

# EVALUATION OF TRAVIS COUNTY INVESTMENTS IN WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT

**2015 UPDATE**

Dan O'Shea  
Kristin Christensen

**FEBRUARY 2016**



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3001 Lake Austin Blvd., Suite 3.200  
Austin, TX 78703 (512) 471-7891  
[www.raymarshallcenter.org](http://www.raymarshallcenter.org)

This report was prepared with funds provided through a grant and cooperative agreement from the Travis County Health and Human Services & Veterans Service Department to the Ray Marshall Center for the Study of Human Resources at the University of Texas at Austin. The views expressed here are those of the authors and do not represent the positions of the funding agency or The University.

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## INTRODUCTION

Travis County annually invests in the range of \$1-2.5 million in workforce development programs for low-income residents who tend to face challenges to steady employment with sufficient earnings to support themselves and their families. The County funds approximately seven to ten providers each year to deliver an array of education, training, and employment services designed to enhance the labor market prospects of participants. Several of the County grants support short-term occupational training in a variety of fields, including general office skills, basic computer technologies, construction trades and “green building”, and other occupational areas with promising entry-level prospects. In addition, funds support the provision of or referral to education services ranging from adult basic education and English language classes through the acquisition of a GED or high school diploma, which is almost universally required for entry and advancement in today’s labor market. The County also invests in college readiness and long-term skills training, leading to certifications and associates’ degrees in areas such as nursing and allied health professions, information and electronic technologies, skilled trades, and other better-paying, *demand* occupations in growth industries with good prospects for career pathway advancement.

The evaluation examines outcomes and impacts for participants in Travis County-funded community-based workforce programs over several years. Seven providers with long-standing County contracts have been the focus of successive annual evaluations of the outcomes and impacts of local workforce services investments led by the Ray Marshall Center since 2006.

These include:

1. American YouthWorks
2. Austin Academy/Ascend Center for Learning
3. Austin Area Urban League
4. Capital IDEA
5. Goodwill Industries of Central Texas
6. Skillpoint Alliance
7. Workforce Solutions–Capital Area Workforce Board

Most of these providers offer short-term occupational and basic skills training with County funds; Capital IDEA primarily offers longer-term training leading to a postsecondary credential for higher-skilled occupations. American YouthWorks participants may also engage in longer-term education and training in several occupational areas through its high school/GED programs and its service learning model. It should be noted, however, that since at least 2011, Central Texas area education and workforce training providers have been designing and implementing a *continuum of services* approach and that Travis County workforce grantees and other local providers increasingly coordinate referrals and access to a seamless array of enhancements to employment readiness, job entry, and career advancement services that meet the client's needs and aspirations from where they start to where they want to be in the workforce.<sup>1</sup>

This *2015 Update* report extends the labor market outcomes analyses of prior annual updates and estimates the net impact of participation in a County-funded workforce program for 2010-2014 participants who exited services from each of the seven providers listed above. Impacts are analyzed by means of a quasi-experimental design that uses propensity score matching to select individuals who are comparable along multiple dimensions to those who receive services supported by Travis County. Treatment group individuals are matched with others who received publicly-funded workforce services as identified in administrative records drawn from The Workforce Information System of Texas (TWIST), the statewide, integrated workforce program database, or in Work in Texas (WIT), the automated labor exchange system that registers job seekers, Unemployment Insurance (UI) work registrants, and individuals that receive Wagner-Peyser employment services at Workforce Solutions Career Centers in Travis County. Thus, the impact analysis measures the incremental difference between those who receive limited employment services with those who receive the additional services in which Travis County invests. Outcomes and impacts vary across the spectrum of grantees, as would be expected given their varying services regimes and the challenging populations they serve.

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<sup>1</sup> For FY 2016 Travis County is funding a subset of 4 providers in the Workforce and Education Readiness Continuum (WERC), a local collaborative effort of 11 providers initiated in 2012 and funded by the City of Austin.



The following section presents an overview of the evaluation questions and research methods and is followed by separate sections for each of the seven providers examined. Each provider section includes a brief profile of the provider and its workforce development program(s), details outcomes for participants from calendar years 2010 through 2014, and highlights statistically significant impacts from participation. All findings examine results in the post-service period through December 2014. Additionally, each section reports annual funding levels. Travis County funding historically tracked the calendar year. In 2014 the County adjusted its funding cycle to align with the fiscal year (October 1 to September 30). Thus, 2014 contracts ran from January 1 to September 30; FY 2015 was the first year of fiscal alignment. The final section summarizes 2015 evaluation findings and identifies considerations for future evaluation reports.

## EVALUATION OVERVIEW

The purpose of Travis County's investments in local workforce development services is to help low-income residents with weak labor force attachment build the skills needed for gainful employment. Accordingly, each program is evaluated based on its participants' outcomes. Output and outcome performance goals are established for each provider in its contract with the County. Among the various performance measures utilized, three are shared across the majority of providers:

- Number of unduplicated clients served,
- Percentage of clients who retained employment for 6 months, and
- Average wage at entry.

Other performance measures are based on the type of service provided, for example:

- Number of clients who enter basic education (ABE, ESL) or secondary (high school/GED) education skills training,
- Number of clients who enter and complete occupational skills training,
- Number of clients who complete educational training programs,
- Percentage of clients receiving job placement services, and
- Percentage of clients who obtain or improve employment or enter postsecondary education, training or national service.

Performance results of workforce and other social service investments are detailed annually in the *Workforce Development Community Impact Report* prepared by the Travis County Health and Human Services & Veterans Service Department (HHS&VS). While that report assesses how a provider or program fared in relation to its contractually-established performance goals, its focus is primarily on immediate and near-term objectives (e.g., wage at entry, two calendar quarters of employment).

The Ray Marshall Center's evaluation extends the analysis of Travis County's workforce investments by examining participants' labor market experiences prior to entering the program and then tracking their labor market outcomes following training. The Local Workforce Services Evaluation draws on multiple data sources to answer the following questions:

- Are services being delivered as planned?

- Who is being served?
- What outcomes are achieved?
- What are the impacts of the investment?

The outcomes evaluation focuses on four key labor market measures:

1. Average quarterly employment,
2. Average quarterly earnings of those employed,
3. The share meeting monetary eligibility requirements for UI benefits quarterly, and
4. The share filing a claim for UI benefits quarterly.

It should be noted that the third measure is a proxy measure for employment stability. In Texas, monetary UI eligibility is based on the claimant earning sufficient wages in at least two consecutive quarters of the five quarters prior to filing a claim for benefits. For the 2010-2014 exiting participant groups, labor market outcomes are examined in the four quarters prior to program entry, the last quarter of participation in provider services (the “exit quarter”), and up to 16 post-service quarters (four years) after exit. Employment data through the end of calendar year 2014 has been analyzed: for those who exited in 2010, 16 quarters of data were available for analysis, whereas, for those who exited in 2014, up to three post-service quarters were available. The report also summarizes participants’ labor market outcomes across all post-service quarters through December 2014.

#### **DATA SOURCES**

The evaluation of Travis County-funded workforce development programs draws from multiple data sources, including participant records maintained by individual programs, UI wage and benefits claim files, The Workforce Information System of Texas (TWIST) records, *Work in Texas* (WIT) records, interviews with program administrators and staff, program documents, provider websites, and published reports.<sup>2</sup>

Two caveats should be noted about the data used for this evaluation. First, UI wage records have known coverage gaps. Workers in industries with high levels of self-employment

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<sup>2</sup> While UI benefit data are collected and reported weekly, the outcomes are examined on a quarterly basis to mirror UI wage records.

or independent contracting, such as construction and truck driving, are less likely to be in a UI-covered position. Researchers therefore acknowledge that the outcomes reported here for programs that train for construction and truck driving occupations likely undercount actual labor market outcomes. Second, UI wage records are subject to review and correction by workers and employers as part of the claims determination process for UI benefits. Therefore, numbers reported here are based on the most recently available records and may not be fully consistent with prior reports.<sup>3</sup>

A total of 6,027 unduplicated participants were included in the dataset for this report.<sup>4</sup> Some 199 participants were clients of more than one Travis County-funded workforce development service during the study time period. Outcomes for these participants are documented for each program in which they were enrolled.

#### **PROGRAM IMPACTS**

The *quasi-experimental impact analysis* seeks to gauge the “value-added” from workforce program participation by comparing labor market outcomes for participants with those of a matched comparison group. Comparison group members were drawn from TWIST and WIT records for Travis County residents who received publicly-funded job readiness, job search, and placement services or merely registered for automated labor exchange services online or at a local Workforce Solutions Career Center. Quasi-experimental approaches tend to work well when participants for whom comparison groups are created have sufficient prior employment and earnings histories and when data are available on a sufficient number of variables with which to perform the match. Youth and ex-offenders are problematic in this regard precisely because their prior employment and earnings histories are either lacking or are difficult to determine with any real confidence. Ex-offenders present an additional problem since offender status is generally lacking for potential comparison group members.<sup>5</sup> Net effects and adjusted net effects are included in the impact estimates; adjusted net effects (labeled as

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<sup>3</sup> Any discrepancies are expected to be quite small.

<sup>4</sup> A total of 900 records were removed from the analysis due to missing Social Security Numbers.

<sup>5</sup> Since the termination of Project RIO, which was a source of potential information about offender status, no data is available from this program past 2013. Although criminal justice engaged status may be available in WIT, this data had yet to be pulled by researchers and it is therefore not known how reliable this information is.

“impact measure” in the tables) have been modified to account for unmeasured socioeconomic and other differences not already controlled in the matching process. More information on the matching process and the quality of comparison groups is provided in Appendix B. Quasi-Experimental Impacts Analysis.

Because of the way data are tracked in the WIT system, members of the comparison group were known to have been located in Travis County at the time the data were obtained by the researchers, however, individuals may or may not have been located in Travis County during the entire time period examined.

The mission of American YouthWorks is “building brighter futures and better communities through job skills training, education, and service.”\*

The program offers high school and GED classes, as well as job training programs based on a service learning model that combines academic instruction with occupational skills development and community service projects.

Travis County invested \$201,992 annually in workforce training through American YouthWorks in 2010 through 2012, dropping slightly to \$191,229 in 2013 and rising to \$207,765 in 2014. The 2011 through 2014 contracts included an additional \$83,300 for the ongoing Travis County Metro Parks Project parks improvement work with the Texas Conservation Corps/E-Corps program.

\*[www.americanyouthworks.org/about-american-youthworks](http://www.americanyouthworks.org/about-american-youthworks). Accessed: 02.06.2015



## AMERICAN YOUTHWORKS

### WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT PROGRAMS AND SERVICES

Travis County funds multiple training programs through American YouthWorks (AYW), including Casa Verde Builders, the Texas Conservation Corps (introduced in 2014 as an expanded version of the Environmental Corps/E-Corps), the Green Energy Corps, and the Youth Media Corps (a revised configuration of the former Computer Corps introduced in late 2013). Each of these programs uses a Service Learning Academy model that combines occupational skills training and academic instruction with community service projects. Students often switch from one training program to another and may complete multiple programs over time. The two largest programs, Casa Verde Builders and Texas Conservation Corps, served over three-quarters of American YouthWorks participants included in this report.

Casa Verde Builders is part of the national YouthBuild initiative led by the U.S. Departments of Labor and Housing & Urban Development. Students learn “green” construction skills while constructing energy efficient, affordable homes, primarily in East Austin. Participants in the Casa Verde program typically range in age from 17-24 years old. The Casa Verde training takes approximately nine months to complete and is generally reserved for high school seniors or those who will earn a high school credential within the year. Participants earn 18 credit hours at Austin Community College at the completion of the construction training. Participants also earn certifications through the Occupational Safety and Health Administration (OSHA) and the Home Builders Association.

The E-Corps/Texas Conservation Corps program trains youth to build, restore, and maintain the natural environment. Through work in parks, nature trails, and wildlife habitats, participants learn environmental management and safety practices. A key area of focus is invasive species management. Contracts with Travis County, the City of Austin, the Texas Parks and Wildlife Department, and the National Parks Service, among others, give participants real work experience while creating benefits for the broader community. The Green Energy Corps was developed “in response to a growing need for job training in home improvement and weatherization.”<sup>6</sup>

Beyond the academic and occupational skills training, American YouthWorks participants also receive training in soft skills, job search, and resume building. For participants who are interested in pursuing higher education, the program has recently added college access and persistence services.

#### **SUPPORT SERVICES**

In addition to job training and a high school academy, American YouthWorks provides a number of wrap-around support services to help individuals succeed. Participants in both Casa Verde Builders and E-Corps/Texas Conservation Corps receive bi-weekly stipends to help cover their living expenses while in training. The program also provides uniforms and safety equipment, tools, clothing for interviews, bus passes, on-site childcare, and emergency assistance for food, diapers, and other necessities.

American YouthWorks has dedicated staff to help participants with the job search process and internships, as well as full-time counselors to help participants overcome other obstacles to success. The program partners with the local One-Stop Career Center to connect participants with other training opportunities and support services. The American YouthWorks is also a partner in the Workforce and Education Readiness Continuum (WERC).

#### **PARTICIPANT PROFILE**

Participants in most American YouthWorks training programs are between 17-24 years of age at program entry and have a family income at or below 200% of the Federal Poverty

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<sup>6</sup> Matvy, Rachel. “Job Training for Youth – Service to Low Income Home Owners.” October 4, 2012.

Income Guideline level or at or below 80% of the Austin Median Family Income Level. Many also have significant barriers to employment, such as homelessness, or prior criminal justice system involvement.

Among the 647<sup>7</sup> Austin YouthWorks participants included in this evaluation, the majority were White (41%) or Hispanic (41%). Just over half (55%) were male, with an average age of 20 years old. Over half (57%) of participants had less than a 12<sup>th</sup> grade education at program entry while another third (33%) had a high school diploma or GED. Most participants lived in south (38%) or east (29%) Austin at the time of enrollment. Offender status was not provided for most of the sample, but 6% of the participants were noted as having a criminal background. Demographic details are provided in Appendix A.

#### **PARTICIPANT OUTCOMES**

Table 1 presents outcomes over time for American YouthWorks participants who exited services (completed or dropped out) from 2010 through 2014. Most of these participants were enrolled in the E-Corps/Texas Conservation Corps (40%) or the Case Verde Builders program (38%). Another 14% of the sample were charter school students, and 8% were in the Media Corps program

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<sup>7</sup> Fifty-six (56) records were removed from analyses due to missing Social Security numbers.



**Table 1. American YouthWorks 2010-2014 Exiter Outcomes**

Cohort Outcome Measure	Four Qtrs Before Service	Last Qtr of Service	2nd Qtr Post-Service	4th Qtr Post-Service	8th Qtr Post-Service	12th Qtr Post-Service	16th Qtr Post-Service	All Post-Service Qtrs
N (across all cohorts):	647	647	580	558	429	297	117	
<b>Quarterly Employment:<sup>a</sup></b>								
2010	22.5%	17.0%	37.3%	44.1%	50.0%	58.5%	53.9%	49.8%
2011	21.1%	27.4%	38.6%	43.6%	52.5%	55.9%	.	50.3%
2012	19.5%	28.0%	40.9%	40.9%	45.5%	.	.	44.6%
2013	20.5%	34.1%	46.5%	55.0%	.	.	.	50.2%
2014	21.1%	38.2%	45.5%	.	.	.	.	47.5%
<b>Overall</b>	20.9%	28.4%	40.9%	45.7%	49.7%	56.9%	53.9%	49.0%
<b>Average Quarterly Earnings:</b>								
2010	\$1,588	\$2,018	\$2,891	\$3,130	\$4,257	\$4,996	\$5,366	\$4,400
2011	\$2,251	\$2,193	\$2,637	\$2,552	\$3,448	\$4,045	.	\$3,146
2012	\$2,451	\$1,622	\$2,767	\$3,270	\$3,714	.	.	\$3,117
2013	\$2,824	\$1,643	\$3,765	\$4,029	.	.	.	\$3,858
2014	\$2,251	\$1,991	.	.	.	.	.	\$2,846
<b>Overall</b>	\$2,272	\$1,890	\$3,044	\$3,233	\$3,747	\$4,433	\$5,366	\$3,625
<b>Qualified for UI Benefits:</b>								
2010	17.0%	.	.	28.0%	37.3%	52.5%	53.0%	44.5%
2011	10.5%	.	.	31.8%	44.7%	48.0%	.	41.3%
2012	10.6%	.	.	34.1%	38.6%	.	.	39.0%
2013	12.6%	.	.	41.9%	.	.	.	48.6%
2014	14.0%	.	.	.	.	.	.	.
<b>Overall</b>	12.6%	.	.	33.9%	40.8%	49.8%	53.0%	42.4%
<b>Filed UI Claim:</b>								
2010	0.4%	0.0%	0.9%	1.7%	1.7%	3.4%	2.6%	1.3%
2011	0.1%	0.0%	1.1%	0.6%	1.1%	0.6%	.	0.7%
2012	0.6%	0.8%	1.5%	0.8%	0.8%	.	.	0.6%
2013	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	1.6%	.	.	.	0.5%
2014	0.3%	0.0%	0.0%	.	.	.	.	0.0%
<b>Overall</b>	0.3%	0.2%	0.9%	1.1%	1.2%	1.7%	2.6%	0.8%

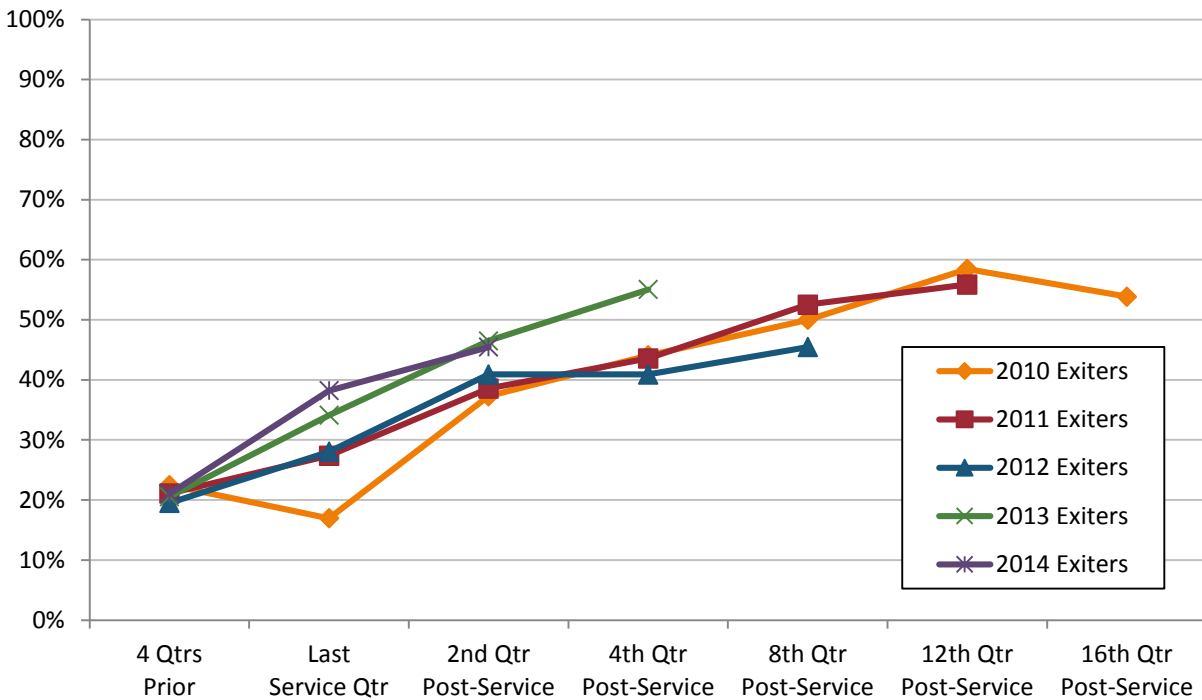
Source: American YouthWorks participant records and Texas Workforce Commission UI wage and claim records.

Note: A dot represents too few participants, no data to report, or insufficient time passing to report for that timeframe.

<sup>a</sup> Participants were counted as employed if they were found in Texas UI wage records. Those who were not found may be unemployed, employed outside of Texas, or employed in Texas in a position that is not UI-covered and reported to TWC.

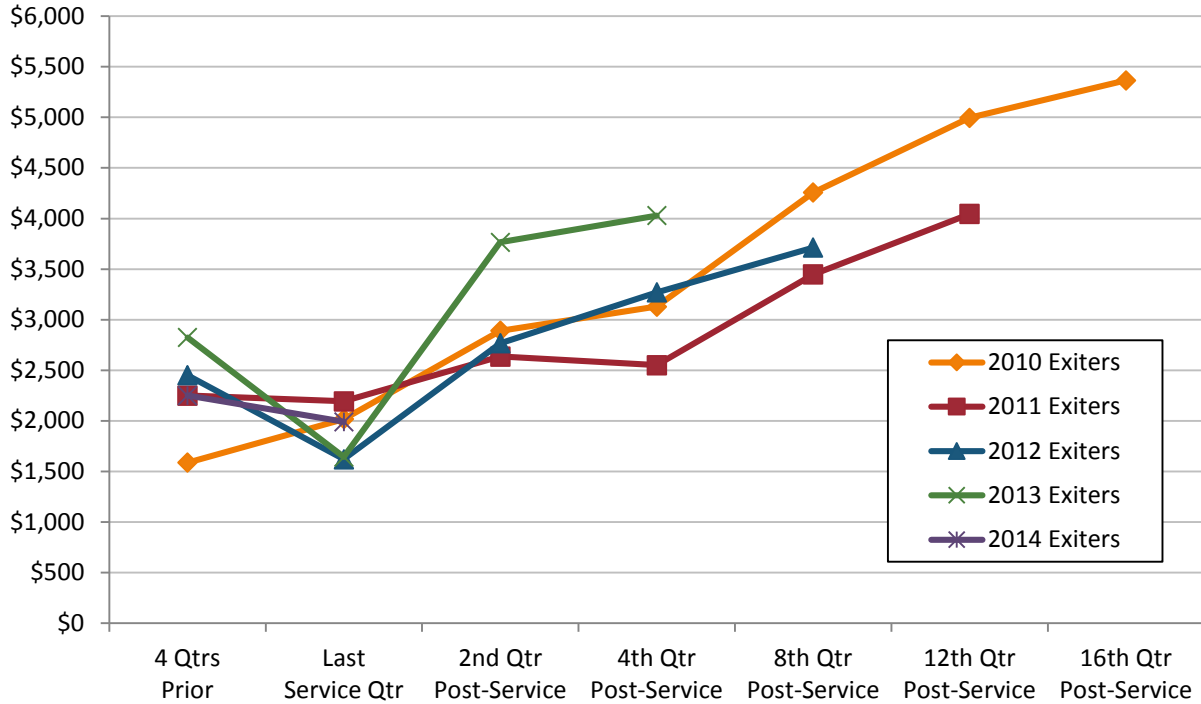
Overall, in the four quarters prior to entering the program, quarterly employment in a UI-covered job in Texas for youth served by American YouthWorks was just under 21%. Quarterly employment among these participants grew in each subsequent period examined from the last quarter of service through the 12<sup>th</sup> post-service quarter (three years after the last date of service). For those cohorts for whom data are available, quarterly employment leveled off at around 54% during the fourth year after leaving the American YouthWorks program. Across all post-service quarters through December 2014, 49% of 2010-2014 American YouthWorks exiters were employed.

**Figure 1. Average Quarterly Employment of American YouthWorks 2010-2014 Exiters<sup>a</sup>**



Pre-program earnings overall averaged about \$2,272 per quarter for those employed in the year prior to entry. In the second quarter after service, average earnings rose to \$3,044 and continued to rise in each studied quarter through the fourth year post-service (among cohorts for whom data are available). Across all post-service quarters American YouthWorks 2010-2014 exiters earned, on average, \$3,625 per quarter.

**Figure 2. Average Quarterly Earnings of Employed American YouthWorks 2010-2014 Exiters**



Prior to entering American YouthWorks, approximately 13% of participants overall had sufficient employment and earnings histories to meet the monetary eligibility requirements for UI benefits. A year after leaving training, almost 34% met the requirements for eligibility. This measure is a proxy measure for examining employment stability. Across all post-service quarters, 42% of American YouthWorks participants met UI monetary eligibility requirements. Very few participants (less than 1% overall) filed a claim for UI benefits in the period examined.

**PROGRAM IMPACTS**

Table 2 presents findings from the impacts analysis comparing the outcomes of the AYW 2010-2014 exiting cohorts to the outcomes of a matched comparison group. Participation was positively associated with two of the four outcomes of interest, including the statistically significant three quarter percentage point decrease in the share that filed for UI benefits and a slight increase in earnings.<sup>8</sup> Measures of quarterly employment rates and the percent qualified

<sup>8</sup> A negative rate in “Filed UI Claim” is a positive impact, since fewer individuals filed a claim.

for UI benefits showed little differences from those of the comparison group. None of the latter were statistically significant. For a discussion of the limitations of the impact analyses, see the Program Impacts section on page 7.

**Table 2. Impacts for American YouthWorks 2010-2014 Exiters**

<b>Impact Measure</b>	<b>All Qtrs Post-Service: Comparison Group</b>	<b>All Qtrs Post-Service: AYW Participant</b>	<b>Unadjusted Net Effect</b>	<b>Impact Measure</b>
<b>Quarterly Employment</b>	53.2%	49.0%	-4.2%	-1.1%
<b>Average Quarterly Earnings</b>	\$3,883	\$3,624	-\$259	\$29
<b>Qualified for UI Benefits</b>	47.2%	42.2%	-5.0%	-0.8%
<b>Filed UI Claim</b>	1.68%	0.82%	-0.86%	-0.76%**

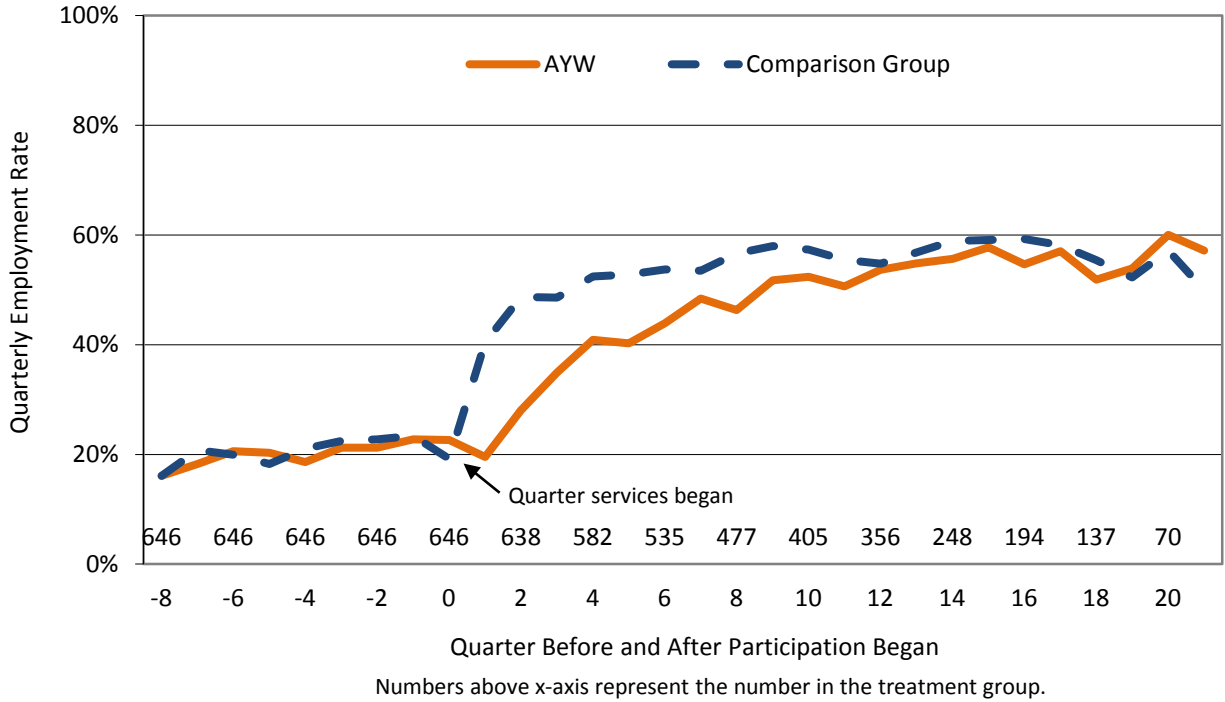
Note: \*\*=significant at  $p < .01$

In Figure 3 and Figure 4, below, the impact of participation in AYW is examined by looking at participants' quarterly employment rates and earnings over time, regardless of employment status (i.e., unconditional earnings), in relation to those of the comparison group. These figures show data starting two years prior to enrolling (quarters -8 through -1), the quarter that services began (quarter 0), and continue for another 20 quarters (5 years).

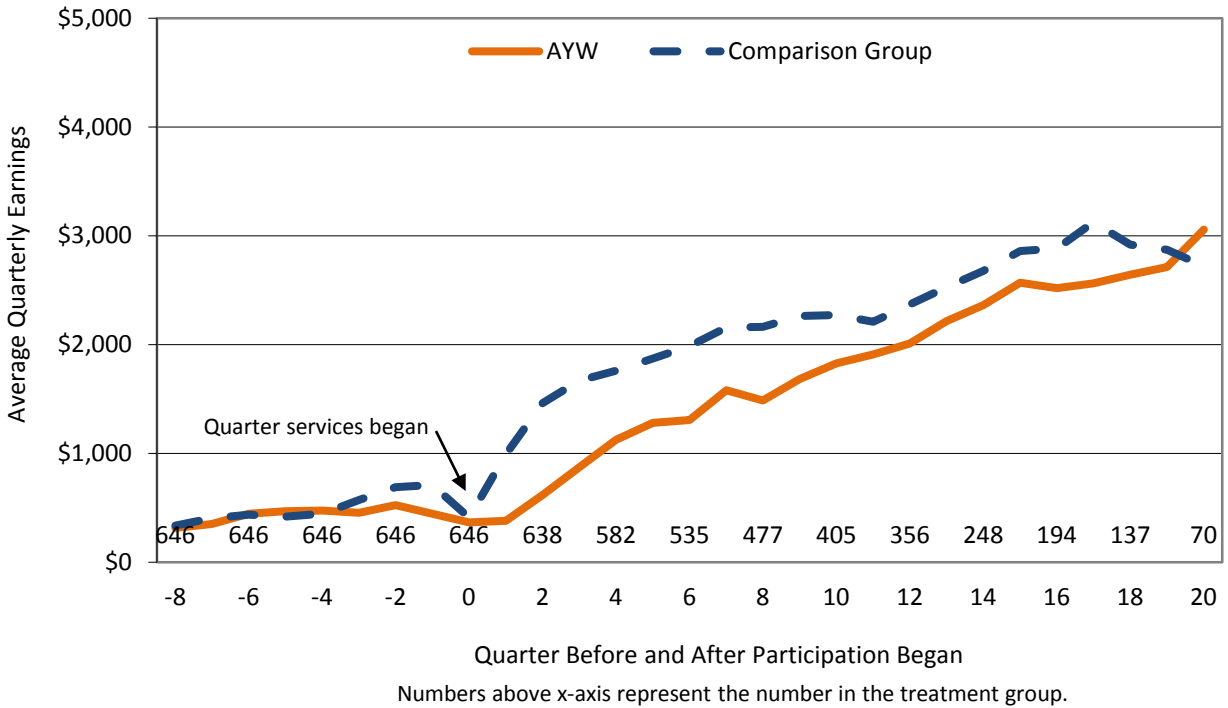
The employment rates of both AYW participants and the comparison group increased dramatically after quarter 0 (the quarter participants began services and the quarter comparison group members began a WIT or WIA service), however the employment rates of AYW participants were lower than those of the comparison group for most of the subsequent quarters. Approximately three years after beginning services, participants' employment rates began to equal those of the comparison group, surpassing it in the last two quarters.

The analysis of unconditional earnings shows that the comparison group out-earned the AYW participants through the 19<sup>th</sup> quarter after starting the program, when earnings for participants began to equal and then exceed those of the comparison group.

**Figure 3: Employment Rates Over Time, American YouthWorks Participants vs. Comparison Group**



**Figure 4. Unconditional Earnings Over Time, American YouthWorks Participants vs. Comparison Group**



Austin Academy became the Ascend Center for Learning in 2011. The mission of the organization has remained the same: to help people missed by the traditional school system catch up and succeed in education and the workplace.

The program offers GED preparation, basic computer literacy classes, and occupational skills training.

Travis County invested \$43,609 annually during the 2010-14 period in Austin Academy/Ascend Center for Learning.

In January 2015 Ascend merged with the Literacy Coalition and renewed intensification of services are once more underway.



For more information visit:  
[www.ascendaustin.org](http://www.ascendaustin.org)

## **ASCEND CENTER FOR LEARNING (AUSTIN ACADEMY)**

### **WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT PROGRAMS AND SERVICES**

The Austin Academy became the Ascend Center for Learning in 2011. Austin Academy offered a broad-based Workplace Competency Training Program to build literacy and basic office skills, as well as a GED preparation program for individuals testing at a minimum of the 7<sup>th</sup> grade math and 9<sup>th</sup> grade reading level. The Workplace Competency Program included training in workplace communications, job search, and resume development. The computer literacy training helped individuals build skills in basic computer operations (e.g., keyboarding, Internet basics, file sharing, email) and Microsoft Office applications. All training was provided by program staff.

With the transition to the Ascend Center for Learning in 2011, program offerings were updated and a broader menu of resources and activities was incorporated into the Workplace Competency Program. Activities still include GED preparation (with an attainment objective), beginner through advanced computer literacy, and a Job Readiness Program. Career path exploration and basic math for the workplace were added to the latter.

In addition, Ascend launched a new adult education program for individuals with skills as low as the 3<sup>rd</sup> grade level. This program was the result of a new partnership with Austin Community College and AmeriCorps, where a full-time volunteer teacher works with a small (no more than 15

students) class in an intensive curriculum that requires daily attendance over the course of approximately one year.

The Ascend Center for Learning program includes both daytime and evening options and operates as a self-paced, open-enrollment program. Because the training is individualized for each participant, the amount of time an individual is in training varies but averages approximately four to six months. Participants take the Test for Adult Basic Education (TABE) at the beginning of the program to identify skill strengths and weaknesses. Participants are then tested after every 40 hours of instruction. The structure and program offerings encourage participants to return for additional training or job search services when they are ready. In January 2015, Ascend merged with the Literacy Coalition of Central Texas and renewed intensification of its services.

#### **SUPPORT SERVICES**

Ascend employs a full-time case manager/participant support specialist and a social services coordinator who work to improve program persistence and completion by helping participants to overcome intersecting barriers they usually face. Ascend offers transportation assistance, primarily in the form of bus passes. The organization also provides emergency rent or utility assistance on a case-by-case basis. The social services coordinator also makes referrals to organizations throughout Travis County based on the participant's needs. For example, parenting participants may be referred to Workforce Solutions–Capital Area to access childcare development funds. The organization finds that a lack of childcare is a significant barrier to participation.

Ascend partners with a number of community organizations to provide additional classes to participants on a variety of topics. These include financial literacy classes through Frameworks, healthy relationships training through Safe Place, parenting skills through Any Baby Can, smoking cessation classes through YWCA, and courses on safe sex practices through AIDS Services Austin.

## **PARTICIPANT PROFILE**

Ascend Center for Learning intentionally seeks out participants who may face barriers to employment, including disabled veterans, public housing residents, high school dropouts, and victims of violent crimes. A total of 561 participants from Ascend Center for Learning's 2010-2014 exiting cohorts are included in the outcomes evaluation<sup>9</sup>. The majority of Ascend participants included in this evaluation were Hispanic (43%), with smaller shares of White (26%) and Black (25%) participants. Approximately 64% of participants were women, and nearly two-thirds were between the ages of 20 and 39 at program entry (average age was 33). Most participants resided in east (37%) or south (21%) Austin. Although offender status is unknown for just over half of the sample, 16% of the participants were indicated as having a criminal background. Nearly 24% of the sample received public benefits; however, just over half of the sample is missing information about public benefit receipt. Demographic details are provided in Appendix A.

About 11% of clients in this analysis had been served by at least one other workforce development program included in this report. The Ascend Center for Learning is a WERC partner.

## **PARTICIPANT OUTCOMES**

Table 3 provides an overview of participant outcomes across the four evaluation measures. In the four quarters prior to entering the Ascend program, quarterly employment in a UI-covered job in Texas was 40%, rising to almost 46% by the second post-service quarter. This rate peaked in the second year after the end of services and, among those for whom data are available, leveled off just below 50%. Exiters in more recent years (2012-2014) have experienced slightly higher post-service employment rates as compared to the two previous exiting cohorts. In all post-service quarters through December 2014, employment averaged approximately 48%.

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<sup>9</sup> Three (3) records were removed from analyses due to missing Social Security numbers.



**Table 3. Ascend Center for Learning 2010-2014 Exiter Outcomes**

Cohort Outcome Measure	Four Qtrs Before Service	Last Qtr of Service	2nd Qtr Post-Service	4th Qtr Post-Service	8th Qtr Post-Service	12th Qtr Post-Service	16th Qtr Post-Service	All Post-Service Qtrs
N (across all cohorts):	561	561	525	495	393	309	114	
<b>Quarterly Employment:<sup>a</sup></b>								
2010	40.4%	27.2%	36.8%	43.9%	50.0%	46.5%	45.6%	46.5%
2011	34.5%	33.9%	41.0%	44.6%	44.1%	46.7%	.	44.4%
2012	44.1%	45.9%	51.8%	57.7%	56.0%	.	.	55.0%
2013	43.1%	47.5%	54.5%	53.5%	.	.	.	55.4%
2014	42.8%	53.0%	66.7%	.	.	.	.	64.3%
<b>Overall</b>	39.7%	39.0%	45.9%	48.5%	48.4%	46.6%	45.6%	47.8%
<b>Average Quarterly Earnings:</b>								
2010	\$3,923	\$3,192	\$3,827	\$3,807	\$4,024	\$5,015	\$4,257	\$4,264
2011	\$3,434	\$3,064	\$3,174	\$3,478	\$4,123	\$4,173	.	\$3,754
2012	\$3,705	\$3,136	\$3,946	\$3,737	\$4,824	.	.	\$4,341
2013	\$3,976	\$3,106	\$4,573	\$4,781	.	.	.	\$4,587
2014	\$3,216	\$2,609	\$3,833	.	.	.	.	\$3,252
<b>Overall</b>	\$3,659	\$3,031	\$3,803	\$3,893	\$4,267	\$4,483	\$4,257	\$4,085
<b>Qualified for UI Benefits:</b>								
2010	35.8%	.	.	28.1%	43.9%	49.1%	42.1%	41.5%
2011	28.5%	.	.	33.3%	37.4%	39.0%	.	38.0%
2012	40.9%	.	.	44.7%	50.0%	.	.	47.9%
2013	33.9%	.	.	48.5%	.	.	.	42.6%
2014	45.5%	.	.	.	.	.	.	.
<b>Overall</b>	34.8%	.	.	37.2%	42.0%	42.7%	42.1%	40.5%
<b>Filed UI Claim:</b>								
2010	3.7%	7.0%	1.8%	0.9%	2.6%	2.6%	0.9%	1.9%
2011	3.0%	2.1%	3.6%	3.6%	3.6%	2.6%	.	2.3%
2012	5.0%	1.2%	2.4%	3.5%	2.4%	.	.	1.3%
2013	2.2%	3.0%	1.0%	3.0%	.	.	.	1.9%
2014	3.8%	3.0%	3.3%	.	.	.	.	1.0%
<b>Overall</b>	3.4%	3.2%	2.5%	2.8%	3.1%	2.6%	0.9%	2.0%

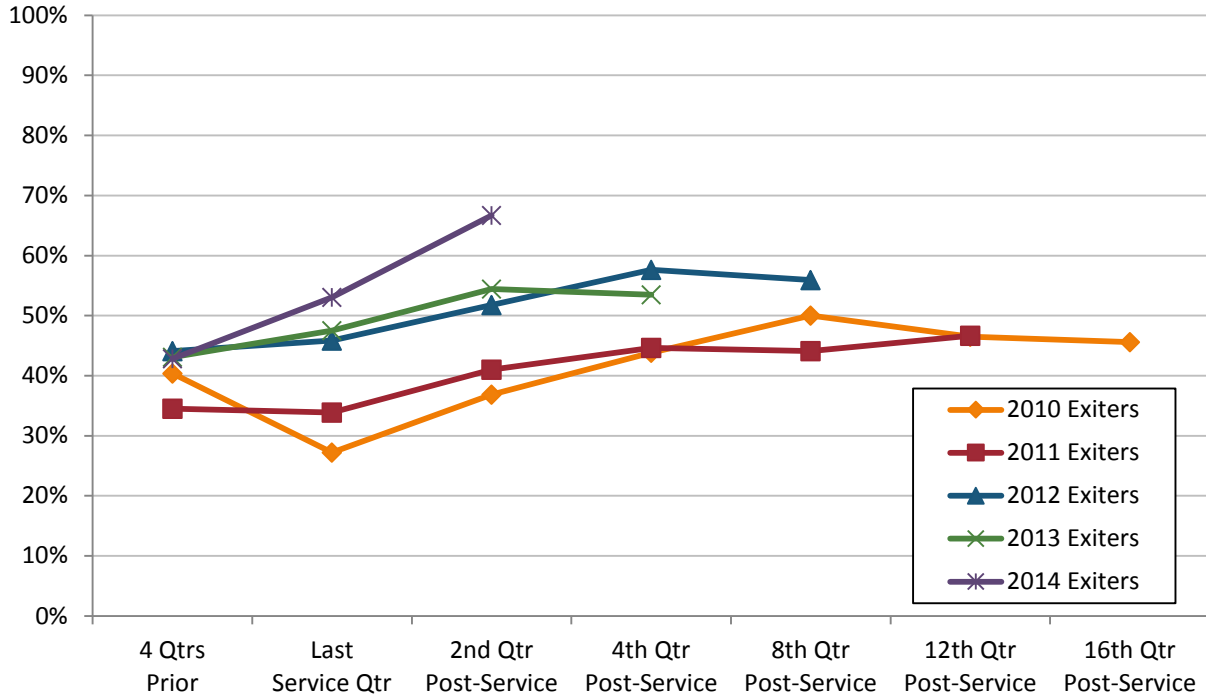
Source: Austin Academy participant records and Texas Workforce Commission UI wage and claim records.

Note: A dot represents too few participants, no data to report, or insufficient time passing to report for the timeframe.

Participants were counted as employed if they were found in Texas UI wage records. Those who were not found may be unemployed, employed outside of Texas, or employed in Texas in a position that is not covered by UI and reported to TWC.

Figure 5 illustrates quarterly employment patterns for Ascend participants.

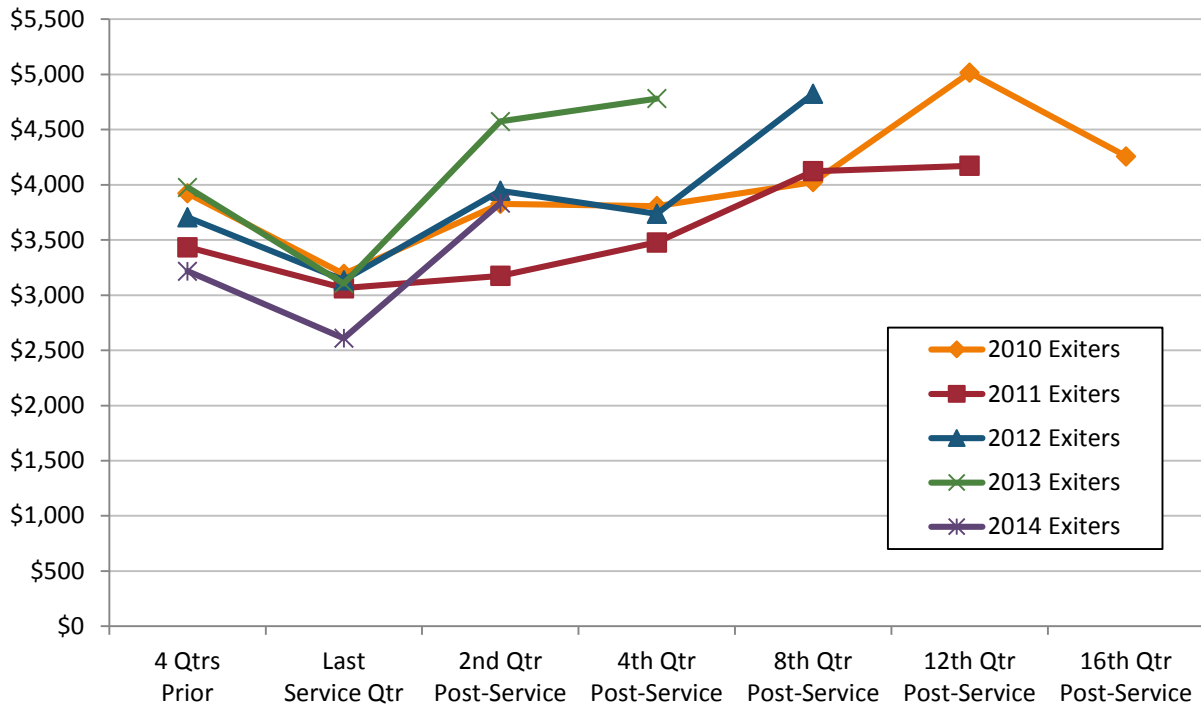
**Figure 5. Average Quarterly Employment of Ascend Center for Learning 2010-2014 Exiters<sup>a</sup>**



Participants were counted as employed if they were found in Texas UI wage records. Those who were not found may be unemployed, employed outside of Texas, or employed in Texas in a position that is not covered by UI and reported to TWC.

Average quarterly earnings in the four quarters prior to entering training were \$3,659 across all exiting cohorts. One year after leaving the Ascend program, average quarterly earnings were about the same as pre-service earnings (at \$3,893). However, for groups for which longer-term data are available, earnings increased in the second to fourth years post-service. Across all post-service quarters through December 2014, quarterly earnings for employed participants averaged roughly \$4,085. Figure 6 illustrates the average quarterly earnings of Ascend’s 2010-2014 exiters.

**Figure 6. Average Quarterly Earnings of Employed Ascend Center for Learning 2010-2014 Exiters**



Approximately one-third of Ascend’s 2010-2014 exiters met the monetary eligibility requirements for UI benefits based on their earnings and employment history in the four quarters prior to entry. In the fourth post-service quarter, roughly 37% of all participants met the monetary eligibility requirements. The percent that met these requirements continued to rise in subsequent post-service quarters. Across all post-service quarters, 40% of Ascend participants met the requirements. In the year prior to entering the program, roughly 3% of Ascend participants filed a claim for UI benefits. Across all post-service quarters, just 2% of participants had filed a UI benefit claim.

**PROGRAM IMPACTS**

Table 4 presents findings from the impacts analysis comparing the outcomes of the Ascend 2010-2014 exiting cohorts to the outcomes of a matched comparison group. Only one measure – average quarterly earnings – showed a significant difference between the two groups; however, it was in favor of the comparison group.

**Table 4. Impacts for Ascend Center for Learning 2010-2014 Exiters**

<b>Impact Measure</b>	<b>All Qtrs Post-Service: Comparison Group</b>	<b>All Qtrs Post-Service: Ascend Participants</b>	<b>Unadjusted Net Effect</b>	<b>Impact Measure</b>
<b>Quarterly Employment</b>	50.6%	47.3%	-3.2%	-1.8%
<b>Average Quarterly Earnings</b>	\$4,401	\$4,116	-\$285	-\$825**
<b>Qualified for UI Benefits</b>	45.4%	39.9%	-5.6%	-0.2%
<b>Filed UI Claim</b>	2.80%	1.86%	-0.94%	-0.49%

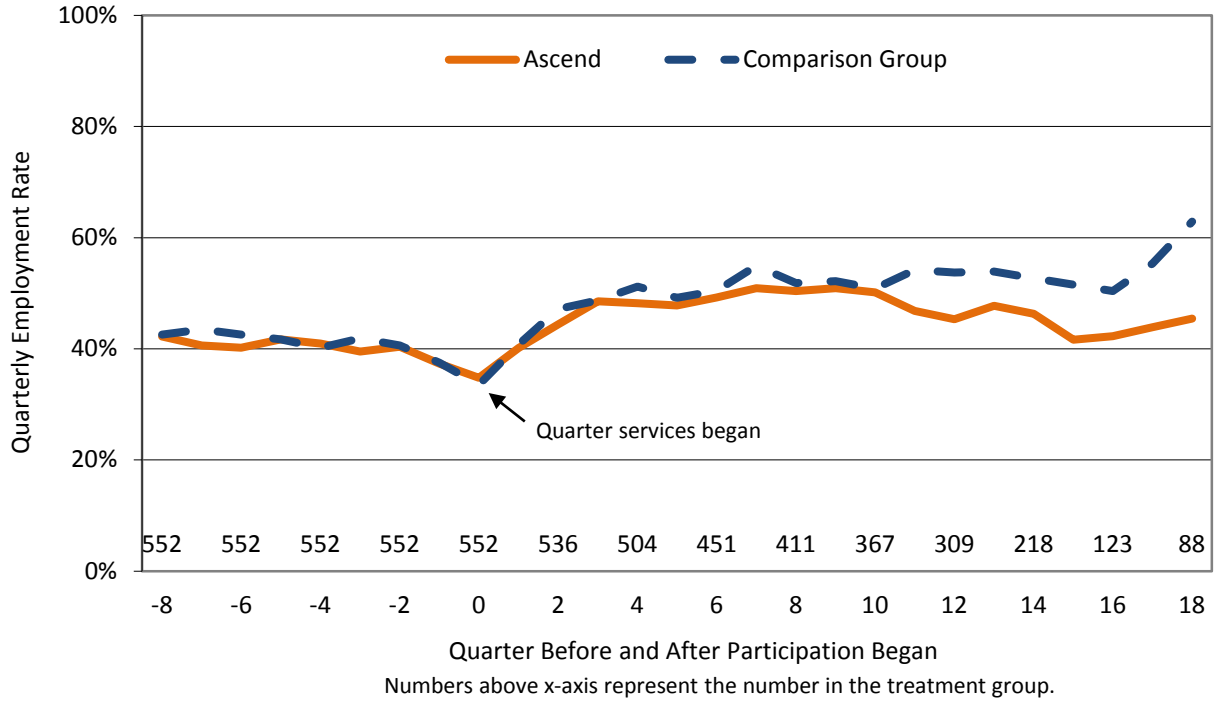
Note: \*\*=significant at  $p < .01$

In Figure 7 and Figure 8, the impact of participation in Ascend is examined by looking at participants' quarterly employment rates and earnings over time, regardless of employment status (i.e., unconditional earnings), in relation to those of the comparison group. These figures show data starting two years prior to beginning services (quarters -8 through -1), the quarter that services began (quarter 0), and continuing for another 18 quarters for some participants.

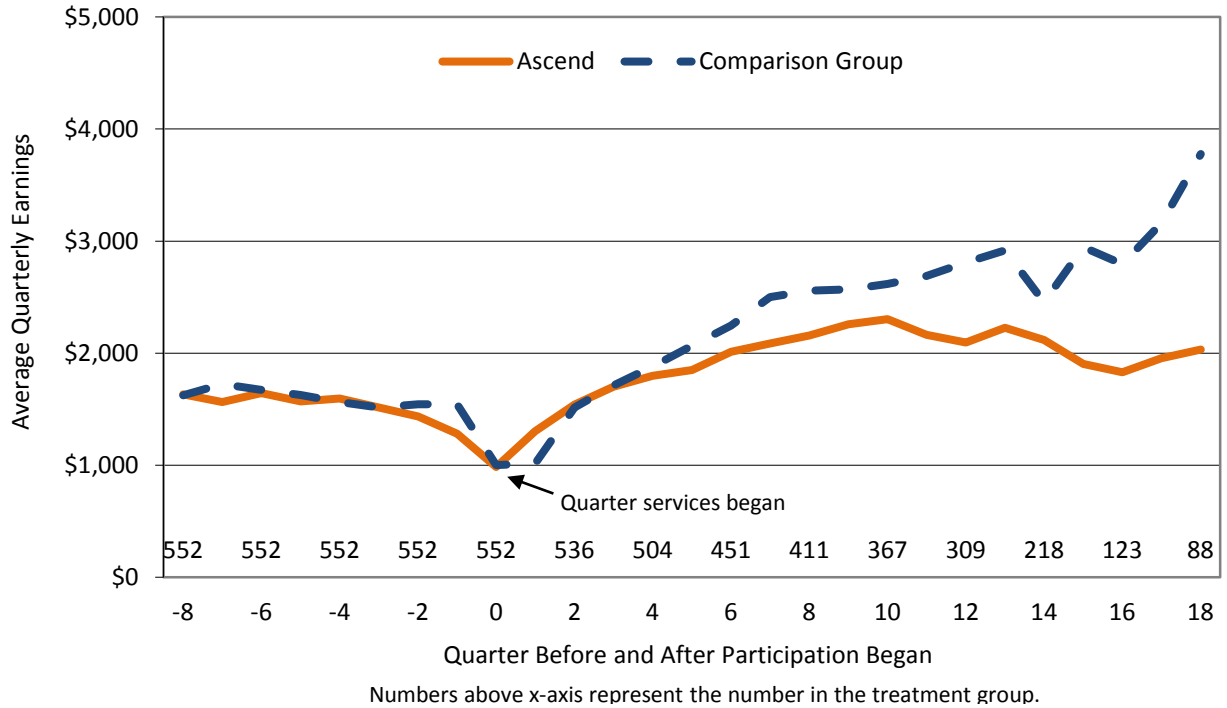
The employment rates of Ascend participants were very similar to those of the comparison group. However, in the second year after beginning services, the employment rate for participants decreased slightly while the employment rates for the comparison group increased slightly.

The analysis of unconditional earnings shows that Ascend participants did not fare as well in average quarterly wages as did the comparison group in all quarters after beginning the program.

**Figure 7: Quarterly Employment Rates Earnings Over Time, Ascend Center for Learning's Participants vs. Comparison Group**



**Figure 8. Unconditional Earnings Over Time, Ascend Center for Learning's Participants vs. Comparison Group**



The mission of the Austin Area Urban League is to assist African-Americans and other under-served residents in the achievement of societal and economic equality by focusing on educational improvement, employment readiness, health and wellness, and the preservation of affordable housing.

AAUL revamped its workforce training program as part of WERC to help individuals attain certifications and credentials valued by employers.

Travis County invested \$45,744 annually in AAUL during the 2010-12 period; subsequently providing \$34,330 for each of two 9-month grants from April 2013 through September 2014.



For more information visit:  
<http://www.aaul.org/>

## AUSTIN AREA URBAN LEAGUE

### WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT PROGRAMS AND SERVICES

The Austin Area Urban League (AAUL) currently offers three main programs through its contract with Travis County: Essential Office Skills (EOS) classes; life skills workshops; and job placement assistance. The approach of the AAUL program is to “meet the participant where they are” and help them to build the skills they need for employment.

Essential Office Skills classes focus on developing computer skills, with a particular emphasis on the Microsoft Office software suite and Internet/email basics. The curriculum includes Workplace Literacy training, such as business math and business communications (both verbal and written). The training also exposes participants to office technology, such as multi-line phone systems and fax/copy machines.

Life skills workshops focus on soft skills to “assist youth and adults in altering those negative patterns of behaviors that create barriers to their success.”<sup>10</sup> The Job Resource Center provides resume writing, interviewing, and job search best practices training, as well as job leads and referrals. While AAUL does not target any particular industry or occupation, the organization has established relationships with hiring managers in healthcare, insurance, customer service, construction, and education among other fields. The EOS Training “model was revamped [in 2012] to align with the Workforce and Education Readiness Continuum (WERC) program funded by the City of Austin. The existing workforce

<sup>10</sup> Austin Area Urban League. <http://aaul.org/what-we-do/workforce-career-development/> Accessed: 10.28.2015.

development program ended after the first quarter of 2012, and the new EOS Training program began during the second quarter of 2012. The service array was more “light touch” in those early years. County funds were linked, for example, to serving 910 clients in 2010 and 810 clients in 2011 through one-time job fairs, basic job readiness, and placement assistance. In 2012, the use of County funds was limited to the more intensive EOS, which for that and the following two years enrolled between 63 and 84 participants.<sup>11</sup>

AAUL participants receive short-term services. . Computer classes are offered in 6-week sessions – five hours daily for the daytime classes; three hours daily for the evening classes. Life skills workshops are offered every Wednesday during the daytime computer class for one to two hours each session.

#### **SUPPORT SERVICES**

AAUL works to connect participants with resources in the community, including Dress for Success for female participants and various faith-based agencies for interview and work clothes for male participants. Born Again Ministries is a key resource for transitional housing for men who have been released from incarceration. Bus passes are also provided if funding is available. AAUL also operates its own vans to transport groups of individuals to and from classes.

#### **PARTICIPANT PROFILE**

AAUL participants must be residents of Travis County, and most have a family income at or below 200% of the Federal Income Poverty Guideline Level. A total of 1,773<sup>12</sup> AAUL participants who exited from 2010 through 2014 were included in the analysis.<sup>13</sup> Half of AAUL exiters in the evaluation were male and approximately 69% were African-American; another 17% were Hispanic and 10% were White. The average age of participants was 37. Participants served were primarily from east and north Austin (about 32% each). About 13% of the

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<sup>11</sup> See Travis County Community Impact Reports 2010 through 2014.

<sup>12</sup> Five records were removed from analyses due to missing Social Security Numbers (SSN); 5 were removed due to duplication or other concerns with the SSN.

<sup>13</sup> Although Travis County funding targets EOS, AAUL also reports participants in ancillary services.

participants were indicated as having a criminal background (26% of the sample had an unknown/missing offender status).<sup>14</sup> Demographic details are provided in Appendix A.

About 21% of these participants had also received services at another workforce training program included in this report The AAUL is also a WERC partner.

#### **PARTICIPANT OUTCOMES**

Table 5 provides an overview of AAUL participant outcomes for the study period. Quarterly employment was approximately 48% for AAUL participants in the four quarters prior to program entry. By two quarters after leaving AAUL services, participants' average quarterly employment rose to 54%. Across all post-service quarters, 55% of AAUL participants were employed. Employment outcomes are also illustrated in Figure 9.

On average, quarterly earnings for AAUL participants were just over \$4,000. Although data are not available for two exiting cohorts (too few employed participants to report the numbers), the average quarterly earnings for the other three exiting cohorts had increased to \$4,445 by two years after leaving services. Quarterly earnings continued to rise for those for whom data are available. Overall, post-service quarterly earnings were just over \$5,000. Figure 10 below illustrates the earnings outcomes of AAUL's 2010-2014 exiters.

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<sup>14</sup> According to Darnise Bowens, AAUL Workforce and Career Development Manager, approximately 2/3 of their clients are "judicially involved individuals." (Conversation with RMC on September 1, 2015)



**Table 5. Austin Area Urban League 2010-2014 Exiter Outcomes**

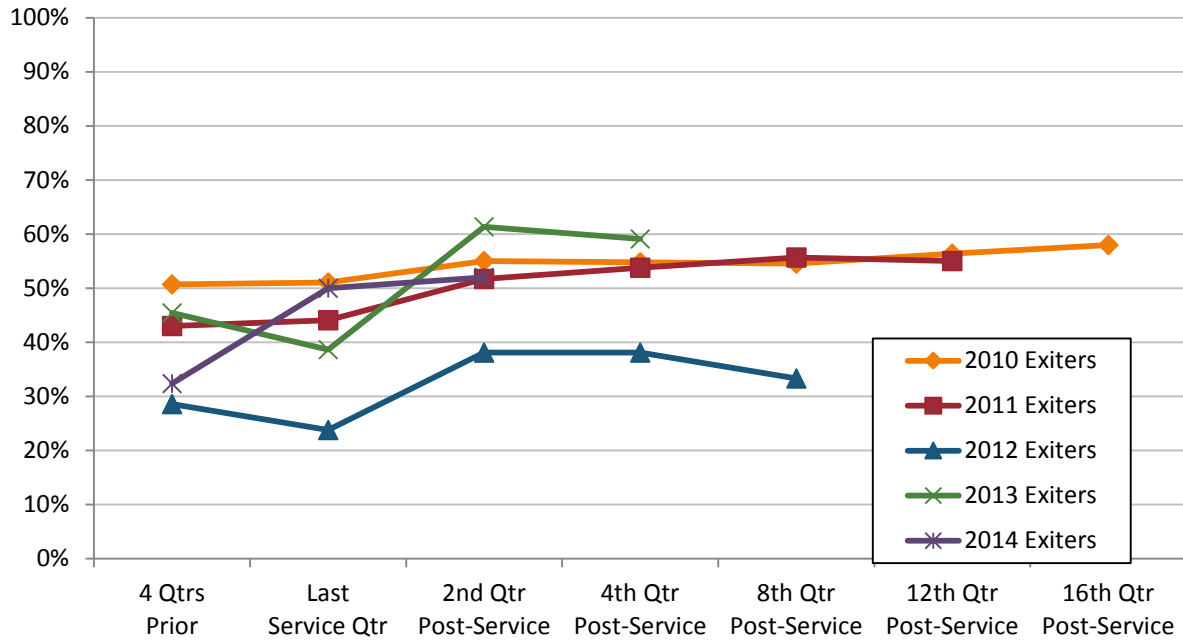
<b>Cohort Outcome Measure</b>	<b>Four Qtrs Before Service</b>	<b>Last Qtr of Service</b>	<b>2nd Qtr Post-Service</b>	<b>4th Qtr Post-Service</b>	<b>8th Qtr Post-Service</b>	<b>12th Qtr Post-Service</b>	<b>16th Qtr Post-Service</b>	<b>All Post-Service Qtrs</b>
<b>N (across all cohorts):</b>	1,773	1,773	1,754	1,729	1,685	1,664	1,179	
<b>Quarterly Employment:<sup>a</sup></b>								
<b>2010</b>	50.7%	51.1%	55.1%	54.8%	54.5%	56.4%	58.0%	55.7%
<b>2011</b>	43.0%	44.1%	51.8%	53.8%	55.7%	55.1%	.	54.7%
<b>2012</b>	28.6%	23.8%	38.1%	38.1%	33.3%	.	.	37.4%
<b>2013</b>	45.5%	38.6%	61.4%	59.1%	.	.	.	58.6%
<b>2014</b>	32.4%	50.0%	52.0%	.	.	.	.	54.8%
<b>Overall</b>	47.8%	48.5%	54.1%	54.4%	54.6%	56.0%	58.0%	55.4%
<b>Average Quarterly Earnings:</b>								
<b>2010</b>	\$4,171	\$3,479	\$4,201	\$4,508	\$4,994	\$5,394	\$5,895	\$5,205
<b>2011</b>	\$4,176	\$3,184	\$3,913	\$4,348	\$4,853	\$4,945	.	\$4,610
<b>2012</b>	\$5,469	.	.	.	.	.	.	\$4,035
<b>2013</b>	\$4,300	.	\$3,602	\$4,248	.	.	.	\$3,704
<b>2014</b>	\$4,535	\$2,183	.	.	.	.	.	\$4,553
<b>Overall</b>	\$4,191	\$3,357	\$4,109	\$4,445	\$4,957	\$5,265	\$5,895	\$5,051
<b>Qualified for UI Benefits:</b>								
<b>2010</b>	47.4%	.	.	48.6%	49.3%	51.2%	52.8%	50.4%
<b>2011</b>	38.1%	.	.	42.1%	48.9%	52.0%	.	47.6%
<b>2012</b>	35.7%	.	.	33.3%	33.3%	.	.	36.2%
<b>2013</b>	40.3%	.	.	54.6%	.	.	.	51.4%
<b>2014</b>	33.0%	.	.	.	.	.	.	.
<b>Overall</b>	44.2%	.	.	46.7%	49.0%	51.4%	52.8%	49.8%
<b>Filed UI Claim:</b>								
<b>2010</b>	5.7%	3.7%	2.8%	4.3%	3.8%	2.5%	2.5%	3.2%
<b>2011</b>	4.6%	6.2%	3.1%	3.1%	2.7%	1.9%	.	3.0%
<b>2012</b>	4.8%	4.8%	4.8%	0.0%	9.5%	.	.	2.9%
<b>2013</b>	5.7%	15.9%	4.6%	4.6%	.	.	.	3.6%
<b>2014</b>	2.3%	0.0%	0.0%	.	.	.	.	2.7%
<b>Overall</b>	5.3%	4.6%	2.9%	3.9%	3.6%	2.3%	2.5%	3.2%

Source: Austin Area Urban League participant records and Texas Workforce Commission UI wage and claim records.

Note: A dot represents too few participants, no data to report, or insufficient time passing to report for the timeframe.

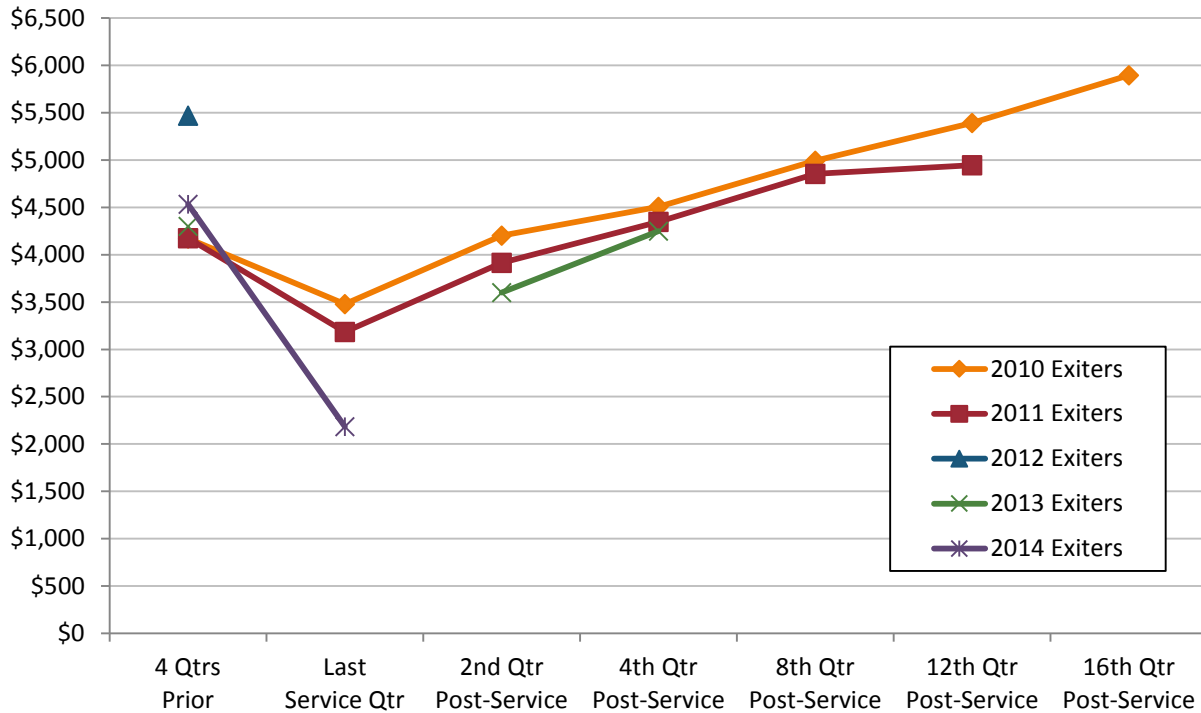
Participants were counted as employed if they were found in Texas UI wage records. Those who were not found may be unemployed, employed outside of Texas, or employed in Texas in a position that is not covered by UI and reported to TWC.

**Figure 9. Average Quarterly Employment of AAUL 2010-2014 Exitters<sup>a</sup>**



Participants were counted as employed if they were found in Texas UI wage records. Those who were not found may be unemployed, employed outside of Texas, or employed in Texas in a position that is not reported to TWC.

**Figure 10. Average Quarterly Earnings of Employed AAUL 2010-2014 Exitters**



The share of AAUL participants meeting monetary eligibility requirements for UI benefits grew slightly from 44% in the year prior to enrolling in services to about 50% across all post-service quarters. The share of AAUL participants filing a claim for UI benefits was down to an average 3% in the post-service period from an average high of 5% in the four quarters prior to service.

**PROGRAM IMPACTS**

Table 6 presents findings from the impacts analysis comparing the outcomes of the 2010-2014 exiting cohorts of AAUL to the outcomes of a matched comparison group. Participation was significantly associated with two of the four outcomes of interest. Statistically significant average quarterly earnings were lower for participants across all post-service quarters; however, fewer participants, as compared to the comparison group, applied for UI benefits.

**Table 6. Impacts for Austin Area Urban League 2010-2014 Exiters**

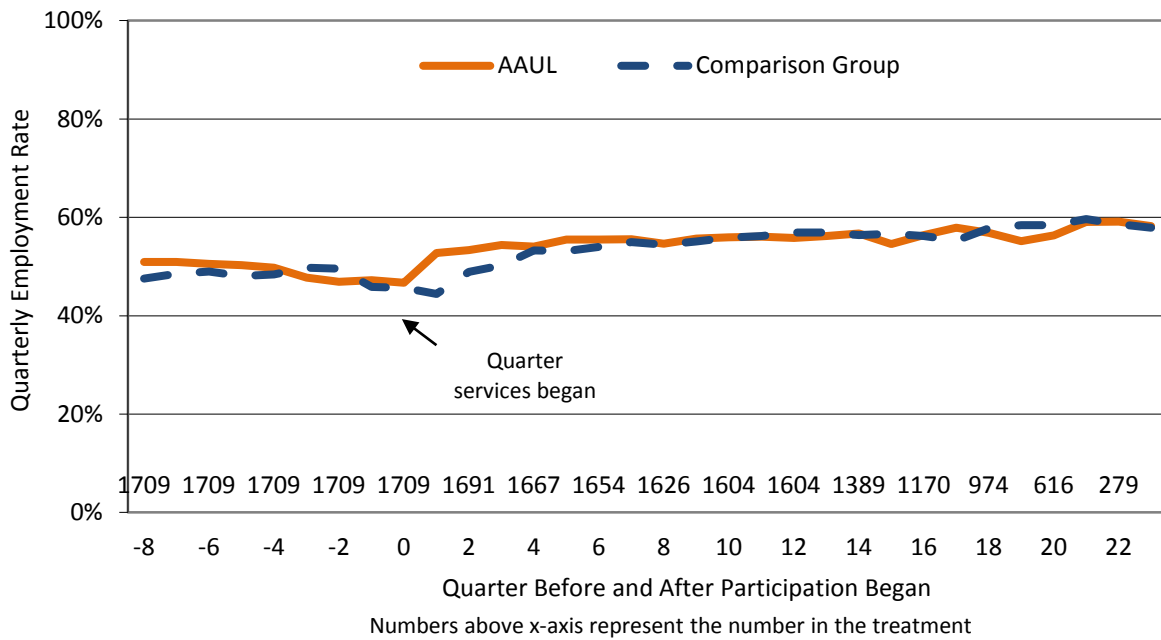
Impact Measure	All Qtrs Post-Service: Comparison Group	All Qtrs Post-Service: AAUL Participant	Unadjusted Net Effect	Impact Measure
Quarterly Employment	54.6%	55.5%	0.9%	-0.7%
Average Quarterly Earnings	\$5,148	\$5,082	-\$67	-\$164**
Qualified for UI Benefits	50.1%	49.8%	-0.3%	-1.62%
Filed UI Claim	4.08%	3.12%	-0.96%	-1.33%**

Note: \*\*=significant at p<.01

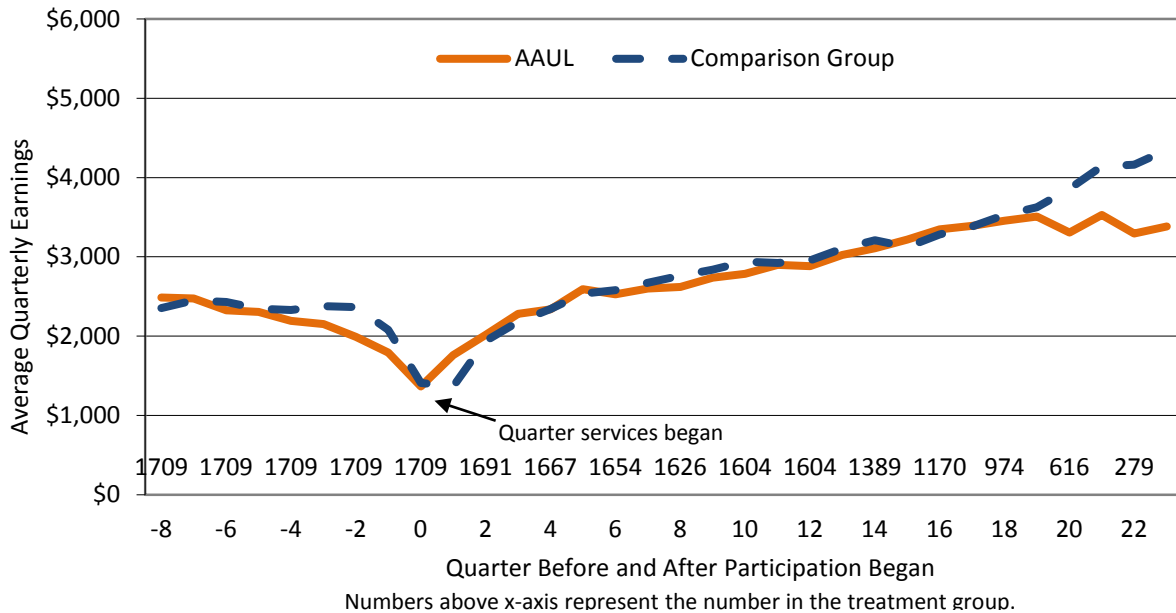
In Figure 11 and Figure 12, the impact of participation in AAUL is examined by looking at participants’ quarterly employment rates and earnings over time, regardless of employment status (i.e., unconditional earnings), in relation to those of the comparison group. These figures show data starting two years prior to beginning services (quarters -8 through -1), the quarter that services began (quarter 0), and continue for another 22 quarters (over five years) for some participants.

The employment rates of AAUL participants closely mirror those of the comparison group. Unconditional earnings of AAUL participants were also very similar to those of the comparison group. However, the earnings of participants leveled off around quarter 19 while the earnings of the comparison group continued to grow.

**Figure 11: Quarterly Employment Rate Over Time, AAUL Participants vs. Comparison Group**



**Figure 12. Unconditional Earnings Over Time, AAUL Participants vs. Comparison Group**



Capital IDEA provides long-term training in high-wage, high-demand occupations. The mission of the organization is to “sponsor educational opportunities for low-earning adults that lead to life-long financial independence.”

Capital IDEA collaborates with employers and training providers to help prepare participants for good jobs with family-supporting wages and benefits

In 2010 and 2011, Travis County invested \$700,213 in Capital IDEA. In 2012, the program was funded at \$800,000 plus an additional \$113,869 for a Prerequisite Enrollment Program. 2013 funding rose to \$875,000. Alignment with the County fiscal year required 9-month funding through September 2014 at \$675,000. FY 2015 funding was again \$875,000.



For more information visit:  
[www.capitalIDEA.org](http://www.capitalIDEA.org)

## CAPITAL IDEA

### WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT PROGRAMS AND SERVICES

Capital IDEA is a sectoral workforce development program, offering training in nursing, allied health, skilled trades, utilities, information and electronic technologies, and other fields. Healthcare occupations (both patient care and allied health) historically have accounted for approximately 75% of the training that study participants are enrolled in. Each program supported at Capital IDEA is one identified by employers as an occupation in high-demand paying \$15.90 or more per hour.

Capital IDEA carefully screens applicants for suitability with its intensive program design. Programming includes the College Prep Academy (described below), weekly group sessions with a Career Navigator (case manager/counselor) and other participants, and occupational skills training. Eligibility for the program includes at least a 5<sup>th</sup> grade skill level in reading and math and a high school diploma or GED. The College Prep Academy is an intensive 6.5 hour per day, five-day a week program to build math, reading, writing, and study skills. Less than 10% of participants require more than one semester of the academy; those who do repeat typically need additional support in math. Twice a week, time is dedicated to tutoring, advising, or other activities. In the fourth quarter of 2012, Capital IDEA invested unspent County funding in a Prerequisite Enrollment Program aimed at accelerating completion of prerequisite classes and enrollment in substantive occupational training at Austin Community College (ACC), which resulted in the

establishment of additional prerequisite classes during the Fall semester for Capital IDEA students. The program helped participants research their chosen careers, provided hands-on case management, and partnered with ACC instructors to identify barriers to academic success and provide timely interventions.<sup>15</sup> Overall the average active status for participants is 3.5 to 4 years, including follow-up.<sup>16</sup> Moreover, in response to increasing employer demand for experienced workers, Capital IDEA and ACC introduced the IT Career Expressway in the Fall 2015, which provides paid internships to students, assuring that they have that experience employers seek.<sup>17</sup>

One of the primary activities in Capital IDEA is the weekly one-hour peer support group session led by a Career Navigator. Topics for these sessions are driven by student needs and their ability to navigate the college experience. Navigators also meet individually with participants at the start of each semester to make sure they get off on the right track.

Capital IDEA covers all tuition, fees and books, and provides financial assistance towards the costs of childcare. The program also covers the cost of uniforms, shoes, tools, training software, and anything required on a class syllabus. Participants are encouraged to manage their own self-sufficiency by working part-time during training. Financial literacy is a core skill participants develop through Capital IDEA. Financial aid and budgeting are important topics that help participants stay focused on their training plan.

## **SUPPORT SERVICES**

The majority of Capital IDEA training is delivered by ACC. ACC students have a “green pass” which entitles them to free bus, rail, and Express Bus services in the region for the entire semester. College Prep Academy participants, who are not ACC students, are provided bus passes or emergency gas cards if they have a particularly lengthy commute.

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<sup>15</sup> Lyman. (2013). P. 40

<sup>16</sup> Those who withdraw or suspend participation usually do so at about 2.5 years, typically for financial, personal health or family issues, according to Capital IDEA Director, Steve Jackobs, during a conversation on 8/28/2015

<sup>17</sup> Entry IT jobs may pay less than the target wage, but the career path is expected to quickly recover and surpass that rate. As the IT Career Expressway ramps up in the next year, it will rebalance the occupational prevalence of healthcare occupations. Jackobs attributes the model to the Workforce Potential Project, conducted by the Ray Marshall Center in 2012 in behalf of the Austin Area Research Association (AARO). <http://www.mystatesman.com/news/business/acc-programs-aim-build-a-fast-track-to-higher-pay/npbsx/>

Participants receive Wal-Mart gift cards to purchase school supplies including backpacks, printer ink, and paper. The program also covers the cost of other services important to learning, such as eye examinations and eyeglasses, if needed. Emergency utility vouchers, and mortgage and rent assistance are also available on a case-by-case basis.

Capital IDEA refers participants to Workforce Solutions for child care services. For parents who do not receive support through Workforce Solutions, Capital IDEA offers the following support based on income level: If the participant's family income is under 100% of the Federal Poverty Level, then Capital IDEA covers 100% of allowable childcare costs; if the participant's family income is over 100% of FPL, then parents pay 20% of allowable childcare costs, plus any difference above allowable costs. Many of the participant parents have school-aged children, so the required care is typically before/after school rather than full-day.

Capital IDEA has a robust network of informal and formal relationships with social service providers. Participants in need of mental health counseling may be referred to the Samaritan Center. Other partners include Dress for Success and other sources for interview clothes, Blue/Brown Santa, food bank, Housing Authority and Foundation Communities, SafePlace, and many others. Proximity to the ACC Eastview Campus Workforce Center has improved connections between the Workforce Solutions' WIA program and Capital IDEA and helps to build partnerships and resource connections. In the Fall 2014, the ACCelerator, a high-tech learning lab at Highland Mall campus, opened. Capital IDEA has staff and offices on-site. Students can partake of multiple pods of (600+) computer stations for individualized and self-paced learning, as well as the tutoring, academic advising, adult and continuing education, and college readiness services available in the state-of-the-art facility.

#### **PARTICIPANT PROFILE**

Among the 759 Capital IDEA participants included in this report, about half were female. Nearly a quarter of participants were Black while 26% were of "other" race/ethnicity. Over half (60%) were between 20 and 39 years of age, with an average age of 30. The majority (74%) started Capital IDEA with a high school diploma or GED, and 28% had attended or graduated from postsecondary education. Just over 10% of the sample was justice-engaged and nearly 40% of the sample received public benefits. Reportedly, 7% have felony convictions and two-

thirds were first-generation college students.<sup>18</sup> Demographic details are provided in Appendix A.

More than half (61%) of the participants included in this report had participated in a healthcare-related training program at Capital IDEA; just under 19% had been referred to an ABE/GED or ESL programs at ACC or other community provider prior to the college prep program;<sup>19</sup> 12% were in an information technology-related program; and 8% were studying a professional trade.

### **PARTICIPANT OUTCOMES**

Table 7 provides an overview of labor market outcomes for Capital IDEA 2010-2014 exiters.

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<sup>18</sup>These first-gen students have an 84% Texas Success Initiative (TSI) pass rate in the math section (the most challenging part) of the TSI exam, compared to an approximate 25% pass rate statewide, according to Steve Jackobs on 8/28/2015. TSI is the statewide college readiness examination introduced in 2013.

<sup>19</sup>Capital IDEA is co-located in the Lifeworks Building, adjacent to ACC Eastview campus, with Ascend and the Literacy Coalition that offer these adult education services.



**Table 7. Capital IDEA 2010-2014 Exiter Outcomes**

Cohort Outcome Measure	Four Qtrs Before Service	Last Qtr of Service	2nd Qtr Post-Service	4th Qtr Post-Service	8th Qtr Post-Service	12th Qtr Post-Service	16th Qtr Post-Service	All Post-Service Qtrs
N (across all cohorts):	759	759	729	653	513	360	212	
<b>Quarterly Employment:<sup>a</sup></b>								
2010	65.6%	71.7%	77.4%	78.8%	70.3%	74.1%	74.5%	74.8%
2011	73.3%	62.2%	67.6%	75.0%	78.4%	77.7%	.	74.5%
2012	62.4%	68.6%	77.8%	75.2%	75.8%	.	.	75.4%
2013	61.6%	75.0%	80.0%	78.6%	.	.	.	77.1%
2014	66.5%	68.9%	71.1%	.	.	.	.	73.0%
<b>Overall</b>	65.8%	69.4%	75.3%	77.0%	74.3%	75.6%	74.5%	75.0%
<b>Average Quarterly Earnings:</b>								
2010	\$4,585	\$5,210	\$6,539	\$6,925	\$7,714	\$8,120	\$9,361	\$7,788
2011	\$5,089	\$4,873	\$6,891	\$7,404	\$8,088	\$9,144	.	\$8,040
2012	\$4,671	\$5,158	\$7,044	\$7,686	\$8,272	.	.	\$7,691
2013	\$4,499	\$4,616	\$6,093	\$6,954	.	.	.	\$6,412
2014	\$4,414	\$5,144	\$7,109	.	.	.	.	\$6,561
<b>Overall</b>	\$4,672	\$5,013	\$6,677	\$7,211	\$7,998	\$8,553	\$9,361	\$7,670
<b>Qualified for UI Benefits:</b>								
2010	56.7%	.	.	73.6%	75.0%	74.1%	73.6%	73.6%
2011	66.2%	.	.	70.3%	75.0%	75.0%	.	74.3%
2012	58.7%	.	.	73.2%	77.8%	.	.	75.0%
2013	58.6%	.	.	76.4%	.	.	.	73.7%
2014	59.0%	.	.	.	.	.	.	.
<b>Overall</b>	59.6%	.	.	73.4%	75.8%	74.4%	73.6%	74.0%
<b>Filed UI Claim:</b>								
2010	3.3%	1.4%	0.5%	4.3%	1.9%	2.4%	1.9%	2.0%
2011	5.9%	0.7%	2.7%	2.7%	3.4%	2.0%	.	2.6%
2012	4.4%	2.0%	2.0%	0.7%	0.7%	.	.	1.7%
2013	4.1%	1.4%	3.6%	2.1%	.	.	.	2.1%
2014	3.5%	0.0%	2.6%	.	.	.	.	1.1%
<b>Overall</b>	4.2%	1.2%	2.1%	2.6%	2.0%	2.2%	1.9%	2.1%

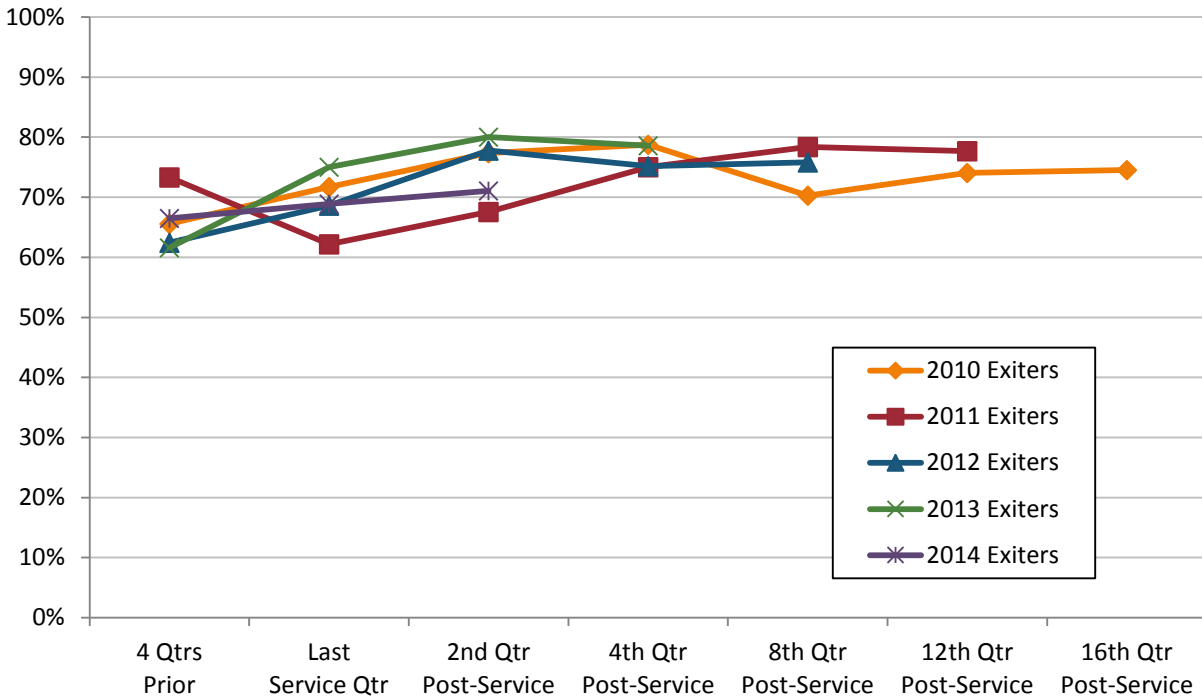
Source: Capital IDEA participant records and Texas Workforce Commission UI wage records.

Note: A dot represents too few participants, no data to report, or insufficient time passing to report for the timeframe.

Participants were counted as employed if they were found in Texas UI wage records. Those who were not found may be unemployed, employed outside of Texas, or employed in Texas in a position that is not covered by UI and reported to TWC.

In the four quarters prior to enrolling in Capital IDEA, quarterly employment for participants was roughly 66%. In the last quarter of participation, that rate rose to 69%. Participants continued to exhibit strong employment levels (close to or above 75%) during the four years post-service and across all post-service quarters through December 2014.

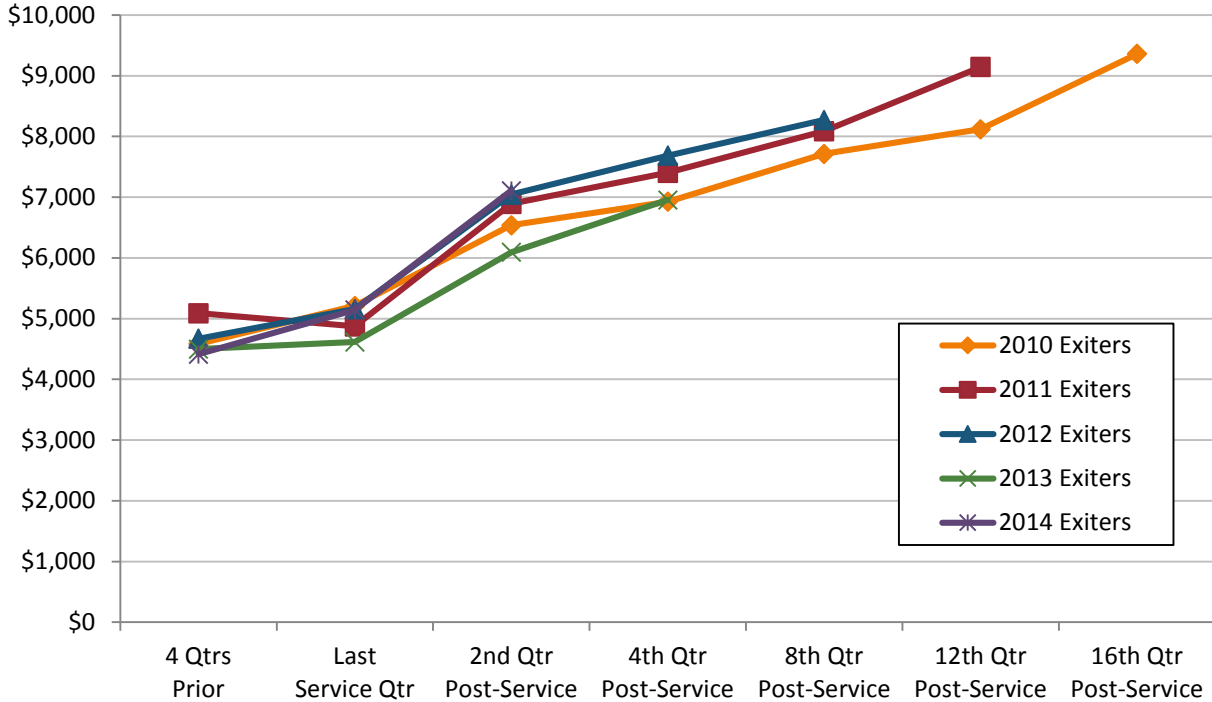
**Figure 13. Average Quarterly Employment of Capital IDEA 2010-2014 Exiters<sup>a</sup>**



Participants were counted as employed if they were found in Texas UI wage records. Those who were not found may be unemployed, employed outside of Texas, or employed in Texas in a position that is not reported to TWC.

Earnings in the pre-service period averaged \$4,672 for employed participants. In all post-service quarters, Capital IDEA exiters earned an average of \$7,670, an increase of 64% over their pre-service earnings. The earnings trajectories of Capital IDEA’s 2010-2014 exiters are shown in Figure 14.

**Figure 14. Average Quarterly Earnings of Employed Capital IDEA 2010-2014 Exiters**



Approximately 60% of Capital IDEA participants met the monetary eligibility requirements for UI benefits in the four quarters prior to entry. Across all post-service quarters, that share rose to 74%. About 4% of all Capital IDEA participants filed a claim for UI benefits in the pre-service period, while just 2% on average filed a claim in any post-service quarter.

**PROGRAM IMPACTS**

Table 8 presents findings from the impacts analysis comparing the results of the 2010-2014 exiting cohorts of Capital IDEA to the results of a matched comparison group. In relation to the matched comparison group, Capital IDEA participants experienced significant gains in three measures: quarterly employment, average quarterly earnings of those employed, and filing for UI benefits.<sup>20</sup> The employment rate in all post-service quarters was over three percentage points higher for Capital IDEA participants and their quarterly earnings were nearly \$1,400 greater than those of the comparison group. Participants experienced about a three percentage point decrease, as compared to the comparison group, in the share who filed a UI

<sup>20</sup> Capital IDEA is the only grantee for which all four impact measures were statistically significant.

claim. Although the unadjusted net effect for UI benefit qualification is positive for the treatment group at nearly twelve percent, the negative impact measure almost reaches four percent.<sup>21</sup>

**Table 8. Impacts for Capital IDEA 2010-2014 Exiters**

Impact Measure	All Qtrs Post-Service: Comparison Group	All Qtrs Post-Service: Capital IDEA Participant	Unadjusted Net Effect	Impact Measure
<b>Quarterly Employment</b>	64.4%	74.6%	10.2%	3.2%**
<b>Average Quarterly Earnings</b>	\$6,488	\$7,631	\$1,143	\$1,362**
<b>Qualified for UI Benefits</b>	61.5%	73.4%	11.9%	-3.71%**
<b>Filed UI Claim</b>	4.34%	2.16%	-2.18%	-3.09%**

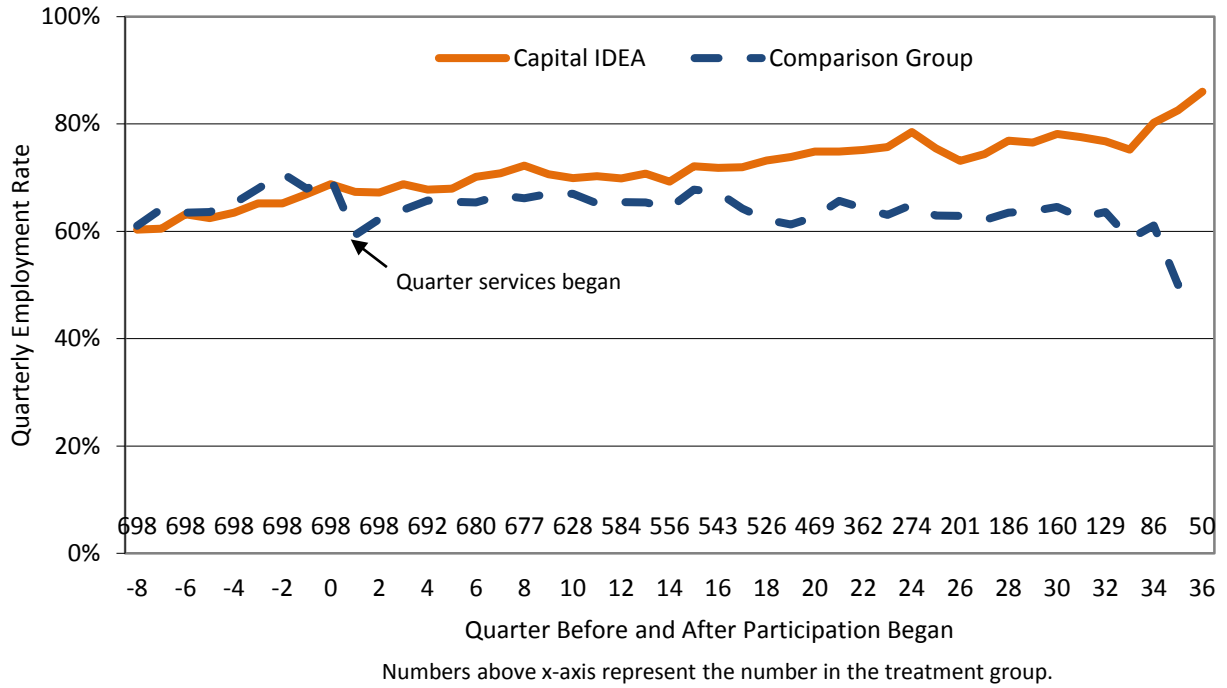
Note: \*\*=significant at p<.01

Figure 15 and Figure 16 examine the impact of participation in Capital IDEA by looking at participants' quarterly employment rates and unconditional earnings over time, in relation to those of the comparison group. These figures show data starting two years prior to beginning services (quarters -8 through -1), the quarter that services began (quarter 0), and continuing for another 36 quarters (eight years) for some participants.

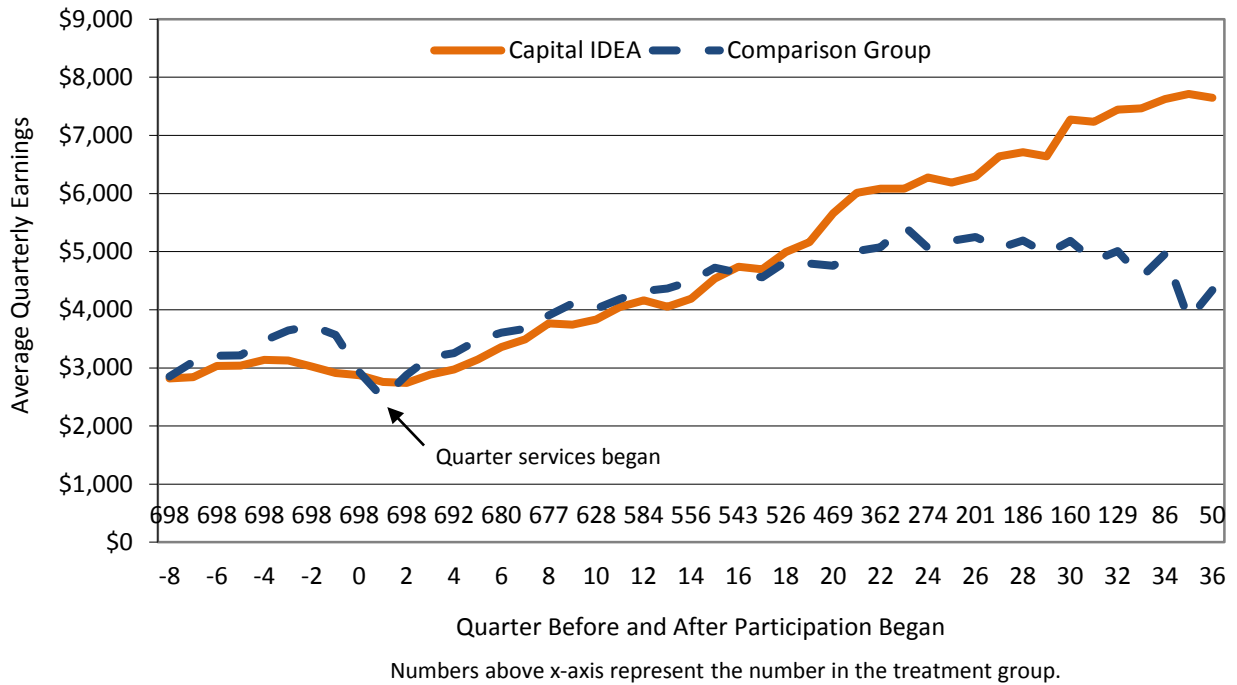
The employment rate of Capital IDEA participants was higher than that of the comparison group since the beginning of services and continued to gradually increase throughout the time period studied. The unconditional earnings of Capital IDEA participants were similar to those of the comparison group for the first 18 quarters. After that, the earnings of the comparison group leveled off, while the earnings of the Capital IDEA participants continued to grow. By the 8<sup>th</sup> year after starting services, the unconditional earnings of participants were nearly double those of the comparison group.

<sup>21</sup> This may be associated with the limited timeframe for UI qualifying earnings and employment quarters for the 2014 cohort, compared with the notable separation in employment rates and earnings that occurs in the post-program period between the two groups as revealed in Figures 15 and 16.

**Figure 15: Quarterly Employment Rate Over Time, Capital IDEA Participants vs. Comparison Group**



**Figure 16. Unconditional Earnings Over Time, Capital IDEA Participants vs. Comparison Group**



Goodwill Industries of Central Texas provides services to ex-offenders, the homeless, individuals with disabilities, individuals who lack a high school diploma or GED, and others who face barriers in the labor market. Its mission is to help individuals generate lifelong connections to work.

Workforce programs at Goodwill include Ready to Work, Job Source, Community Rehabilitation, and WIA Youth.

From 2010 to 2015, Travis County invested \$137,439 annually in Goodwill's Ready to Work program.

<https://www.goodwillcentraltexas.org/education-job-training>



## GOODWILL INDUSTRIES OF CENTRAL TEXAS

### WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT PROGRAMS AND SERVICES

Goodwill's Ready-to-Work program is available throughout Travis County. Adults can access this program through many service points, including the Goodwill Career Academy (GCA), the Excel Center, Job Source Offices distributed about the City of Austin and Travis County, and Travis County Service Centers at Palm Square and in Pflugerville. While both Travis County and the City of Austin support the program, Travis County funding is primarily targeted to ex-offenders, while city funding is used to support homeless individuals. Approximately 64 percent of individuals included in this report were ex-offenders, by far the largest documented share of justice-involved individuals in the program array supported by Travis County.<sup>22</sup>

The Ready-to-Work program is focused on helping individuals develop occupational skills necessary to enter a field with real prospects for reaching a self-sufficiency wage through the development of talent, soft skills, and literacy. Soft skills training includes job search, resume preparation, computer basics, and interview techniques. In 2013, Goodwill renamed the program Ready to Work Plus, a change in nomenclature signifying the intensified collaboration with WERC partners along a continuum of education, training, and employment

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<sup>22</sup> Goodwill is the only provider that reports offender status for 100% of its Ready-to-Work participants. Status is unknown for 14% to 89% of all other entities, though justice-involved individuals are anecdotally known to comprise a significant share of all program participants.

services, as well as an enhanced focus on the acquisition of credentials valued by industry in occupations with career pathway potential. This occupationally focused training now includes not only very short-term credentials like Travis County Food Handler permit for entry into the hospitality sector, but also expanded access to more substantive training paths, such as Certified Nurse Assistant (CNA) with ancillary credentials for cardiopulmonary resuscitation (CPR) and phlebotomy, Texas Commercial Driver's License (CDL), QuickBooks, Heating, Ventilation, and Air Conditioning (HVAC) systems, office administration, and dental assistant. The target placement wage in 2014 was \$10 per hour for Ready to Work overall, and Goodwill targets \$13.50 as a livable wage threshold for those who receive substantive training through the Goodwill Career Academy and WERC partners.<sup>23</sup> GCA is now known as the Goodwill Career and Technical Academy (GCTA).

Since 2004, Goodwill's workforce development emphasis has grown exponentially. From a staff of 7 in 2004, the team now has 70 full-time employees. During the 2009-2010 period, Goodwill shifted away from one-on-one services towards a more cohort-based approach. In a cohort model, a group of individuals start and complete training together, allowing for the development of peer support. The work process was also re-organized by population of focus to help staff build a stronger knowledge base. Goodwill created taskforce teams that focus on specific types of offenses (for example, a sex offenders team that focuses on identifying job opportunities that meet probation/parole requirements). All Goodwill workforce staff members are certified in Offender Employment Services.

Goodwill focuses on making participants marketable. With many participants coming from prison, there is a struggle to balance their immediate need for employment with intensive case management and longer-term occupational training. Placement specialists help participants to understand that work is a way out of poverty and get their buy-in for starting the pathway to earning money and building skills. Goodwill also works with ex-offenders to

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<sup>23</sup> Goodwill closed the GCA on East 6<sup>th</sup> Street in 2015 and is in the process of relocating it adjacent to the Excel Center at the Norwood Office in North Austin. The Goodwill Excel Center is the first no-cost, public charter high school in Austin Texas that serves adults 17-50 and 2015 is its inaugural class. Students are guided by individualized learning plans and life coaches, and may receive support services including childcare, transportation and tuition assistance (should they choose to pursue post-secondary education) or start working with a technical career certification. <https://www.goodwillcentraltexas.org/excel-center/goodwill-career-technical-academy>.

develop strategies for responding to employers' questions about their criminal background. The program conducts a background check on all participants and shares the results with the participants to help them understand the information that is available to a potential employer.

The Ready-to-Work program offers classes pre- and post-release focused on peer support and mentoring. This is part of the effort towards simplifying reentry into the community. Job readiness training for ex-offenders includes information on the federal bonding program, understanding career options and limitations, and developing letters of explanation for their crimes. Goodwill also conducts outreach to employers through its Business Solutions staff to understand what participants need to be able to demonstrate to gain employment. Many companies are reluctant to hire ex-offenders, and participants who try for employment but are unsuccessful may feel defeated or overwhelmed. Goodwill works to provide some hope to these individuals and develop a plan for moving forward. Goodwill helps participants recognize that there are legal work opportunities; it just takes time to pursue them.<sup>24</sup>

#### **SUPPORT SERVICES**

As part of the program, individuals can earn \$25 from Goodwill for every 30 days of employment retention. This helps to keep individuals connected to the program and involved in case management. Case managers may also provide Goodwill/Simon gift cards at their discretion. With case managers' help, individuals develop housing stability plans and may receive up to \$2,000 annually in housing supports. Other services offered to Ready-to-Work participants, based on their individual needs, include transportation, help in obtaining identification cards, child care referrals, connections to food pantries, and resources for work/interview clothes.

As a result of its partnership with United Way, Goodwill has incorporated more financial education into its programs. Ready-to-Work participants are offered classes and one-on-one sessions with a financial literacy trainer, focusing on topics such as budgeting, credit repair, and the dangers of payday loans. Through its itinerant connection with multiple partner programs around Austin, including Caritas, Any Baby Can, Safe Place, Austin-Travis County Assistance

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<sup>24</sup> Goodwill's operative approach is called Transtheoretical Cognitive Transformation.



Centers, and others, Goodwill is able to help its staff build knowledge and connections that enhance referrals and supports for participants.

## **PARTICIPANT PROFILE**

A Goodwill participant must have a documented barrier to employment, be a County resident with income at or below 200% of the Federal Poverty Income Guideline Level, and be ready to work. The challenge is that many participants have multiple, overlapping barriers to employment, including multiple required appointments for probation, unstable housing, lack of technology skills, and lack of identification.<sup>25</sup>

Of the 1,221 exiters from 2010 to 2014 in the outcomes evaluation,<sup>26</sup> most were male (66%) and just less than a third were Black (32%) or White (30%) with a lower share of Hispanic (21%) participants. More than half were between 30 and 49 years old, with an average age of 41. Goodwill participants were more likely to live in east Austin (33%) than in other areas of town. Over half (64%) of the sample were offenders and 11% received public benefits. Demographic details are provided in Appendix A.

Just over half of the sample had received case management services, about 43% had received application, resume writing, and interviewing skills services, and about 36% had received job readiness services. About 18% of these participants had also received services at another workforce training program included in this report. The Goodwill is a WERC partner.

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<sup>25</sup> As noted by staff, a state prison ID card is not a good employment tool.

<sup>26</sup> A significant number of records were removed from analyses (758) due to missing Social Security numbers.

## PARTICIPANT OUTCOMES

Table 9 provides an overview of Goodwill’s 2010-2014 exiter outcomes.

**Table 9. Goodwill 2010-2014 Exiter Outcomes**

Cohort Outcome Measure	Four Qtrs Before Service	Last Qtr of Service	2nd Qtr Post-Service	4th Qtr Post-Service	8th Qtr Post-Service	12th Qtr Post-Service	16th Qtr Post-Service	All Post-Service Qtrs
N (across all cohorts):	1,220	1,220	960	888	830	626	421	
<b>Quarterly Employment:<sup>a</sup></b>								
2010	39.7%	56.8%	61.8%	57.7%	55.8%	51.8%	49.2%	54.0%
2011	34.1%	50.0%	50.0%	46.6%	49.5%	48.8%	.	50.0%
2012	36.2%	67.5%	69.0%	68.0%	63.6%	.	.	66.2%
2013	36.2%	56.9%	58.6%	58.6%	.	.	.	60.2%
2014	36.1%	56.6%	45.8%	.	.	.	.	48.8%
<b>Overall</b>	37.1%	57.4%	59.4%	57.6%	56.1%	50.8%	49.2%	55.1%
<b>Average Quarterly Earnings:</b>								
2010	\$3,303	\$2,942	\$3,848	\$4,227	\$4,719	\$5,539	\$6,107	\$4,935
2011	\$3,267	\$3,621	\$3,857	\$4,309	\$4,788	\$4,919	.	\$4,523
2012	\$2,866	\$4,048	\$4,410	\$4,718	\$5,394	.	.	\$5,039
2013	\$3,237	\$3,355	\$4,590	\$4,187	.	.	.	\$4,416
2014	\$3,123	\$3,403	\$3,310	.	.	.	.	\$3,850
<b>Overall</b>	\$3,176	\$3,402	\$4,001	\$4,373	\$4,921	\$5,344	\$6,107	\$4,838
<b>Qualified for UI Benefits:</b>								
2010	39.4%	.	.	51.5%	50.8%	49.9%	48.0%	49.7%
2011	30.5%	.	.	42.7%	45.6%	48.3%	.	44.1%
2012	33.0%	.	.	64.5%	60.1%	.	.	62.7%
2013	31.5%	.	.	55.2%	.	.	.	59.1%
2014	26.8%	.	.	.	.	.	.	.
<b>Overall</b>	33.0%	.	.	52.7%	51.8%	49.4%	48.0%	50.2%
<b>Filed UI Claim:</b>								
2010	3.8%	3.6%	3.3%	5.5%	4.3%	3.1%	1.9%	3.3%
2011	3.5%	2.4%	3.4%	3.9%	1.9%	3.4%	.	2.8%
2012	4.2%	3.0%	3.9%	1.5%	2.0%	.	.	3.1%
2013	5.2%	1.7%	1.7%	5.2%	.	.	.	3.0%
2014	2.4%	2.1%	2.8%	.	.	.	.	1.3%
<b>Overall</b>	3.5%	2.8%	3.3%	4.2%	3.1%	3.2%	1.9%	3.1%

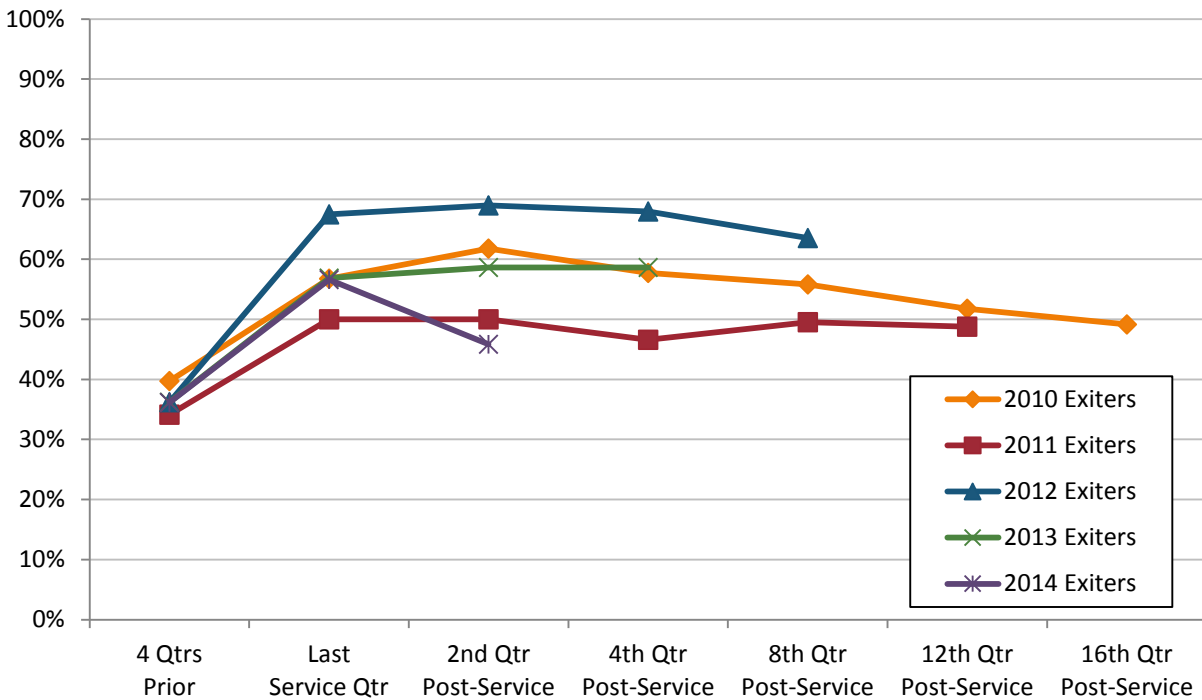
Source: Goodwill participant records and Texas Workforce Commission UI wage and claim records.

Note: A dot represents too few participants, no data to report, or insufficient time passing to report for the timeframe.

Participants were counted as employed if they were found in Texas UI wage records. Those who were not found may be unemployed, employed outside of Texas, or employed in Texas in a position that is not covered by UI or reported to TWC.

Goodwill’s participants in each exit cohort had large employment gains in the last quarter of service (an average of a 20% point increase in quarterly employment). This jump in employment rates while still in training may be attributed to the program’s focus on helping individuals find immediate employment and then transitioning to longer-term employment through better skills. Employment results were mixed in the second post-service quarter – three of the cohorts continued to experience an increase in quarterly employment rates during the second quarter after services, while one (2011) remained level and one (2014) actually dropped. Across all post-service quarters, approximately 55% of Goodwill’s 2010-2014 exiters were employed. Figure 17 illustrates the employment outcomes for Goodwill participants.

**Figure 17. Average Quarterly Employment of Goodwill 2010-2014 Exiters<sup>a</sup>**

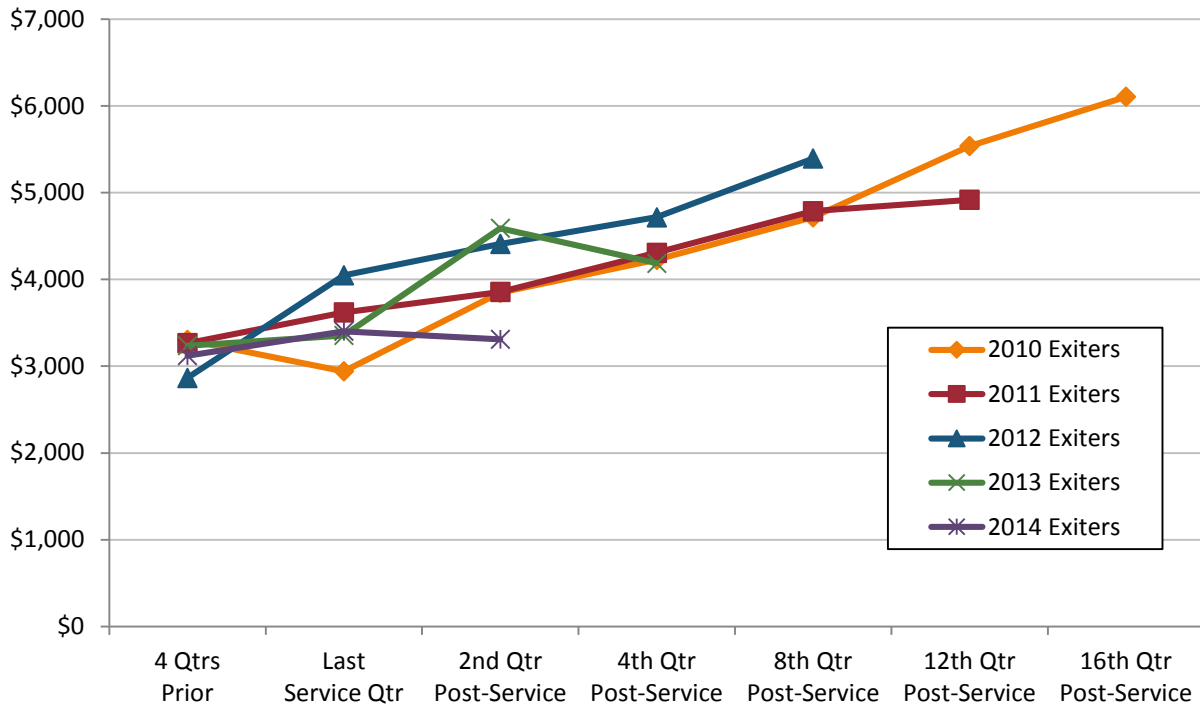


Participants were counted as employed if they were found in Texas UI wage records. Those who were not found may be unemployed, employed outside of Texas, or employed in Texas in a position that is not reported to TWC.

Figure 18 illustrates the average quarterly earnings of employed Goodwill participants. The 2010 exiters who were employed experienced, on average, a sizeable drop in wages during the last quarter of services, in contrast with the other four cohorts. However, earnings recovered in subsequent quarters, and earnings for all groups showed gains in the post-service

period. On average, post-service earnings were \$4,838 per quarter, which is a 52% increase over the year prior to starting services.

**Figure 18. Average Quarterly Earnings of Employed Goodwill 2010-2014 Exitters**



Based on their employment and earnings histories in the pre-service period, 33% of Goodwill participants qualified for UI benefits. Across all post-service quarters, the share monetarily eligible for UI benefits grew to 50%. Nearly 4% of Goodwill participants filed a claim for UI benefits in the four quarters prior to entering Goodwill training. In the post-service period, the share dropped to an average 3%.

**PROGRAM IMPACTS**

Table 10 presents findings from the impacts analysis comparing the results of Goodwill’s 2010-2014 cohorts to the results of a matched comparison group. Participation was positively associated with two of the four outcomes of interest: quarterly employment and a statistically significant decrease in the share that filed for UI benefits. Participation was also associated with a statistically significant \$257 decrease in average quarterly earnings and slightly over two percent gap for those who qualified for UI benefits. However, the inability to measure prior

incarceration (a population specifically targeted by Goodwill) for comparison group members shadows this result and suggests that caution should be used in interpretation.

**Table 10. Impacts for Goodwill 2010-2014 Exiters**

<b>Impact Measure</b>	<b>All Qtrs Post-Service: Comparison Group</b>	<b>All Qtrs Post-Service: Goodwill Participant</b>	<b>Unadjusted Net Effect</b>	<b>Impact Measure</b>
<b>Quarterly Employment</b>	50.0%	56.0%	6.0%	1.0%
<b>Average Quarterly Earnings</b>	\$5,239	\$4,939	-\$300	-\$257**
<b>Qualified for UI Benefits</b>	46.4%	50.9%	4.4%	-2.06%**
<b>Filed UI Claim</b>	4.40%	3.06%	-1.33%	-1.69%**

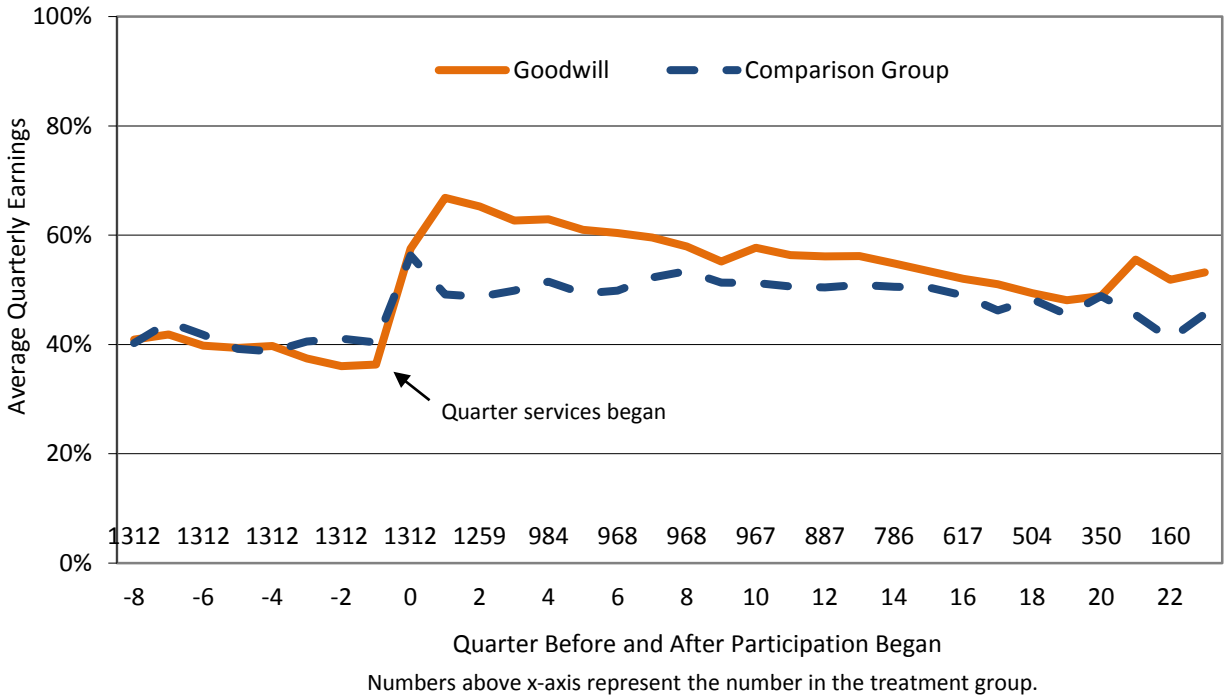
Note: \*\*=significant at p<.01

In Figure 19 and Figure 20, below, the impact of participation in Goodwill is examined by looking at participants’ quarterly employment rates and earnings over time, regardless of employment status (i.e., unconditional earnings), in relation to those of the comparison group. These figures show data starting two years prior to beginning services (quarters -8 through -1), the quarter that services began (quarter 0), and continue for another 22 quarters (5.5 years) for some participants.

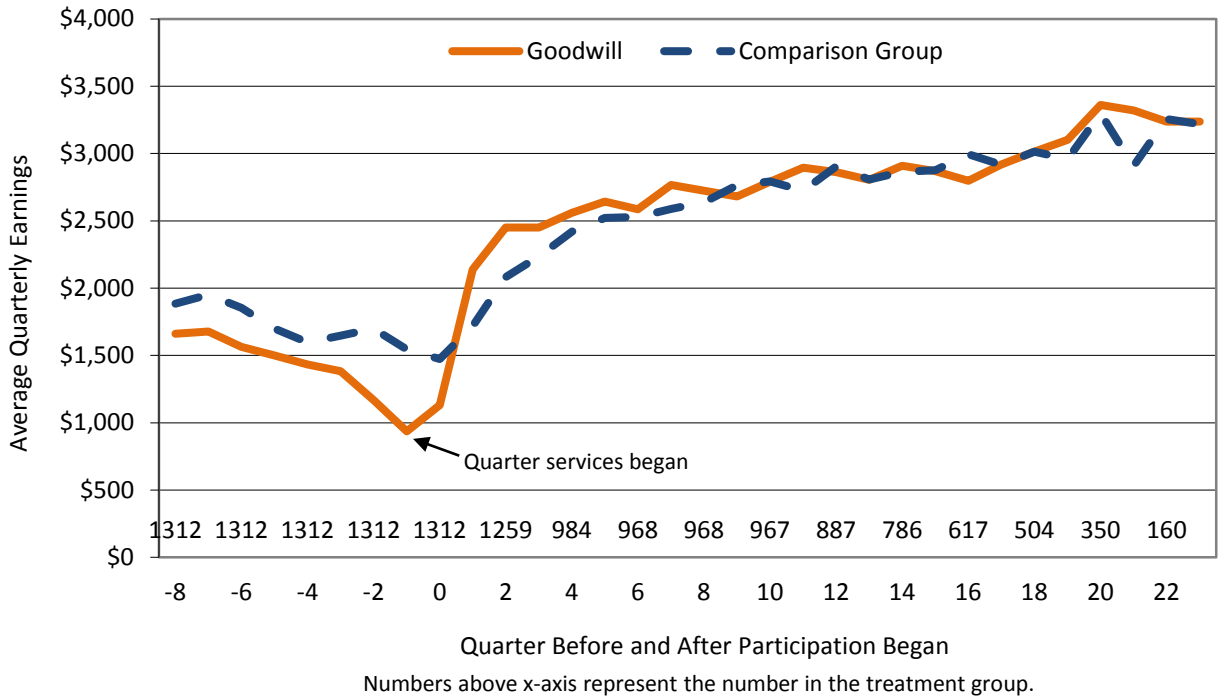
Goodwill’s focus on helping participants find employment during training is evident as the employment rate jumped markedly in the first and second quarters after starting services. Although employment rates declined slowly over the remaining quarters studied, they remained higher than those of the comparison group.

Analysis of unconditional earnings shows that Goodwill participants also experienced a significant increase in unconditional wages after starting the program, and wages remained level with or slightly higher than the comparison group.

**Figure 19: Quarterly Employment Rates Over Time, Goodwill Participants vs. Comparison Group**



**Figure 20. Unconditional Earnings Over Time, Goodwill Participants vs. Comparison Group**



Skillpoint Alliance is a regional workforce intermediary based in Austin, Texas. Skillpoint connects individuals, training providers, employers, and other community organizations together to meet identified workforce skills gaps.

Skillpoint offers short-term occupational skills training through its Gateway program.

From 2010 through 2014, Skillpoint Alliance received annualized ongoing funding of \$244,965 from Travis County for two programs: STEM/Youth College & Career and Gateway, supplemented by an additional \$150,000 for 2011 and 2012 for the Adult Workforce/Gateway. This supplement rose to \$244,965 in 2013 and 2014. The evaluation only examines the Gateway workforce training program.



For more information visit:  
[www.skillpointalliance.org](http://www.skillpointalliance.org)

## SKILLPOINT ALLIANCE

### WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT PROGRAMS AND SERVICES

The mission of Skillpoint Alliance's Gateway program is to get people employed in high-demand occupations at a livable wage through short-term training. Depending on the occupation targeted, full-day training may range from three to ten weeks. The curricula emphasize hands-on learning opportunities, with the program shifting more class time away from lectures towards active skill development in recent years.

In 2010, Skillpoint renewed its focus on employer engagement. Gateway program administrators recognized a need to better engage employers in a dialogue to understand their workforce needs and to give employers and industry groups a bigger role in shaping the Gateway training programs. The focus is to match training to the needs of employers so that individuals have the skills necessary to gain employment. Additionally, Skillpoint has strengthened its assessment process to screen for those truly interested in the occupational field.

In 2010, the Gateway program expanded from training in general construction only to three fields by adding electrical and allied health trainings to its menu. In 2011, Gateway added training opportunities in nurse aide and plumbing. 2012 saw HVAC and computer literacy added to the occupational options, followed by machinists in 2014. As the program has grown, Skillpoint Alliance has worked with its training providers to develop a core curriculum that serves as the first step in the training sequence for a number of career paths. For example, a 4-week construction core class is now the entry point for additional training in electrical work or plumbing. The new

emphasis on specialty skills is intended to better prepare participants for available employment opportunities.

Professional development/job readiness training became a more formal activity in the Gateway program in 2010. While participants have always developed resumes early in the training sequence, most employment services were offered after the occupational skills training ended. In the new structure, 12 hours of professional development and soft skills training is integrated with the occupational training coursework. Topics include targeted job search, interviewing, and conversational skills. Individual sessions with a workforce development specialist are still offered following training to target participants' specific employment needs.

Many of the Gateway training programs lead to industry-recognized credentials. For example, the construction training program leads to National Center for Construction Education and Research (NCCER) certifications and apprentice "Level 1" licenses. Originally, all training was provided through Austin Community College. In addition to regular contact with the Joint Apprenticeship Training Program of the International Brotherhood of Electrical Workers (IBEW), during the 2010 -2012 period, the Associated Builders and Contractors of Central Texas also served as a training provider for the Gateway Electrical training program. Since 2011, Gateway has expanded into other Central Texas counties, often through training partnerships with apprenticeship programs or unions.

#### **SUPPORT SERVICES**

In addition to covering the full cost of the training and professional development activities noted above, Skillpoint also provides substantial support services to help participants cope with the travel, equipment, and clothing requirements of the program. Services include bus passes, parking passes for the community college, tools, work clothes, shoes, and books. Child care assistance may be included on a case-by-case basis.

Skillpoint also connects Gateway participants with other resources in the community. For example, participants are referred to Workforce Solutions Career Centers for workshops on job search skills and other topics. Participants receiving SNAP or TANF benefits are also encouraged to take advantage of the resources available through those programs.



## **PARTICIPANT PROFILE**

Skillpoint has established different minimum entry-level skill requirements by occupational program. For example, in construction, participants must have at least a 7<sup>th</sup> grade skill level in reading and math. For the electric program, participants must have at least a 9<sup>th</sup> grade English skills level and a 10<sup>th</sup> grade math skill level. For allied health, participants must have 10<sup>th</sup> grade skills in both subjects. In 2011, the program began using the GAIN (Global Appraisal of Individual Needs) assessment to identify participants' strengths and weaknesses in reading and math to better target services.

Gateway administrators noted that the intake process has become more rigorous in recent years, with eligibility interviews focused on identifying candidates who are actually interested in working in the selected field rather than simply participating in training. Interviews are intended to help staff understand the applicant's motivation for training, the individual's attitude and "coach-ability." Staff noted that as the intake and assessment process has improved, so too have the employment numbers following training. Approximately one in five applicants are accepted into a Gateway training program; the number trained each year is driven by space limitations of the training partner, funding limitations, and eligibility.

Skillpoint targets low-income residents, at least half of whom are in a transitional state due to homelessness, recent jail release or unemployment, which often makes follow-up difficult.<sup>27</sup> For Gateway, 721 exiters were included in the analyses.<sup>28</sup> About one-third (34%) of participants were Hispanic, a quarter was Black (26%), and another quarter was White (25%). Approximately 63% were between 20 and 39 years old, with an average age of 34. Gender distribution is uncertain because it is unknown for 21% of the exiters. The other 79% is almost evenly split between males and females. Most had a high school education at program entry and 11% had attended or graduated from post-secondary schooling. Participants were more likely to come from south (21%) or east (20%) Austin, with a sizeable share coming

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<sup>27</sup> Conversation with Cat Newlands, Deputy Director, and Ben Holquist, Compliance and Evaluation Manager at Skillpoint, August 27, 2015.

<sup>28</sup> Sixty-five (65) records were removed from analyses due to missing Social Security numbers. One record was removed due to questionable earnings (over \$100,000 annually, both pre- and post-program participation).

from north Austin or the suburbs north of the city (27% together). Less than a quarter (22%) of the sample had a known criminal background. Demographic details are provided in Appendix A.

Nearly 40% of the exiters had attended the CNA program, 23% had attended the electrical program, and 15% were in construction, while the remaining were in bookkeeping/office administration, HVAC, plumbing or machine operation. About 21% of these exiters had also received services at another workforce training program included in this report. Skillpoint is a WERC partner.

### **PARTICIPANT OUTCOMES**

At the outset, it is important to note that the construction industry has significant shares of self-employed and independent contractors, some of whom are very likely misclassified – workers who would not appear in UI wage records.<sup>29</sup> Therefore, the outcomes presented here likely under-estimate actual outcomes for Gateway participants. Table 11 provides an overview of Gateway participant outcomes.

In the four quarters prior to entry, quarterly employment in a UI-covered job in Texas averaged 44% but varied widely among the exiting cohorts, from 31% for those who exited in 2010 up to 54% for those who exited in 2014. All cohorts exhibited stronger employment rates in the second quarter after leaving services, at an average employment rate of 64%, after which employment rates remained stable or dropped slightly. Across all post-service quarters, more than half (62%) of the Gateway program's participants were employed, an impressive 41% increase over pre-program employment rates. Figure 21 illustrates the quarterly employment outcomes for 2010 through 2014 Gateway program exiters.

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<sup>29</sup> The Austin-based Workers Defense Project has thoroughly documented the extensive practice of hourly worker misclassification as contract employees in the construction industry in Austin and elsewhere in Texas. See *Building Austin, Building Injustice* (Workers Defense Project,) 2009.

**Table 11. Skillpoint Alliance’s Gateway Program 2010-2014 Exiter Outcomes**

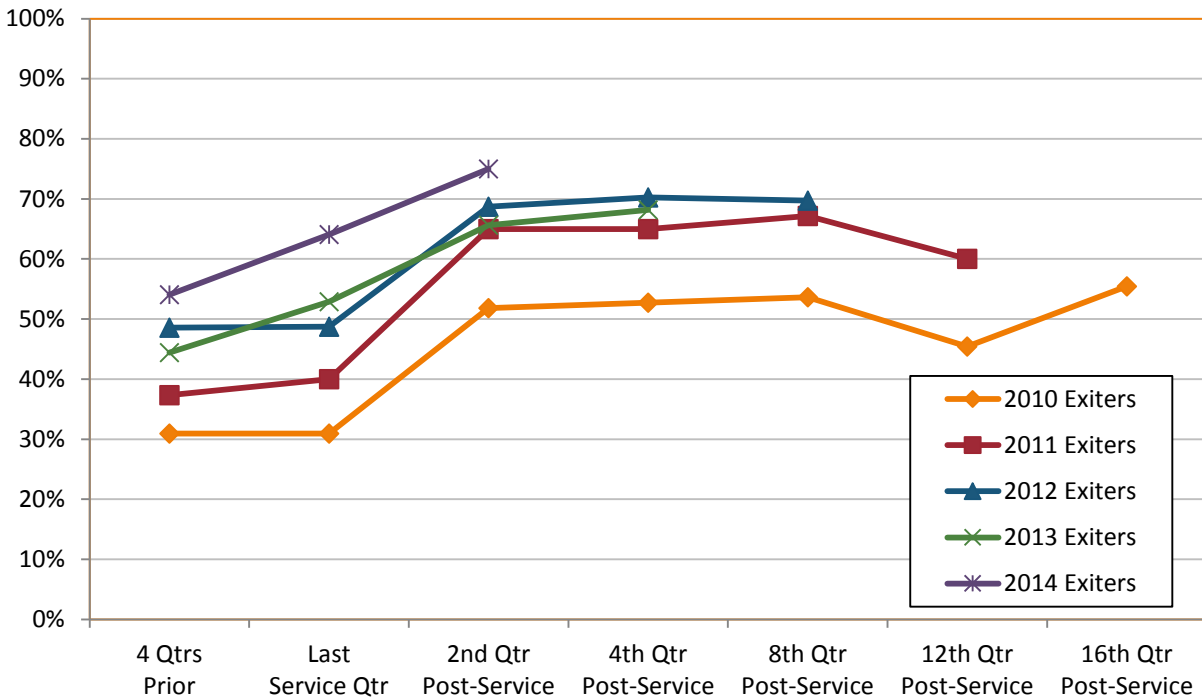
Cohort Outcome Measure	Four Qtrs Before Service	Last Qtr of Service	2nd Qtr Post-Service	4th Qtr Post-Service	8th Qtr Post-Service	12th Qtr Post-Service	16th Qtr Post-Service	All Post-Service Qtrs
N (across all cohorts):	719	719	622	602	445	250	110	
<b>Quarterly Employment:<sup>a</sup></b>								
2010	30.9%	30.9%	51.8%	52.7%	53.6%	45.5%	55.5%	51.7%
2011	37.3%	40.0%	65.0%	65.0%	67.1%	60.0%	.	63.0%
2012	48.6%	48.7%	68.7%	70.3%	69.7%	.	.	67.8%
2013	44.4%	52.9%	65.6%	68.2%	.	.	.	68.1%
2014	54.1%	64.1%	75.0%	.	.	.	.	77.3%
<b>Overall</b>	<b>43.7%</b>	<b>47.7%</b>	<b>64.3%</b>	<b>65.3%</b>	<b>64.9%</b>	<b>53.6%</b>	<b>55.5%</b>	<b>61.8%</b>
<b>Average Quarterly Earnings:</b>								
2010	\$3,522	\$1,771	\$3,525	\$4,086	\$4,979	\$5,518	\$5,962	\$4,902
2011	\$3,266	\$2,144	\$4,520	\$4,741	\$5,138	\$6,033	.	\$5,128
2012	\$4,066	\$2,976	\$4,571	\$4,767	\$5,169	.	.	\$4,937
2013	\$4,003	\$3,230	\$4,826	\$4,945	.	.	.	\$4,809
2014	\$3,652	\$2,348	.	.	.	.	.	\$3,884
<b>Overall</b>	<b>\$3,776</b>	<b>\$2,645</b>	<b>\$4,459</b>	<b>\$4,709</b>	<b>\$5,120</b>	<b>\$5,841</b>	<b>\$5,962</b>	<b>\$4,949</b>
<b>Qualified for UI Benefits:</b>								
2010	30.7%	.	.	42.7%	52.7%	42.7%	50.9%	47.4%
2011	32.9%	.	.	61.4%	62.1%	57.1%	.	60.6%
2012	46.8%	.	.	66.2%	64.6%	.	.	63.8%
2013	43.0%	.	.	65.0%	.	.	.	66.7%
2014	40.6%	.	.	.	.	.	.	.
<b>Overall</b>	<b>39.8%</b>	<b>.</b>	<b>.</b>	<b>60.5%</b>	<b>60.9%</b>	<b>50.8%</b>	<b>50.9%</b>	<b>56.2%</b>
<b>Filed UI Claim:</b>								
2010	3.9%	2.7%	0.9%	6.4%	0.9%	1.8%	0.9%	2.2%
2011	3.0%	5.7%	0.0%	2.1%	1.4%	0.0%	.	1.6%
2012	6.7%	2.1%	2.6%	5.1%	2.1%	.	.	2.5%
2013	3.8%	3.2%	3.2%	1.3%	.	.	.	2.5%
2014	2.4%	0.9%	5.0%	.	.	.	.	2.3%
<b>Overall</b>	<b>4.2%</b>	<b>2.9%</b>	<b>1.9%</b>	<b>3.7%</b>	<b>1.6%</b>	<b>0.8%</b>	<b>0.9%</b>	<b>2.1%</b>

Source: Skillpoint Alliance participant records and Texas Workforce Commission UI wage and claim records.

Note: A dot represents too few participants, no data to report, or insufficient time passing to report for the timeframe.

Participants were counted as employed if they were found in Texas UI wage records. Those who were not found may be unemployed, employed outside of Texas, or employed in Texas in a position that is not covered by UI and reported to TWC.

**Figure 21. Average Quarterly Employment of Skillpoint Alliance’s Gateway Program 2010-2014 Exitters<sup>a</sup>**



<sup>a</sup> Participants were counted as employed if they were found in Texas UI wage records. Those who were not found may be unemployed, employed outside of Texas, or employed in Texas in a position that is not covered by UI and reported to TWC.

As illustrated in Figure 22, earnings rose rapidly in the first two quarters after exiting Gateway for all cohorts. In the post-service period, most cohorts showed earnings gains, on average, in each quarter studied. Across all exiting cohorts, average earnings were 31% higher in post-service quarters than in pre-service quarters.

**Figure 22. Average Quarterly Earnings of Employed Skillpoint Alliance’s Gateway Program 2010-2014 Exiters**

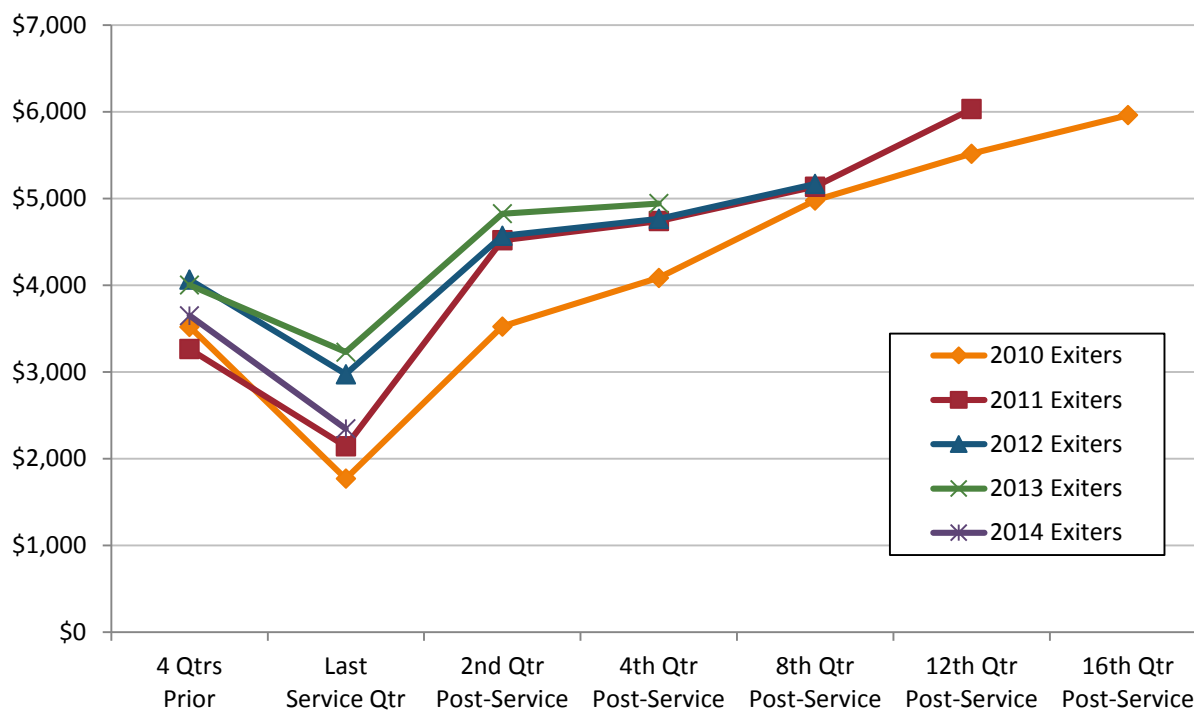


Table 11 also indicates that in the four quarters prior to entering Gateway roughly 40% of the program’s participants met the monetary eligibility requirements for UI benefits. The share of participants that met the monetary eligibility requirements increased in the one to two years after services, but dropped slightly in the third and fourth years after services (among those for whom data are available). Across all post-service quarters, 56% of Gateway’s 2010-2014 exiters met the monetary eligibility standard. Approximately 4% participants filed a UI benefit claim before entering training; only 2% filed a claim across all post-service quarters.

**PROGRAM IMPACTS**

Table 12 presents findings from the impacts analysis comparing the outcomes of the 2010-2014 cohorts of the Gateway program to the outcomes of a matched comparison group. Participation was positively associated with an increase in quarterly employment rates and a statistically significant decrease in the share that filed for UI benefits. Participation was also associated with statistically significant lower quarterly earnings of nearly \$400.

**Table 12. Impacts for Skillpoint Alliance’s Gateway Program 2010-2014 Exiters**

<b>Impact Measure</b>	<b>All Qtrs Post-Service: Comparison Group</b>	<b>All Qtrs Post-Service: Gateway Participant</b>	<b>Unadjusted Net Effect</b>	<b>Impact Measure</b>
<b>Quarterly Employment</b>	52.9%	63.4%	10.5%	1.6%
<b>Average Quarterly Earnings</b>	\$4,955	\$5,016	\$61	-\$393*
<b>Qualified for UI Benefits</b>	44.9%	58.5%	13.7%	-0.23%
<b>Filed UI Claim</b>	2.84%	2.18%	-0.66%	-0.95%*

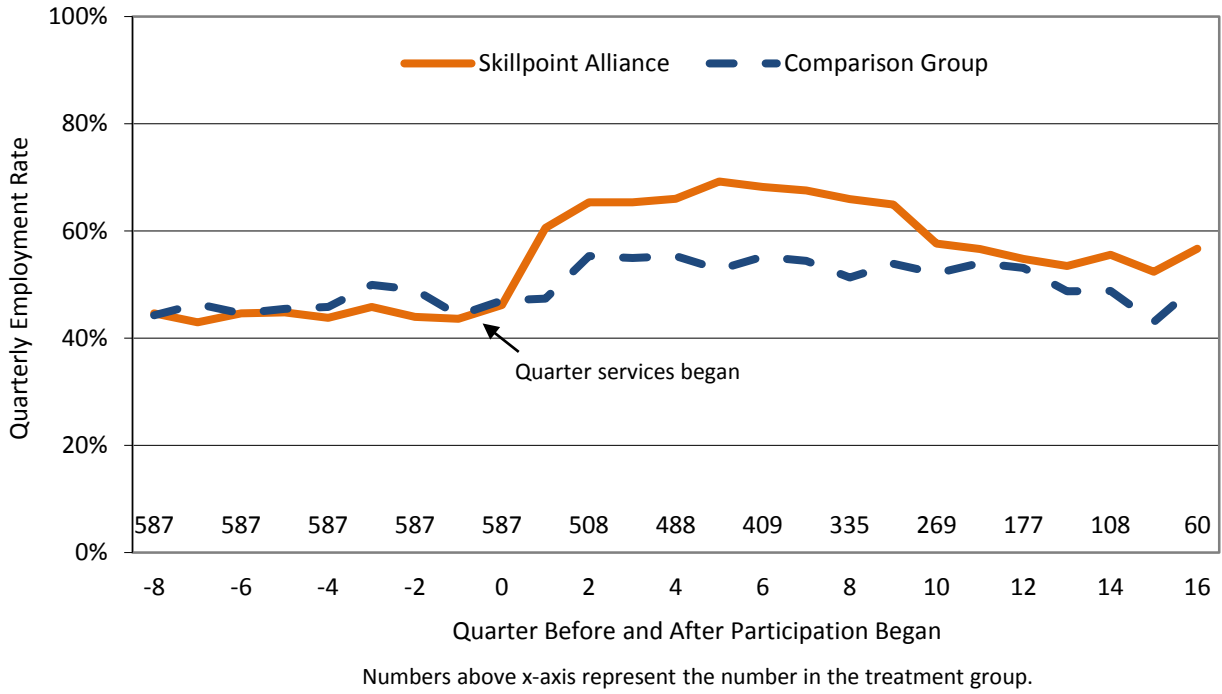
Note: \*=significant at p<.05

In Figure 23 and Figure 24, the impact of participation in the Gateway program is examined by looking at participants’ quarterly employment rates and earnings over time, regardless of employment status (i.e., unconditional earnings), in relation to those of the comparison group. These figures show data starting two years prior to beginning services (quarters -8 through -1), the quarter that services began (quarter 0), and continue for another 16 quarters (4 years) for some participants.

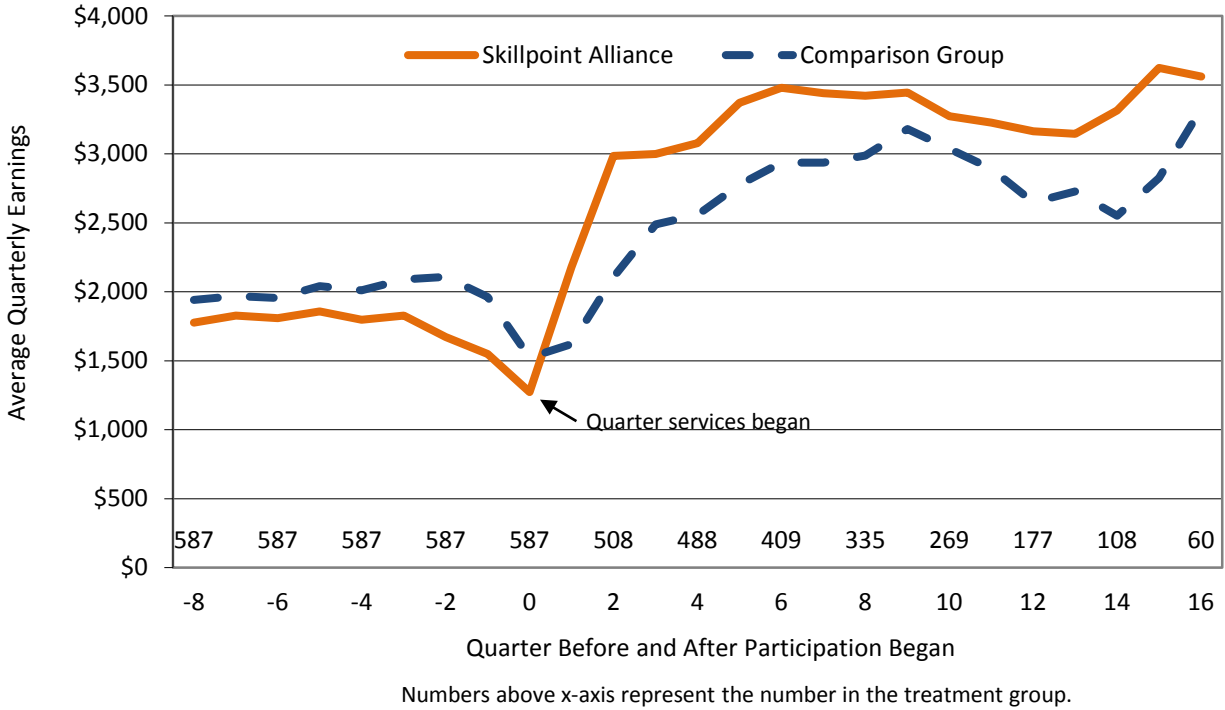
While the comparison group saw a modest increase in quarterly employment rates, participants in the Gateway program saw an increase of nearly 20 percentage points within two quarters of beginning services. Although employment rates declined slightly for participants during the 3rd and 4th years, they remained higher than those for the comparison group; once accounting for other factors however, this difference is not statistically significant.

Analysis of unconditional earnings shows that Gateway program participants also experienced a significant increases in unconditional wages after starting the program, and wages continued to grow, in general, through the 4th year after starting services.

**Figure 23: Quarterly Employment Rates Over Time, Skillpoint Alliance’s Gateway Program Participants vs. Comparison Group**



**Figure 24. Unconditional Earnings Over Time, Skillpoint Alliance’s Gateway Program Participants vs. Comparison Group**



Workforce Solutions – Capital Area is the local Workforce Investment Board for Travis County. It is one of 28 local boards in Texas. The board oversees federal and state employment and training programs. The Capital Area Board also raises funds through active grant and contract development efforts for targeted workforce development services.

Travis County funded the Rapid Employment Model (REM) project as a regular workforce services program in 2010-2012\* for \$244,275 annually; prior to that REM operated as a pilot demonstration project. Annual funding for 2013 and 2014 settled at \$400,157.

\*In October 2011, the County provided an additional \$125,000 for an enhanced REM model program in the Oct. 2011-Dec. 2012 period.



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## **WORKFORCE SOLUTIONS—CAPITAL AREA WORKFORCE BOARD**

### **WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT PROGRAMS AND SERVICES**

Workforce Solutions—Capital Area Workforce Board operates the Travis County-funded Rapid Employment Model (REM) program, which launched in 2006 as a pilot demonstration project then transitioned to regular workforce program operations in 2010. REM is embedded in the continuous workforce serves array available at the Workforce Solutions career centers and through its community partnerships. The program is funded exclusively by Travis County.

### **RAPID EMPLOYMENT MODEL**

The purpose of the REM program is to accelerate the time it takes for individuals to become reemployed with new skills and a marketable credential. Services are specifically targeted at disadvantaged County residents, in particular ex-offenders, welfare (TANF-Choices) and food stamp (SNAP) recipients, and those seeking financial assistance from the County. In-depth assessment, individual employment planning (IEP), intensive case management, and flexible service tracks leading to rapid employment at a decent wage are keynotes of REM.

REM services are determined by their appropriateness regarding the clients' needs, desired outcomes, and eligibility. The local program and funding complement other federal programs and foster more seamless systemic development within the workforce system. REM has a higher income threshold than WIA/WIOA, permitting services for a broader



client base. Given that WIA/WIOA funding and training provision are associated with tight performance standards, REM resources allow WIB to provide enhanced services for higher risk populations whose ability to fully benefit and meet performance expectations of WIA/WIOA is more questionable. As a result REM gives access to better services for those not always provided access to training services. Moreover, there is more demand/target-occupation flexibility in REM than WIA. For example, REM may train Certified Nurse Assistants (CNA) for which entry-level positions are available in the Healthcare sector, but whose starting wages are too low to qualify for WIA training dollars. Nonetheless, the average wage for REM completers in FY 2014 was \$15.02 per hour, well above the \$10 target set in the contract.<sup>30</sup>

All participants receive case management from one of the two specialists assigned to the program. Job-ready participants may steer directly into limited pre-employment services and job search or a work experience program for rapid placement. Others receive more intensive pre-employment, job search and placement services or such services plus short-term occupational training lasting less than six months.

Workforce Solutions contracts with a number of training providers to serve REM participants, which during the current analysis timeframe included the Ascend Center for Learning, Skillpoint Alliance's Gateway program, Continuing Education at Austin Community College, Express Training Services, Ventana Del Sol, and New Horizons, as well as referral to and from partners in the Workforce and Education Readiness Continuum initiated in 2012. Participants select from a number of occupations for which short-term training is available, including general construction, electric and plumbing; clerical, office work, computer training; line cook; certified nurse aide; and truck driving, as well as ESL, ABE and GED classes.

Assessment is essential to REM. In 2010, Workforce Solutions introduced a Job Preview Exercise to help participants think through the training program and next steps for obtaining a job. The Exercise focuses on barriers to employment, participant's needs and goals for employment, working conditions, and other factors related to target occupations. The Exercise also asks participants to develop a job search plan that includes identifying three potential job leads. The program specialist then uses the exercise as a framework for discussing training

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<sup>30</sup> Miranda, 2015, p.62

options and opportunities with each participant. The program specialists report that the Exercise has been helpful in keeping the focus on employment rather than training. The TABE test is given to those seeking short-term training services to assess their readiness level for the desired skills training. The enhanced REM program funded in October 2011 introduced “individualized, tailored case management services to clients.”<sup>31</sup> In FY2013, REM was assigned a funding code and data entered into TWIST, supporting richer data collection and better client tracking, as well as quicker access to UI wage data.

### **SUPPORT SERVICES**

In the early years, REM participants in occupational training received \$100 per week as an incentive for perfect attendance, as well as a \$50 bonus for reporting employment to their program specialist. In 2011, the incentive model changed. While participants could still earn \$100 per week for perfect attendance and participation in training activities, only \$50 of the incentive was paid directly to the participant each week. The remaining \$50 was held in reserve and paid to the participant when job placement information was verified by the program specialist. Employment must be for a minimum of 20 hours per week, training-related, and obtained within 12 weeks of training completion. Participants who continued to be employed for six months were eligible to earn an additional \$50 bonus. For the last three years the incentive or “stipend” has been set at \$25 per week for perfect attendance in training only; no longer are any payments held in reserve.<sup>32</sup>

REM participants are commonly referred to the program through another workforce training service at Workforce Solutions and are often co-enrolled. More than a quarter of participants in the 2010-2012 period were in Project RIO which served ex-offenders.<sup>33</sup> Workforce Solutions regularly conducts “in-reach” for REM at the County’s Del Valle Corrections Facility and seeks referrals from probation officers. Other referral sources for REM include TANF Choices and SNAP. Through co-enrollment, these programs primarily provide the

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<sup>31</sup> Lyman. (2013). P. 58.

<sup>32</sup> Conversation with Tamara Atkinson, Deputy Executive Director, and Yael Trevino, Manager, Workforce Development Contracts at Capital Area WIB on August 28, 2015.

<sup>33</sup> Authorization and appropriations for Project RIO ceased in November 2011 following action by the Texas Legislature.

wrap-around support services participants need to be successful in REM. Transportation assistance through the issuance of bus passes and gas cards is the prevailing support service. Emergency assistance (utility payments, auto repairs, etc.) and work related expenses, generally capped at \$200, are available on a case-by-case basis.

## **PARTICIPANT PROFILE**

Among the 545 REM exiters included in this report, <sup>34</sup> about two-thirds were male and nearly half were Black (41%) with Hispanic and White participants each making up about a quarter of the sample (27% and 24%, respectively). The average age was 38 years old and participants were most likely to live in east (27%) or south (23%) Austin. Half of the participants had a high school diploma or GED at program entry, and a sizeable share (37%) reported having attended or graduated from post-secondary schooling. Over a third of the sample had a criminal background. Demographic details are provided in Appendix A.

While the specific training program is not known for most of these participants, 23% had attended the truck driving/transportation program and another 6% had participated in the office/clerical program. About 21% of these participants had also received services at one of the other workforce training programs included in this report. Workforce Solutions is the grant recipient for the Workforce and Education Readiness Continuum.

## **PARTICIPANT OUTCOMES**

Although the specific training program for participants is not at this time part of the analyses, the agency reports that a significant share of REM participants were in training for construction trades or truck driving. It is therefore likely that the outcomes reported here undercount the actual employment levels reached by REM participants due to the UI coverage issue noted earlier. Table 13 below provides an overview of labor market outcomes of REM 2010-2014 exiters.

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<sup>34</sup> Thirteen (13) records were removed from analyses due to missing Social Security numbers one participant was removed due to questionable earnings (over \$100,000 annually, both pre- and post-program participation).

**Table 13. Workforce Solutions – REM Program 2010-2014 Exiter Outcomes**

Cohort Outcome Measure	Four Qtrs Before Service	Last Qtr of Service	2nd Qtr Post-Service	4th Qtr Post-Service	8th Qtr Post-Service	12th Qtr Post-Service	16th Qtr Post-Service	All Post-Service Qtrs
N (across all cohorts):	544	544	460	343	214	128	86	
<b>Quarterly Employment:<sup>a</sup></b>								
2010	29.1%	40.7%	53.5%	48.8%	38.4%	41.9%	43.0%	45.7%
2011	22.0%	23.8%	45.2%	52.4%	52.4%	42.9%	.	48.4%
2012	42.4%	60.5%	59.3%	66.3%	62.8%	.	.	63.0%
2013	44.8%	62.0%	67.4%	68.2%	.	.	.	65.9%
2014	58.2%	58.7%	64.1%	.	.	.	.	67.5%
<b>Overall</b>	45.1%	54.2%	60.4%	60.9%	50.9%	42.2%	43.0%	55.0%
<b>Average Qtrly Earnings:</b>								
2010	\$2,367	\$1,531	\$2,656	\$2,854	\$3,970	\$4,393	\$4,253	\$3,694
2011	\$2,536	.	.	\$3,136	\$3,989	.	.	\$4,572
2012	\$3,221	\$3,897	\$5,236	\$5,870	\$6,964	.	.	\$6,260
2013	\$4,866	\$4,927	\$6,967	\$7,486	.	.	.	\$7,140
2014	\$5,481	\$4,871	\$5,100	.	.	.	.	\$4,945
<b>Overall</b>	\$4,572	\$4,204	\$5,210	\$5,657	\$5,457	\$4,916	\$4,253	\$5,260
<b>Qualified for UI Benefits:</b>								
2010	26.5%	.	.	43.0%	36.1%	43.0%	37.2%	39.6%
2011	29.8%	.	.	40.5%	40.5%	42.9%	.	41.4%
2012	36.9%	.	.	53.5%	60.5%	.	.	60.9%
2013	45.7%	.	.	67.4%	.	.	.	63.1%
2014	50.3%	.	.	.	.	.	.	.
<b>Overall</b>	41.7%	.	.	54.5%	46.7%	43.0%	37.2%	45.0%
<b>Filed UI Claim:</b>								
2010	2.9%	2.3%	1.2%	4.7%	1.2%	0.0%	0.0%	1.9%
2011	4.2%	2.4%	0.0%	2.4%	2.4%	2.4%	.	1.4%
2012	6.7%	3.5%	1.2%	2.3%	4.7%	.	.	2.9%
2013	11.8%	3.1%	3.9%	3.9%	.	.	.	3.6%
2014	6.1%	5.5%	1.7%	.	.	.	.	1.4%
<b>Overall</b>	6.9%	3.9%	2.0%	3.5%	2.8%	0.8%	0.0%	2.3%

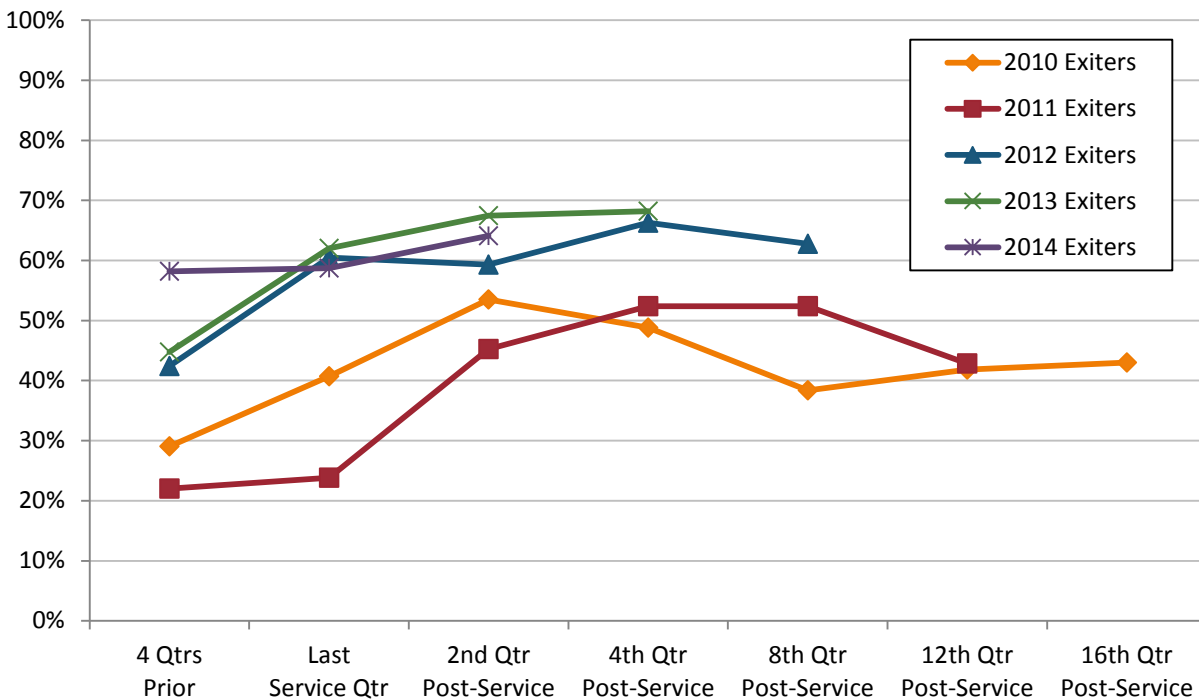
Source: REM participant records and Texas Workforce Commission UI wage and claim records.

Note: A dot represents too few participants, no data to report, or insufficient time passing to report for the timeframe.

<sup>a</sup> Participants were counted as employed if they were found in Texas UI wage records. Those who were not found may be unemployed, employed outside of Texas, or employed in Texas in a position that is not covered by UI and reported to TWC.

The quarterly employment trajectory of REM participants varied widely across annual groups, as illustrated in Figure 25. Employment in pre-service quarters ranged from 22% for the 2011 exiters to 58% for the 2014 exiters. For all five exiting cohorts, employment peaked in the second and fourth quarters, reaching about 60%, but the earlier cohorts continued to show lower employment rates than the later cohorts. Across all post-service quarters, approximately 55% of REM 2010-2014 exiters were employed.

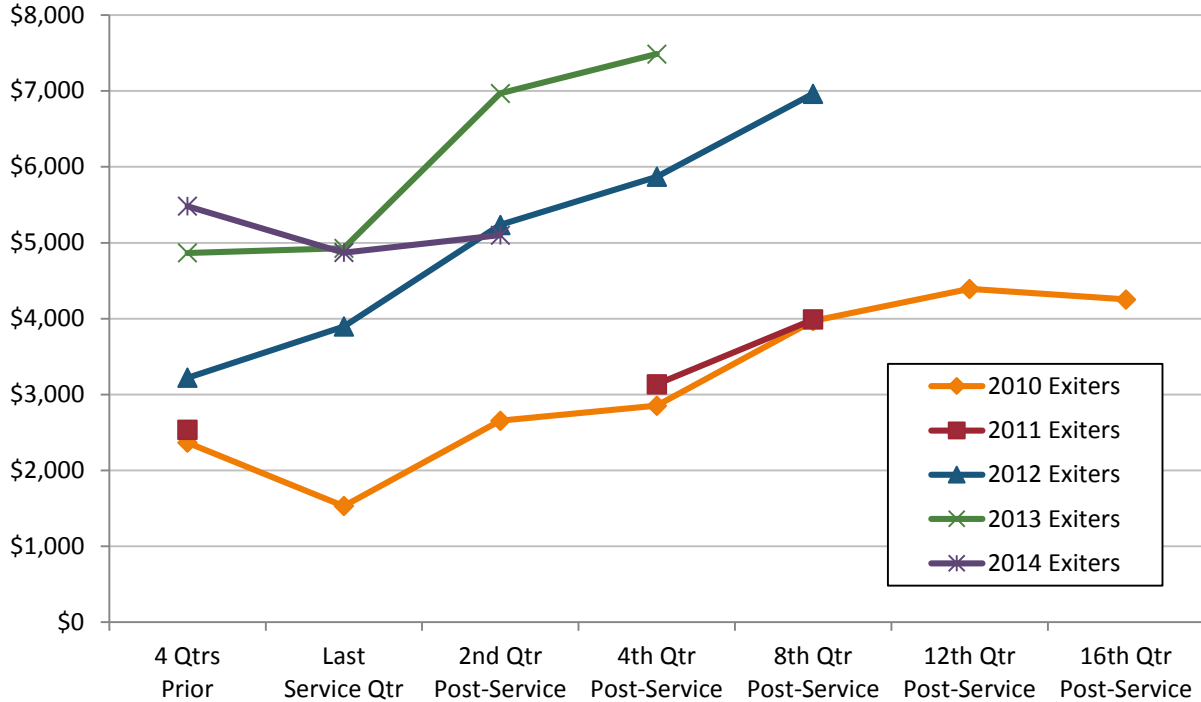
**Figure 25. Average Quarterly Employment of REM Program 2010-2014 Exiters<sup>a</sup>**



Participants were counted as employed if they were found in Texas UI wage records. Those who were not found may be unemployed, employed outside of Texas, or employed in Texas in a position that is not reported to TWC.

Figure 26 illustrates that the average quarterly earnings of employed REM participants varied widely by annual cohort. As with employment rates, the later cohorts experienced higher income prior to entering the program; the 2014 exiting cohort had pre-service earnings that averaged double those of the 2010 exiting cohort. Most cohorts (the 2014 exiters being the exception) have shown increases in wages across time, reaching an average of \$5,260 across all quarters, which is a 15% increase over pre-service earnings.

**Figure 26. Average Quarterly Earnings of Employed REM Program 2010-2014 Exitters**



The share of participants who met monetary eligibility requirements for UI benefits also varies significantly by cohort. Overall, almost 42% of participants were qualified based on their employment histories in the pre-service period. Across all post-service quarters, that share rose only slightly to 45%. The overall share filing a claim for UI benefits dropped from an average 7% in the four quarters prior to entering REM to just about 2% per quarter on average in the post-service period.

**PROGRAM IMPACTS**

Table 14 presents findings from the impacts analysis comparing the outcomes of the 2010-2014 cohorts of the REM program to the outcomes of a matched comparison group. Participation was positively associated quarterly employment and the statistically significant 1.5 percentage point decrease in the share that filed for UI benefits. Again, the analysis indicates a large negative gap in quarterly earnings and a small difference in those that qualified for UI benefits. For a discussion of the limitations of the impact analyses, see the Program Impacts section.

**Table 14. Impacts for Workforce Solutions - REM 2010-2014 Exiters**

<b>Impact Measure</b>	<b>All Qtrs Post-Service: Comparison Group</b>	<b>All Qtrs Post-Service: REM Participant</b>	<b>Unadjusted Net Effect</b>	<b>Impact Measure</b>
<b>Quarterly Employment</b>	46.8%	57.2%	10.3%	2.8%
<b>Average Quarterly Earnings</b>	\$5,311	\$5,491	\$180	-\$360
<b>Qualified for UI Benefits</b>	40.5%	45.9%	5.4%	-1.03%
<b>Filed UI Claim</b>	3.85%	2.31%	-1.54%	-1.54%*

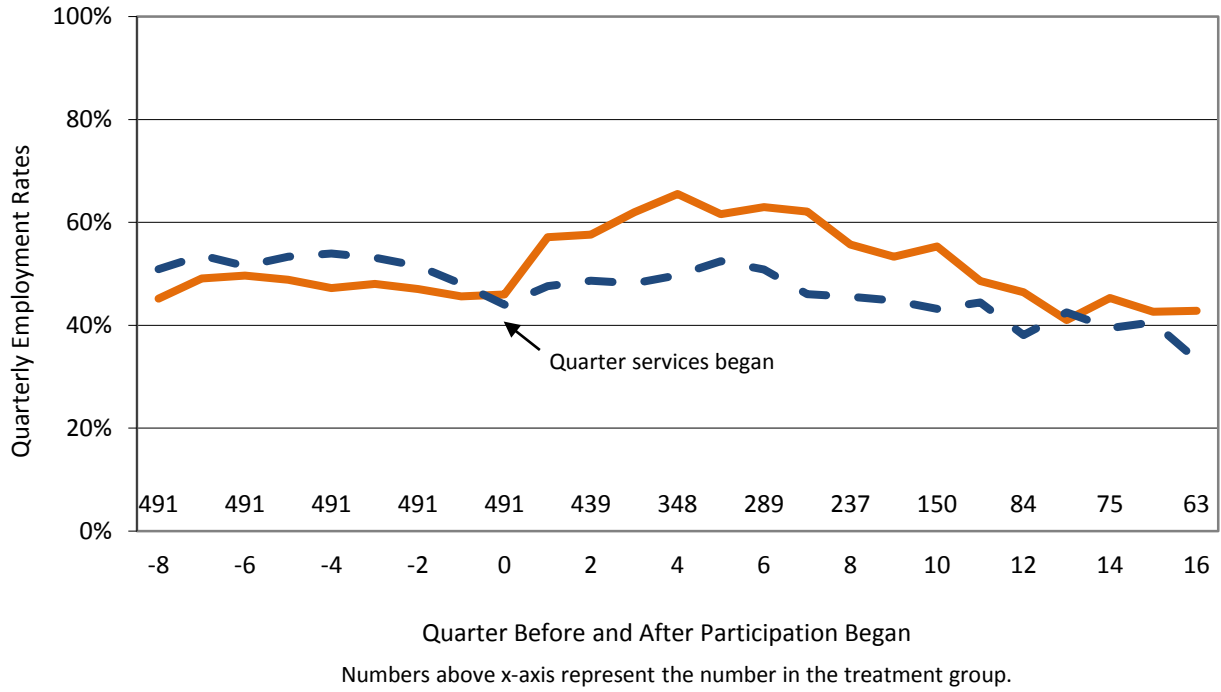
Note: \*=significant at p<.05

In Figure 27 and Figure 28, the impact of participation in REM is examined by looking at participants' quarterly employment rates and earnings over time, regardless of employment status (i.e., unconditional earnings), in relation to those of the comparison group. These figures show data starting two years prior to beginning services (quarters -8 through -1), the quarter that services began (quarter 0), and continuing for another 16 quarters (4 years) for some participants.

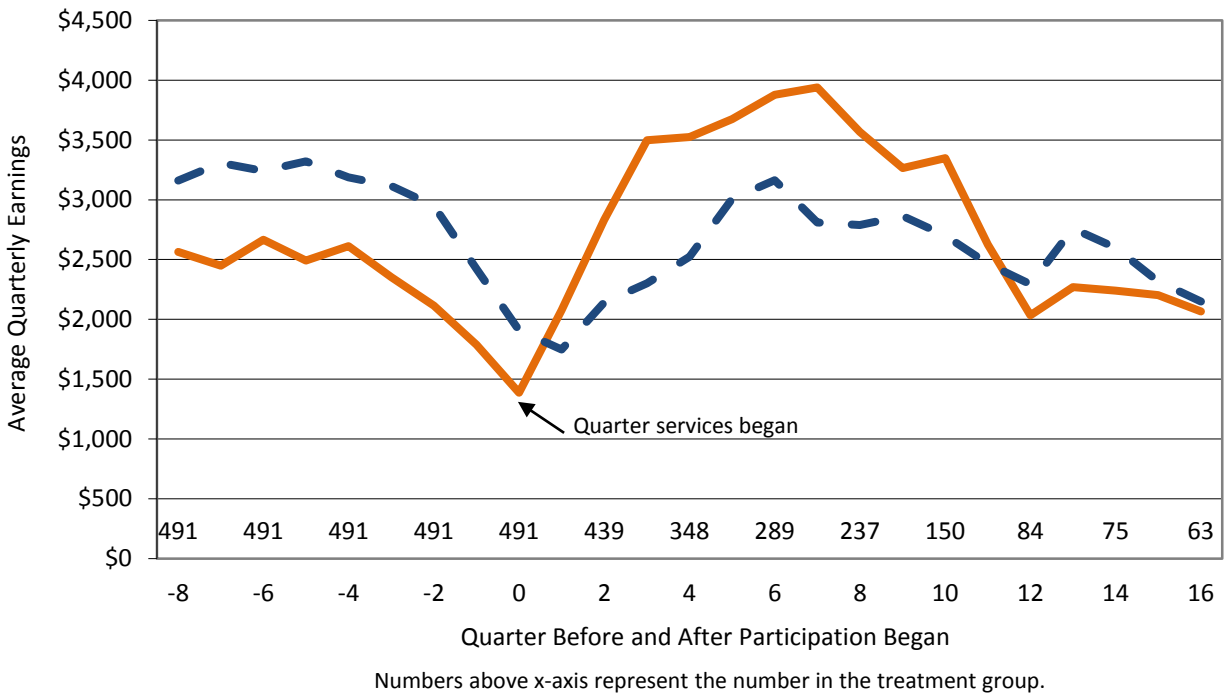
Results show that employment rate of participants increased in the first year after starting services, but their employment rates then dropped to levels similar to before services and approximately even with those of the comparison group.

Unconditional earnings mirror the patterns of the employment rate, increasing in the first year and a half and declining thereafter.

**Figure 27: Quarterly Employment Rates Over Time, Workforce Solutions - REM Participants vs. Comparison Group**



**Figure 28. Unconditional Earnings Over Time, Workforce Solutions - REM Participants vs. Comparison Group**





## **RESULTS AND NEXT STEPS**

Travis County, Texas, invests local tax dollars in a continuum of services to improve opportunities for disadvantaged residents to enhance their labor market viability. Through contracts with a mix of workforce development providers and programs, the County supports education and workforce opportunities that include, among other services, increasingly contextualized adult basic education at the Ascend Center for Learning and service learning at American Youth Works; short-term skills training and job readiness at REM, Goodwill, Skillpoint, or Austin Area Urban League enabling immediate entry-level job placement; and longer-term occupational training at Capital IDEA, mostly leading to an associate degree that provides a giant step along a high-wage career pathway. Each provider has established one or more target populations for its services, and Travis County funds serve individuals facing considerable obstacles to employment, such as low academic attainment, homelessness, and ex-offender backgrounds, among others. All providers generally serve persons earning less than 200% of Federal Poverty Income Guidelines. In addition to the key focus, intensity and duration of the services regime, the program participant pools vary by race, ethnicity, gender, education, and age. For example, the average overall age of exiters at American Youth Works is 20 years compared to 41 years in Goodwill's Ready-to-Work program; Goodwill serves nearly two-thirds males, while Ascend serves a little less than two-thirds females; and Austin Area Urban League serves nearly 70% Blacks, whereas American Youth Works serves 12% Blacks.

### **OUTCOMES**

Although the variety of features, services and populations renders cross-provider comparisons inappropriate, each of the providers has attained positive, yet notably varied achievements in almost every year and overall for the five years combined (2010-2014) in the four employment-related outcome measures analyzed.

At around 75% quarterly employment for each annual cohort and overall for all post-service quarters, Capital IDEA leads among the provider spectrum for this measure. Understandably, given the challenges of youth labor market opportunities, American Youth Works at 50% or below, exhibits the least share of exiters employed in post-service quarters overall. Nevertheless, and not surprisingly given the weak labor force attachment of many

school-age youth in prior quarters (21%), the quarterly employment rate at American Youth Works for all post-service quarters increased nearly 30%, by far the largest pre-post gain among all providers. By comparison, Capital IDEA, which targets the *working poor*, had the highest rate of quarterly employment for the four quarters prior to service entry at around 66%, and registered a 9% gain in all post-service quarters. Ascend and Austin Area Urban League, at about 8% each, had similar gains overall between the pre- and post-service quarters overall. The pre- post- quarterly employment gain stood at about 10% for Workforce Solutions REM and 18% for Skillpoint and Goodwill.

The earnings outcomes associated with the increased employment also varied across providers. Although positive overall, the earnings gains for participants from Austin Area Urban League (\$860), Ascend (\$426), and Workforce Solutions (\$688) were low. Skillpoint (\$1,173), Goodwill (\$1,662), and American YouthWorks (\$1,353) registered intermediate gains. As in all previous analyses, participants of Capital IDEA, the long-term, career path training provider in the evaluation, showed strong earnings gains in the post-service period.<sup>35 36</sup> Across all cohorts from 2010 through 2014, average quarterly earnings for Capital IDEA participants were up \$3,000 from the average pre-service earnings, an increase of about 65 percent. Although earnings have improved, with overall quarterly reported income ranging between \$3,625 and \$5,260 for the shorter-term programs, average annualized incomes of \$14,500 to \$21,400 leave most individual participants only slightly above poverty and well below the Austin per capita income of \$31,387 in 2014.<sup>37</sup> Only Capital IDEA at earnings of \$7,670, annualized at \$30,680, for employed exiters across all post service quarters, exhibits capacity to produce a sustainable living wage for a household of one or two adults in the Austin-Round Rock-San Marcos MSA.<sup>38</sup>

Participation in any skills building appears to be associated with increased employment stability, as evidenced by higher shares of participants in all of the programs meeting the monetary eligibility requirements for UI benefits in the post-service period. UI qualifying rates

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<sup>35</sup> See Smith, et al., various years.

<sup>36</sup> The concept of career pathways supported by training for demand occupations and stackable credentials has begun to pervade workforce development policy and practices in Central Texas, as elsewhere in the nation.

<sup>37</sup> Per capita income reported in June 2014 at <http://www.bestplaces.net/economy/city/texas/austin>.

<sup>38</sup> See the Center for Public Policy Priorities budget calculator at <http://www.familybudgets.org/>.

range for all post-service quarters range from 40% at Ascend to 75% at Capital IDEA. American YouthWorks, where very few participants (13%) qualified for UI in the four quarters prior to service, exhibits the largest gain in this measure (30%); Workforce Solutions (3%) and Ascend (6%) registered much smaller gains. Skillpoint (16%), Capital IDEA (14%) and Goodwill (17%) also increased their respective post-program shares of UI qualifiers.

Few participants from any program submitted a claim for UI benefits in the quarters examined and overall UI claims across all years dropped from the pre-enrollment period for every provider except American YouthWorks, where claim filings were miniscule in both pre- and post- periods (0.3% and 0.8%, respectively). Claims by Workforce Solutions (2.3%) dropped by nearly two-thirds and were cut in half among Capital IDEA (2.1%) and Skillpoint (2.1%) participants. Goodwill (3.1%) exiters maintained the tightest pre-/post gap at 0.4%.

## **IMPACTS**

The quasi-experimental analysis compares the outcomes of participants to those of a matched comparison group to assess the value-added of participation in a Travis County-funded workforce development program.<sup>39</sup> The analysis reveals mixed results, indicating that participation is associated with:

- Positive and statistically significant quarterly employment impacts for Capital IDEA (3.2%);
- Positive, but not statistically significant quarterly employment impacts for Workforce Solutions (2.8%), Skillpoint (1.6%), and Goodwill (1.0%);<sup>40</sup>
- Negative impacts on quarterly employment for Ascend (-1.8%), Austin Area Urban League (-0.7%), and American YouthWorks (-1.1%), none of which are statistically significant;
- Positive and statistically significant impacts for Capital IDEA (\$1,362) on average quarterly earnings and positive, but not statistically significant impacts for American YouthWorks (\$29);
- Negative and statistically significant impacts on quarterly earnings for Goodwill (-

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<sup>39</sup> Despite a large degree of positive outcomes and unadjusted net effects, these results are descriptive in nature and do not control for differences between program participants and the comparison group. Propensity score matching is used to account for differences in observable characteristics between the program participants and the comparison group. This method allows us to attribute impacts to program participation.

<sup>40</sup> All those with positive impacts have strong employer and industry sector connections, as well as professional employment specialists.

\$257), Austin Area Urban League (-\$164), Skillpoint (-\$393) and Ascend (-\$825). Workforce Solutions (-\$360) also reveals a negative, but not statistically significant impact on this measure;

- No impacts on qualification for UI benefits for any provider; and
- Positive impacts regarding reductions in Unemployment Insurance claims at Capital IDEA (-3.1%), Workforce Solutions (-1.5%), Goodwill (-1.7%), Austin Area Urban League (-1.3%), Skillpoint (-1.0%), and American YouthWorks (-0.8%), all of which are statistically significant. Ascend (-0.5%) also reveals negative, but not statistically significant impacts on this measure.

The impact analysis is based on exiters and employment effects may be stunted if a notable number of individuals exit a program funded by Travis County then initiate or continue participation with another education or training program and delay labor market entry. This is a distinct possibility, given the regional progress with its comprehensive services model, at best represented by the eleven-agency Workforce Education and Readiness Continuum (WERC). All providers supported by Travis County, except Capital IDEA, are also part of WERC.<sup>41</sup> A preliminary analysis indicates that participation in more than one program is notable among five of the six partners dually funded by the City of Austin's WERC and Travis County: Austin Area Urban League, Skillpoint, and Workforce Solutions (21%); Goodwill (18%), and Ascend (11%), indicating the need for further research in this area.

Alternatively, Capital IDEA, whose outcomes and impacts results are impressive, provides *in-program*, comprehensive services that exit directly to employment in a high-wage, high-demand occupation.<sup>42</sup> Recall also that many of these participants in shorter-term services, start from a very weak status regarding labor market viability, given their very low academic attainment (as low as 3rd grade equivalency in Ascend for example), lack of experience and marketable occupational skills, and significant barriers to employment, including homelessness, disabilities, and incarceration records, as well as pervasive transportation and family/household challenges. Travis County funding creates tangible opportunities for its marginal and most vulnerable residents.

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<sup>41</sup> WERC has been supported by grants from the City of Austin and began operations in FY 2012.

<sup>42</sup> Although a few of the program's participants may be co-enrolled with WIA or WIOA at Workforce Solutions during their last year of training, they are not part of WERC and exit only from Capital IDEA among the programs supported by Travis County.

## **NEXT STEPS**

The 2016 update will assess outcomes and impacts through December 2015. Both providers and programs are in transition for all or part of that year. For example, Ascend merged within the Literacy Coalition of Central Texas in January 2015 and has been infused with additional workforce emphasis, including stronger focus on job readiness, credentials, and career pathways. Also, in the Fall 2015, Capital IDEA partnered with Austin Community College (ACC) to introduce the IT Career Expressway. The program is a joint effort to accelerate occupational qualifications through stackable, marketable certificates within high-demand occupational degree programs, while providing income and experience through paid internships at \$11 per hour for 20 hours per week. The internships are funded by ACC and braided work-study funds. Additionally, for FY 2016 (October 1, 2015-September 30, 2016) Travis County funded its own subset of WERC, comprising Workforce Solutions, Austin Area Urban League, American Youth works, and Goodwill Industries of Central Texas. The County bundled prior contract funds of the four partners in WERC-TC into a single \$630,315 grant administered by Workforce Solutions-Capital Area, further supporting the comprehensive services model. This again increases the capacity and breadth of workforce services available to residents in need of assistance. Target numbers served will be about the same as in prior years, with braided funding. The key feature is more funding earmarked (but flexibly so) for expanded paid internship and work experience placements. The increase in combined services is expected to improve outcomes in the near- and longer-term. Moreover, for 2016, these City and County WERC funds will be used as the local match for drawing down Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program Employment and Training (SNAP E&T) funds as SNAP 50/50 program federal dollars up to \$0.5 million approved by TWC which will strengthen and increase services for REM/WERC participants.

These significant new program developments will likely only marginally affect the pool of exiters for the next update since the WERC-TC, IT Expressway, and the SNAP 50/50 program are just being ramped up in the last quarter of the calendar year. What must be recognized is that FY 2016 bears significant changes in programs and services.

As such, the Ray Marshall Center and Travis County agree that the annual evaluation updates as presently produced will change after the next report on program outcomes and impacts through December 2015. Researchers will meet with the Director of the Research & Planning Division and staff at Travis County HHS &VS to probe methods for potential “value add-ons” for the next report and transition to the new series beginning the following year. There are several approaches being considered to enhance the evaluation next year and beyond, including analyses of the bottom 10% earners going into the program and results for key target populations (e.g., at-risk/homeless, justice-involved/ex-offenders, persons with disabilities, age groups, race/ethnicity, etc.).

The transition to a new workforce investment evaluation series requires several decisions by Travis County and Ray Marshall Center staff. For starters, the researchers suggest switching to a fiscal year approach rather than the current calendar year to align with the change to fiscal year funding for workforce providers that occurred on October 1, 2014. The emergence of WERC-TC combines four providers and programs under a single set of performance measures. As such, an agreement must be reached regarding any continuation of stand-alone analysis as is presently done, for any or all of these partners.

In addition, several providers are presently introducing new systems for program and performance management, and researchers will revisit data elements requested from providers in pursuit of options for enriching analysis and improving treatment/comparison group matching, including data regarding ex-offender or “judicially involved individuals”, disability status, education attainment, household composition/dependents, and others. Researchers can “mine” similar variables from TWIST or WIT specifically for matching purposes. Additionally, researchers will become familiar with the Community TechKnowledge (CTK) database administered by Goodwill for WERC, and the Apricot version of CTK adopted by Capital IDEA, and any other database introduced by WERC-TC or other grantees.

Lastly, as the new series emerges, the Ray Marshall Center intends to give additional attention to service delivery processes to better explain outcomes and impacts, as well as to provide a basis for recommendations regarding policies and practices regarding populations, programs, and services supported by Travis County funds. Research capacity is bounded

somewhat by funding availability. The Ray Marshall Center will continue to work with the County and its grantees in pursuit of evidence-based approaches to deliver better livelihood prospects for its low-income residents.

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## APPENDIX A. DEMOGRAPHIC DETAILS

Demographic data is provided by each agency. In order to reduce the amount of unknown and missing data, demographic data provided by the agencies is compared to demographic information found in data provided by the Texas Workforce Commission (TWC). If information is missing in the provider data file and found in TWC data, TWC information is used.

**Table A-1. Demographics of 2010-2014 Program Exiters**

	American YouthWorks	Ascend Center for Learning	Austin Area Urban League	Capital IDEA	Goodwill	Skillpoint - Gateway	Workforce Solutions - REM
<b>Number of Participants</b>							
Number of records removed due to no SSN	56	3	5	0	758	65	13
Number of records removed due to questionable SSN	0	0	5	0	0	1	1
<b>Number of unduplicated participants included in analyses</b>	<b>647</b>	<b>561</b>	<b>1,773</b>	<b>759</b>	<b>1,221</b>	<b>721</b>	<b>545</b>
<b>Gender</b>							
Male	54.6%	35.8%	50.4%	18.7%	66.0%	37.9%	66.4%
Female	45.4%	63.8%	49.6%	47.0%	34.0%	40.9%	28.6%
Unknown	0.0%	0.4%	0.0%	34.3%	0.0%	21.2%	5.0%
<b>Race/Ethnicity</b>							
White	41.4%	25.9%	10.2%	16.7%	30.2%	25.2%	23.9%
Black	11.9%	25.0%	69.4%	23.9%	32.1%	26.1%	41.1%
Hispanic	40.7%	42.8%	17.4%	12.8%	21.3%	33.8%	26.6%
Other	5.4%	3.4%	3.0%	26.4%	2.5%	5.1%	5.3%
Missing	0.6%	3.0%	0.0%	20.3%	13.9%	9.7%	3.1%
<b>Age</b>							
14-19 years	45.9%	10.0%	7.6%	7.1%	1.3%	6.4%	0.6%
20-29 years	51.9%	38.5%	28.1%	36.4%	18.1%	34.8%	16.9%
30-39 years	0.5%	25.7%	22.1%	23.9%	26.4%	27.9%	27.0%
40-49 years	0.0%	11.9%	20.7%	9.2%	28.7%	18.3%	21.3%
50-59 years	0.0%	10.2%	16.8%	3.0%	20.8%	9.7%	9.7%
60 years and older	0.0%	2.5%	4.1%	0.3%	4.1%	1.4%	2.0%
Unknown	1.7%	1.3%	0.6%	20.2%	0.7%	1.5%	22.6%
Average age	20	33	37	30	41	34	38

**Table A-1. Demographics of 2010-2014 Program Exiters, continued**

	American YouthWorks	Ascend Center for Learning	Austin Area Urban League	Capital IDEA	Goodwill	Skillpoint - Gateway	Workforce Solutions - REM
<b>Education at Program Entry</b>							
Less than 12th grade	56.9%	38.2%	4.7%	3.6%	9.3%	13.0%	9.2%
12th grade or GED	33.4%	17.8%	31.0%	46.4%	27.7%	70.9%	49.9%
Attended or graduated postsecondary education	7.6%	5.4%	13.1%	27.9%	17.9%	11.4%	36.5%
Unknown	2.2%	38.7%	51.2%	22.1%	45.1%	4.7%	4.4%
<b>Area of Residence</b>							
Central Austin	5.6%	5.5%	5.4%	1.5%	17.9%	3.1%	2.6%
North Austin	9.1%	14.8%	32.2%	17.8%	13.5%	14.3%	17.8%
Northern suburbs	1.2%	3.6%	10.2%	4.9%	3.8%	12.5%	7.0%
East Austin	28.9%	37.4%	32.3%	10.7%	32.5%	19.7%	26.8%
Eastern suburbs	3.1%	6.2%	4.4%	3.6%	7.9%	9.4%	9.2%
South Austin	38.2%	20.7%	7.9%	11.2%	14.9%	21.1%	23.3%
Southern suburbs	2.2%	1.4%	1.2%	0.0%	2.2%	6.1%	0.9%
West Austin	2.0%	2.3%	3.5%	3.0%	1.7%	2.8%	4.6%
Western suburbs	0.8%	0.5%	0.7%	0.4%	1.1%	2.6%	1.5%
Other and Unknown	9.0%	7.5%	2.3%	47.0%	4.5%	8.5%	6.4%
<b>Offender Status</b>							
Yes	6.0%	16.0%	12.6%	10.7%	63.9%	22.3%	37.1%
No	5.1%	27.8%	61.6%	63.2%	36.1%	63.9%	28.6%
Unknown	88.9%	56.2%	25.8%	26.1%	0.0%	13.7%	34.3%
<b>Receives Public Benefits</b>							
Yes	0.0%	23.7%	1.5%	38.7%	10.7%	4.9%	18.7%
No	0.0%	19.3%	2.4%	61.3%	18.4%	0.0%	0.0%
Unknown	100.0%	57.0%	96.1%	0.0%	70.8%	95.2%	81.3%

## APPENDIX B. QUASI-EXPERIMENTAL IMPACTS ANALYSIS

In an attempt to measure the impacts of locally-funded workforce services, researchers conducted a quasi-experimental analysis comparing labor market outcomes for workforce participants with those of a comparison group of similar non-participants. Quasi-experimental analysis has been shown to produce impact estimates comparable to those resulting from more rigorous and costly approaches involving the use of experimental designs that randomly assign individuals to treatment and control status.<sup>43</sup> In fact, for some groups, quasi-experimental estimates tend to understate employment and earnings impacts from workforce services. For these reasons, results presented in this report should be considered conservative estimates of the true impacts.

Quasi-experimental approaches tend to work well when participants for whom comparison groups are being created have sufficient prior employment and earnings histories and when data are available on a sufficient number of variables with which to perform the requisite match. Youth and ex-offenders are problematical in this regard precisely because their prior employment and earnings histories are either lacking or difficult to determine.

Potential comparison group members were drawn from two sources: individuals who either registered to look for employment using the state's *WorkinTexas* (WIT) program or who received "core" services under the Workforce Investment Act or WIA (such as job-matching or resume development). Thus, the comparison group selected as described below is not a "no-services," but rather a "low-intensity services" group. The resulting impact estimates thus reflect the incremental value of the community's investments in workforce services. For providers that are primarily providing job search assistance and short-term training services (e.g., Austin Academy, Austin Area Urban League, Gateway, Goodwill), impact estimates are likely to be biased downward even more so than expected, in that comparison group members may have received similar services. For providers like Capital IDEA that are providing longer-term, intensive skill investments, the estimated impacts will be conservative estimates of the incremental value of local workforce investments over and above low-intensity services already

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<sup>43</sup> For example, see Greenberg et al. (2006); Hollenbeck and Huang (2006); and Card et al. (2009).

available through *WorkinTexas* or WIA “core” services provided through Workforce Solutions Career Centers.

Workforce services participants were matched on a one-to-one basis with potential comparison group members using a method known as propensity score matching. Matching was done by selecting for each participant the one comparison group member judged most similar. Matching was done without replacement, with a caliper of 0.1 to remove the least similar matches.

Researchers were able to access matching variables for most participants in locally-funded workforce services. Exact matches carried out included: county of residence; year of entry into the program; and whether or not individuals had recently experienced an earnings dip of 20% or more. Distance matches were also carried out on up to 11 variables by treating them as numeric and including them in the overall multivariate distance measurement. These variables included: age (for those participants with a recorded birth date); gender; race/ethnicity (White, Black, Hispanic); time since first earnings; employed at entry; percent of time employed over four years prior to program entry; average quarterly earnings over four years prior to program entry; percent of time in any workforce development service in the year immediately prior to program entry (matched according to service intensity: high for training programs, and low for job placement services); prior participation in any WIT service; any prior participation in Project RIO; any UI claims filed in the year prior to program entry; any UI benefits received in the year prior to program entry; and whether the individual’s earnings history qualified for UI if he/she were to lose a job. For those experiencing a recent earnings dip, the time since the earnings dip and the percent of earnings represented by the dip were also included in the matching process.

The adequacy of each comparison group for the quasi-experimental impacts analysis was judged by performing t-tests. These tests compared treatment and comparison groups on the same dimensions. If the groups were statistically different at  $p < .01$  on two or more dimensions, the comparison was considered inadequate. All programs met the criteria set forth. Table A-2 provides the results of these tests.

**Table A-2. Summary of Differences between Treatment and Selected Comparison Groups, by Provider**

	Austin Area Urban League	American Youth Works	Ascend Center for Learning	Capital IDEA	Skillpoint - Gateway	Goodwill	Workforce Solutions - REM
Age							
Average earnings, 4 years prior							
Maximum earnings dip in prior 2 years, percent							
Employed at entry							
White							
Black							
Hispanic							
Race unknown		**		**			**
Gender, male							
Eligible for UI based on work history							
Percent of time employed, 4 years prior							
Any prior participation in Project RIO							
Time since first observed earnings, quarters							
Any UI benefits in prior year							
Any UI claims in prior year							
Any high-intensity workforce development in prior year							
Percent of time in high-intensity workforce development in prior year							
Any low-intensity workforce development in prior year							
Percent of time in low-intensity workforce development in prior year							
Any WIT service in prior year	**	**	**	**		**	**
Pass or fail test for adequacy of comparison group	PASS	PASS	PASS	PASS	PASS	PASS	PASS

Note: \*\*=significantly different at  $p < .01$ , - =test could not be computed