 |
| Direct testing of youth knowledge | 9 | 9 |
| All three methods | 4 | 0 |

Source: Site visit interviews in 20 selected sites.

Note: N = 20 sites.

knowledge and performance. Second, 17 areas gathered written feedback from worksite supervisors. Third, nine sites conducted formal written tests of youth's work readiness knowledge. As shown in the table, however, not all of these assessments from the different perspectives were used in the formal calculation of work readiness sent to states for federal performance reporting. Although four sites collected data from all three sources, none used all three in their formal measurement tool.

A review of local measurement tools revealed eight key skill sets that were assessed among youth: (1) work habits, (2) attitude and interpersonal skills, (3) knowledge relevant for future employment, (4) communication, (5) portfolio development, (6) motivation and self-image, (7) job-specific skills, and (8) daily-living skills. More than three-quarters of sites measured youth progress in developing solid work habits (see Table VIII.3). More than half assessed work habits, attitudes, and interpersonal skills. The remaining skill sets were reported by smaller subsets of sites. One site gathered data about six of these eight categories in their assessment tool; the others measured four or fewer.

One-third of sites reported that they formally discuss the results of the work readiness assessment with each participating youth. These sites reported that this strategy allows staff to provide feedback to youth early in the initiative, based on the pre-test, on the areas where they need to continue improving. It also highlights youth's improvement when they were reassessed at the end of their experience. All these require youth to sign off on the assessment, indicating that they were informed of their progress.

### 4. Sites' Additional Data Collection Activities

Beyond the work readiness measure and completion rate for summer work experiences, states were required to report monthly on a small number of data items, including the number and characteristics of youth served under the Recovery Act and the services they received (discussed further in Chapter II). States and local sites, however, used data systems that could gather much richer information on youth experiences. These systems were used for regular WIA reporting requirements as well as state and local planning and management. Many sites chose to collect this additional information to support their local management of the SYEI, coordinate participant services effectively, and track overall progress of youth. This data could potentially be used in future evaluations to glean further insights into youth experiences and outcomes.

Administrators in 9 of the 20 sites reported collecting additional data on youth that were not required as part of federal performance reporting. Four sites chose not to collect additional data. In the remaining seven sites, it was unclear whether local staff consistently collected additional data that was required under the regular WIA program but were optional for the SYEI.

Sites most commonly collected additional data on services, participant outcomes, or both. Among the nine that collected additional data, seven chose to collect richer information on services, such as participation in each of the 10 service elements required under the regular WIA program or specialized services offered by the site. Six sites collected additional outcome measures; these could include return to school, permanent job placement, and receipt of educational certificates. Four sites also gathered additional data on youth's summer work experiences. The most common elements in this category included codes for employer, industry and occupation codes, hours worked, and wages. One of these four sites collected the additional worksite data through its

**Table VIII.3 Skills Assessed in Work Readiness Indicators**

| Skill Set | Specific Areas Covered in Assessment[a] | Number of Sites Measuring This Skill Set |
|---|---|---|
| Work habits | Exhibits appropriate dress and hygiene<br>Attendance<br>Punctuality<br>Follows instructions/rules/procedures<br>Works to best of ability<br>Adheres to quality standards<br>Organizational skills<br>Initiative<br>Time management and task completion<br>Ability to work independently<br>Works without distracting others | 16 |
| Attitude and interpersonal skills | Positive attitude toward supervisor, co-workers, and customers<br>Accepts feedback constructively<br>Contributes to team effort | 11 |
| Knowledge relevant for future employment | Career exploration<br>Labor market information<br>Job searching strategies<br>Expectations of employer<br>Interviewing skills<br>Budgeting and finances | 7 |
| Communication | Reading<br>Writing<br>Verbal | 6 |
| Portfolio development | Resume<br>Cover letter<br>Job applications<br>List of references | 6 |
| Specific job skills | <As appropriate> | 4 |
| Motivation and self-image | Motivation<br>Adaptability<br>Effective coping skills<br>Problem-solving skills<br>Acquiring an improved self-image | 3 |
| Daily living skills | Using the phone<br>Telling time<br>Shopping<br>Renting an apartment<br>Opening a bank account<br>Using public transportation | 1 |

Source: Site visit interviews in 20 selected sites.

Notes: Skill sets shown in this table were developed from a review of local measurement tools.

N = 20 sites.

[a] Assessments used by sites may not include all topics listed under a specific skill group.

accounting system rather than its WIA reporting system. Although many of these sites gathered data on common topics, their variable definitions and methods of measurement varied substantially, potentially limiting the feasibility of cross-site analysis if data were gathered for future evaluations.

### 5. Strategies to Gather Feedback from Youth

Seventeen sites implemented processes to gather feedback from all or some summer participants. In particular, 14 chose to conduct satisfaction or exit surveys with all or some of their participating youth. Of these sites, 10 conducted surveys with all participating youth. In the remaining four sites, some providers chose not to administer surveys or only a sample of youth was chosen to participate.

Three sites chose different methods of collecting feedback. One conducted focus groups with a subset of youth to get their verbal feedback on the summer experience. Another required site monitors to conduct one-on-one exit interviews with all youth. The last conducted in-person interviews with a randomly selected sample of 10 percent of youth.

Local administrators in the 17 sites that gathered feedback reported that the primary goal was to foster continuous program improvement for both summer initiatives and the regular WIA program. Some areas also used these instruments to assess employer performance to determine whether they were suitable for future youth placements. The remaining three sites that chose not to collect feedback from youth, reported they did not do so because of a lack of budget and a lack of time.

## C. Youth Progress Beyond Summer 2009

Once the summer initiative was over, youth moved to new phases and looked for new opportunities. The largest proportion of participants planned to return to school. Some youth could receive additional services from the workforce investment system and other organizations within the community. Still other youth sought to move into permanent jobs. As summer came to a close, sites had to decide how to transition participants into these various paths, as well as whether and how to track their progress throughout the school year. The timing of evaluation site visits prevented observations of what happened after the summer initiative ended; nonetheless, respondents were able to discuss their plans and expectations for the fall.

### 1. Transitioning Youth to Post-summer Activities

The goals and next steps of summer participants could differ substantially based on their age and education status. For most younger, in-school youth, the summer initiative served as an opportunity to use their summer break to earn money and gain work experience. A new semester at school began when the summer ended. For many older and out-of-school youth, there was no clear opportunity waiting at the end of the summer. As a result, sites had to tailor their strategies to help these different populations make meaningful transitions into the fall.

To facilitate transitions to post-summer activities for in-school youth, sites planned to use their established relationships with the public and private school systems and local WIA youth program. About half the sites reported plans to leverage their relationships with schools to assure that in-school youth returned to the classroom at the end of the summer. They also planned to use these connections to encourage out-of-school youth to seek educational services as needed. The local school district was a summer provider at four sites, and providers from six other sites reported

having strong relationships with area schools. In two of these sites, for example, summer providers had front-line staff stationed in either a local public school or an alternative school building. This reportedly allowed frequent contact with youth and helped school officials coordinate services more effectively.

Budget constraints, however, may have influenced sites' ability to serve summer youth through regular WIA programs beyond September. As mentioned in Chapter III, many sites planned to spend all or most of their Recovery Act allocations during the summer. Most sites also reported that their regular WIA programs typically had waiting lists due to excess demand. As a result, six sites reported at the time of the study's site visits that financial constraints would limit referrals of summer youth to regular WIA youth and adult programs. Providers from all six of these sites indicated that staff would attempt to link youth with other, non-WIA programs when possible.

Sites also reported other reasons that would limit their ability to transition out-of-school youth 18 or older to the WIA adult program in the fall of 2009. Staff from five sites felt the youth program was more appropriate for most participants. They believed the adult program could be intimidating and placed less emphasis on critical services, such as mentoring, counseling, and intensive case management, that are vital to youth success. Administrators in one site added that co-enrollment in both the adult and the youth programs could be confusing and cause youth to be unsure of which front-line staff to contact when issues arise. Because of these various factors, administrators and staff in 14 sites expected that few or no participants would be enrolled in the adult program.

To encourage continued services for older youth, 12 sites reported that their states applied for and received waivers to use the work readiness indicator as the only performance measure for youth aged 18 to 24 who participate in only work experience beyond the summer months. Given the timing of our site visits during summer 2009, it is unclear whether these waivers had any influence on staff decisions to continue serving older youth into the fall.

Despite budget constraints and other inhibiting factors, connections to the WIA youth program were nevertheless expected to yield opportunities for at least some youth, both in and out of school, between the ages of 14 and 21. As noted in Chapter III, all or some summer providers in most sites administered the regular WIA youth program. As a result, summer staff were knowledgeable about WIA program eligibility requirements and services, familiar with regular WIA youth staff, and acquainted with enrollment procedures. They expected to be able to transition, to the WIA youth program, youth between the ages of 14 and 21 who needed assistance beyond the summer months. Staff from nine of these sites planned to meet with each youth toward the end of the summer experience to determine which, if any, WIA program was appropriate. Staff reported that the primary considerations in this decision were age, need, interest, and academic achievement. Importantly, nearly all sites also reported that a small portion of SYEI participants were already enrolled in regular WIA services before the summer months.

## 2. Challenges to Permanent Job Placements

Beyond services provided through WIA and other local programs, many youth, particularly those out of school, hoped to use their summer experience to transition into a permanent job. Statistics on the number of youth able to transition into permanent placements were unavailable during site visits. However, at least 17 sites reported that at least a small portion of youth would find steady jobs as a result of their summer experience (see Box VIII.2 for examples). As discussed in Chapter II, about 13 percent of all SYEI participants nationwide were reported to have been placed in work experience outside the summer months.

**Box VIII.2: Employers That Hoped to Hire Youth Permanently**

The supervisor of a day care center hoped, funds permitting, to offer jobs to two young men who worked at her center through the SYEI. She reported that these youth had worked hard all summer and were now trained for the position. She added that the youth might opt to pursue education instead, but that she hoped they would eventually return to work at the center. She explained that it is important for the children at the center to have more male role models and felt the SYEI was one way to encourage males to enter the childcare profession.

A local hospital hired 15 youth as part of the SYEI to serve as ward clerks (data entry), nutritional aides (food service, preparation, and cashiering), file clerks, admissions clerks, and maintenance workers. An administrator reported that because of the high cost of training youth just for the summer, the hospital would not have been able to offer summer employment without the Recovery Act. She strongly believed in the importance of summer employment because it offers the youth opportunities to explore career paths. She also felt the SYEI staff helped manage an otherwise burdensome application process, including performing background checks on behalf of the hospital. The hospital planned to hire one of the youth permanently as an admissions clerk, a position that is above entry level.

To facilitate permanent placements, almost half the sites reported that they relied on private for-profit companies to hire youth. As mentioned in Chapter VI, providers at four of these sites targeted private employers for recruitment as summer worksites because they were more likely to hire youth permanently. At least two of these sites also focused on matching older youth with private employers that were more likely to offer permanent jobs.

Respondents in seven sites did not expect public and nonprofit organizations to hire youth after the SYEI stopped subsidizing their wages. During focus groups, nonprofit and public employers at five of these sites stated that tight budgets and limited capacity typically precluded them from hiring youth permanently. At a sixth site, one provider did not speak with employers about permanent placements at all because most were nonprofits or public agencies that probably could not hire youth. At another site, where many providers directly employed youth, at least six nonprofit and public providers indicated that they would not be able to hire their youth permanently once the Recovery Act funds were gone.

Nine sites also expressed concern that the current recession would limit the number of permanent placements. For example, one private employer stated that they typically hire 25 percent of the youth they employ over the summer. This summer, however, they could not be able to hire nearly as many, a result of recession-related cutbacks. Front-line staff from these sites also stated that job opportunities in their local sites were limited, and that youth would probably not get hired over the more experienced out-of-work adults with whom they had to compete.

### 3. Plans to Conduct 12-Month Follow-Ups of Summer Youth

To assess youth's progress over time, local sites are required as part of the regular WIA program to follow youth for a full year after they exit the program. Under the Recovery Act, however, ETA gave local sites the flexibility to decide whether they would conduct a 12-month follow-up with summer participants. At least one provider in three sites planned to follow up with all or a portion of summer youth after the initiative concluded. The LWIB in one rural site required that the local provider track 20 percent of summer youth from each county through quarterly follow-ups. Individual providers in two other sites intended to formally follow youth, though they were not obligated through their contracts with the LWIB to do so.

The remaining 17 sites chose not to conduct the 12-month follow-up. While data were not available from all sites, six of these sites reported financial constraints, a lack of staff capacity, and the volume of youth as barriers to following youth over time. However, providers in at least four sites planned to informally check in with some or all participants. In addition, those that are enrolled in the regular WIA youth or adult programs will continue to receive services from many of these same SYEI providers. Staff also reported that many youth are likely to seek their assistance with referrals to other programs and services.

# IX. REFLECTIONS ON THE 2009 SYEI AND FUTURE CONSIDERATIONS

The American Recovery and Reinvestment Act of 2009 (Recovery Act) posed a new and exciting opportunity for local workforce investment areas to develop or reinvigorate their summer youth employment initiatives (SYEIs). Once a large component of the workforce investment strategy for youth, these programs received reduced emphasis within the previous decade. During their monumental efforts in the summer of 2009 in response to the Recovery Act, local areas reported tremendous successes as well as some significant hurdles. This evaluation report has documented their experiences, painted an in-depth picture of implementation, and given a voice to the youth and employers who were at the core of this effort.

Drawing information from across the report, this final chapter distills the main lessons learned by the 20 sites studied during the summer of 2009 as well as the challenges they faced along the way. Section A provides overall impressions of implementation and how the initiative unfolded over time. Section B summarizes the key factors that contributed to both the successes and challenges of the summer experience. Finally, Section C looks to the future, discussing considerations for the future of participating youth and the initiative as a whole.

## A. Overall Impressions of the Summer Experience

The evaluation captured the perspectives of more than 600 administrators, staff members, youth, and employers who took part in the SYEI. Respondents discussed the successes and challenges of the 2009 effort. Based on this feedback, the study distilled several key impressions of the summer experience.

### 1. Effects of the Size of the Initiative and Timeframe for Implementation

Given the state of the United States economy early in 2009, Congress emphasized urgency when it passed the Recovery Act. Federal guidance encouraged the workforce investment system to focus on spending Recovery Act youth funds on summer employment in 2009. As a result, parties at all levels of the workforce investment system—Federal, state, and local—had to act quickly to ensure that the SYEI could get off the ground in time. Once the Act was signed into law in mid-February, the Department of Labor (DOL) quickly developed guidance and distributed it to states and local areas in mid-March. The Employment and Training Administration (ETA) also followed the guidance with a series of technical assistance webinars on the Recovery Act vision and expectations, effective program models, and tips on measuring work readiness. During this same timeframe, funding was being distributed to states, which then had to determine local allocations. Local areas often began planning before they received final guidance or their funding allocations, adjusting their plans as necessary over time.

The size of the initiative and the quick timeframe affected every aspect of planning and implementation. Many local areas were starting from scratch, having to build the SYEI from smaller scale summer programs or no existing program. All sites hired at least some temporary workers to help recruit, enroll, and serve the high volume of youth. To implement the initiative by May, planning had to begin early and quickly. As a result, some sites reported having to make compromises along the way, including curbing the extent of innovation and choosing to implement some practices without exploring all possible options. For example, some sites chose not to develop procurement procedures that would allow new and diverse local organizations to compete for SYEI

contracts, and others felt they did not have sufficient time to properly vet worksite opportunities. Despite these limitations, administrators and staff reported pride in what they were able to accomplish in the summer of 2009.

### 2. Overall Success Despite Inevitable Challenges

Despite the tremendous pressure, sites succeeded in implementing the SYEI without any major problems. They were able to recruit sufficient numbers of youth, place them in employment, and provide additional services. There were aspects of the initiative that could inevitably be improved, but sites reported accomplishing their major goals and quickly spent a significant portion of their Recovery Act funds.

Across the nation, the workforce investment system served more than 355,000 youth between the ages of 14 and 24 from May through November 2009. Of these, more than 88 percent were placed in summer jobs. Many received additional services, including academic help, support services, and leadership development opportunities. More than 82 percent of participating youth successfully completed their work experiences, and nearly 75 percent achieved a measurable increase in work readiness during the summer.

Administrators and staff at the 20 study sites reported a perceived threefold effect from the SYEI. First, they got money into the hands of needy families. Second, youth and their families spent this new disposable income in a depressed economy. Third, youth gained valuable work experience, increasing their human capital and long-term job prospects. Although the study was unable to assess how meaningful youth experiences were or how their experiences could affect them and their communities over time, site visits revealed many interesting, creative, and innovative activities.

### 3. Youth Appreciation for Summer Experiences

The study gathered data from only a small, nonrandom subset of participants, but the 149 youth who participated in the study through focus groups were overwhelmingly positive about their summer experiences. They appreciated the opportunity to hold a job, gain work skills, and build their résumés. Many were enthusiastic about having money in their pockets for the first time and about being able to help their families in tough economic times. Many reported that, in the absence of the initiative, they would have been competing for jobs with more experienced adult workers or doing nothing productive over the summer. Although youth had some important feedback on key ways to improve the initiative, their most common complaint was that the initiative was too short and offered few work hours.

### 4. Positive Employer Feedback

Most sites were able to recruit enough worksite opportunities for participating youth. Employers appeared motivated by a sense of altruism and a desire to give back to their communities. Some employers also saw the SYEI as an opportunity to take advantage of cost-free summer assistance during lean times or to train and vet potential future employees. Employers interviewed for this study felt that the experience was worth the effort of mentoring youthful employees and almost unanimously agreed that they would participate again if given the opportunity.

## B. Implementation Challenges and Lessons

Despite the positive feedback from staff, youth, and employers, implementation of the SYEI was not without its challenges. Every new initiative evolves over time as local implementers gain a better understanding of what works best. At the time of the site visits, SYEI sites and providers had just begun to reflect on how stumbling blocks could have been avoided or traversed more smoothly. Based on those reflections, as well as observation of initiative practices across all 20 sites, the study identified seven key lessons from SYEI implementation.

### 1. Enrollment and Eligibility Determination

Staff across all sites struggled to handle the increased volume of youth, particularly the process of determining their eligibility. The volume strained local capacity, created large workloads for staff, and, in some sites, created delays in youth enrollment. For future summer initiatives, local areas should consider providing more training to less experienced staff members to prepare them for summer tasks. As did some sites in 2009, local areas should also consider relying more heavily on experienced staff to perform more complex tasks, such as eligibility determination. Local areas should also examine other possible strategies to reduce workloads and maximize staff resources such as streamlining intake procedures through prescreening applications and coordinating with schools and social service agencies to determine youth eligibility.

### 2. Recruitment of Veterans and Older Youth

Although overall youth recruitment efforts proved very successful, sites had difficulty reaching older youth between the ages of 22 and 24 as well as veterans and their spouses. Given that these target populations were new for local youth programs, they had to modify their recruitment strategies to reach them. For future summers, sites should think beyond "youth" when designing and promoting youth activities, given that many veterans and young adults have children, household responsibilities, and significant work experience. Sites that had success with these groups reported that it was important to avoid alienating older youth by characterizing the SYEI as a youth program. Local areas should also consider developing new partnerships or reframing old partnerships with organizations that already serve these young adults. Finally, they should consider implementing strategies to differentiate services based on the unique needs of these older participants.

### 3. Recruitment of Private Sector Employers

Although federal guidance encouraged the involvement of private employers, some sites were hesitant about including them. Sites raised three concerns: (1) the advisability of choosing one private employer over another for a government-subsidized job, (2) the lack of sufficient information on the quality of private sector jobs, and (3) the age and background restrictions imposed by private employers. While not necessarily appropriate for all youth, the private sector can be a good source of high quality jobs for many participants, particularly older, more experienced youth. Most sites did successfully engage at least some private employers, and the private employers involved in the study appreciated the opportunity to participate and support local youth. About one-third of sites felt that private employers were more likely to hire participants permanently and were a better fit based on youth interests. In addition, sites did not report any problems or conflicts related to equity among local businesses. With sufficient planning time, local areas can address concerns about the quality of private sector jobs by sufficiently vetting potential employers and

training worksite supervisors to ensure that they can provide quality tasks and professional mentoring.

### 4. Green Jobs

While more than half of sites reported at least some success placing youth in green industries and jobs, administrators and staff across sites and even within sites often did not use a common definition for green jobs. Respondents in three sites explicitly expressed confusion over the definition. To further expand youth opportunities in this emerging field, sites require additional guidance from ETA on what constitutes a green job. The Bureau of Labor Statistics as well as several states, foundations, and private organizations have already begun efforts to define the concept of green jobs more clearly and conduct inventories of these jobs across the country.

### 5. Job Matching

Some sites felt—and youth agreed—that job matching of youth to employers could have been improved by either aligning employer recruitment to the interests of youth or more closely considering data from youth intake and assessments when determining the most appropriate employer. To the extent possible, local areas should match youth to employers based on their interests and career goals to help maximize the potential for a valuable summer experience that may lead to better employment opportunities. To help achieve this goal, sites should consider using information on the types of jobs that best suited the interests of youth enrolled in the summer of 2009 to help focus initial employer recruitment efforts in future summers. In addition, if sites chose to recruit employers before enrolling youth, they should consider continuing employer recruitment as needed once youth are enrolled to accommodate the interests of as many participants as possible. Given that all matches may not be ideal, staff should also work to ensure that both employers and youth have reasonable expectations for the summer experience. In particular, staff should stress to youth that, no matter what their work assignment, they will be able to build their résumés and can learn important work skills.

### 6. Measurement of Work Readiness Increases

Sites varied dramatically in their measurement of work readiness increases among youth and sometimes used different approaches within a site. These inconsistencies make it difficult to assess the true meaning of the national performance measure. To ensure the use of a valid measure across all local areas, sites require additional guidance from ETA on standards and best practices in measuring increases in work readiness skills. This includes guidance on the timing and frequency of youth assessments, the most appropriate sources of data on youth performance, and the types of skills that should be assessed.

### 7. Innovation

Variations in the local infrastructure and economy of study sites clearly affected their implementation of the SYEI. For instance, one site reported denying services to some youth who did not live near a participating employer because the youth's community lacked a good public transportation system. However, other sites with youth in similar situations either developed their own van routes or recruited businesses within the communities where youth lived to allow them to participate. As another example, administrators in some areas said they could not place significant numbers of youth into green jobs given the lack of green industry in their local economies. Other

sites in similar situations, however, developed their own green projects or tapped into the public sector for green opportunities. Addressing local circumstances may require innovation. When encountering an implementation challenge, administrators should consider new or innovative models, including looking to other sites with similar local circumstances for potential solutions.

## C. Looking Beyond the Summer of 2009

Although the SYEI of 2009 was a monumental effort, it was not the end of the road for participating youth. Many participants came out of the initiative looking for new opportunities to expand on their experiences. How they fared beyond the summer and what effect the SYEI had on their employment prospects can only be determined through further research. During the evaluation site visits, some administrators and staff were still overwhelmed by the task at hand. However, others had already begun reflecting on what worked and what could be improved.

### 1. New Opportunities for Youth in the Fall

Most sites planned to use established linkages with other local organizations and partners to transition youth to new opportunities when the summer ended. The largest proportion of participants planned to return to school. Some youth could receive additional services from the workforce investment system, including regular WIA youth and adult programs and other organizations within the community. Still other youth sought to move into permanent jobs.

The evaluation was not designed to examine what opportunities youth were able to seize, but respondents mentioned several issues that could potentially limit these chances. Although the regular WIA programs for youth and adults might yield services for some SYEI participants, sites were concerned that most Recovery Act funding was spent on the SYEI and that the regular WIA programs already had waiting lists due to excess demand. In addition, administrators worried that the state of the economy would limit the extent of job opportunities that could become permanent placements.

### 2. The Need for Future Evaluations

This study provided rich information on the implementation of the SYEI funded by the Recovery Act in 2009. It examined national patterns of participation and explored the experiences of 20 sites through qualitative data collection and analysis. The study could not, however, assess the quality of youth experiences, examine what strategies sites implemented with Recovery Act funding in the fall and spring, or track participants to assess their longer-term progress. Future evaluation efforts are necessary to study those aspects of the Recovery Act effort. Long-term follow up or better efforts to track future participants can provide more insight into how this youth population fares beyond the summer. The extent of waiting lists and excess demand for the SYEI that sites in this study reported may also suggest that a random assignment evaluation to assess the impact of the SYEI on youth outcomes is possible if funding is available to serve sufficient numbers of youth in future summers.

### 3. Site Readiness for Summer Initiatives in 2010

During the summer of 2009, sites worked through many of the challenges inherent in the implementation of a new initiative and learned lessons that can be used to inform future efforts. As they reflected on their experiences, some administrators were already developing plans to improve

certain aspects of their initiatives. With sufficient funds and time for planning, sites looked forward to offering summer work opportunities to youth in 2010. Even if dedicated funding were not available, a few sites felt the success of the SYEI in helping youth gain a better understanding of the world of work would prompt them to consider dedicating a larger portion of their WIA-formula funds to developing summer initiatives for youth.

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# APPENDIX A. DETAILED LIST OF RESEARCH QUESTIONS

The evaluation answers a set of six research questions and related subtopics:

1. ***How did the selected sites plan for and organize summer youth initiatives with funding from the Recovery Act?*** What was the organizational structure of summer youth initiatives?.How did sites identify and select summer youth providers? How did the summer initiative fit within the larger context of the regular WIA youth program and within existing summer youth programs? What processes did sites use to design their initiatives? What proportion of funds from the Recovery Act was allocated for summer activities?

2. ***How did selected sites identify, recruit, and enroll at-risk youth?*** How many and what types of youth did sites target for their summer initiatives? Did sites have procedures for identifying and recruiting youth most in need of services, such as out-of-school youth and those most at risk of dropping out, youth in and aging out of foster care, youth offenders and those at risk of court involvement, homeless and runaway youth, children of incarcerated parents, migrant youth, Indian and Native American youth, and youth with disabilities? How did sites provide priority service for veterans and their eligible spouses? What challenges did sites face in identifying and recruiting youth? What challenges emerged in determining eligibility and conducting youth enrollment? What strategies worked well?

3. ***What were the characteristics of participants nationwide?*** How many youth participated in summer youth initiatives funded by the Recovery Act? What were the background characteristics of participating youth? How many youth completed summer work experiences? What growth did states report that youth achieve in work readiness skills? To help inform the national statistic, how did selected sites determine whether a measureable increase in work readiness skills for summer youth participants has occurred?

4. ***What services were offered in the summer months in selected sites?*** How were participants oriented to the initiative? Did sites use a group orientation process for youth prior to the start of the summer initiative? What types of assessments and Individual Service Strategies (ISS) did sites use for youth served with Recovery Act funds? Which of the 10 youth program elements were offered to summer participants?[23] How was work readiness preparation integrated into the initiative? Did sites integrate work-based and classroom-based learning activities and how? What is the typical duration and intensity of services? How did services differ for youth of different ages? How did sites determine whether a 12-month followup should or should not be

[23] The 10 youth program elements offered through the regular WIA program include (1) tutoring, study skills training, and instruction leading to secondary school completion; (2) alternative secondary school offerings; (3) summer employment opportunities directly linked to academic and occupational learning; (4) paid and unpaid work experience, including internships and job shadowing; (5) occupational skill training; (6) leadership development opportunities; (7) supportive services; (8) adult mentoring for a duration of at least 12 months; (9) follow-up services; and (10) comprehensive guidance and counseling, including drug and alcohol abuse counseling (Workforce Investment Act of 1998).

used for youth served with Recovery Act funds during summer months? How and under what circumstances do sites transition youth to the regular WIA youth program? Did states plan to use a waiver of regular reporting requirements to keep serving older youth? Does this appear to encourage services to older youth? What successes and challenges did sites encounter in offering summer services to at-risk youth? What promising strategies do they identify?

5. ***What types of work experiences were offered to participating youth in selected sites?*** What was the breakdown between public sector, private sector, and nonprofit summer employment opportunities offered in the summer youth initiative? How were employers recruited, assessed, selected, and oriented to the initiative? To what extent was the Work Opportunity Tax Credit promoted as an incentive to hire disconnected youth? What were the connections to registered apprenticeship or pre-apprenticeship programs? Did sites use project-based community service learning opportunities that are not conducted at an employer worksite? Did sites consider and/or use transitional job approaches that combined short-term subsidized work experience with support services and career counseling? To what extent did sites develop work experiences and other activities that exposed youth to opportunities in "green" educational and career pathways? How were youth matched to work experiences? How were worksites supervised, and what was the participant-to-staff ratio? To what extent and how did initiatives support the transition of older youth to permanent placement? What successes and challenges did sites encounter in developing and implementing summer work experiences for at-risk youth? What promising strategies did they identify?

6. ***What lessons can be drawn about the implementation of summer youth initiatives?*** What implementation strategies appeared to work well? What challenges did sites encounter and how did they overcome those challenges? How has the current economic context influenced implementation? How did sites' experiences vary based on their location in urban and rural areas? How did their experiences vary based on other site characteristics (for example, size, prior summer youth programs, organizational structure)?

# APPENDIX B. CHARACTERISTICS OF YOUTH FOCUS GROUP PARTICIPANTS

| | Percentage of All Participants |
|---|---|
| **Age at Time of Site Visit** | |
| 14–15 | 20.7 |
| 16–17 | 35.2 |
| 18–21 | 35.2 |
| 22–24 | 9.0 |
| **Male** | 48.0 |
| **Race** | |
| White | 11.4 |
| Black or African American | 20.8 |
| Multiracial | 6.7 |
| Other | 39.6 |
| Not Specified | 21.5 |
| **Latino or Hispanic Origin** | 28.9 |
| **Education Status** | |
| Enrolled for 2009–2010 school year | 81.9 |
| Not enrolled for 2009–2010 school year | 18.1 |
| **Grade for Those Enrolled for 2009–2010 School Year** | |
| 8–9 | 5.4 |
| 10 | 15.4 |
| 11 | 14.1 |
| 12 | 20.1 |
| College/Vocational School | 26.9 |
| **Educational Attainment of Those Not Enrolled for the 2009–2010 School Year** | |
| High school diploma | 11.4 |
| GED | 3.4 |
| Associates degree | 0.7 |
| None | 2.7 |
| **Mental, Physical, or Emotional Health Problems** | 9.4 |
| **Sample Size** | **149** |

Source: Information forms completed by youth who participated in site visit focus groups.

# APPENDIX C. RECOVERY ACT ALLOCATIONS AND DRAW DOWNS BY STATE

| | Funding Allocation | Draw Downs Through November 2009 | Percentage of Allocation Drawn Down Through November 2009 |
|---|---|---|---|
| **Total** [a] | **$1,188,000,000** | **$717,299,355** | **60.4** |
| Alabama | $11,647,403 | $6,907,116 | 59.3 |
| Alaska | $3,936,018 | $1,782,928 | 45.3 |
| American Samoa | $170,030 | N.A. | N.A. |
| Arizona | $17,830,637 | $8,740,869 | 49.0 |
| Arkansas | $12,065,555 | $8,097,148 | 67.1 |
| California | $186,622,034 | $90,934,238 | 48.7 |
| Colorado | $11,874,970 | $7,553,078 | 63.6 |
| Connecticut | $11,034,723 | $7,720,153 | 70.0 |
| Delaware | $2,918,025 | $989,503 | 33.9 |
| District of Columbia [b] | $3,969,821 | $0 | 0.0 |
| Florida | $42,873,265 | $31,260,046 | 72.9 |
| Georgia | $31,361,665 | $21,877,460 | 69.8 |
| Guam | $1,383,998 | N.A. | N.A. |
| Hawaii | $2,918,025 | $962,798 | 33.0 |
| Idaho | $2,918,025 | $2,702,489 | 92.6 |
| Illinois | $62,203,400 | $41,108,830 | 66.1 |
| Indian and Native Americans | $17,820,000 | N.A. | N.A. |
| Indiana | $23,677,573 | $14,451,625 | 61.0 |
| Iowa | $5,172,183 | $3,729,683 | 72.1 |
| Kansas | $7,121,714 | $3,572,925 | 50.2 |
| Kentucky | $17,709,821 | $12,388,656 | 70.0 |
| Louisiana | $20,012,271 | $12,459,616 | 62.3 |
| Maine | $4,293,710 | $2,324,563 | 54.1 |
| Maryland | $11,585,610 | $6,760,700 | 58.4 |
| Massachusetts | $24,838,038 | $15,187,870 | 61.1 |
| Michigan | $73,949,491 | $47,957,332 | 64.9 |
| Minnesota | $17,789,172 | $12,064,000 | 67.8 |
| Mississippi | $18,687,021 | $14,626,657 | 78.3 |
| Missouri | $25,400,077 | $19,662,596 | 77.4 |
| Montana | $2,918,025 | $1,976,125 | 67.7 |
| Nebraska | $2,944,616 | $2,367,115 | 80.4 |
| Nevada | $7,570,212 | $4,489,715 | 59.3 |
| New Hampshire | $2,918,025 | $1,398,671 | 47.9 |
| New Jersey | $20,834,103 | $11,017,481 | 52.9 |
| New Mexico | $6,235,678 | $4,089,402 | 65.6 |
| New York | $71,526,360 | $38,215,020 | 53.4 |
| North Carolina | $25,070,698 | $15,216,257 | 60.7 |
| North Dakota | $2,918,025 | $2,372,760 | 81.3 |
| Northern Marianas | $512,149 | N.A. | N.A. |
| Ohio | $56,158,510 | $37,250,239 | 66.3 |
| Oklahoma | $8,708,036 | $5,811,533 | 66.7 |
| Oregon | $15,068,081 | $11,586,865 | 76.9 |
| Palau | $86,779 | N.A. | N.A. |
| Pennsylvania | $40,647,780 | $19,910,754 | 49.0 |
| Puerto Rico | $42,456,987 | $26,189,294 | 61.7 |
| Rhode Island | $5,611,097 | $3,549,668 | 63.3 |
| South Carolina | $24,712,293 | $14,230,501 | 57.6 |

| | Funding Allocation | Draw Downs Through November 2009 | Percentage of Allocation Drawn Down Through November 2009 |
|---|---|---|---|
| South Dakota | $2,918,025 | $2,422,337 | 83.0 |
| Tennessee | $25,099,116 | $17,502,348 | 69.7 |
| Texas | $82,000,708 | $59,095,423 | 72.1 |
| Utah | $5,067,154 | $4,065,703 | 80.2 |
| Vermont | $2,918,025 | $2,262,337 | 77.5 |
| Virgin Islands | $817,044 | N.A. | N.A. |
| Virginia | $12,982,612 | $7,320,015 | 56.4 |
| Washington | $23,445,432 | $14,645,836 | 62.5 |
| West Virginia | $5,343,318 | $3,362,290 | 62.9 |
| Wisconsin | $13,808,812 | $10,012,084 | 72.5 |
| Wyoming | $2,918,025 | $1,116,703 | 38.3 |

Source: Training and Employment Guidance Letter No. 13-08 and state performance reports for WIA youth initiatives supported by the Recovery Act submitted to the U.S. Department of Labor as of December 31, 2009.

N.A. = not available.

[a] Total draw downs and percentage of funds drawn down do not include data from outlying areas or from Indian and Native American grantees.

[b] Draw down reports show that Washington, DC has not yet begun to draw down its Recovery Act allocation. It is unclear whether this reflects actual initiative status or a reporting error.

# APPENDIX D. KEY PERFORMANCE STATISTICS BY STATE

| | Total Number of Participants Enrolled Through November 2009 | Percentage Employed During Summer | Percentage Completing Summer Employment[a] | Percentage Achieving Work Readiness Goal[b] | Percentage Employed Outside the Summer Months |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| **Total[c]** | **355,320** | **88.3** | **82.4** | **74.8** | **12.8** |
| Alabama | 5,367 | 64.6 | 75.9 | 80.5 | 0.0 |
| Alaska | 972 | 97.3 | 95.9 | 84.2 | 4.9 |
| American Samoa | N.A. | N.A. | N.A. | N.A. | N.A. |
| Arizona | 3,404 | 87.6 | 89.0 | 86.8 | 0.9 |
| Arkansas | 3,475 | 97.3 | 85.2 | 90.1 | 0.0 |
| California | 45,267 | 92.9 | 86.7 | 73.7 | 6.8 |
| Colorado | 3,328 | 94.3 | 79.6 | 78.5 | 5.5 |
| Connecticut | 4,066 | 100.0 | 94.1 | 84.2 | 1.8 |
| Delaware | 1,071 | 99.6 | 69.4 | 65.1 | 0.0 |
| District of Columbia[d] | 94 | 0.0 | N.A. | N.A. | 100.0 |
| Florida | 14,548 | 93.8 | 92.4 | 86.7 | 3.2 |
| Georgia | 11,192 | 98.5 | 91.1 | 90.9 | 7.5 |
| Guam | 357 | 100.0 | 100.0 | 100.0 | 0.0 |
| Hawaii | 626 | 94.7 | 79.8 | 80.5 | 1.9 |
| Idaho | 848 | 99.1 | 85.1 | 76.4 | 0.0 |
| Illinois | 17,868 | 93.0 | 81.0 | 80.2 | 0.4 |
| Indian and Native Americans | 3,763 | 84.8 | 85.0 | 79.0 | N.A. |
| Indiana | 2,603 | 98.4 | 70.8 | 79.8 | 0.0 |
| Iowa | 1,375 | 92.4 | 80.3 | 78.8 | 7.2 |
| Kansas | 1,920 | 89.2 | 75.1 | 61.0 | 1.4 |
| Kentucky | 6,051 | 99.9 | 98.0 | 80.1 | 0.0 |
| Louisiana | 5,762 | 93.3 | 86.6 | 79.6 | 5.6 |
| Maine | 1,544 | 45.3 | 59.1 | 71.0 | 5.8 |
| Maryland | 4,438 | 81.4 | 98.8 | 90.8 | 1.1 |
| Massachusetts | 6,917 | 98.2 | 91.8 | 85.2 | 2.9 |
| Michigan | 20,649 | 88.9 | 68.2 | 67.6 | 28.6 |
| Minnesota | 6,031 | 92.1 | 88.9 | 85.8 | 3.2 |
| Mississippi | 6,742 | 97.0 | 75.2 | 72.3 | 1.6 |
| Missouri | 9,447 | 91.9 | 78.5 | 74.6 | 6.4 |
| Montana | 819 | 84.2 | 58.7 | 56.6 | 23.2 |
| Nebraska | 1,062 | 98.9 | 77.6 | 71.3 | 0.0 |
| Nevada | 1,560 | 96.3 | 76.4 | 84.2 | 30.5 |
| New Hampshire | 585 | 88.2 | 89.7 | 94.0 | 0.0 |
| New Jersey | 6,195 | 95.0 | 31.9 | 21.9 | 0.0 |
| New Mexico | 1,831 | 96.3 | 36.5 | 82.8 | 6.0 |
| New York | 25,323 | 94.3 | 85.2 | 83.2 | 3.8 |
| North Carolina | 6,436 | 100.0 | 71.1 | 62.2 | 3.7 |
| North Dakota | 817 | 73.4 | 67.3 | 48.8 | 7.7 |
| Northern Marianas | N.A. | N.A. | N.A. | N.A. | N.A. |
| Ohio | 17,861 | 58.7 | 85.4 | 89.5 | 13.6 |
| Oklahoma | 1,847 | 89.9 | 71.0 | 64.1 | 14.4 |
| Oregon | 4,251 | 85.3 | 94.6 | 66.4 | 1.1 |
| Palau | N.A. | N.A. | N.A. | N.A. | N.A. |
| Pennsylvania | 9,359 | 98.7 | 73.5 | 71.8 | 0.8 |
| Puerto Rico | 25,627 | 61.6 | N.A. | 21.7 | 100.0 |
| Rhode Island | 1,665 | 98.7 | 84.3 | 95.9 | 0.8 |
| South Carolina | 7,235 | 89.4 | 80.5 | 84.2 | 7.7 |
| South Dakota | 721 | 100.0 | 88.5 | 88.3 | 0.0 |
| Tennessee | 12,577 | 92.9 | 75.1 | 72.5 | 2.0 |

| | Total Number of Participants Enrolled Through November 2009 | Percentage Employed During Summer | Percentage Completing Summer Employment[a] | Percentage Achieving Work Readiness Goal[b] | Percentage Employed Outside the Summer Months |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Texas | 24,669 | 88.6 | 87.4 | 83.3 | 2.4 |
| Utah | 847 | 87.1 | 43.0 | 44.6 | 8.9 |
| Vermont | 808 | 98.9 | 100.0 | 59.0 | 9.0 |
| Virgin Islands | 314 | 89.2 | 67.9 | 27.5 | 0.0 |
| Virginia | 3,968 | 95.5 | 79.7 | 75.7 | 8.0 |
| Washington | 5,913 | 92.1 | 91.2 | 77.4 | 7.9 |
| West Virginia | 2,501 | 56.4 | 96.2 | 78.9 | 0.4 |
| Wisconsin | 4,071 | 99.7 | 89.0 | 91.0 | 0.0 |
| Wyoming | 496 | 76.0 | 79.4 | 65.8 | 13.3 |

Source: Training and Employment Guidance Letter No. 13-08 and state performance reports for WIA youth initiatives supported by the Recovery Act submitted to the U.S. Department of Labor as of December 31, 2009.

Note: ETA defined "summer" as May 1 through September 30.

N.A. = not available.

[a] Pertains only to those youth who were employed during the summer and for whom data are available.

[b] Pertains only to those youth who participated during the summer months and for whom data are available.

[c] Statistics in the total row do not include youth from outlying areas or those served by Indian and Native American grantees.

[d] Draw down reports show that Washington, DC has not yet begun to enroll youth with its Recovery Act allocation. It is unclear whether this reflects actual initiative status or a reporting error.


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