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Youth Summer Jobs Programs: Aligning Ends and Means

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Executive summary

Summer jobs programs for young people have experienced a resurgence of interest and investment since the Great Recession, driven by concerns about high youth unemployment rates, particularly among low-income, black, and Hispanic youth. Summer jobs programs typically last five to seven weeks and provide work opportunities to teens and young adults who otherwise might struggle to find jobs. They offer a paycheck, employment experiences, and other organized activities in the service of multiple goals: increasing participants' income, developing young people's skills and networks to improve their labor market prospects, and offering constructive activities to promote positive behavior.

Most young people are placed in subsidized positions in the public and nonprofit sectors, although most cities also secure unsubsidized and private-sector placements, which typically come with higher skill and work-readiness requirements. Recent research finds that summer jobs programs have positive effects: reducing violence, incarceration, and mortality and improving academic outcomes.

But a strong program does not automatically follow from good intentions. Program design and implementation carry the day and determine the results. Moreover, research has not yet conclusively linked summer jobs programs to improved employment outcomes; evaluations to date are silent on effective program design; and, in the absence of agreed-upon standards and best practices, there is no guarantee of quality.

This paper is written to help clarify what is known about summer jobs programs and to provide information and guidance to city leaders, policymakers, and funders as they consider supporting larger and better summer efforts. Many jurisdictions are rebuilding their summer programs after a long hiatus that followed the end of dedicated federal funding in the late 1990s. Summer jobs programs are complex endeavors to design and deliver. Local leaders and administrators make a multitude of choices about program design, implementation, and funding, and these choices have a direct impact on quality and results. It is an opportune moment to assess the knowledge base and gaps about the operations and impacts of summer jobs programs.

Based on interviews and a scan of the relevant literature, this paper identifies a core set of practices that characterize high-performing summer jobs initiatives. They fall into two categories of program design and organizational capacity.

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Program design, referring to the activities that make up a summer jobs program and the specific services provided to youth and employers.

- Recruiting employers and worksites and sustaining their participation to provide the maximum number of job opportunities.
- Matching young people with age- and skill-appropriate opportunities, differentiating by age, work readiness, and youth interests so that no one goes to a workplace unprepared to succeed.
- Preparing young people to succeed and learn new skills by providing training and professional development on work readiness and other topics, including financial capability.
- Supporting youth and supervisors to maximize learning and development by structuring the job placement and monitoring progress over the summer to address problems that arise and provide guidance to supervisors on working with young people.
- Connecting the summer program to other educational, employment, and youth development services so that the summer program both feeds into and draws from other community resources.

Capacity and infrastructure, referring to the ability to implement program elements efficiently and effectively.

- Ensuring sufficient staff capacity and capability to deliver critical program elements at a high level of quality, executing with clear roles, sufficient staff training, and coordination across partner organizations.
- Deploying information technologies to improve program management and communication among partners and participants, including information management systems to streamline enrollment and job matching and to strengthen tracking and evaluation.
- Simplifying coordination and strengthening training through partnership management tools, such as sample job descriptions and assessment tools that help structure the work experience and support youth and worksite supervisors.

Recommendations

In order to develop stronger summer jobs programs, this paper makes a number of recommendations, many targeted to the local agencies running the programs but also to philanthropy and policymakers at the local, state, and federal level. These are:

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- **Set specific program goals that go beyond the number of youth served and measure progress toward those goals.** These should measure incremental progress and be readily trackable with program data.
- **Invest in sharing and building knowledge about what works in summer jobs programs** via performance management systems, better use of administrative data, learning communities, and evaluation.
- **Align program staffing and capacity with goals** for scale, learning, and quality.
- **Deepen and extend services to both young people and employers**, by providing more intensive services to participants when appropriate, linking participants to programs and services that extend beyond the summer, and maintaining stronger relationships with employers throughout the year to better understand their needs and thus make better job matches.
- **Stabilize, diversify, and expand the funding base, including an increased federal funding commitment**, by maximizing use of existing funding streams and sources, providing a more predictable funding cycle, and developing a large-scale competitive program for demonstrations and planning grants.

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Introduction: A snapshot of current summer jobs programming

Summer jobs programs for youth have received considerable attention since the 2007-09 recession and the associated spike in unemployment among young people.[1] The 2009 federal stimulus package directed $1.2 billion to states for employment and training for youth, and it strongly encouraged states to use the money to support summer jobs programs. In response, states and localities placed more than 300,000 youth in summer employment in the summer of 2009, two-thirds of whom were in school and between the ages of 14 and 18.[2] The stimulus dollars were the first dedicated federal funds for summer youth employment since the enactment of the Workforce Investment Act (WIA) in 1998, which ended the long-standing practice of stand-alone summer programs in favor of more comprehensive, year-round services.[3] Philanthropy also made large investments in summer jobs programs in response to the recession's effect on youth employment, and most recently, the U.S. Department of Labor announced $21 million of grants for the summer of 2016 to 11 communities through its "Summer Jobs and Beyond" program.[4]

This paper is written to help clarify what is known about summer jobs programs and to provide information and guidance to city leaders, policymakers, and funders as they consider

1. Martha Ross and Nicole Prchal Svajlenka, "Worrying Declines in Teen and Young Adult Employment" (Washington: Brookings Institution, 2015), http://www.brookings.edu/research/papers/2015/12/16-declines-in-teen-and-young-adult-employment-ross-svajlenka (accessed June 7, 2016); Heidi Schierholz, "16-to-24-Year-Olds Continue to Face Tough Labor Market" (Washington: Economic Policy Institute, 2012), http://www.epi.org/publication/16-24-year-olds-continue-face-tough-labor/ (accessed June 7, 2016); U.S., Bureau of Labor Statistics, "Summer Youth Labor Force News Release" (U.S. Department of Labor, 2009), http://www.bls.gov/news.release/archives/youth_08272009.htm (accessed June 7, 2016).

2. Jeanne Bellotti et al., "Reinvesting in America's Youth: Lessons From the 2009 Recovery Act Summer Youth Employment Initiative" (Princeton, N.J.: Mathematica Policy Research, 2010).

3. Social Policy Research Associates, "The Workforce Investment Act After Five Years: Results From the National Evaluation of the Implementation of WIA" (2004); Linda Harris, "The Tragic Loss of the Summer Jobs Program: Why It Is Time to Reinstate!" (Washington: Joint Center for Economic and Political Studies, 2007).

4. White House, "Fact Sheet: White House and Department of Labor Announce $21 Million for Summer and Year-Round Jobs for Young Americans and Launch of 16 Summer Impact Hubs" (2016), https://www.whitehouse.gov/the-press-office/2016/05/16/fact-sheet-white-house-and-department-labor-announce-21-million-summer (accessed June 7, 2016).

supporting larger and better summer efforts. Many jurisdictions are rebuilding their summer programs after a long hiatus: one study estimated that enrollment in summer jobs programs plummeted by 50 to 90 percent after WIA's enactment.[5] Summer jobs programs are complex endeavors to design and deliver. Local leaders and administrators make a multitude of choices about program design, implementation, and funding, and these choices have a direct impact on quality and results. It is an opportune moment to assess the knowledge base and gaps about the operations and impacts of summer jobs programs.

Summer jobs programs offer youth a paycheck, employment experiences, and other organized activities in the service of multiple goals: increasing participants' income, developing young people's skills and networks to improve their labor market prospects, and offering constructive activities to promote positive behavior. A typical summer jobs program runs for five to seven weeks, serving young people in their teens and sometimes into their early twenties. While the exact age range varies by jurisdiction, young people must typically be at least 14 to be eligible and no older than 21 or 24. Most youth are hired into subsidized jobs in government or nonprofits, and work between about 15 and 35 hours per week. Most cities also secure some level of private-sector participation, including unsubsidized positions in which the employer pays the wages. Some positions and worksites do not require particular skills or experience, while others are more selective or competitive. Youth receive varying levels of work-readiness training before they are placed at worksites, ranging from several hours to several days of pre-employment workshops. More rarely, young people participate in educational, training, or development programs throughout the year that prepare them for summer jobs or incorporate summer jobs into their ongoing programming. Most youth and supervisors receive several check-ins from program staff during the summer to offer guidance and address problems. Some programs have developed more formal coaching and support structures for youth and employers, including work-related professional development and college exploration workshops. Increasingly, summer jobs programs provide financial literacy education and link participants to banking services, taking advantage of the "teachable moment" of earning a paycheck.

"Summer jobs programs offer a paycheck and a chance for young people to build skills and expand their networks."

Summer jobs programs are generally run at the city or county level and are operated by a variety of organizations, including workforce investment boards, employment service agencies, human services agencies, or workforce intermediaries. These entities are generally

5. Social Policy Research Associates, "The Workforce Investment Act After Five Years."

public or quasi-public, and they may run the program directly or contract out the work of enrolling young people, recruiting worksites, placing youth into jobs, and monitoring job sites.

There is no comprehensive national census of summer jobs programs or the number of youth served, due in part to the decentralized nature of these programs. A recent U.S. Conference of Mayors report, based on a survey of 40 cities, reported that 115,766 youth were placed in summer jobs in 2015.[6] Program size varies widely. New York City has the largest program, serving 54,263 in 2015. Other large programs include Chicago (24,679), Los Angeles (11,644), Washington (13,230), Boston (10,360), Philadelphia (8,813), Baltimore (8,137), San Francisco (7,937), and Detroit (5,594).[7] However, not only big cities host summer jobs programs. Small and mid-size jurisdictions also run programs, including Missoula, Mont. (43 participants), Erie County, Pa. (142), Charlottesville, Va. (153), Madison, Wis. (415), Evanston, Ill. (550), Cincinnati (776), Pittsburgh (1,901), and Hartford, Conn. (2,090).[8]

There is also no definitive accounting of the average costs of summer jobs programs. However, the largest share of a program's budget typically goes to subsidized wages. While hourly wages and program lengths vary, wages of $7.25 or $8.25 for 125 hours is fairly representative, which represents total wages per participant of $900 to $1,031. Programs typically describe total per-participant costs as being in the range of $1,400 to $2,000.[9] Two recent proposals to expand summer jobs programs estimate per capita costs as $2,000 and $2,200, including costs ($500 and $650, respectively) for educational programming for youth.[10]

6. U.S. Conference of Mayors, "Financial Education and Summer Youth Programs" (2016).
7. U.S. Conference of Mayors, "Financial Education and Summer Youth Programs"; Office of the District of Columbia Auditor, "Review of Summer Youth Employment Programs in Eight Major Cities and the District of Columbia" (2016).
8. U.S. Conference of Mayors, "Financial Education and Summer Youth Programs"; Colleen Stuart, "Erie Summer JAM 2015: Final Report" (Seneca, Pa.: Venango Training and Development Center, 2015).
9. Baltimore City Mayor's Office of Employment Development, Summer Jobs, http://moed.baltimorecity.gov/youth-services/summer-jobs (accessed May 25, 2016); San Diego Workforce Partnership CONNECT2Careers, "Invest in the Future," http://c2csd.org/wp-content/uploads/2014/03/C2C-Fundraising.pdf (accessed May 25, 2016); Richard Moore et al., "Hire LA: Summer Youth Employment Program Evaluation Report 2014" (California State University at Northridge, 2014); Lazar Treschan, "Extending the High School Year Through Universal Summer Jobs for New York City Youth" (New York: Community Service Society, 2016).
10. Amy Ellen Schwartz and Jacob Leos-Urbel, "Expanding Summer Employment Opportunities for Low-Income Youth" (Washington: Brookings Institution, 2014); Treschan, "Extending the High School Year Through Universal Summer Jobs."

WorkReady Philadelphia provides probably the most detailed publicly available breakdown of per participant costs, specifying the cost of wages; payroll taxes and administration; recruiting, enrolling, preparing, and placing youth; and managing the network of organizations contracted to operate the program. For a young person working 120 hours at $7.25 per hour, the program cost is $1,700, with wages and associated costs (employer portion of payroll taxes and administering payroll) accounting for 58 percent of the total cost.[11]

Toward a strategy for strengthening summer jobs programs: Scale, outcomes, and efficiency

The case for summer jobs programs is straightforward. Summer jobs provide early work experience and skills development for young people who otherwise might flounder in the labor market—particularly low-income youth with weak connections to the work world and limited knowledge of career options. The programs can help youth see new possibilities and develop supportive relationships with adults. Summer jobs provide young people an opportunity to learn and practice skills required to succeed in a work environment: to be responsible, assess situations, accept feedback, identify when to seek assistance, and so on. Not least of all, youth in a summer jobs program earn wages—an important benefit for low-income youth and communities. They are often a jurisdiction's most high-profile and popular youth employment effort. Participants, parents, and employers often testify to the program's value.

However, it is unwise to expect too much of current summer jobs programs and their ability to position young people for future labor market success. A summer work experience is short and of limited intensity. There may or may not be continuity from one summer to the next in terms of placing a young person in assignments requiring progressively higher skills. For programs that award slots based on lotteries, there is no guarantee that a youth served one year will be served the next. Because summer jobs programs tend to be stand-alone programs, with a hard stop at the end of the summer, relatively few are well integrated or articulated with year-round youth development, educational, or training programs.

As currently designed and implemented, summer jobs programs tend to best serve high school students and some older youth who have little job experience, are unlikely to find

11. WorkReady Philadelphia, "Summer Work Experiences: Information on Wages and Program Costs" (n.d.).

a job on their own, don't have strong family or community networks connecting them to employment opportunities, and can benefit from a relatively modest intervention in the labor market. They do not typically reach large numbers of the most-vulnerable and disconnected youth, those with chaotic and difficult lives who are up against barriers such as low basic skills, child care responsibilities, housing instability, and criminal justice involvement. Summer programs cannot easily provide the level of intensive and comprehensive supports and services that research and experience have shown that disconnected youth need, such as case management and counseling; assistance in meeting needs such as child care, transportation, and food; long-term relationships that allow young people to engage, disengage, and re-engage; and education and training linked to paid job opportunities.[12]

The obstacles to growing and strengthening summer jobs program are significant. Logistical challenges bump up against budgetary constraints to pose real barriers to scale and quality. The rush of activity to place and support many young people at one time—recruiting participants and employers, matching youth with worksites, managing payroll, and monitoring program implementation—poses significant operational challenges. Pressure to place as many youth as possible can complicate efforts to manage for quality. Because of budget constraints and the many different program components that must be coordinated and delivered in a short time, many programs are understaffed for the critical tasks of matching youth to appropriate worksites based on readiness and interest, ensuring that worksites have adequate job descriptions and prepared supervisors, and delivering quality learning opportunities.

Additionally, due to the vagaries of local and state government budgeting, summer programs sometimes do not know their total budget until the spring, when planning and recruitment are in full swing. Foundations often find it hard to align their grantmaking with public-sector budget cycles. One report characterizes summer employment programs as caught in a "cycle of underinvestment and uncertainty."[13]

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12. Louisa Treskon, "What Works for Disconnected Young People: A Scan of the Evidence" (New York: MDRC, 2016); David T. Applegate et al., "Providing True Opportunity for Opportunity Youth: Promising Practices and Principles for Helping Youth Facing Barriers to Employment" (Chicago: Heartland Alliance, 2015); Sonam Gupta, Zachary Miller, and Timothy Griffith, "Evaluation of the Linking Innovation, Knowledge, and Employment Program: Process Study" (Washington: IMPAQ International, 2015).
13. Treschan, "Extending the High School Year Through Universal Summer Jobs."

Moreover, the research on the impacts of summer jobs program is limited. A handful of recent studies have found that summer jobs programs have reduced youth violence, incarceration, and mortality and improved academic outcomes, although they have not been linked conclusively to better employment outcomes. Evaluation literature is silent on the design elements that appear to be most effective, and, in the absence of agreed-upon standards and best practices, there is no guarantee of quality.

Even given these challenges, though, the recent experience of cities around the country demonstrates that the design and delivery of summer jobs programs can be improved. Cities can grow their programs, add valuable new services, improve both scale and impact, and align summer and year-round efforts more effectively. This paper is written to help practitioners and local officials who are committed to delivering a quality—and large-scale—summer jobs program by learning from the best efforts of their peers. We believe that the recent wave of growth and modernization of summer jobs programs is encouraging, and lessons regarding scale, quality, and the pursuit of both should be widely disseminated.

To this end, this report is structured as follows:

First, as background, we summarize existing research on two questions: (1) what do young people today need for long-term success in the labor market, and (2) what does existing research tells us about the outcomes of summer jobs programs? We then turn to lessons from the experience of summer jobs administrators around the country to fill research gaps and to distill a set of core practices that characterize more mature and developed summer programs. Lastly, we make recommendations for strengthening current summer jobs programs.

Research on youth labor market challenges and the impact of summer jobs programs

What do we know about what young people need for long-term success in the labor market?

For young people today, the labor market is more challenging and competitive than in earlier generations. Postsecondary credentials have become a gatekeeper in many occupations and fields. Employers have ratcheted up expectations for academic skills as well as work readiness, communication, and other “soft” skills. Many employers want

to see a track record of work experience from new hires. Together, these hurdles make it hard for many young people, particularly those with weak school and work records, to enter and move up in the labor market.

Rising demand for education and skills: In the past three to four decades, employer demand for postsecondary credentials has risen dramatically. In 1973, only 28 percent of workers had an education beyond high school; in 2010 that figure was 59 percent. By 2020, according to the Georgetown Center on Education and the Workforce, 65 percent of all jobs will require postsecondary education and training beyond high school.[14] Unemployment and earnings data paint a clear picture of the economic value of more years of formal education. In 2015, the unemployment rate of workers with less than a high school education was 8 percent, compared to 5.4 percent for those with a high school diploma and 2.8 percent for those with a bachelor's degree. Earnings follow this stair-step progression: median weekly earnings in 2015 for workers with less than a high school education were $493, compared to $698 for workers with a high school diploma and $1,341 for those with a bachelor's degree.[15]

Labor market sorting by education starts young. Among young adults age 20-24, unemployment rates by educational attainment show wide variation. In 2014, unemployment among young adults with a bachelor's degree was 4.6 percent, compared to 6.6 percent for those with an associate's degree, 17.8 percent for those with a high school diploma, and 22 percent for those who had not completed high school.[16]

Importance of work readiness and professional skills: Evidence continues to grow that academic and technical skills are not the only important factors in determining labor market and life success.[17] Other skills and capabilities that are critical to long-term labor

14. Anthony P. Carnevale, Nicole Smith, and Jeff Strohl, "Recovery: Projections of Jobs and Education Requirements Through 2020" (Washington: Georgetown Center on Education and the Workforce, 2013).
15. U.S. Department of Labor, Bureau of Labor Statistics, "Earnings and Unemployment Rates by Educational Attainment"(2016), http://www.bls.gov/emp/ep_table_001.htm (accessed March 17, 2016).
16. Ross and Svajlenka, "Worrying Declines in Teen and Young Adult Employment."
17. Robert Lerman, "Are Employability Skills Learned in U.S. Youth Education and Training Programs?" IZA Journal of Labor Policy 2, no. 6 (2013); Tim Kautz et al., "Fostering and Measuring Skills: Improving Cognitive and Non-Cognitive Skills to Promote Lifetime Success," Working Paper 20749 (Cambridge, Mass.: National Bureau of Economic Research, 2014); David J. Deming, "The Growing Importance of Social Skills in the Labor Market," Working Paper 21473 (Cambridge, Mass.: National Bureau of Economic Research, 2015); Laura H. Lippman, Renee Ryberg, Rachel Carney, and Kristin A. Moore, "Key 'Soft Skills' That Foster Youth Workforce Success: Toward a Consensus Across Fields" (Washington: Child Trends, 2015).

market success—variously referred to as non-cognitive skills, work readiness, professional, 21st century, or soft skills—can be more important in the early stages of labor market participation.

Responding to the lack of consensus on how to define these skills and how they can be promoted, Child Trends recently undertook a major review of existing U.S. and international research. The research team developed the following evidence-based definition of what it labeled "soft skills" that are associated with the likelihood that young people age 15 to 29 will be successful in the workplace, as measured by employment, job performance, wages, and entrepreneurial success:

> **Soft skills** refer to a broad set of skills, competencies, behaviors, attitudes, and personal qualities that enable people to effectively navigate their environment, work well with others, perform well, and achieve their goals. These skills are broadly applicable and complement other skills such as technical, vocational, and academic skills.

Child Trends identified five distinct soft skills that are most critical to labor market success, according to its review of the international literature:

- Social skills: The ability to get along with others, including respecting others, using context-appropriate behavior, and resolving conflict.
- Communication skills: Oral, written, non-verbal, and listening skills.
- Higher-order thinking skills: The ability to identify an issue, take in information, evaluate options, and reach a reasonable conclusion, sometimes described as problem solving, critical thinking, and decision making.
- Self-control: The ability to delay gratification, control impulses, direct and focus attention, manage emotions, and regulate behaviors.
- Positive self-concept: Self-confidence, self-awareness, and a sense of well-being and pride.

One strand of research finds that adolescents can learn these important skills—and that the workplace is an important venue for such mastery. Economists Tim Kautz, James Heckman, and their colleagues found particular promise in youth programs that combine education and work-related experience.[18] Citing outcomes of intensive workplace-based

18. Kautz et al., "Fostering and Measuring Skills," p. 35.

initiatives like Career Academies and YearUp, they concluded, "Workplace-based programs that teach non-cognitive skills appear to be effective remedial interventions for adolescents. They motivate acquisition of work relevant skills and provide for disadvantaged youth the discipline and guidance which is often missing in their homes or high schools."[19] Well-designed workplace activity enables teachers, supervisors, mentors, and other adults to provide young participants with developmentally appropriate and incremental guidance that helps them develop these skills that employers seek in new hires.

The value of work experience for young people: Research on the effects of teenage work experiences, which tends to focus on high school students, presents a mixed picture of the impact of employment (and unemployment) on young peoples' labor market chances and success.

One fairly robust strand of research suggests that a moderate level of teen employment during the school year (less than 15 or 20 hours per week) has beneficial effects on future employment, earnings, and net worth. In this view, teens gain valuable skills, experience, and work habits through employment that serve them well in the future. Some of this research associates teen employment with small declines in educational attainment, and finds the labor market benefits are greater for those not subsequently enrolling in college. Other research finds that work begets work, and that young people who worked in the previous year and more likely to work in the current year.[20]

Additional research finds that unemployment at a young age has adverse effects on wages up to 10 and 20 years later.[21] However, others contend that teen employment is

19. Kautz et al., "Fostering and Measuring Skills," p. 89.
20. Christopher J. Ruhm, "Is High School Employment Consumption or Investment?" Journal of Labor Economics 15, no. 4 (1997): 735-75; Matthew Painter, "Get a Job and Keep It! High School Employment and Adult Wealth Accumulation," Research in Social Stratification and Mobility 28 (2010): 233-49; Rhoda V. Carr, James D. Wright, and Charles J. Brody, "Effects of High School Work Experience a Decade Later: Evidence From the National Longitudinal Survey," Sociology of Education 69 (1996): 66-81; James R. Stone III, "Employment," in B. Bradford Brown and Mitchell J. Prinstein, eds., Encyclopedia of Adolescence, Vol. 2 (Elsevier: 2011). Andrew Sum et al, "The Plummeting Labor Market Fortunes of Teens and Young Adults" (Washington: Brookings Institution, 2014).
21. Thomas A. Mroz and Timothy H. Savage, "The Long-Term Effects of Youth Unemployment," Journal of Human Resources 41, no. 2 (2006): 259-93; Paul Gregg and Emma Tominey, "The Wage Scar From Male Youth Unemployment," Labour Economics 12, no. 4 (2005): 487-509.

not a determining factor in later labor market success, citing selection effects and the pre-existing characteristics of teens who work versus teens who don't.[22]

Employment may be more beneficial for some youth if not others—particularly for disadvantaged young people.[23] For those without family or community networks to help them find jobs, formal programs that link youth to jobs may be especially helpful. As researcher Jeylan Mortimer concludes about high school students with poor grades and low educational goals: "[H]aving a positive work experience can help to turn you around. For those who have a lot of disadvantages, any positive experience is likely to have a greater impact than on people with a lot of advantages already."[24] A study of the effects of school-to-work programs on high school students unlikely to attend college draws a similar conclusion: among men, mentoring and cooperative education programs (combining academic and vocational studies) increased participation in postsecondary education; co-op, school enterprise, and internships boosted employment and decreased idleness after high school for those not continuing directly to college.[25]

The youth development literature sees work as an important developmental experience that exposes teens and young adults to new ideas, people, and perspectives and provides opportunities for young people to act in new ways and reflect on their experiences. In order to develop the sense of agency, identity, and competencies necessary for adult success, young people need positive activities, coupled with strong, supportive, and sustained relationships with adults.[26] Employment can constitute one of those activities, but researchers caution against using an overly narrow lens when designing youth employment programs. One study notes, "[Youth] development programs and

22. V. Joseph Hotz, Lixin Colin Xu, Marta Tienda, and Avner Ahituv, "Are There Returns to the Wages of Young Men From Working While in School?" Review of Economics and Statistics 84, no. 2 (2002): 221-36; Marigee Bacalod and V. Joseph Hotz, "Cohort Changes in the Transition From School to Work: Evidence From Three NLS Surveys," Economics of Education Review 25, no. 4 (2006): 351-73.
23. Jeylan Mortimer, "The Benefits and Risks of Adolescent Employment," Prevention Researcher 17, no. 2 (2010): 8-11.
24. Ruth Graham, "Are Teen Jobs Becoming a Luxury Good?" Boston Globe, May 2, 2014.
25. David Neumark and Donna Rothstein, "Do School-to-Work Programs Help The 'Forgotten Half?'" Working Paper 11636 (Cambridge, Mass.: National Bureau of Economic Research, 2005)..
26. Jenny Nagaoka et al., "Foundations for Young Adult Success: A Developmental Framework" (University of Chicago Consortium on Chicago School Research, 2015).

educational training events without real work experience is a recipe for failure, and so is work experience isolated from education and youth development principles."[27]

What do we know about the impact of summer jobs programs?

Many mayors, police officials, and other city leaders believe from observation and personal experience that summer jobs increase skills, reduce youth violence, and otherwise benefit young people. Until recently, however, most research on youth employment assessed its value for high school youth during the school year; little was known about the impact of summer jobs programming.[28]

In the past few years, several new evaluations have expanded the research base on summer jobs programs. Research on summer jobs programs serving public high school students in Chicago and New York City found that these programs can reduce violence, make modest but non-trivial improvements in school attendance and academic performance, and reduce the probability of incarceration and mortality.[29]

In Chicago, research focused on a subset of Chicago's summer jobs program called One Summer Plus, designed for high school students from high-violence schools. All participants worked in nonprofit and government positions and were assigned adult mentors. One group also participated in a social-emotional learning (SEL) component, based on cognitive behavioral therapy principles, aimed at teaching youth to manage thoughts and emotions and set and achieve goals more successfully. At the end of the 16-month

27. Brandeis Center for Youth and Communities, "Practical Advice Guides: Smart Strategies to Employ, Educate, and Support Youth in Employability Development Programs" (n.d.), p. 2.
28. Adrienne L. Fermandes-Alcantara, "Vulnerable Youth: Federal Funding for Summer Job Training and Employment" (Washington: Congressional Research Service, 2011); Robert J. LaLonde, "Employment and Training Programs," in Robert A. Moffitt, ed., Means-Tested Transfer Programs in the United States (University of Chicago Press, 2003).
29. Sarah B. Heller, "Summer Jobs Reduce Violence Among Disadvantaged Youth," Science 346, no. 6214 (2014): 1219-22; Jacob Leos-Urbel, "What Is a Summer Job Worth?" Journal of Policy Analysis and Management 33, no. 4 (2014): 891-911; Amy Ellen Schwartz, Jacob Leos-Urbel, and Matthew Wiswall, "Making Summer Matter: The Impact of Youth Employment on Academic Performance," Working Paper 21470 (Cambridge, Mass.: National Bureau of Economic Research, 2015); Alexander Gelber, Adam Isen, and Judd B. Kessler, "The Effects of Youth Employment: Evidence From New York City Summer Youth Employment Program Lotteries," Working Paper 20810 (Cambridge, Mass.: National Bureau of Economic Research, 2014).

follow-up period, violent crime arrests among the treatment groups declined by 43 percent relative to the control group. This decline was nearly equal among both the jobs/mentor and the jobs/mentor/SEL treatment groups, indicating that SEL was not the only mechanism causing the decline. At the same time, though, the study found no impact on school attendance or grade point average.[30]

In New York City, several research projects examined outcomes among summer jobs program participants. One study of academic outcomes found small but significant increases in the share of participants taking and passing statewide high school exams relative to the control group, with effects concentrated among those who participated in the summer jobs program for more than one year.[31] A related study found average increases in participants' school attendance the following year of 1-2 percent, equaling two or three days. For those with lower baseline attendance rates, the increase was larger: 3 percent, or four to five additional school days.[32]

"Recent research is encouraging, but more and better evidence of what works is necessary to ensure quality."

Another New York City study examined several outcomes: earnings, college enrollment, incarceration, and mortality. The study found that participation in a summer jobs program reduced the probability of incarceration; the effects were most pronounced among those who were 19 or older when they participated in the summer program. It also found reduced probability of mortality, most likely by reducing death by "external causes" such as homicides, suicides, and accidents.[33] The study found no positive effect on earnings or subsequent college enrollment. The authors comment, "It is notable that even for this young group with typically little prior job experience, and even during the Great Recession period that we examine separately, an employment program did not provide a path to greater future earnings."[34]

Although evaluations based on random assignment are relatively rare because of their expense and complexity, some programs have invested in other types of research. For example, in Boston, research suggests that summer jobs reduced violent, risky, and adverse social behaviors among youth from high-crime neighborhoods. An evaluation of

30. Heller, "Summer Jobs Reduce Violence Among Disadvantaged Youth" (and "Supplementary Material").
31. Schwartz, Leos-Urbel, and Wiswall, "Making Summer Matter."
32. Leos-Urbel, "What Is a Summer Job Worth?"
33. Gelber, Isen, and Kessler, "The Effects of Youth Employment."
34. Gelber, Isen, and Kessler, "The Effects of Youth Employment," p. 4.

Hire LA by California State University at Northridge found high levels of satisfaction with the program among participants and employers and small gains in participants' career development. The report also made several recommendations: improve financial literacy and work-readiness training, improve the quality and variety of job placements, build in more structured reflection and career-planning activities for participants, and, in the long term, address the logistical and funding issues that lead program planning and implementation to take place relatively late in the spring and summer.[35] Programs in Louisville, Ky. and Connecticut compared summer jobs participants to demographically similar public school students and found positive effects on postsecondary enrollment and high school retention and graduation.[36]

The few summer jobs programs that have been experimentally evaluated are promising, although they have not delivered all the impacts supporters may have hoped for and they do not form a sufficient research base to support generalized statements about program effectiveness. However, new research efforts may increase our understanding of factors that enhance program impact. MDRC is assessing the academic and labor market impacts of New York City's summer program as well as the mechanisms leading to these impacts.[37] The University of Chicago's Urban Labs is continuing to assess the Chicago program by evaluating effects on crime and violence, education, and labor market outcomes; unpacking the mechanisms driving the program effects; and understanding the challenges of scaling up a successful program.[38] Researchers at Northeastern University are evaluating Boston's summer program, looking at outcomes such as job readiness, financial literacy, academic performance, subsequent employment and wages, and court involvement.[39]

35. Moore et al., "Hire LA." Andrew Sum, Mykhaylo Trubskyy, and Walter McHugh, "The Summer Employment Experiences and the Personal/Social Behaviors of Youth Violence Prevention Employment Program Participants and Those of a Comparison Group" (Boston: Northeastern Unviersity, n.d.)

36. Connecticut Workforce Development Council, Summer Youth Employment Program 2012 (2012); Connecticut Workforce Development Council, Summer Youth Employment Program 2013 (2013); Kentucky Center for Education and Workforce Statistics, "SummerWorks 2015 Evaluation Executive Summary" (2015).

37. MDRC, Summer Youth Employment Program (SYEP) Project Overview, http://www.mdrc.org/project/summer-youth-employment-program-syep#overview (accessed March 13, 2016).

38. Personal communication from Sara Heller, assistant professor, University of Pennsylvania, March 13, 2016.

39. Alicia Sasser Modestino, "The Boston Summer Youth Employment Program: Phase I Evaluation of Survey Results," presentation, December 21, 2015.

B

Elements of a strong summer jobs program

Despite the thin research base, however, political and funding support for summer jobs initiatives has been on the rise. Their underlying logic is clear, in an era of high youth unemployment and a heightened awareness of the need to create more economic and educational opportunities for young people from distressed communities, especially young people of color. Moreover, young people, their parents, community-based organizations, and employers testify to the value of such programs. Mayors, private-sector employers, and foundations in cities large and small have taken steps to build, expand, and improve their programs. This recent attention and support demonstrate both the potential for and the challenges to building a high-quality 21st century summer youth employment program.

The actions cities are taking to build, expand, and improve their summer jobs programs are generating important lessons. To help cities around the country that want to know more about how to create or grow a high-quality summer jobs program, the Brookings Metropolitan Policy Program undertook a scan of summer jobs programs in about a dozen cities, identifying trends, approaches that are gaining traction, and time-tested strategies. (For a list of organizations that were interviewed, please see the Appendix.)

The Metropolitan Policy Program identified a number of core practices that support high-quality programs. They fall into two categories:

- **Program design**, referring to the activities that make up a summer jobs program and the specific services provided to youth and employers, and
- **Capacity and infrastructure**, referring to the ability to implement program elements efficiently and effectively.

This descriptive framework should be seen as a compendium of "best bets," rather than a definitive accounting of what every summer jobs program should look like, particularly in light of the limited research base on program elements and their relative effectiveness.[40] However,

40. Credit to the following report for the use of the "best bet" language: Susan Jekielek, Stephanie Cochran, and Elizabeth Hair, "Employment Programs and Youth Development: A Synthesis" (Washington: Child Trends, 2002).

the elements elaborated upon below echo themes that are front and center in other assessments of strong summer jobs and youth employment programs.[41]

Program design

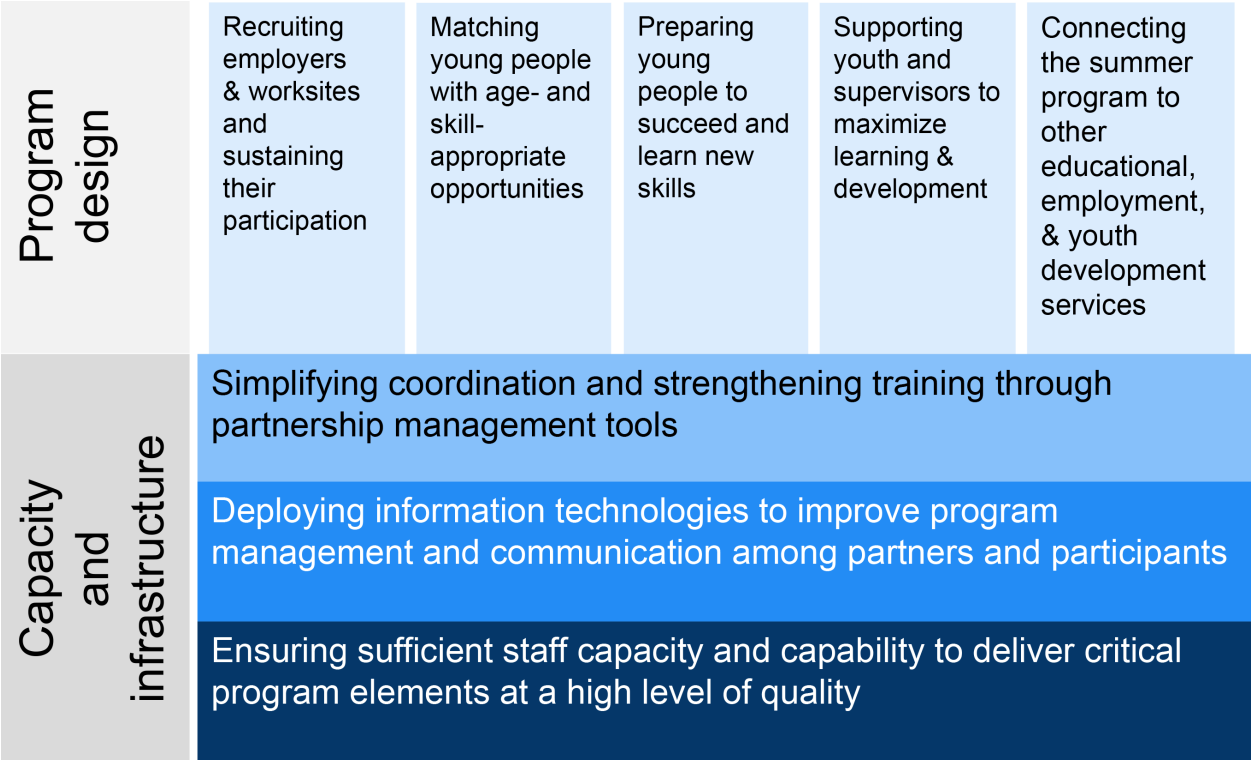
- Recruiting employers and worksites and sustaining their participation to provide the maximum number of job opportunities.
- Matching young people with age- and skill-appropriate opportunities, differentiating by age, work readiness, and youth interests so that no one goes to a workplace unprepared to succeed.
- Preparing young people to succeed and learn new skills by providing training and professional development on work readiness and other topics, including financial capability.
- Supporting youth and supervisors to maximize learning and development by structuring the job placement and monitoring progress over the summer to address any problems that arise and provide guidance to supervisors on working with young people
- Connecting the summer program to other educational, employment, and youth development services so that the summer program both feeds into and draws from other community resources.

Capacity and infrastructure

- Ensuring sufficient staff capacity and capability to deliver critical program elements at a high level of quality, executing with clear roles, sufficient staff training, and coordination across partner organizations. This applies to the organization administering the program as well as to contracted organizations.
- Deploying information technologies to improve program management and communication among partners and participants, including information management systems to streamline enrollment and job matching and to strengthen tracking and evaluation.

41. Sillerman Center for the Advancement of Philanthropy, Brandeis University, "Summer Youth Employment: A Guide to High-Impact Investments" (n.d.); Brent Orrell and Mark Ouellette, "Building Effective Summer Youth Employment Programs" (Washington: ICF International, 2008); National Youth Employment Coalition, "PEPNet Guide to Quality Standards for Youth Programs" (2005); Youth Violence Prevention Funder Learning Collaborative, "Career Pathways Framework" (2013).

- Simplifying coordination and strengthening training through partnership management tools, such as sample job descriptions and assessment tools that help structure the work experience and support youth and worksite supervisors.



Program design

1. Recruiting employers and worksites and sustaining their participation to provide the maximum number of job opportunities

Not surprisingly, the primary goal of most cities' summer jobs program is to secure as many paid jobs as possible for their young people. How have cities gone about this?

First and foremost is mayoral commitment: without the mayor as visible champion, it is difficult to maintain or expand a vigorous summer jobs program. Mayors can use their control of city jobs and their visibility in the nonprofit and business communities to be the "marketer in chief" for securing job commitments. Louisville Mayor Greg Fischer, San Francisco Mayor Edwin Lee, Boston Mayor Marty Walsh, Chicago Mayor Rahm

Emanuel, and Los Angeles Mayor Eric Garcetti, to name a few, actively promote and brand their cities' summer jobs programs and make it a priority to recruit new employers.

But a proactive mayor is not enough. A willing and engaged private sector is increasingly important to growing a quality summer program.

Community-based organizations and city agencies have long provided the bulk of summer jobs, but their ability to generate a higher volume of opportunities has limits. Bringing private employers to the table makes it possible to generate new placements, offer participants additional career-focused exploration and networking, and bring more resources into the programs. Cultivating placements that more closely approximate entry-level positions or formal internships also increases the likelihood that youth wages will be paid by the employer, rather than subsidized—enabling the city to expand the number of available jobs for young people without overreaching financially.

Some cities have a track record of engaging private-sector employers and securing unsubsidized slots. In summer 2015, for example, WorkReady Philadelphia placed about 600 youth in competitive, unsubsidized slots, many in the private sector. The Boston Private Industry Council, the city's workforce board and school-to-career intermediary, secured more than 2,600 unsubsidized jobs from local employers. Programs in other cities, such as Louisville, San Diego, and Detroit, have recently set their sights on dramatically increasing their private-sector and unsubsidized slots. Often, programs provide troubleshooting, coaching, and support to these employers.

Programs consider it a best practice to screen potential worksites to increase the likelihood of a positive experience for participating youth. The programs ensure that there is a job description for summer employees and help develop one if necessary; identify skills that participants should have; assess participant reviews from previous summers if the employer hosted youth; and in some cases ask for summer training and professional development plans. Programs typically do more intensive screening when identifying suitable private-sector employers, since programs want to make sure that employers feel they are getting value from participating and minimize any mismatch between employer and youth expectations of the summer work experience.

2. Matching young people with age- and skill-appropriate opportunities

Strong, mature summer jobs programs tend to be multi-sector and "multi-tiered." Jobs are secured in nonprofit, public, and private-sector settings, and young people are

matched with jobs of varying levels of responsibility and complexity based on their age and work readiness.

In cities such as New York, Hartford, Philadelphia, and Pittsburgh, for example, youth with no work experience, particularly younger teens age 14-16, are often engaged in a mixture of career exposure and project-based learning or service learning activities. Those who are older or who may have some work experience are frequently placed in government or nonprofit positions. The most work-ready young people often interview for a competitive placement, which may be unsubsidized. These placements are more likely to be in the private sector, although the public sector and nonprofit organizations also host competitive slots.[42]

The most successful summer programs build in safeguards to ensure that youth are placed in positions for which they are ready. Staff provide more supports and offer jobs in "safer" environments for those who need them, and offer the opportunity to compete for more demanding positions to those who are more job ready.

Some cities build out explicit sub-programs to serve more vulnerable youth or those with more socioeconomic barriers. For example, the Chicago One Summer Plus program mentioned earlier targeted youth who had extensive school absences or had been involved in the juvenile justice system. The program costs more per participant (about $3,000), in part due to the involvement of mentors trained in trauma-informed care, conflict resolution, and other youth development topics. Mentors met with young people five hours each week using a curriculum designed to help them discuss the youth's experiences, both in and out of the program, and think about their goals and what they would like to change about themselves and their communities. It began in 2012 with 700

42. For example, Hartford has four tiers. Tier 1: Project-based learning and career exploration, for teens age 14-16; Tier 2: Simulated work environments and career exploration for teens age 14-17; Tier 3: Enhanced employability skills training and employment (including subsidized internships) for young people age 16-24; and Tier 4: Career connections, which provides mentoring and assistance in finding an unsubsidized position, for young people age 17 and over; see http://capitalworkforce.org/youth-resources/young-job-seekers-center/#tiersystem (accessed June 15, 2016). Philadelphia has three categories: service learning for youth age 14-21 in which young people work in teams to address community problems; work experience for young people age 16-21; and internships for those with previous work history and more experience with workplace competencies; see WorkReady Philadelphia, 10th anniversary report (n.d.), https://www.pyninc.org/models#se (accessed June 15, 2016).

participants and in 2016 is slated to serve 3,000.[43] New York City's summer program offers four different tracks for young people in different circumstances, age groups, and skill levels. One is designed for vulnerable youth—those involved in the juvenile justice or child welfare systems or who are homeless. Participants attend weekly meetings focused on mentoring, counseling, and educational support. The city has also steadily increased the number of young people with disabilities who participate.[44]

3. Preparing young people to succeed and learn new skills

In addition to providing young people with wages and a work experience, summer employment is also an effective platform for learning and for exposure to adult responsibilities and decisions. Strong summer jobs programs embed learning goals in the experience, using the real world context of a job to impart and reinforce lessons about work readiness, interpersonal relations at work, and personal finance.

Work readiness: Summer jobs programs typically build learning about work and careers into participant orientation and ongoing professional development. The emphasis is typically on skills and behaviors best learned in context at the worksite. These include basic behaviors such as punctuality and appropriate dress, but also complex soft skills such as working in teams and taking initiative.

Agencies and organizations managing summer jobs programs are typically expected to provide a certain number of hours of pre-employment and on-the-job professional development for young people. The activities can range from a few hours to a week of pre-employment orientation and can also include programming during the summer, usually one day or afternoon a week.

Cities vary in their approach to work-readiness curricula and training. Some build their own curricula while others use third-party materials. Others try to build this learning into the work experience itself. Boston and 15 other communities in Massachusetts use the Signal Success curriculum developed by the quasi-public Commonwealth Corporation. The curriculum

43. Ed Finkel, "Chicago's Trauma-Informed Summer Jobs Program Prevents Kids From Engaging in Violence," ACES Too High News, September 8, 2015; Fran Spielman, "Magic Johnson Gives $10 Million Assist to Expand Jobs Program for At-Risk Youth," Chicago Sun Times, February 16, 2015; "Mayor Emanuel Announces 25,000 Summer Youth Job Opportunities Available Through 2016 One Summer Chicago Program," press release, March 14, 2016.
44. New York City Department of Youth and Community Development, Summer Youth Employment Program, Annual Summary 2015.

provides lesson plans, assessments, and a variety of activities and interactive exercises to build non-cognitive skills. It can be customized for specific contexts, and there are accompanying web resources and professional development opportunities.

Capital Workforce Partners (CWP), the regional workforce board in Hartford, developed a system to assess and teach the knowledge and behaviors that it identified in consultation with employers as essential for entry-level workers. The Career Competencies curriculum framework covers hard and soft skills, including basic skills in reading and math and customer service and problem solving. The system is a foundational component of CWP's youth programming, and it aligns with the tiers of work readiness that the organization and its partners use for all their youth employment programming.

In Chicago, MHA Labs analyzed thousands of employer appraisals from summer jobs programs in Chicago, Minneapolis, and St. Paul, Minn. to identify a set of 12 core skills most highly correlated with "hirability" and employer satisfaction. MHA Labs organized these skills into the categories of professional attitude, team work ethic, problem solving, and time management. Rather than developing a curriculum, however, MHA Labs works directly with educational and youth-serving organizations to integrate these skills into their programs through assessment and feedback forms and other tools.

MHA Labs also participates in the Chicago City of Learning initiative and awards digital badges based on work competencies and employer performance reviews. These badges can then form a digital portfolio of tasks youth have completed or goals they have reached, to which they can refer future employers. For example, through the summer jobs program, youth can earn a "Hire Up" badge for high ratings on all 12 of the core work skills.

While strategies to promote work readiness vary among cities, and there is no one dominant standardized curriculum, there seems to be consensus that training should be experiential, based on authentic challenges and workplace conditions, and should allow students to practice applying particular skills. Carrying this out demands skilled facilitation and leadership; a successful program not only transmits information but also helps participants internalize behaviors as part of their repertoire of social skills. Youth with limited exposure to the cultural norms of workplace environments can benefit greatly

from assistance in translating their school- and neighborhood-based skills and behaviors into the workplace—a process sometimes referred to as code-switching.[45]

Work-based learning: Some programs take steps to structure the work experience and help supervisors and youth develop positive relationships based on shared and clearly articulated expectations.

Louisville's SummerWorks program adapted the Massachusetts Work-Based Learning Plan, an assessment and goal-setting tool developed about 20 years ago.[46] The plan lays out performance expectations in areas such as attendance, communication, and accepting direction. Supervisors assess participants against those expectations at the beginning and end of the summer. Students subsequently debrief on the evaluation with their supervisor and/or job coach. SummerWorks also adapted the Work-Based Learning Plan to support its own goal that participants will be "retainable, promotable, and referable" by the end of the summer. Supervisors are asked to complete a series of questions asking whether they would recommend the worker for retention (without committing to employment beyond the summer); whether the youth displays qualities

necessary for promotion into a position of greater responsibility; and whether the supervisor would be willing to serve as a professional reference.

MHA Labs helped one of its partners develop a midpoint skills performance review that asks supervisors to assess performance relative to the 12 core skills identified as crucial for high performance. Young people complete a parallel self-assessment. Supervisors and youth then meet to discuss whether and how ratings are similar or different.

WorkReady Philadelphia incorporates a work-based or project-based learning component into all tiers of its programming. It hires seasonal "contextual learning specialists" to help worksites create learning experiences out of or related to the youth's work experience. For instance, youth in the service-learning tier may create a campaign to attract visitors to the riverfront. Youth in the work experience or internship tiers may

45. National Collaborative on Workforce and Disability for Youth, "Helping Youth Develop Soft Skills for Job Success: Tips for Parents and Families" (2011); U.S. Department of Labor, "Skills to Pay the Bills: Mastering Soft Skills for Workplace Success" (n.d.); U.S. Department of Labor, "Teaching Soft Skills Through Workplace Simulations in Classroom Settings" (2010); Annie E. Casey Foundation, "Taking the Initiative on Jobs and Race: Innovations in Workforce Development for Minority Job Seekers and Employers" (2001).
46. Overview of the Work-Based Learning Plan, http://www.massconnecting.org/content/overview-work-based-learning-plan (accessed March 14, 2016).

investigate some aspect of their workplace; at several worksites, youth developed infographics about their industry. They may attend professional development workshops and create an employment-based portfolio, perhaps with a video personal statement.

Financial literacy and empowerment: A growing number of summer jobs programs have introduced learning components on personal finance so that the young wage earners can become more informed consumers of and participants in the financial system. The federal Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act includes financial literacy education as one of the required program elements for youth. In addition, a variety of foundation, corporate, and federal initiatives are helping localities introduce or expand financial literacy into youth employment programs and encourage behavior changes in managing money and using financial products and services.[47]

Earning a paycheck, perhaps for the first time, creates a teachable moment for many young people, and a number of cities are developing partnerships with banks and financial education providers to take advantage of the opportunity. Program developers need to be careful, though, that the specific financial products offered to youth, such as pay cards and bank accounts, are tailored to avoid high fees, encourage savings, and connect young people to mainstream financial services.[48]

San Francisco is a leader in offering young people support to change their banking behavior. Concerned that many summer jobs participants were using check-cashing services, San Francisco piloted a suite of financial capability services in 2011 with a subset of youth employment participants. The MyPath Savings program provided peer-to-peer education, access to a savings account in the youth's name, development of a

47. Kisha Bird, Marcie Foster, and Evelyn Ganzglass, "New Opportunities to Improve Economic and Career Success for Low-Income Youth and Adults: Key Provisions of the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA)" (Washington: CLASP, 2014); Heidi Goldberg, Anthony Santiago, Andrew Moore, and Courtney Coffin, "Youth Employment and Financial Capability: A Municipal Action Guide" (Washington: National League of Cities, 2015); U.S. Conference of Mayors, "Financial Education and Summer Youth Programs" (2016); Daniel Dodd-Ramirez, "Getting Young People on the Path to Financial Success," U.S. Department of Labor Blog, March 10, 2015, https://blog.dol.gov/2015/03/10/getting-young-people-on-the-path-to-financial-success/ (accessed March 15, 2016); Cities for Financial Empowerment Fund, "Summer Jobs Connect: More Than a Job: Lessons From the First Year of Enhancing Municipal Summer Youth Employment Programs Through Financial Empowerment" (2015).

48. Consumer Financial Protection Bureau, "Building Financial Capability in Youth Employment Programs: Insights From a Roundtable With Practitioners" (2014).

savings goal, direct deposit for paychecks, and a savings match. An evaluation found that the youth were able to accumulate significant savings and develop regular savings habits.[49] After the program expanded, another evaluation found that participants saved over $300,000 during the summer, with about 90 percent opening bank accounts and fewer than 5 percent reporting they used a check-cashing facility.[50]

4. Supporting youth and supervisors to maximize learning and development

Effective summer youth programs offer coaching or mentoring for supervisors and youth to maximize positive experiences for both employer frontline staff and participating young people—and to limit demotivating experiences for either party.

"Stronger connections to year-round programs could multiply impacts but are not built in a day."

Cities that can afford to do so hire staff to take on problem solving and coaching at the workplace. (These are in addition to staff who manage payroll for participating youth, saving the employers substantial work.) Many employers who participate in a summer jobs program are not accustomed to having youth at their worksite. They frequently need help supporting youth development, structuring learning and reflection, and dealing with challenges young people bring to the workplace.

Louisville's SummerWorks program assigns coaches to many of its participants and worksites. Coaching is a requirement for all subsidized job placements, and many employers offering unsubsidized placements also allow onsite job coaching as an added benefit to the young people and supervisors. If an employer has a problem with a young person's performance—for example, if the employee is consistently late—the supervisor can call the job coach for assistance. The job coach checks in with the worker and employer at least once a week, helps familiarize supervisors with the work-based learning plan, and debriefs the young person after the evaluation. Similarly, in Boston, as part of the Private Industry Council's School-to-Career initiative, career specialists

49. Vernon Loke, Margaret Libby, and Laura Choi, "Increasing Financial Capability Among Economically Vulnerable Youth: MY Path Pilot and Year Two Updates" (Federal Reserve Bank of San Francisco, 2013).

50. Heidi Goldberg, Anthony Santiago, Andrew Moore, and Courtney Coffin. "Youth Employment and Financial Capability: A Municipal Action Guide" (Washington: National League of Cities, 2015); personal communication with Joanna Rosales, San Francisco Department of Children, Youth, and Their Families, March 28, 2016.

conduct regular check-ins with youth, helping them adjust to the workplace and addressing specific work-related problems.

For the competitive internship component of WorkReady Philadelphia, program representatives help supervisors think creatively about job rotation, mentoring, and participant learning. Employers new to the program may be provided examples of the kinds of activities and tasks the interns can do, tailored to the industry and workplace.

5. Connecting the summer program to other educational, employment, and youth development services

Summer jobs programs typically stand on their own, without systematically robust connections to year-round educational, employment, or youth development programs. However, few programs are monolithic, and many cities have created some strong linkages between summer and longer-term programming. For example, in Washington, D.C., youth development nonprofits like DC Scores and Brainfood arrange to be the summer worksites for young people they serve during the year. Subsidized summer wages allow the nonprofits to offer employment opportunities they otherwise could not afford and to expand their programming in the summer months with the help of the additional staff capacity provided by the summer workers.[51] But synergies like this occur unevenly within and across cities; it is not the typical experience for summer jobs participants.

Most summer jobs officials understand that a six-week dip into paid employment in the summer, while a huge opportunity, still needs to align with year-round programming if it is to have significant and lasting impacts on learning, skills, and employability. A number of cities are exploring how to do this more systematically. It is not easy: fragmented funding streams, conflicting reporting structures and outcome metrics, and inadequate funding for year-round programming present huge obstacles. But some cities find ways to strengthen and publicize connections between summer and year-round employment-related activities. In the process, the effort can achieve efficiencies by sharing resources, staff, and tools that connect young people with the level of support they need.

Integration with year-round programming: The web-based portals launched by some cities to simplify summer enrollment and program management have made it easy to

51. Personal communication with Carina Gervacio, program director, Brainfood, June 15, 2016; personal communication with Katrina Owens, chief of staff, DC Scores, June 15, 2016.

expand online job matching into a year-round service. Once the system has been built, private-sector and nonprofit employers can post youth jobs throughout the year, and young people can regularly scan options and pursue listed jobs.

Some cities are going much further in trying to link summer and year-round youth employment programming. In New York City, for example, completers of the summer program are eligible to apply for a year-round youth employment program called Work, Learn, and Grow. Eligible applicants are selected by lottery to work for up to 10 hours a week during the school year in community-based organizations, during which time they also participate in career-readiness training.[52]

The Hartford-based nonprofit Our Piece of the Pie (OPP) offers young people a range of youth development, educational, and workforce development services. OPP is a contractor with the local workforce board to serve and place youth in summer jobs. It estimates that more than half of its summer jobs participants are already being served during the year by the organization. For these youth, summer employment follows an assessment by the youth and his or her youth development specialist of the participant's needs and interests. For summer participants who are new to OPP, the program conducts an exit interview and encourages participation in year-round OPP programming for individuals who might benefit.

San Francisco views the summer jobs program as an engagement strategy, reflected in the recent name change from Summer Jobs+ to Youth Jobs+. As with OPP, the linkage of summer and year-round opportunities happens at the provider level: organizations contracted to serve and place youth in summer jobs transition youth they are already serving into the summer program or funnel summer participants (if the fit is right) into ongoing activities.

The San Diego Workforce Partnership, a local workforce board, is collaborating with San Diego County's Community Action Partnership to build on its summer jobs program by offering subsidized externships to high school students living in high-poverty ZIP codes. The goal is to use the winter and spring break externships to recruit and prepare youth for employment the following summer. Youth are recruited from schools and youth-serving agencies. The program provides work-readiness training and stipends for

52. The Work, Learn, and Grow Employment Program, http://www.nyc.gov/html/dycd/html/jobs/WLG_application.shtml (accessed March 15, 2016).

transportation and work clothes. After their externship, participants debrief with staff and update their resumes.[53]

Alignment with career-focused high school programs: Some cities link summer jobs initiatives more closely to high school career-oriented programs, particularly in career and technical education (CTE), in an effort to strengthen both. Miami-Dade Public Schools are expanding the promotion of summer jobs to CTE students so they can secure valuable experience working in a job aligned with their school curriculum. Baltimore and Chicago are also committed to using summer jobs more effectively as a learning experience for high school CTE students.

In Hartford, the alignment of summer and school-year job opportunities is building off a bold school-year internship initiative. The Hartford Public Schools, working with the mayor, two business groups, and the region's workforce board, have embarked upon an effort to generate 1,200 internships for 11th graders at all Hartford high schools by 2020. The school system wants to offer an internship to all eligible and interested students, which it estimates to be about 60 percent of the cohort. The program currently serves several hundred students in a mix of subsidized and employer-paid positions. The partnership has begun to identify ways to leverage summer jobs and link the two efforts. For example, employers who are satisfied with the performance of a summer employee could convert the position into a year-round internship or continue to employ school-year interns into the summer.

Systemic coordination of summer and year-round efforts: Under Mayor Bill DeBlasio, New York City launched an ambitious Center for Youth Employment in 2015 to coordinate and expand efforts to connect the city's young people to opportunities for summer and year-round employment, skills building, mentoring, and guidance toward college and careers. The center is engaging both public and private funders with the goal of offering 100,000 employment-focused opportunities for New York City youth between the ages of 14 and 24 by 2020. In 2015, the city's summer jobs program served about 54,000 youth; even with that large base, reaching the goal of 100,000 will require a substantial number of year-round internships and mentorships. The center views

53. San Diego Workforce Partnership, "New Program Places Young Adults in School Break Internships," http://workforce.org/news/new-program-places-young-adults-%C2%A0school-break-externships (accessed March 25, 2016); County of San Diego Community Action Partnership, Application for 2015 CSBG Targeted Initiatives (n.d.); interview with Peter Callstrom, Andy Hall, and Karmin Noar, February 9, 2016.

the summer program as a logical connection point with young people to identify their interests and needs and to refer them to longer-term programs and services. The center is committed to working across agencies and programs to build capacity to deliver more and better employment-related services throughout the year.[54]

Capacity and infrastructure

1. Ensuring sufficient staff capacity and capability to deliver critical program elements at a high level of quality

Summer jobs programs are complex, labor-intensive enterprises that require a high level of effort, collaboration, and execution during a relatively short program window. Implementation is a key differentiator between stronger and weaker summer jobs programs, and a key driver of implementation is staffing—having a sufficient number of people with the necessary skills deployed in clearly delineated roles.

"Summer jobs programs rest upon a host of logistical and bureaucratic achievements that are largely unseen and unsung."

Successful execution of the core program elements described above—recruiting employers and worksites, preparing and placing young people in summer positions, supporting employers and participants throughout the summer, and connecting to year-round programming—all rest on a foundation of staff who have the skills to build relationships with young people and adults in a variety of settings, and to function effectively in the culture of employers, community-based organizations, government agencies, and schools.

Recognizing that expanding quality private-sector and unsubsidized placements is labor-intensive, some programs have secured funding to support staff working year-round to scout positions for young people and stay abreast of employer needs. These include Hartford's Capital Workforce Partners and the Philadelphia Youth Network's Partnership for Employment Pathways department (which manages WorkReady Philadelphia's unsubsidized internship program).

The Boston Private Industry Council (PIC) may have the most developed staff infrastructure. The PIC currently supports 23 career specialists who work year-round in Boston's public high schools to prepare and place young people in summer and school-year jobs. Throughout

54. NYC Center for Youth Employment: Frequently Asked Questions (n.d.)

the year, career specialists provide job readiness and career awareness activities, including resume workshops, mock interviews, and job shadowing. The PIC also employs four employer account managers whose job it is to secure employer participation and the commitment of private-sector jobs. They follow up on leads, many generated by the mayor, and walk companies through the steps of creating a successful placement, including developing a job description, identifying necessary skills, and confirming wages and hours. The role has a strong sales element, and employer account managers typically specialize in specific sectors so that they understand the workplace expectations of the industry and the types of internships that are a good fit for teens. These positions are funded primarily through an allocation from the school district and the state Connecting Activities fund, which is designed to support public schools and workforce boards in developing career development and work-based opportunities for youth. The PIC augments these public resources with philanthropic funds.

While the Boston PIC is not alone in having staff to maintain relationships with employers and prepare young people for employment, it is an outlier in its scale and sophistication. More typically, program staffing is lean and personnel do a lot of multitasking, with a small core team filling multiple roles to carry out and oversee the convenings, connections, and recruitment of businesses and young people. One program director referred to his staffing pattern as a “skeleton crew.”

Cities may rely on a rapid expansion of seasonal workers to staff the summer jobs program. As the managing partner of WorkReady Philadelphia, which placed nearly 9,000 young people in the summer of 2015, the Philadelphia Youth Network (PYN) typically hires about 50 seasonal workers to manage and support the organizations it contracts with to administer the city’s subsidized jobs. Staff responsibilities are varied. Job titles include provider liaison, enrollment specialist, quality assurance specialist, data entry specialist, payroll specialist, youth hotline specialist, contextual learning specialist, and summer supervisors. In addition to the 50 seasonal workers hired by PYN, many of the 60 contracted agencies also rapidly increase staff to support their summer efforts.

While temporary staff are sometimes necessary for time-limited surges of activity, it can be hard to find staff who are sufficiently knowledgeable about employment programs and working with young people. Moreover, having to train new staff every year in programmatic details and processes is a strain on lean organizations. Some programs address this by prioritizing year-to-year consistency among their temporary hires.

2. Deploying information technologies to improve program management and communication among partners and participants

Some cities find that technology solutions such as online applications and robust management information systems can greatly improve program efficiency in carrying out the core activities of recruiting and enrolling youth, recruiting employers, and assigning youth to worksites.

The most forward-looking summer jobs programs are betting on more streamlined and flexible information systems to manage program files and records, shifting away from more labor-intensive manual recordkeeping. Customer relations management software, either customized from commercial products or built from scratch, is helping cities stretch staff capacity, track young people better, automate payroll, and communicate with youth in ways that fit their use of social media.

San Diego has perhaps the most impressive summer jobs management information system. The San Diego Workforce Partnership built a customized web-based CONNECT2Careers portal on a FileMaker Pro foundation, replacing a manually entered multipage application. Young people access the portal by computer or smart phone, with phone support for those without digital access. Research on young people's preferences led the Workforce Partnership to communicate with participants via text message in addition to email and phone, after which the response rate jumped from 7 percent to over 60 percent. The system makes it possible to track young people and their participation in real time. A job search function enables young people to identify jobs that appeal to their interests and sorts openings by distance to the worksite. This year, San Diego will keep the portal running all year rather than closing it down at summer's end.

In 2015, with help from a local foundation, Detroit's summer jobs program partnered with the Philadelphia Youth Network to use and customize PYN's data system. In addition to supporting an online application process accessible by computer and mobile device, the Philadelphia system allowed Detroit to streamline and track worksite registrations, youth job assignments, payroll, funding allocations, and program reporting. This year, Detroit hopes to incorporate lessons from the initial pilot and roll out this integrated approach to all youth participating in the city's Summer Youth Experiences.

3. Simplifying coordination and strengthening training through partnership management tools

As summer programs mature, the best codify the deep knowledge they develop into tools that can simplify learning for new staff, workplace supervisors, and young people. These tools are often low-tech, designed to be used as is or altered as needed. Most importantly, they are a way to gather in one place job descriptions, management forms, and wisdom that can improve the student/employer relationship and program outcomes. These guides can minimize unnecessary reinvention of the wheel and save valuable program staff and workplace supervisor time. They "bake in" quality standards for summer jobs programs.

The work-based learning plans from Massachusetts and Louisville, described earlier, are examples of such a tool. MHA Labs developed a similar tool with another one of its partners, a "summer intern growth contract," which prompts the intern to outline the skills he or she wants to improve over the summer and which helps structure a goal-oriented discussion between the intern and supervisor. Both sign the contract, with the intern agreeing to try his or her best to develop the skills and the supervisor agreeing to support the intern in doing so.

The Philadelphia Youth Network created a Worksite Toolkit that can be used when developing internship slots with employers. The publicly available toolkit covers topics such as guidelines for worksite orientations, workplace activities and job descriptions for youth, and assessment forms. Other cities, such as San Diego and New York, are also developing guidebooks for employers.

Recommendations for strengthening summer jobs programs

The path to employment and economic security for young people is not always straightforward. To succeed in today's economy and earn middle-class wages, a young person needs to achieve several milestones: graduate from high school or earn an alternate credential; enroll in and complete some postsecondary education or job training; preferably gain meaningful work experience; and then enter the labor market with skills that employers want. Young people, particularly youth of color and from high-poverty neighborhoods, can fall off-track at many points.

B

A proposed vision for summer jobs programs

To supplement the recommendations and make them more concrete, below is a draft vision for summer jobs programs based on lessons from practitioners and the literature. The vision is designed to provoke dialogue about what is desirable and feasible in a summer jobs program, as well as the difference between what is ideal and what is "good enough." It is a first draft, and the goal is to stimulate discussion and creativity and for others to improve it.

> Summer jobs programs will provide a **high-quality** work experience to all participants, appropriate to their age, skills, and interests, in a mix of public, private, and nonprofit workplaces. They will also serve as a **portal** to other educational, employment, and youth development programs that can help participants plan for and succeed in further education and the labor market.

What does *high quality* mean?

- Work experiences have value for the employer and meet participants' developmental stage, interests, and skills.
- Every position has a clear job description and a designated work supervisor who is responsible for orientation to the job and at least two performance assessment/feedback sessions.
- Support is available for employers and supervisors, including tools and personal contact that can strengthen the employers' ability to identify appropriate tasks and job responsibilities, improve performance assessment, and handle performance issues that may arise.
- Support is available for summer youth employees, through (1) regular check-ins with city-provided and -trained coaches/mentors on understanding the workplace, relating to supervisors and other workers, and dealing with performance challenges and fears; and (2) occasional facilitated meetings with peers to debrief on their experiences and begin to develop career plans.
- By the end of the summer experience, each participant can clearly describe and document what he or she has learned from the work experience and each has secured the name and contact information of an adult who will serve as a professional reference.
- There is a process to assess participants, identify those with barriers to employment, and provide additional support or referrals to other services.
- Program design choices are evidence-based and guided by performance management systems and evaluation research.

B

What does it mean to be a *portal* to other services?

While a summer job may last only a few months, it is a concentrated period of time when young people are receptive to learning opportunities, since they are eager to work and earn money. A summer jobs program is a rare touch-point outside of school, and programs should leverage this opportunity to connect young people to additional services or supports.

Linkages to additional work- and career-related services can be made during orientation and ongoing professional development sessions over the course of the summer, in "exit interviews" at the end of the summer experience, and, especially for high school students, through continued outreach during the year.

Over time, building out this portal function will require investments of two kinds: (1) a clear understanding and assessment of the existing landscape of available year-round programs and services, and (2) relationship building with local youth-serving organizations so that appropriate and effective partnerships and referral mechanisms are created and strengthened. In the process, gaps in services (e.g., for harder-to-serve and older opportunity youth) are likely to be identified.

Ideally, summer jobs programs should be deployed as part of a broader youth employment strategy that helps less-prepared young people take these important steps toward further education and career development. Such a coherent year-round effort would serve not only those youth most likely to benefit from a short-term summer job, but also those of different ages and levels of maturity, readiness, and skill who face more serious barriers to employment. The gap between this vision and the current reality in most cities is great, and there is no quick fix.

However, evidence from high-performing cities shows that improvements in design and implementation of summer programming are possible—and that these improvements can help cities move in the direction of more strategic, integrated youth employment programs, with summer jobs at the center, that operate at greater scale and higher quality.

The following recommendations are designed to build on the resurgence of energy and resources recently devoted to summer programs. Based on the best efforts of practitioners, these recommendations are meant to help city officials and program leaders focus on a limited number of high-leverage changes that can increase focus, efficiency, capacity, coordination with other youth-serving efforts, and access to a more diverse funding base.

1. Set specific program goals that go beyond the number of youth served and measure progress toward those goals

The easiest goal for a program to set is an increase in the number of youth served. It can be readily described and measured. Politically, it can galvanize support and action. However, tallying jobs provides no information on whether the program is helping young people become more successful in the labor market, reducing violence, or improving academic outcomes. Setting more specific employment, youth development, and educational goals for a summer program—tied to measurable outcomes to which the program is willing to be held accountable—is a crucial first step in strengthening performance. Broader goals of helping young people can be narrowed, specified, and given a time window in which a program can feasibly track and report data. Systematically assessing whether a participant earned a postsecondary credential and subsequently found a full-time family-sustaining job years later is unrealistic, given current information and evaluation resources.

"We need clearer goals and more robust measures of success than number of youth served."

Such goals can help programs achieve a locally appropriate balance of what are often seen as competing interests: program size versus service intensity. Some observers see an inverse relationship between the quantity of youth served and program quality. "Quality" proponents are concerned that serving large numbers of young people dilutes the resources necessary to assess young people, match them with worksites, and offer support to both participants and supervisors. "Quantity" proponents counter that the value is in exposing youth to the work world, likely to be inaccessible otherwise, and placing them in environments where they can learn and grow. While no one wants a program serving large numbers of young people poorly, a boutique program with low enrollment is also problematic, given the scale of the challenge.

But in the absence of more clearly articulated goals and better data on program implementation and performance, it is hard to resolve this tension. Feasible, incremental goals that emphasize outcomes for young people relevant to future labor market and economic success can start to establish a set of quality criteria against which summer programs can benchmark themselves. These goals could include:

- Every participant will leave the program with the name and contact information of an adult who can serve as a professional reference.

- Every participant will leave the program with documentation of their experience and skills, such as an up-to-date resume, template of a cover letter, or digital badge.
- Every participant and supervisor will complete a document outlining shared expectations and goals (such as a work-based learning tool or growth contract) at the beginning of the program.
- Every participant will have at least one performance assessment against a set of skills and competencies, whether developed by the program or external sources, such as WorkKeys.
- Every worksite will have a clear job description and designated supervisor.
- Program staff such as job coaches and mentors will check in with participants and supervisors a set number of times per summer.
- There is a process to identify at-risk young people and channel them into opportunities providing more intensive mentoring and support.
- Youth who participate for multiple years will progress over time to more demanding jobs requiring higher levels of responsibility according to their skills.
- A set percentage of participants will participate in an end-of-summer recruitment fair featuring community-based organizations, afterschool programs, community colleges, career and technical education programs, and other educational, employment, and youth development opportunities available to young people after the summer.
- A set percentage of participants will show improvement on their soft skills, for example, measured in pre- and post-tests or attainment of a work-readiness credential.
- A set percentage of participants will open bank accounts.
- A set percentage of participants will use direct deposit.
- A set percentage of placements will be unsubsidized.
- A set percentage of youth will be recruited from high school career and technical education programs and placed in summer jobs related to their field of study.

2. Invest in sharing and building knowledge about what works in summer jobs programs

As common as summer jobs programs are, surprisingly little is known, documented, and shared about their effectiveness and the key staffing and program design choices required for success. Andrew Moore from the National League of Cities has noted that successful programs are built on broad partnerships, and the leaders orchestrating these partnerships "generally receive the least information about which strategies, services, and programs are effective. Each employer, nonprofit, workforce agency, and educator keeps a record of each youth they serve and knows one small part of the larger story. But none of these records answer the $250 billion question—whether these young people go on to success in college and the workforce."[55]

Practitioners also tend to have limited exposure to their peers and their implementation strategies and innovations. They often develop their systems and programs in a one-off manner, without the benefit of external lessons and advice on issues such as costs, program design, and hard choices about allocation of scarce resources toward scale, enhanced services, or organizational capacity. Funders of all types (government, private sector, and philanthropic) and program officials themselves should promote and support an increased focus on sharing and building knowledge, both within and across programs.

Program designers and operators could benefit greatly from more research, both implementation research and longer-term evaluation. A prerequisite for more robust data on program outcomes and impacts is stronger local performance management systems, which in turn can be enhanced by linkages with state education and workforce data systems.

In addition, the field would benefit from a frank, robust debate about the most appropriate goals and measures of effectiveness for summer jobs programs. What should these programs be most focused on accomplishing? What are realistic expectations of labor market impact from a single summer? Perhaps income support for low-income youth and their families should be included as an important goal, even though it is not employment-focused. Or, as recent research from Chicago and New York City suggests,

55. Andrew Moore, "Jobs Programs Need Data, Not Just Dollars," National League of Cities, April 11, 2016, https://citiesspeak.org/2016/04/11/jobs-programs-need-data-not-just-dollars/ (accessed June 16, 2016).

perhaps violence prevention and improved academic engagement are the highest-value benefits of summer programming.

Greater consensus on these basic questions would guide recruitment and program design, as well as inform further evaluation. Many questions need better answers than are available. For example, which components of summer employment have the greatest payoff for young people in terms of employment and earnings, educational progress, and/or reduction of risky behaviors? Is there a minimum threshold of services or hours worked below which impacts are negligible? What innovations and approaches to implementation should be invested in and strengthened?

Performance management systems: Setting goals and tracking progress requires a performance management system so that program managers can collect and track appropriate measures and use that information to improve services. Developing an effective performance management system is vital.[56] It allows programs to regularly assess their operations to answer key questions, such as: "Are we implementing our program as intended?" or "Do we have adequate resources and staff to achieve our goals?"[57]

Building performance management systems requires leadership, staff expertise, time, and technology.[58] Integrating data-driven decision making into standard operations can require big shifts in organizational culture.[59] However, the payoff is equally big: improved services and a stronger case during budget season, when fundraising for programs, or when recruiting employers.

Access to and use of existing data: The National League of Cities' Andrew Moore emphasizes that state education and workforce agencies already collect data on young

56. Harry Hatry, "Transforming Performance Measurement for the 21st Century" (Washington: Urban Institute, 2014); Jeremy Koulish, "Better Overhead: Better Capturing Nonprofit Performance" (Washington: Urban Institute, 2013).
57. Karen Walker, "Performance Management in a Collaborative Environment"(Washington: Child Trends, 2011).
58. Walker, "Performance Management in a Collaborative Environment"; Sarah Gillespie, "Starting Small and Thinking Long-Term: Q&A With Performance Measurement and Evaluation Professionals" (Washington: Urban Institute, 2015).
59. National Performance Management Advisory Commission, "A Performance Management Framework for State and Local Government: From Measuring and Reporting to Management and Improving" (2010).

people's educational and employment outcomes that programs could put to good use if the data were provided to them in a form they could use easily, quickly, and cheaply. Many states link high school and workforce records and even more link high school with postsecondary data. Better access to existing data could help cities track later earnings and high school and postsecondary enrollment, persistence, and degree completion of participants in summer jobs programs. Congress could make this work easier with amendments to the Family Education Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA) to make data sharing with workforce boards easier for the limited purposes of evaluation and program improvement.[60]

Evaluation: While performance management is an ongoing process for providing information on program operations, evaluations are periodic and use program and other data to answer significant research questions. Impact evaluations use random assignment or quasi-experimental designs with comparison groups to examine a program's effects and determine whether the program intervention actually led to particular outcomes. Cost-benefit analyses determine program efficiency by assessing program costs and the value of improved outcomes relative to costs. Formative or process evaluations are most similar to performance management and examine program implementation, the success in reaching the intended target population, and the major challenges and successful strategies associated with implementation.[61] Process and impact evaluations can be used complementarily. A process evaluation can shed light on the factors contributing to the findings of an impact evaluation. For example, was implementation consistent with design? How did changes in services actually change behaviors and outcomes?[62]

Learning communities: While no two cities are identical, most have similar goals and face similar challenges regarding their summer jobs programs. On their own, many cities are developing smart strategies in funding, staffing, and program design, but there is no ongoing, formal mechanism for cities to learn from one another, brainstorm, and try to

60. Moore, "Jobs Programs Need Data, Not Just Dollars."
61. Allison J.R. Metz, "Why Conduct a Program Evaluation: Five Reasons Why Evaluation Can Help an Out-of-School Time Program" (Washington: Child Trends, 2007); Karen E. Walker and Kristin Anderson Moore, "Performance Management and Evaluation: What's the Difference?" (Washington: Child Trends, 2011); Jacinta Bronte-Tinkew, Krystle Joyner, and Tiffany Allen, "Five Steps for Selecting an Evaluator: A Guide for Out-of-School Time Practitioners" (Washington: Child Trends, 2007); Peter Tatian, "Performance Measurement to Evaluation" (Washington: Urban Institute, 2016).
62. Lillian Bowie and Jacinta Bronte-Tinkew, "Process Evaluations: A Guide to Out-of-School Time Practitioners" (Washington: Child Trends, 2008).

develop shared standards of program quality. A cross-city peer learning network, coupled with technical assistance, would strengthen the field and accelerate promising or tested improvements. The Center for Youth and Communities at Brandeis University convened a face-to-face and online community of practice for a number of cities participating in the Brandeis-Walmart Foundation Summer Youth Employability Initiative from 2012 to 2014. The formal community of practice ended at the conclusion of the initiative, but connections made through the network continue.[63]

3. Align program staffing and capacity with goals for scale, learning, and quality

Programs have predictable surges of activity every year to enroll, assess, prepare, and place youth; recruit worksites; and monitor quality. Successful implementation requires adequate and well-coordinated deployment of staff, technology, partnerships, and management tools.

Staff capacity is typically the most serious constraint. For this reason, summer programs should carefully review the extent to which organizational structure and activities support their specific goals. For example, they may want to revamp their soft-skills training in order to improve participants' work-readiness levels, build relationships with banks to facilitate the use of direct deposit, or increase the number of unsubsidized placements. But each priority has staff implications. Are existing staff, job descriptions, and project plans sufficient to attain program goals? What innovations are feasible? Is it possible to reduce summer capacity challenges by aligning with existing year-round capacity in schools or other youth-serving and workforce organizations?

Programs should review their operational processes and tools with an eye toward streamlining them and identifying efficiencies, particularly in processes for enrolling youth and worksites and matching youth and jobs. Technology holds enormous potential to streamline these critical processes. Putting technology to work will require a significant upfront investment of money and staff time, but the payoff in operational efficiencies and performance management is likely to be worth it. Programs should also review whether they have tools and processes to adequately assess youth skills and interests and whether they have clear criteria for assigning youth to different sites.

63. The Center for Youth and Communities, Brandeis University, "Practical Advice Guides: Smart Strategies to Employ, Educate, and Support Youth in Employability Development Programs" (n.d.).

4. Deepen and extend services to both young people and employers

In most jurisdictions, summer jobs programs are one of the largest, if not the largest, youth initiatives. Because of their scale, summer jobs programs offer a nearly unparalleled opportunity for agencies or nonprofit organizations to build or deepen relationships with young people. Paid employment is a powerful draw and can serve as a portal to link young people to other services.

Similarly, summer jobs create a focused opportunity to engage employers in working with youth and thinking about how their workplaces are equipped to support and integrate younger workers and entry-level hires. Participating in summer jobs can motivate employers to think differently about their year-round interaction with schools and youth-serving organizations.

Yet the stand-alone nature of most summer jobs programs means that this opportunity is not being fully leveraged. Agencies and their nonprofit, governmental, and business partners need to think creatively about how to move toward a model that better aligns and integrates summer and year-round opportunities. Summer programming offers scale and a broad exposure to the adult working world, but many young people would benefit from more support and engagement to significantly improve their ability to navigate the labor market or overcome employment barriers.

Develop links with programs and services that extend beyond the summer: Agencies running programs should develop more robust partnerships with organizations that serve youth year-round. They can develop robust referral networks and guidelines so that summer program staff are prepared to refer participants with specific needs or interests to another program. They can conduct specialized outreach to high school career and technical education programs, juvenile justice systems, and child welfare systems to recruit youth. High school career and technical education students could be steered into summer jobs related to their field of study. Counselors or teachers could refer the more work-ready youth for unsubsidized placements.

Agencies running summer jobs programs could enter into contracts with organizations serving youth year-round, such as afterschool, youth development, or job training programs, so that these programs can incorporate summer opportunities into their ongoing programming. This is an especially promising strategy for serving disconnected youth or those who face more barriers, since summer jobs programs typically offer

less intensive services and by definition are more time-limited than programs best suited for these populations. While a summer jobs program may not be able to offer more comprehensive services on its own, it can coordinate with programs that serve more disadvantaged youth. Programs that effectively serve more disadvantaged youth typically combine paid employment with significant additional support services, focused education and training, and a longer time frame for engagement.[64] By partnering with other programs and systems, programs can build out more intensive services for vulnerable populations within the summer months.

The end of a summer experience can be an important moment for helping young people understand and choose among appropriate options for further education, employment, or youth development services. Exit interviews or small-group closing sessions can prompt young people to consider next steps. Cities can organize fairs at the end of summer with representatives from different educational and youth-serving organizations so participants can learn about and connect with different opportunities.

Build and maintain relationships with employers beyond the summer in order to provide better value to both employers and youth: Building stronger year-round relationships with employers can boost the number and quality of summer slots, especially those that are unsubsidized and/or in the private sector. The more a program understands an employer's needs and interests, the more likely it is to make a good job match. An ongoing relationship can also open up the possibility of referring youth for open positions at other times of the year. This requires some level of staffing dedicated to networking, building, and maintaining employer relationships beyond the targeted outreach that happens in the winter and spring. It could also be accomplished through strategic partnerships with other entities, such as job training organizations, chambers of commerce, or federally-funded One Stop career centers.

5. Stabilize, diversify, and expand the funding base, including an increased federal funding commitment

Like most youth initiatives, summer jobs programs stitch together multiple funding streams, often with different eligibility and reporting requirements and constraints on the use of funds. Many cities are aggressively courting private-sector and philanthropic support to expand the number of young people they can serve and moderate some of

64. Farhana Hossain and Dan Bloom, "Toward a Better Future: Evidence on Improving Employment Outcomes for Disadvantaged Youth in the United States" (New York: MDRC, 2015); Applegate et al., "Providing True Opportunity for Opportunity Youth."

the inflexibilities of public funding streams. The mix of federal, state, local, private, and philanthropic dollars will vary widely from one city to another, and there is no right mix. A key ingredient, however, will have to be more federal funding dedicated to summer jobs.

Increase support from existing funding streams and sources: Going forward, cities may opt to rely more on federal funding via the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA), since WIOA requires that at least 20 percent of youth formula funds be used to support work experiences. (The federal government allocates formula funds to states based on a statutory formula that includes factors such as unemployment levels and other measures of economic disadvantage.) However, WIOA's requirement that states and localities direct at least 75 percent of youth formula funds to out-of-school youth may inhibit cities' use of WIOA funding, at least initially, since in-school youth typically account for such a large share of participants. Creative cities have found ways to fund summer programming through other federal programs such as Temporary Assistance to Needy Families and the Community Development Block Grant.

Increasing private-sector and philanthropic support requires strong mayoral leadership and advocacy, sufficient fundraising staff, and, not least of all, a well-designed program backed up by performance data. Companies and foundations receive many requests for support and are under no obligation to support summer jobs programs. They will be more likely to support the summer effort if they have confidence in the organization administering the program, are convinced that the program model is sound, and are provided data tracking key quality and effectiveness metrics.

Provide a more predictable funding cycle for program administrators: Many summer programs are hampered in their annual planning and implementation by budget uncertainty that can last into the late spring, and this uncertainty has direct implications for how many youth they enroll and employers they recruit. In these circumstances, a last-minute scramble often ensues, compromising the ability to recruit and assess youth and worksites and to make optimal job matches. Some of this uncertainty is unavoidable, but if city officials, program operators, and philanthropic supporters have good lines of communication, they may be able to identify strategies for earlier funding commitments and greater predictability of funding levels, so that hiring and program delivery decisions can be made deliberately and in a timely fashion.

Renew the federal commitment to summer jobs programming: The federal government helped spur much of the current wave of summer jobs programs with its infusion of stimulus dollars under the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act in 2009.

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The federal government should renew its commitment to summer jobs, with a focus on building capacity among localities, strengthening the evidence base about what works, and encouraging effective alignment of summer jobs efforts with ongoing WIOA activities. In the absence of dedicated federal support, many communities simply do not have the funds for summer jobs programs.

Given the significant need for larger, stronger youth employment programs across the country, some within the youth development and employment fields argue for a broad infusion of federal funding, structured as a formula grant disseminated through the WIOA system to all workforce areas, like the stimulus grants in 2009. There are pros and cons of such an investment (leaving aside cost and political feasibility). A formula investment can be distributed efficiently and widely. However, pushing more money into a strained system without addressing core implementation and performance issues risks funding mediocrity, and still leaves policymakers unable to identify outcomes and impacts, i.e., whether and how the programs make a positive difference in the lives of young people.

A more targeted and perhaps more politically feasible approach would be to fund a significant competitive grant process that has several goals: to strengthen programs that are already demonstrating scale and quality as well as those that are newer, less developed, or smaller; test different approaches to working with particular populations and community types; support research on program effectiveness; and support knowledge sharing and quality improvement via a learning community and technical assistance. The ultimate goal would be to increase the number of participants in quality summer jobs programs while ensuring that the number of youth placed is not the only measure that can be reported on with confidence.

A renewed commitment from the federal government could be structured as follows:

- A five-year, $3-4 billion competitive demonstration project, equivalent to $600-800 million a year. This annual allocation would be similar to the spending level of the stimulus funding, which served 314,000 youth in the summer of 2009. But it would not be a one-shot investment, since the demonstration would support summer jobs programs over a five-year period.[65] While it is possible that federal funds may supplant local and state funds that would have been

65. As of November 2009, states and localities had drawn down about $717 million of the national allocation of $1.2 billion in stimulus funds for WIA youth services. The vast majority of youth served with those dollars were enrolled in the summer months and placed in summer employment; see Bellotti et al., “Reinvesting in America’s Youth.”

spent otherwise, the net result will still be a large expansion of summer jobs programs and youth served.

- A subset of funding dedicated to programs serving the hardest-to-employ, most at-risk, and disconnected youth, to promote and learn from efforts to incorporate summer jobs into effective interventions for this population.
- Competitive grants, including demonstration and planning grants:
    - To ensure that funds are wisely invested, two rounds of multiyear grants would be made, several years apart. In the first round, communities could apply for a full demonstration grant or, alternatively, a smaller planning grant that would prepare them to apply for a demonstration grant in Round II. A staggered competitive process would enable communities that applied in the second round to learn from the successes and challenges of first-round grantees. Round II could be structured so that only planning grant awardees could apply for demonstrations, or it could be a more open process allowing any jurisdiction to apply.
    - Successful applicants would demonstrate local support and a minimum level of capacity and infrastructure to build or strengthen their programs and reach more young people. They would be asked to set clear goals for expansion but also goals for improving quality and building out components based on promising practices (for example, financial literacy and capability, links with CTE programming, and tools for structuring employer support for participating youth).
    - Grants will take into account regional diversity and will promote summer jobs program innovation in communities of varying size and demographics, from large cities to smaller urban areas, suburbs, and rural communities.
- A rigorous evaluation of demonstration programs, assessing their performance and outcomes, thereby upgrading the evidence base for summer employment programming.
- A learning community designed to accelerate and document promising and effective practices, complemented by technical assistance. The federal government could partner with private foundations to fund the learning community, and perhaps open it up to other communities beyond federal grantees. A potential model is the Communities That Work Partnership, a joint project of the U.S. Economic Development Administration at the Department of Commerce and the Workforce Strategies Initiative at the Aspen Institute. The partnership

supports seven regions in aligning workforce and economic development to promote inclusive growth.[66]

Conclusion

In recent years, summer jobs programs have recaptured the imagination of policy-makers, businesses, and the public. Young people are showing their desire for work by enrolling in these programs in droves, often exceeding the number of positions available. We need to do better by these youth by ensuring that the programs are effective and provide maximum value to participating young people and local employers. ■

66. See "Communities That Work Partnership Overview," Workforce Strategies Initiative at the Aspen Institute, http://www.aspenwsi.org/communities-that-work/overview/ (accessed June 15, 2016).

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Appendix: Organizations interviewed (in alphabetical order)

Action for Boston Community Development
Aspen Forum for Community Solutions
Baltimore, Mayor's Office of Employment Development
Boston, Department of Youth Engagement and Employment
Boston, Mayor's Office of Workforce Development
Boston Private Industry Council
Brainfood
Capital Workforce Partners
Center for Youth and Communities, Brandeis University
Center for Law and Social Policy
City Connect Detroit
DC Alliance of Youth Advocates
DC SCORES
JP Morgan Chase
KentuckianaWorks
Leaders Up
MHA Labs
National Governors Association
National League of Cities, Institute for Youth, Education, and Families
New York City Center for Youth Employment
Our Piece of the Pie
Philadelphia Youth Network
San Diego Workforce Partnership
San Francisco Department of Children, Youth, and Their Families
Seattle, Office of Economic Development
Seattle-King County Workforce Development Council
Strumpf Associates
Summer Jobs Partnership
Three Rivers Workforce Investment Board
University of Pennsylvania
U.S. Conference of Mayors

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