

# INVESTING IN PEOPLE

An Evaluation of Travis County Investments



**RMC**

Ray Marshall Center for the  
Study of Human Resources



**TEXASLBJ School**

The University of Texas at Austin  
Lyndon B. Johnson School of Public Affairs

**Update 2016**

# EVALUATION OF TRAVIS COUNTY INVESTMENTS IN WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT

**2016 UPDATE**

**Dan O'Shea  
Heath Prince  
Cynthia Juniper  
Patty Rodriguez**

**April, 2017**



---

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.

## TABLE OF CONTENTS

List of Tables .....	iv
List of Figures .....	iv
Introduction .....	1
Evaluation Overview .....	3
Data Sources .....	4
American YouthWorks .....	6
Workforce Development Programs and Services.....	6
Support Services .....	7
Participant Profile .....	8
Participant Outcomes .....	8
Ascend Center for Learning/Literacy Coalition of Central Texas.....	12
Workforce Development Programs and Services.....	12
Support Services .....	14
Participant Profile .....	15
Participant Outcomes .....	15
Austin Area Urban League .....	19
Workforce Development Programs and Services.....	19
Support Services .....	20
Participant Profile .....	21
Participant Outcomes .....	21
Capital IDEA.....	26
Workforce Development Programs and Services.....	26
Support Services .....	28
Participant Profile .....	29
Participant Outcomes .....	29
Goodwill Industries of Central Texas .....	33
Workforce Development Programs and Services.....	33
Support Services .....	36
Participant Profile .....	36
Participant Outcomes .....	38
Skillpoint Alliance .....	41
Workforce Development Programs and Services.....	41
Support Services .....	43
Participant Profile .....	43
Participant Outcomes .....	45
Workforce Solutions–Capital Area Workforce Board.....	50
Workforce Development Programs and Services.....	50

Rapid Employment Model .....	50
Support Services .....	52
Participant Profile .....	53
Participant Outcomes .....	54
Results and Next Steps.....	58
Outcomes.....	58
Next Steps.....	60
Bibliography .....	63
Appendix A. Demographic Details .....	65
Appendix C. Travis County Workforce Evaluation FY 2017-2021 Prospectus .....	69

## LIST OF TABLES

Table 1. American YouthWorks 2011-2015 Exiter Outcomes .....	9
Table 2. Ascend/Literacy Coalition 2011-2015 Exiter Outcomes .....	16
Table 3. Austin Area Urban League 2011-2015 Exiter Outcomes .....	23
Table 4. Capital IDEA 2011-2015 Exiter Outcomes.....	30
Table 5. Goodwill 2011-2015 Exiter Outcomes .....	38
Table 6. Skillpoint Alliance’s Gateway Program 2011-2015 Exiter Outcomes .....	47
Table 7. Workforce Solutions – REM Program 2011-2015 Exiter Outcomes .....	55

## LIST OF FIGURES

Figure 1. Average Quarterly Employment of American YouthWorks Exiters, 2011-2015 .....	10
Figure 2. Average Quarterly Earnings of Employed American YouthWorks 2011-2015 Exiters ..	11
Figure 3. Average Quarterly Employment of Ascend/Literacy Coalition.....	17
Figure 4. Average Quarterly Earnings of Employed Ascend/Literacy Coalition 2011-2015 Exiters.....	18
Figure 5. Average Quarterly Employment of AAUL 2011-2015 Exiters <sup>a</sup> .....	24
Figure 6. Average Quarterly Earnings of Employed AAUL 2011-2015 Exiters.....	24
Figure 7. Average Quarterly Employment of Capital IDEA 2011-2015 Exiters <sup>a</sup> .....	31
Figure 8. Average Quarterly Earnings of Employed Capital IDEA 2011-2015 Exiters.....	32
Figure 9. Average Quarterly Employment of Goodwill 2011-2015 Exiters <sup>a</sup> .....	39

Figure 10. Average Quarterly Earnings of Employed Goodwill 2011-2015 Exiters .....	40
Figure 11. Average Quarterly Employment of Skillpoint Alliance’s Gateway Program 2011-2015 Exiters <sup>a</sup> .....	48
Figure 12. Average Quarterly Earnings of Employed Skillpoint Alliance’s Gateway Program 2011- 2015 Exiters.....	48
Figure 13. Average Quarterly Employment of REM Program 2011-2015 Exiters <sup>a</sup> .....	56
Figure 14. Average Quarterly Earnings of Employed REM Program 2011-2015 Exiters .....	57

## INTRODUCTION

Travis County currently invests approximately \$2.5 million through contracts with nine workforce development programs for low-income residents who tend to face challenges to steady employment with sufficient earnings to support themselves and their families. Several of the programs provide 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 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<sup>1</sup> of local workforce services investments led by the Ray Marshall Center since 2006. These include:

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

---

<sup>1</sup> The impact evaluation will be issued as a separate report in early 2017

<sup>2</sup> In 2015 the Literacy Coalition of Central Texas acquired the Ascend Center for Learning, formerly the Austin Academy. Throughout this paper the program is referred to as: Ascend/Literacy Coalition.

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 2012, 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 clients' needs and aspirations from where they start to where they want to be in the workforce.<sup>3</sup>

This *2016 Update* report extends the labor market outcomes analyses of prior annual updates for participation in a County-funded workforce program for 2011-2015 participants who exited services from each of the seven providers listed above.

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) and details outcomes for participants from calendar years 2011 through 2015. Findings examine results in the post-service period through June 2016, the latest quarter for which UI wage data is available. Additionally, each section reports annual funding levels.<sup>4</sup> The final section summarizes evaluation findings from the 2016 update and identifies considerations for future evaluation reports.

---

<sup>3</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 8 to 10 providers initiated in 2012 and funded by the City of Austin. Workforce Solutions is the grant recipient and the sub-grantees are C2-GPS (the WIB workforce training contractor), American YouthWorks, Goodwill, and Austin Area Urban League. Researchers will evaluate the outcomes and impacts of the continuum in FY 2017, after the County effort (WERC-TC) has been operational for a full service year.

<sup>4</sup> Travis County workforce grants 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 analysis remains on the calendar year to maintain the integrity of the continuous annual update, 5-year series. The evaluation will realign with the fiscal year funding cycle beginning with the 2017 update.

## 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, four are shared across the majority of providers:

- Number of unduplicated clients served,
- Percentage of clients who obtain or improve employment or enter postsecondary education, training or national service,
- 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, and
- Percentage of clients receiving job placement services

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 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 2011-2015 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 19 post-service quarters for those who exited in the first quarter (Q1) of calendar 2011. For those who exited in Q1 of calendar 2015, up to five post-service quarters were analyzed.

#### **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>5</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 or independent contracting, such as construction and truck driving, are less likely to be in a UI-

---

<sup>5</sup> While UI benefit data are collected and reported weekly, the outcomes are examined on a quarterly basis to mirror UI wage records.

covered position.<sup>6</sup> Training and employment entry in these occupations has been booming in recent years throughout the region. 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>7</sup>

A total of 4887 unduplicated participants were included in the dataset for this report. Several 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.

---

<sup>6</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.

<sup>7</sup> Any discrepancies are expected to be quite small.

## 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 the majority of the 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

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 2011 - 2012, dropping slightly to \$191,229 in 2013 and rising to \$207,765 in 2014 and 2015. The 2011 through 2015 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

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.<sup>8</sup> The Green Energy Corps was developed “in response to a growing need for job training in home improvement and weatherization.”<sup>9</sup>

Beyond the academic and occupational skills training, American YouthWorks participants also receive training in soft skills, job search, and résumé building. The target wage for those who enter employment was \$9 per hour minimum in 2015. For participants who are interested in pursuing higher education, the program has recently added college access, credit articulation, and persistence services. Already a partner in the Workforce and Education Readiness Continuum (WERC-CoA) funded by the City of Austin, in FY 2016, AYW received County funding as part of Workforce Education and Training Continuum funded by Travis County (WERC-TC). Also AYW re-introduced health care career options, strengthened connections with Premier High School, the onsite charter schools, and continued to outreach and develop opportunities targeting opportunity youth with local partners.

AYW workforce development County funding is channeled through three contracts: WERC-TC, Workforce Development (direct to AYW), and the Travis County Metro Parks Project.<sup>10</sup>

## **SUPPORT SERVICES**

In addition to job training and on-site access to Premier High School, 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

---

<sup>8</sup> AYW has moved towards a fee for services approach to cover expenses and provide opportunities for youth.

<sup>9</sup> Matvy, Rachel. “Job Training for Youth – Service to Low Income Home Owners.” October 4, 2012.

<sup>10</sup> The Metro Parks Project can be understood as a transfer of HHS funds to Travis County passed through to AYW for a subsidized work experience program.

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 Workforce Solutions in both WERC-CoA and WERC-TC to connect participants with other training opportunities and support services.

#### **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 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 648 Austin YouthWorks participants included in this evaluation, the majority were White (43%) or Hispanic (39%). Just over half (56%) were male, with an average age of 21 years old. Over half (55%) 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 (35%) or east (30%) Austin at the time of enrollment. Judicial Involvement status was not provided for most of the sample, but 8% of the participants were noted as have been judicially involved. 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 2011 through 2015.

**Table 1. American YouthWorks 2011-2015 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	647	528	461	366	236	
<b>Quarterly Employment:</b>								
2011	21.1%	27.4%	38.6%	43.6%	52.5%	55.9%	53.1%	51.4%
2012	19.5%	28.0%	40.9%	40.9%	45.5%	50.0%	43.9%	45.7%
2013	19.9%	33.6%	46.1%	54.7%	45.3%	56.4%	.	48.1%
2014	21.1%	38.2%	57.3%	55.1%	50.0%	.	.	51.9%
2015	29.0%	44.5%	45.4%	.	.	.	.	51.7%
Overall	22.1%	34.3%	45.6%	48.6%	48.3%	54.1%	48.5%	49.8%
<b>Average Qrtly Earnings:</b>								
2011	\$2,251	\$2,193	\$2,637	\$2,552	\$3,448	\$4,045	\$4,983	\$3,651
2012	\$2,451	\$1,622	\$2,767	\$3,270	\$3,714	\$4,589	\$4,596	\$3,686
2013	\$2,152	\$1,485	\$3,320	\$4,018	\$4,539	\$5,260	.	\$4,299
2014	\$2,251	\$1,991	\$3,646	\$5,256	.	.	.	\$4,734
2015	\$2,241	\$3,279	\$3,974	.	.	.	.	\$3,792
Overall	\$2,269	\$2,114	\$3,269	\$3,774	\$3,900	\$4,631	\$4,789	\$4,032
<b>Qualified for UI Benefits:</b>								
2011	10.5%	.	.	31.8%	44.7%	48.0%	53.6%	44.8%
2012	10.6%	.	.	34.1%	38.6%	43.2%	38.6%	39.8%
2013	12.1%	.	.	41.4%	36.7%	54.6%	.	44.5%
2014	14.0%	.	.	49.4%	54.6%	.	.	48.0%
2015	13.9%	.	.	.	.	.	.	.
Overall	12.2%	.	.	39.2%	43.7%	48.6%	46.1%	44.3%
<b>Filed UI Claim:</b>								
2011	0.1%	0.0%	1.1%	0.6%	1.1%	0.6%	0.0%	0.5%
2012	0.6%	0.8%	1.5%	0.8%	0.8%	0.0%	0.0%	0.4%
2013	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	1.6%	0.0%	0.0%	.	0.2%
2014	0.3%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	.	.	0.0%
2015	0.2%	0.0%	0.0%	.	.	.	.	0.0%
Overall	0.2%	0.2%	0.5%	0.7%	0.5%	0.2%	0.0%	0.2%

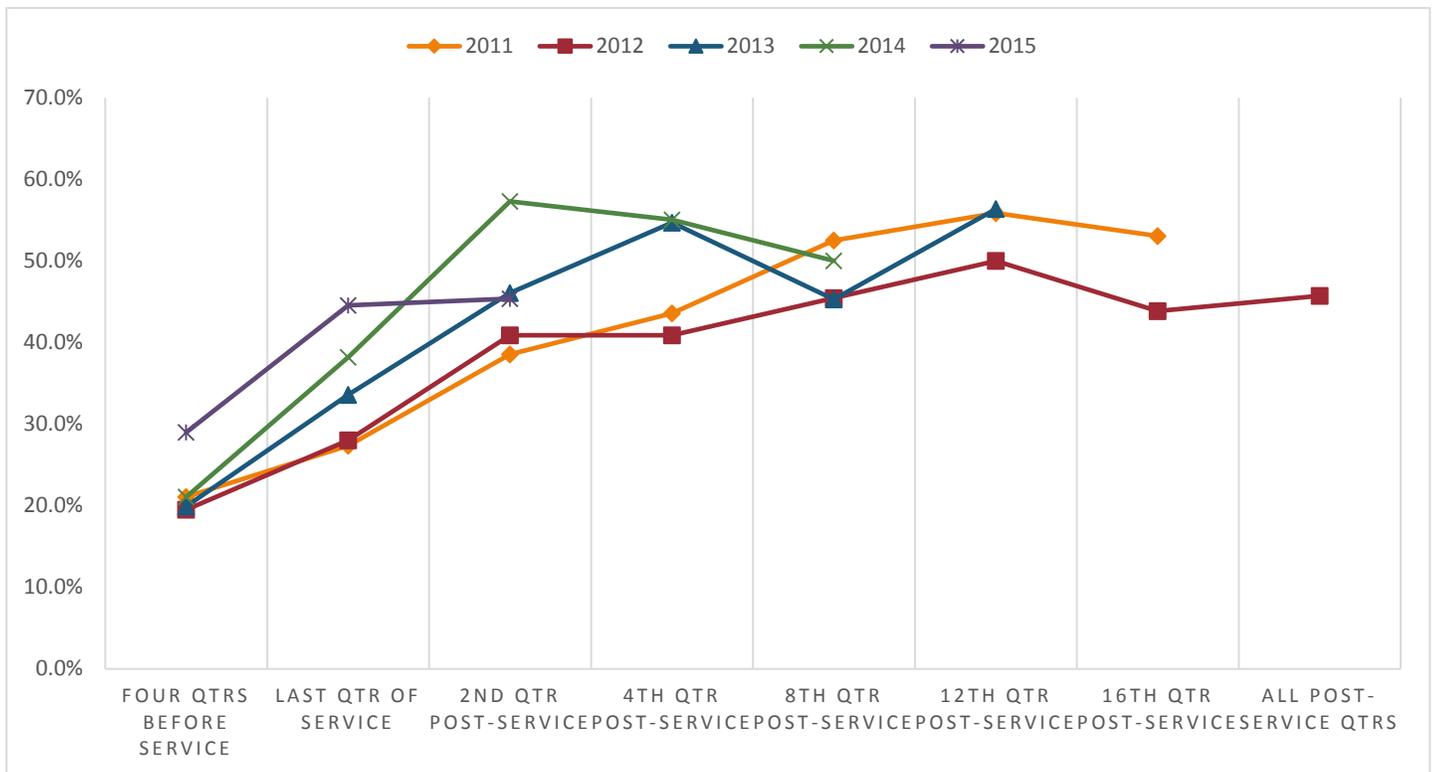
Source: American YouthWorks participant records and Texas Workforce Commission UI wage and claim records.

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

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 over 22%. 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 48.5% during the fourth year after leaving the American YouthWorks program. Across all post-service quarters through June 2016, 49.8% of 2011-2015 American YouthWorks exiters were employed (Figure 1).

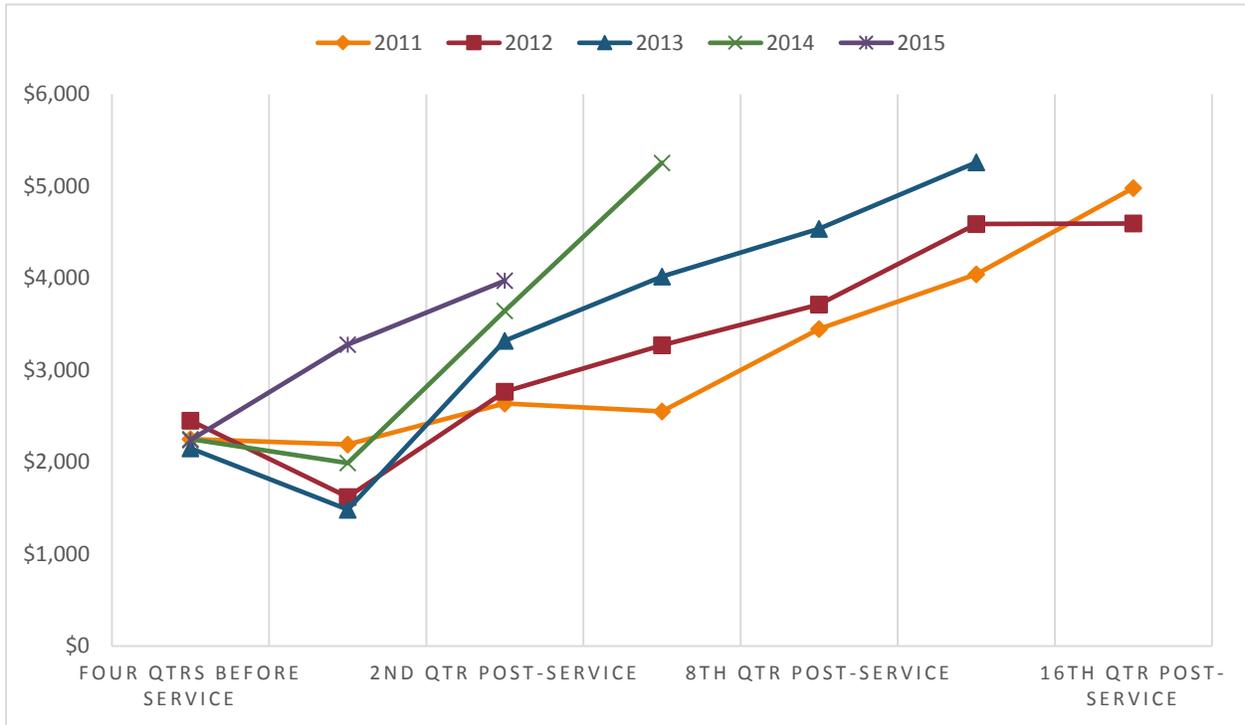
**Figure 1. Average Quarterly Employment of American YouthWorks Exiters, 2011-2015**



Pre-program earnings overall averaged about \$2,269 per quarter for those employed in the year prior to entry. In the second quarter after service, average earnings rose to \$3,269 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 2011-2015 exiters earned, on average, \$3,625 per quarter (Figure 2).

**Figure 2. Average Quarterly Earnings of Employed American YouthWorks 2011-2015 Exiters**



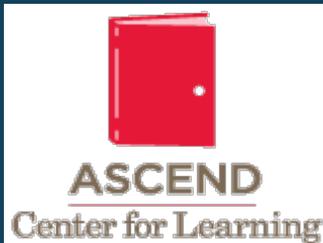
Prior to entering American YouthWorks, approximately 13% of participants overall had sufficient employment and earnings histories to meet the monetary eligibility requirements for UI benefits. A year after leaving training, almost 34% met the requirements for eligibility. This measure is a proxy measure 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.

## ASCEND CENTER FOR LEARNING/LITERACY COALITION OF CENTRAL TEXAS

### WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT PROGRAMS AND SERVICES

The Ascend Center for Learning merged with the Literacy Coalition of Central Texas in January 2015. 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 County funds support ABE and GED preparation, basic computer literacy classes, and occupational skills training.

Travis County invested \$43,609 annually during the 2011-15 period in Ascend Center for Learning/Literacy Coalition.



For more information  
visit:  
<http://willread.org/>

Travis County workforce investments have followed a series of institutional and program realignments over the past several years. Initially, the County funded the Austin Academy, which became the Ascend Center for Learning in 2011. In January 2015, the Ascend Center for Learning merged with the Literacy Coalition of Central Texas. Program activities have matured and expanded with each successive institutional change. The 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 included 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.

After merging with the Literacy Coalition, the program began to migrate from Workplace Competency to Job Readiness to the present Workforce Infusion Program. Many basic features remain intact, but have been embellished as new services and features have emerged. The program consistently included the above features, as well as both daytime and evening options, and operates as a self-paced, open-enrollment program. Training is largely individualized for each participant, and 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. The target wage for those that enter employment was \$9 per hour minimum in 2015.

The Workforce Infusion approach reconstituted service dimensions of the two program tracts under its umbrella: the Adult Basic Literacy (3<sup>rd</sup> to 8<sup>th</sup> grade functional levels) and Job Readiness /GED programs. Computer Literacy and Job Readiness, once reserved for the advanced group, is now available one-half day per week (*Workforce Wednesdays*) for those in the Basic Literacy group. The education and job readiness services are delivered at the Literacy Coalition sites, as well as community partner sites throughout the area. Most are staffed by 2 AmeriCorps volunteers (an instructor and a career coach) assigned by the Literacy Coalition with oversight and direct assistance provided by the agency's employment specialists. Those in the Job Readiness Program split their days (4 hours Computer Literacy and Job Readiness, 4 hours GED prep). After completing the six weeks of Job Readiness activities, all efforts are dedicated to GED prep. Additionally, one-hour every Friday for both day and night classes is dedicated to an open group "Empowerment Session" at which soft skills are emphasized. The session uses the CAPS curriculum, which contains modules for Communications, Assertiveness,

Professionalism, and Stress management. Frameworks, a local non-profit, also provides financial literacy classes one hour per week for six weeks to those in the Job Readiness track.

### **SUPPORT SERVICES**

Ascend/Literacy Coalition participants are eligible to access the Literacy Coalition web of support services. The Literacy Coalition 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. The Literacy Coalition offers transportation assistance, primarily in the form of bus passes, but has moved towards gas cards, and even helps with auto repairs, as it strives to become more effective in the use of direct assistance funds and moves consciously toward “wrap around” services to foster retention and advancement. 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.

The Literacy Coalition partners with a number of community organizations to provide additional classes to participants on a variety of topics. These include, as mentioned above, 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 of Austin. The Literacy Coalition is also a WERC-CoA partner. Currently the Literacy Coalition is developing opportunities for student access to HVAC training provided in English and Spanish by the Austin Career Institute (ACI). ACI is a non-profit that largely recruits from refugee populations served by Caritas, Catholic Charities and Texas Refugee Services. ACI is on the eligible training provider list of Workforce Solutions. The Literacy Coalition currently partners with ACI to provide ESL classes to the students in the limited English speaking HVAC training class.

## **PARTICIPANT PROFILE**

Ascend/Literacy Coalition intentionally seeks out participants who may face barriers to employment, including disabled veterans, public housing residents, high school dropouts, and victims of violent crimes. Although the standard minimum age for services is 18, the program can serve youth as young as 16, if they are court-ordered, and commonly has participants who are in their sixties. According to the Director of Adult Education, the predominant student profiles are single-parent, Hispanic women in the 30-35 age bracket and Black males in their early twenties.<sup>11</sup> A total of 476 participants from 2011-2015 exiting cohorts are included in the outcomes evaluation. One-half of participants included in this evaluation were Hispanic (50%), with smaller shares of White (16.4%) and Black (28.4%) participants. Approximately 66% of participants were women, and nearly two-thirds were between the ages of 20 and 39 at program entry (average age was 33).<sup>12</sup> Most participants resided in east (40%) or south (20%) Austin. Although judicial involvement status is unknown for just over half of the sample, 16% of the participants were indicated as having been judicially involved. Nearly 31% of the sample received public benefits (up significantly from 24% in the FY 2010-2014 series); however, 43.7% of the sample is missing information about public benefit receipt. Demographic details are provided in Appendix A.

## **PARTICIPANT OUTCOMES**

Table 2 provides an overview of participant outcomes across the four evaluation measures. Overall, in the four quarters prior to entering the Ascend/Literacy Coalition program, quarterly employment in a UI-covered job in Texas was 46.3%, rising to 57.7% by the second post-service quarter. Exiters in more recent years (2014-2015) have experienced significantly higher post-service employment rates as compared to the three previous exiting cohorts. In all post-service quarters through December 2015, employment averaged approximately 60%. This large increase over prior years in overall post-service employment rates for 2015 exiters is driven by substantially higher employment rates prior to entering the program (67.2% in 2015

---

<sup>11</sup> Conversation with Selena Munoz, Director of Adult Education, August 19, 2016

<sup>12</sup> Program staff currently observe two primary client profiles: Hispanic, single mothers between 30 and 35 years of age, and Black males in their early twenties.

vs. 42.8% in 2014), during the program (65.5% vs. 53%), and in the second quarter after exit (79.3% vs. 62.1%).

**Table 2. Ascend/Literacy Coalition 2011-2015 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):	476	476	476	448	411	320	222	
<b>Quarterly Employment:</b>								
2011	34.5%	33.9%	41.0%	44.6%	44.1%	46.7%	47.2%	45.4%
2012	44.1%	45.9%	51.8%	57.7%	55.3%	54.1%	63.0%	55.6%
2013	43.1%	47.5%	54.5%	53.5%	61.4%	47.5%	.	55.8%
2014	42.8%	53.0%	62.1%	65.2%	56.7%	.	.	63.6%
2015	67.2%	65.5%	79.3%	.	.	.	.	77.3%
Overall	46.3%	49.2%	57.7%	55.2%	54.4%	49.4%	55.1%	59.5%
<b>Average Qrtly Earnings:</b>								
2011	\$3,434	\$3,064	\$3,174	\$3,478	\$4,123	\$4,173	\$4,838	\$4,050
2012	\$3,705	\$3,136	\$3,946	\$3,737	\$4,824	\$5,899	.	\$4,728
2013	\$3,976	\$3,106	\$4,573	\$4,781	\$4,962	.	.	\$4,872
2014	\$3,216	\$2,609	\$3,226	\$3,980	.	.	.	\$4,037
2015	\$5,093	\$5,910	\$5,227	.	.	.	.	\$5,405
Overall	\$3,885	\$3,565	\$4,029	\$3,994	\$4,636	\$5,036	\$4,838	\$4,619
<b>Qualified for UI Benefits:</b>								
2011	28.5%	.	.	33.3%	37.4%	39.0%	41.5%	38.8%
2012	40.9%	.	.	44.7%	49.4%	51.8%	55.6%	49.1%
2013	33.9%	.	.	48.5%	53.5%	52.5%	.	49.8%
2014	45.5%	.	.	56.1%	53.3%	.	.	57.9%
2015	50.0%	.	.	.	.	.	.	.
Overall	39.7%	.	.	45.7%	48.4%	47.7%	48.6%	48.9%
<b>Filed UI Claim:</b>								
2011	3.0%	2.1%	3.6%	3.6%	3.6%	2.6%	0.0%	1.6%
2012	5.0%	1.2%	2.4%	3.5%	2.4%	0.0%	0.0%	0.8%
2013	2.2%	3.0%	1.0%	3.0%	0.0%	0.0%	.	0.9%
2014	3.8%	3.0%	1.5%	0.0%	0.0%	.	.	0.2%
2015	1.7%	3.5%	0.0%	.	.	.	.	0.0%
Overall	3.1%	2.5%	1.7%	2.5%	1.5%	0.9%	0.0%	0.7%

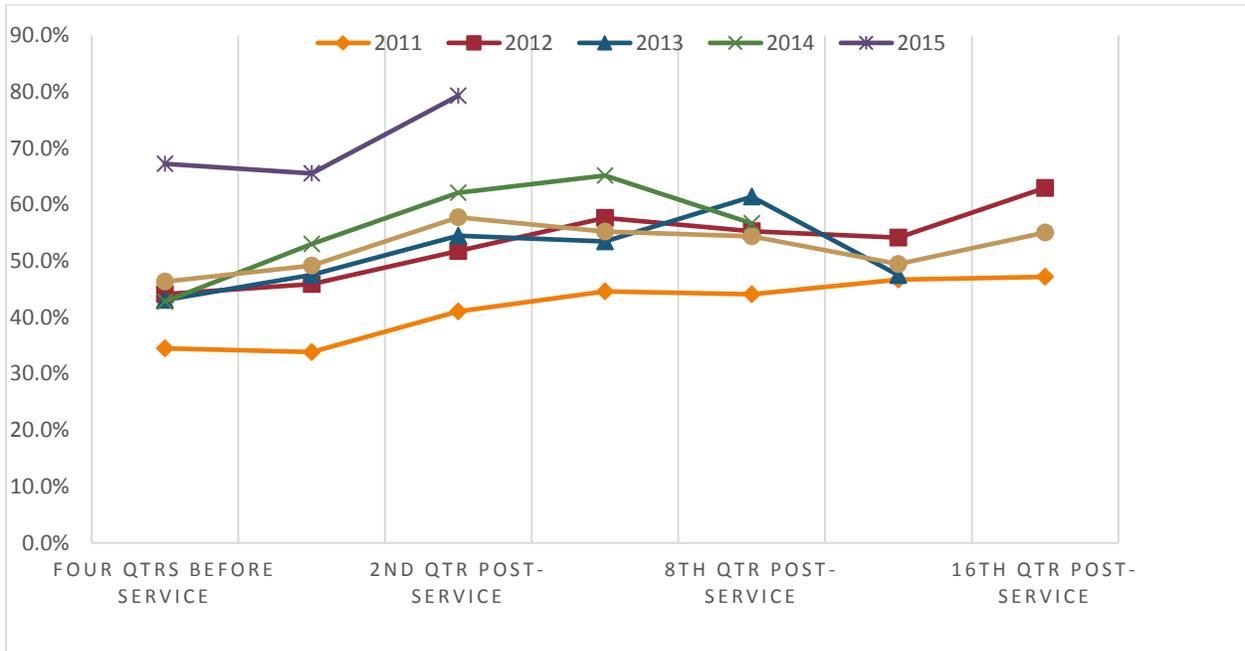
Source: Ascend/Literacy Coalition participant records and Texas Workforce Commission UI wage and claim records.

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 3 illustrates quarterly employment patterns for Ascend/Literacy Coalition participants.

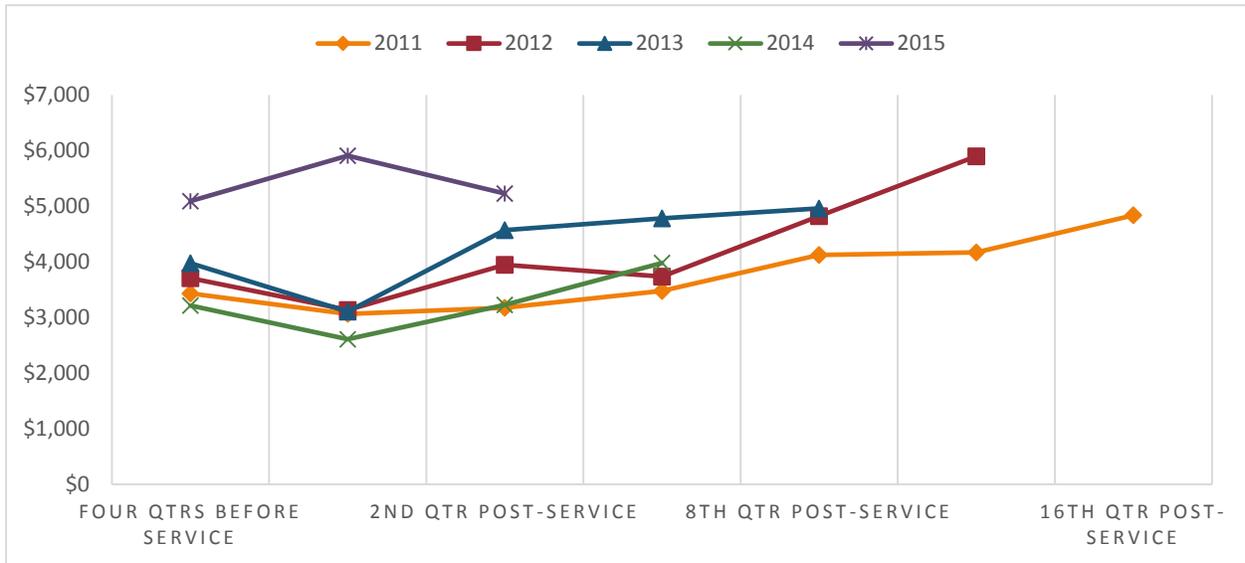
**Figure 3. Average Quarterly Employment of Ascend/Literacy Coalition 2011-2015 Exiters<sup>a</sup>**



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 \$3,885 across all exiting cohorts. One year after leaving the Ascend/Literacy Coalition program, average quarterly earnings were about the same as pre-service earnings (at \$3,994). 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 2015, quarterly earnings for employed participants averaged roughly \$4,619. Figure 4 illustrates the average quarterly earnings of Ascend/Literacy Coalition 2011-2015 exiters.

**Figure 4. Average Quarterly Earnings of Employed Ascend/Literacy Coalition 2011-2015 Exiters**



Approximately 40% of Ascend/Literacy Coalition 2011-2015 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, 45.7% 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, approximately 49% of Ascend/Literacy Coalition participants met the requirements. In the year prior to entering the program, roughly 3% of Ascend/Literacy Coalition participants filed a claim for UI benefits. Across all post-service quarters, just 0.7% of participants had filed a UI benefit claim.

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 2011-2015 period.



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

## AUSTIN AREA URBAN LEAGUE

### WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT PROGRAMS AND SERVICES

Through 2015, the Austin Area Urban League (AAUL) offered 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;” elements of cognitive behavior therapy have been injected into the Life Skills and other AAUL services.”<sup>13</sup> The Job Resource Center provides resume writing, interviewing, and job search best practices training, as well as job leads and referrals. AAUL has established relationships with hiring managers in healthcare, insurance, customer service, construction, information technologies, and education among other fields. The EOS Training “model was revamped [in 2012] to align with the Workforce and Education Readiness Continuum (WERC-CoA) program funded by the City of Austin.

<sup>13</sup> Conversation with Darnise Bowens-Jones, Workforce Program Manager, September 19, 2016.

The existing workforce 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 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 three years enrolled between 51 and 84 participants.<sup>14</sup> In FY 2016, AAUL became part of WERC-TC and the organization’s County support is channeled through its subcontract under Workforce Solutions.

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. AAUL’s main office is a satellite office for Austin Community College’s (ACC) Adult Education and Literacy classes. Life skills workshops are offered every Wednesday during the daytime computer class for one to two hours each session. Under WERC-TC, AAUL has begun to expand its training referrals to include truck driving/CDL training and Certified Nurse Assistant training through ACC. The target wage for employment entries in FY 2015 was \$10 per hour minimum and rose to \$12 per hour in FY 2016. Given the weak work histories and barriers to employment of most participants—many of whom are “judicially involved,” others may be elderly or disabled looking for part-time work or community volunteer opportunities—the \$12 per hour standard is challenging. Reportedly, the average placement wage for 2015 was \$11.47. Many participants are employed while receiving services and AAUL does not generally foresee an increase in earnings from short-term training that would be substantial enough to move many participants above the self-sufficiency rung on the income ladder.<sup>15</sup>

#### **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

---

<sup>14</sup> See Travis County Community Impact Reports 2011 through 2015.

<sup>15</sup> Conversation with Darnise Bowens-Jones, Workforce Program Manager, September 19, 2016.

available and the provision of gas cards has been increasing with the enrollments in CDL training. AAUL also operates its own vans to transport groups of individuals to and from classes. Incentives (\$20) are provided at 30-day intervals to support attainment of the 6-month retention target. AAUL also helps with work-related expenses, refers to Workforce Solutions for childcare, and may provide emergency assistance.

## **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. As noted, many participants are judicially involved and have multiple barriers, including weak work histories. Recent profiles also indicate that many clients are retired or disabled and want to learn computer basics to obtain part-time jobs or volunteer for community service.<sup>16</sup> A total of 648<sup>17</sup> AAUL participants who exited from 2011 through 2015 were included in the analysis.<sup>18</sup> Fifty-six percent of AAUL exiters in the evaluation were female and approximately 65% were African-American; another 18.8% were Hispanic and 11.4% were White. The average age of participants was 38. Participants served were primarily from east and north Austin (about 33% each). About 10% of the participants were indicated as having been judicially involved (71.1% of the sample had an unknown/missing judicial involvement status).<sup>19</sup> Demographic details are provided in Appendix A.

As mentioned, the AAUL is a partner in WERC-CoA and WERC-TC. The only difference noted is that WERC-TC requires job placement in the industry related to the field of training to be “successful”, WERC-CoA does not.

## **PARTICIPANT OUTCOMES**

---

<sup>16</sup> Conversation with Darnise Bowens-Jones, Manager, AAUL Workforce & Career Development Department, September 21, 2016.

<sup>17</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>18</sup> Although Travis County funding targets EOS, AAUL also reported participants in ancillary services.

<sup>19</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 3 provides an overview of AAUL participant outcomes for the study period. Overall, quarterly employment was approximately 37.2% for AAUL participants in the four quarters prior to program entry. By two quarters after leaving AAUL services, participants' average quarterly employment rose to 54.4%. Across all post-service quarters, 52.6% of AAUL participants were employed. Employment outcomes are also illustrated in Figure 5.

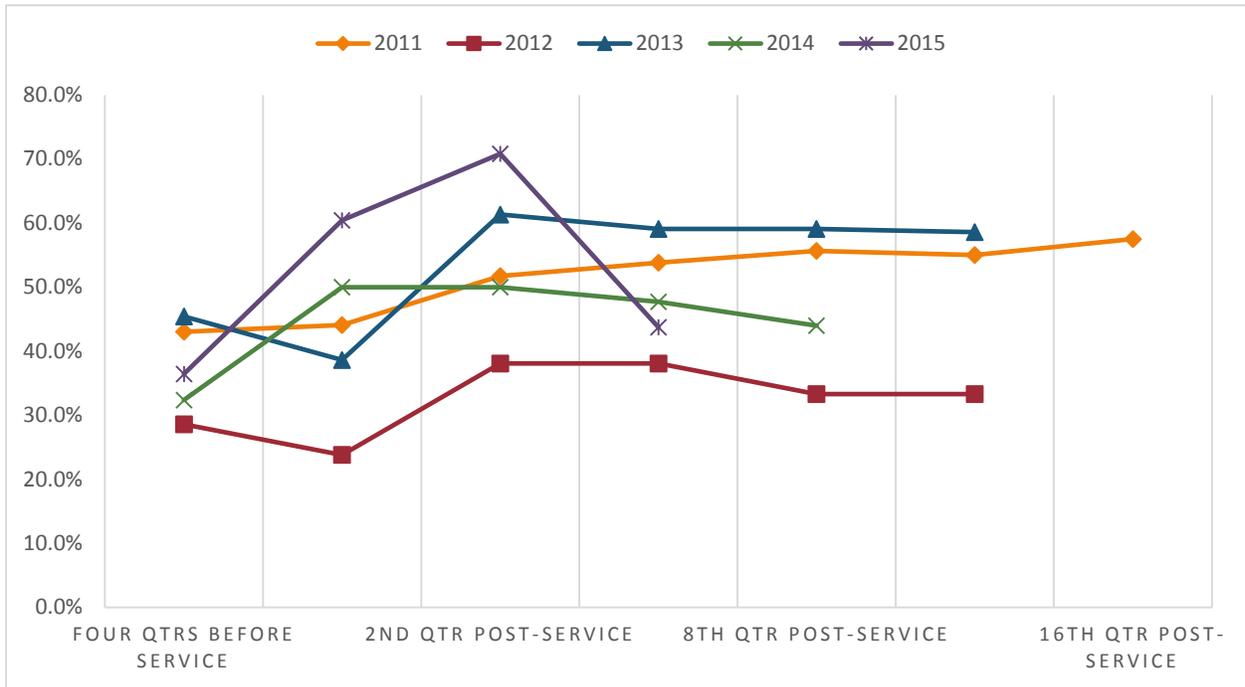
On average, quarterly earnings for AAUL participants were \$4,319. Although data are not available for two exiting cohorts (too few employed participants to report the numbers), the average quarterly earnings for the other three exiting cohorts had increased to \$4,642 by two years after leaving services. Quarterly earnings continued to rise for those for whom data are available. Overall, post-service quarterly earnings were \$4,589, substantially lower than overall earnings (\$5,501) reported in the 2014 outcomes report. This is driven primarily by consistently lower reported earnings for 2015 exiters through the fourth quarter post service.

**Table 3. Austin Area Urban League 2011-2015 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):	642	642	642	610	575	535	486	
<b>Quarterly Employment:</b>								
2011	43.0%	44.1%	51.8%	53.8%	55.7%	55.1%	57.5%	55.4%
2012	28.6%	23.8%	38.1%	38.1%	33.3%	33.3%	.	37.0%
2013	45.5%	38.6%	61.4%	59.1%	59.1%	58.6%	.	59.4%
2014	32.4%	50.0%	50.0%	47.7%	44.0%	.	.	49.0%
2015	36.5%	60.4%	70.8%	43.8%	.	.	.	62.2%
Overall	37.2%	43.4%	54.4%	48.5%	48.0%	49.0%	57.5%	52.6%
<b>Average Qrtly Earnings:</b>								
2011	\$4,176	\$3,184	\$3,913	\$4,348	\$4,853	\$4,945	\$5,783	\$4,916
2012	\$5,469	.	.	.	.	.	.	\$4,671
2013	\$4,300	.	\$3,602	\$4,248	\$4,432	.	.	\$3,949
2014	\$4,535	\$2,183	\$4,550	\$5,417	.	.	.	\$5,501
2015	\$3,115	\$2,337	\$3,880	\$2,745	.	.	.	\$3,908
Overall	\$4,319	\$2,568	\$3,986	\$4,190	\$4,642	\$4,945	\$5,783	\$4,589
<b>Qualified for UI Benefits:</b>								
2011	38.1%	.	.	42.1%	48.9%	52.0%	51.1%	49.1%
2012	35.7%	.	.	33.3%	33.3%	38.1%	.	36.4%
2013	40.3%	.	.	54.6%	52.3%	58.6%	.	54.2%
2014	33.0%	.	.	43.2%	40.0%	.	.	44.4%
2015	36.5%	.	.	56.3%	.	.	.	.
Overall	36.7%	.	.	45.9%	43.6%	49.6%	51.1%	46.1%
<b>Filed UI Claim:</b>								
2011	4.6%	6.2%	3.1%	3.1%	2.7%	1.9%	0.0%	2.1%
2012	4.8%	4.8%	4.8%	0.0%	9.5%	0.0%	.	1.7%
2013	5.7%	15.9%	4.6%	4.6%	0.0%	0.0%	.	1.8%
2014	2.3%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	.	.	0.6%
2015	4.7%	2.1%	4.2%	0.0%	.	.	.	1.8%
Overall	4.4%	5.8%	3.3%	1.5%	3.1%	0.6%	0.0%	1.6%

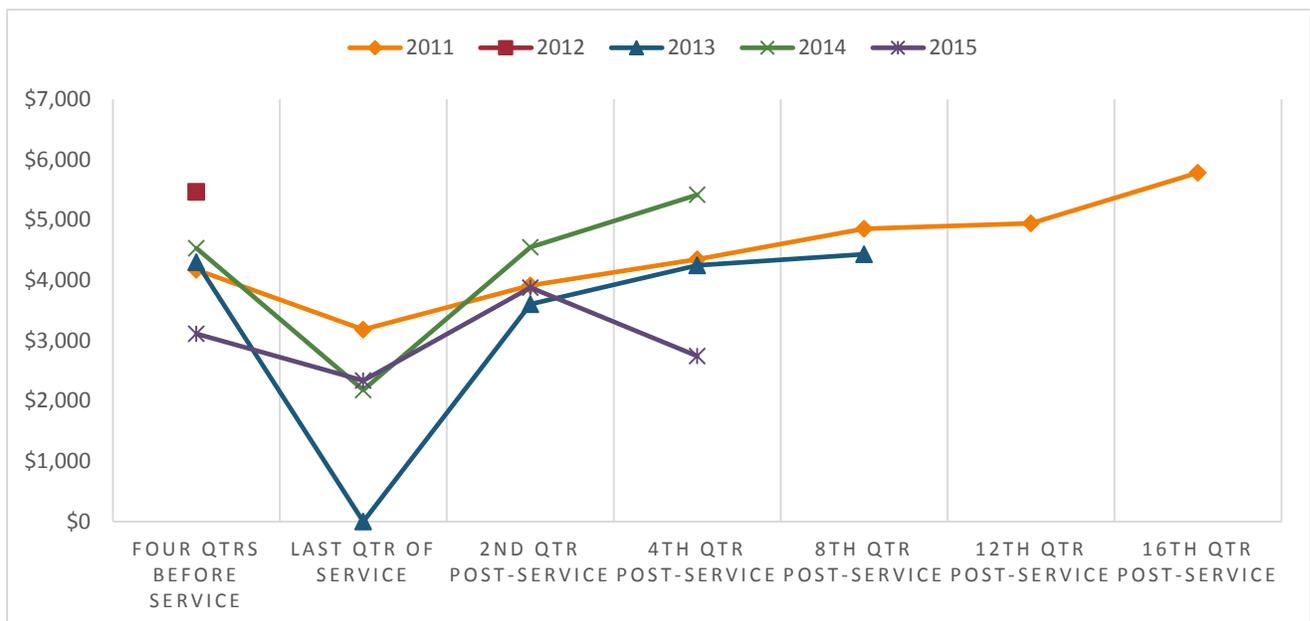
Source: Austin Area Urban League participant records and Texas Workforce Commission UI wage and claim records.  
 Note: A dot represents too few participants, no data to report, or insufficient time passing to report for the timeframe.  
 Participants were counted as employed if they were found in Texas 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 5. Average Quarterly Employment of AAUL 2011-2015 Exiters<sup>a</sup>**



**Error! Not a valid bookmark self-reference.** below illustrates the earnings outcomes of AAUL's 2011-2015 exiters.

**Figure 6. Average Quarterly Earnings of Employed AAUL 2011-2015 Exiters**



The overall share of AAUL participants meeting monetary eligibility requirements for UI benefits dropped slightly from last year's report, dropping from 49.8% to 46.1% across all post-service quarters. Substantially higher shares of AAUL participants filed for UI benefits two quarters post service in 2015 (4.2%) than had in 2014 (0%).

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 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>20</sup> Overall the average active status for participants is 3.5 to 4 years, including follow-up.<sup>21</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>22</sup> The Health Care Career Expressway opened in FY 2016.<sup>23</sup> Presently, about 75 percent of the Career Expressway participants are in the Health Care pathway. In FY 2016 Capital IDEA began recruiting current high school graduates. It is yet uncertain at this time what effects serving the younger clientele may have on persistence, completion, and duration of services. Capital IDEA has noted that the historic average age of participants has been dropping significantly given the young age of these recruits. Also Administrators note that 40 percent of these recent graduates fail to pass the Texas Success Initiative Assessment and need developmental education.<sup>24</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.

---

<sup>20</sup> Lyman. (2013). P. 40

<sup>21</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>22</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/>

<sup>23</sup> There is some concern that IT interns may be placed in good paying jobs directly from the internships, prior to finishing the Capital Idea training sequence. Employers can custom train those whose talent and prospects they recognize. This would affect completion rates. The risk is eliminated in the health care sector because students must finish their studies and licensure prior to employment in the industry. Conversation with Steve Jackobs, Executive Director, Eva Rios-Lleverino, Director of Operations, and Amy Price, Director of Development, on August 26, 2016

<sup>24</sup> Conversation with Steve Jackobs, Executive Director, Eva Rios-Lleverino, Director of Operations, and Amy Price, Director of Development, on August 26, 2016

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. Capital IDEA covers all tuition, fees and books, and may provide minimal 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. 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.

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.

Workforce Solutions had provided most childcare services for Capital IDEA participants who needed such assistance. Through 2015, Capital IDEA offered supplemental childcare support for parents who did not receive support through Workforce Solutions, based on income level. If the participant’s family income was under 100% of the Federal Poverty Level, then Capital IDEA covered 100% of allowable childcare costs; if the participant’s family income was over 100% of FPL, then parents paid 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. In 2015 demand for childcare exceeded expectations and in FY 2016, such expenditures were disallowed.<sup>25 26</sup>

---

<sup>25</sup> FY 2015 Community Impact Report.

<sup>26</sup> For FY 2016, Travis County disallowed child care support expenditures, causing Capital IDEA to rely on Workforce Solutions or other funding sources to provide child care support. In July 2016, TWC placed a freeze on child care support for Priority 3 workforce participants, reserving funds for Priority 1 and 2 (TANF and Child Protective Services). Although existing workforce clients were grandfathered in, the freeze presents challenges to

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, the Housing Authority, 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 659 Capital IDEA participants included in this report, about 59% were female and many were single heads of households.<sup>27</sup> Just over 26% of participants were Black while 28% were of "other" race/ethnicity. Over two-thirds (69%) were between 20 and 39 years of age, with an average age of 31. The majority (56.6%) started Capital IDEA with a high school diploma or GED, and 40% had attended or graduated from postsecondary education. Just over 13% of the sample was justice involved and nearly 41.6% of the sample received public benefits. Demographic details are provided in Appendix A.

#### **PARTICIPANT OUTCOMES**

Table 4 provides an overview of labor market outcomes for Capital IDEA 2011-2015 exiters.

---

the 80 new participants that Capital IDEA has enrolled for the Fall, 2016 semester. Conversation with Steve Jackobs and Eva Rios on 8/26/2016.

<sup>27</sup> Conversation with Capital IDEA leadership, August 26, 2016.

**Table 4. Capital IDEA 2011-2015 Exiter Outcomes**

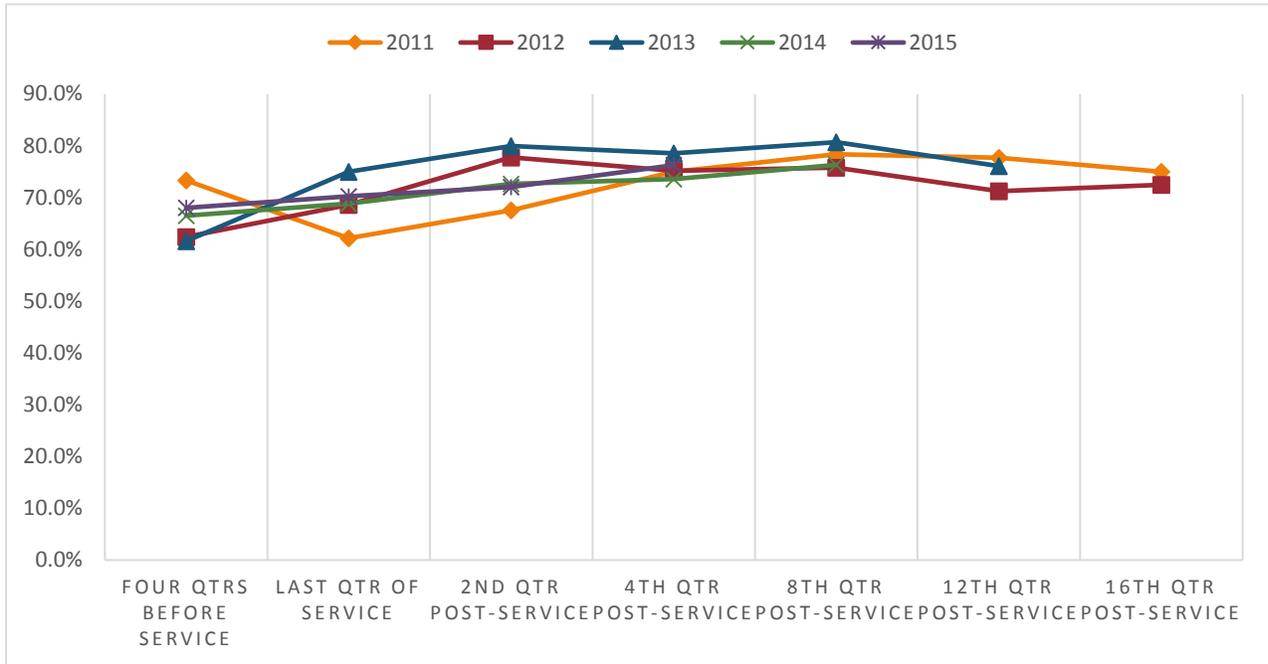
Cohort Outcome Measure	Four Qtrs Before Service	Last Qtr of Service	2nd Qtr Post-Service	4th Qtr Post-Service	8th Qtr Post-Service	12th Qtr Post-Service	16th Qtr Post-Service	All Post-Service Qtrs
N (across all cohorts):	658	658	658	606	517	368	228	
<b>Quarterly Employment:</b>								
2011	73.3%	62.2%	67.6%	75.0%	78.4%	77.7%	75.0%	74.3%
2012	62.4%	68.6%	77.8%	75.2%	75.8%	71.2%	72.5%	74.5%
2013	61.6%	75.0%	80.0%	78.6%	80.7%	76.1%	.	77.9%
2014	66.5%	68.9%	72.6%	73.6%	76.3%	.	.	73.7%
2015	68.0%	70.3%	72.1%	76.3%	.	.	.	73.9%
Overall	66.4%	69.0%	74.0%	75.7%	77.8%	75.0%	73.8%	74.9%
<b>Average Qrtly Earnings:</b>								
2011	\$5,089	\$4,873	\$6,891	\$7,404	\$8,088	\$9,144	\$9,845	\$8,643
2012	\$4,671	\$5,158	\$7,044	\$7,686	\$8,272	\$9,279	\$9,570	\$8,237
2013	\$4,499	\$4,616	\$6,093	\$6,954	\$7,632	\$7,059	.	\$7,028
2014	\$4,414	\$5,144	\$6,899	\$7,511	\$7,992	.	.	\$7,317
2015	\$4,901	\$6,398	\$6,889	\$6,830	.	.	.	\$6,746
Overall	\$4,715	\$5,238	\$6,763	\$7,277	\$7,996	\$8,494	\$9,707	\$7,594
<b>Qualified for UI Benefits:</b>								
2011	66.2%	.	.	70.3%	75.0%	75.0%	75.7%	74.1%
2012	58.7%	.	.	73.2%	77.8%	70.6%	73.8%	73.9%
2013	58.6%	.	.	76.4%	80.0%	70.2%	.	75.9%
2014	59.0%	.	.	70.8%	72.4%	.	.	72.9%
2015	64.3%	.	.	74.6%	.	.	.	.
Overall	61.3%	.	.	73.0%	76.3%	71.9%	74.7%	74.2%
<b>Filed UI Claim:</b>								
2011	5.9%	0.7%	2.7%	2.7%	3.4%	2.0%	0.0%	1.8%
2012	4.4%	2.0%	2.0%	0.7%	0.7%	0.0%	0.0%	1.1%
2013	4.1%	1.4%	3.6%	2.1%	0.0%	0.0%	.	1.0%
2014	3.5%	0.0%	1.9%	0.0%	0.0%	.	.	0.2%
2015	0.5%	0.9%	2.7%	0.0%	.	.	.	1.8%
Overall	3.7%	1.0%	2.6%	1.1%	1.0%	0.7%	0.0%	1.2%

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.

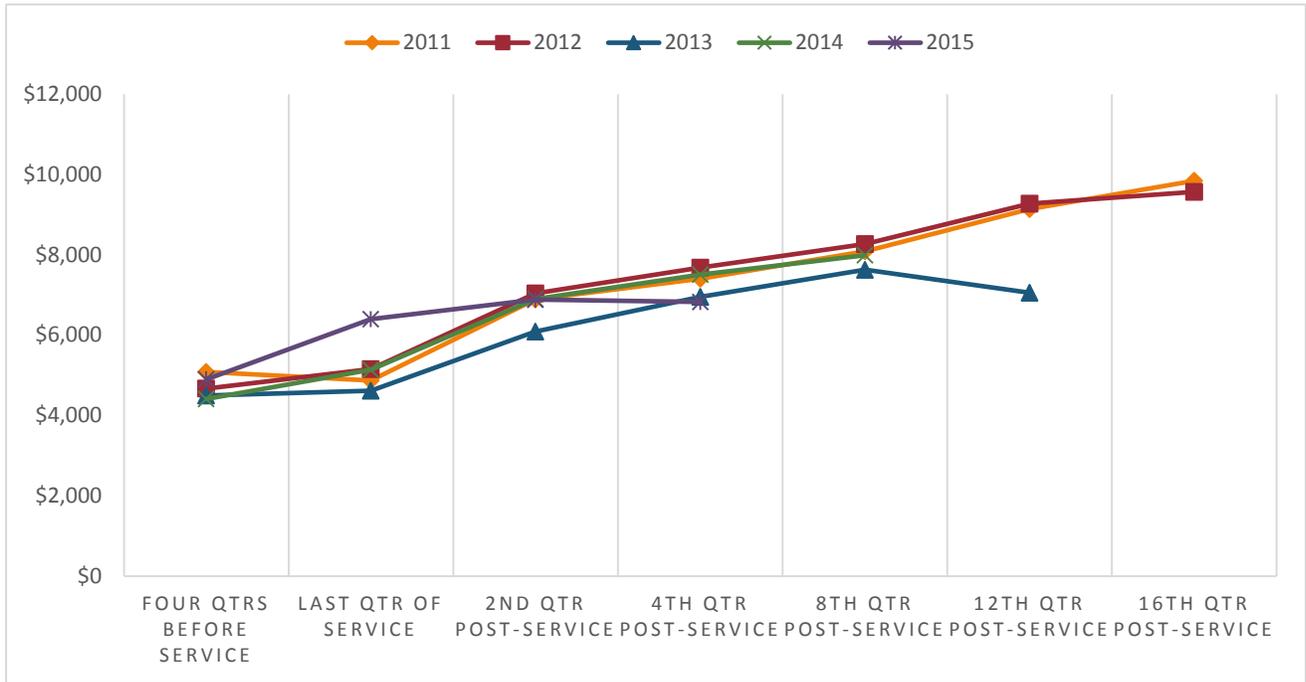
In the four quarters prior to enrolling in Capital IDEA, overall quarterly employment for participants was roughly 66%. In the last quarter of participation, that rate rose to 69%. Participants continued to exhibit strong employment levels (close to or above 75%) during the four years post-service and across all post-service quarters through December 2014 (Figure 7).

**Figure 7. Average Quarterly Employment of Capital IDEA 2011-2015 Exitters**



Exitters in the pre-service period averaged \$4,715 for employed participants. In all post-service quarters, Capital IDEA exitters earned an average of \$7,594, an increase of 61% over their pre-service earnings. The earnings trajectories of Capital IDEA’s 2011-2015 exitters are shown in Figure 8.

**Figure 8. Average Quarterly Earnings of Employed Capital IDEA 2011-2015 Exiters**



Overall, approximately 61% 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%. Three point seven percent of all Capital IDEA participants filed a claim for UI benefits in the pre-service period.

Goodwill Industries of Central Texas provides services to justice involved individuals, 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 2011 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 (R2W) was accessible at several locations throughout Travis County, 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 supported the program, Travis County funding was primarily targeted to justice involved individuals while city funding was used to support homeless individuals. Approximately 65% of individuals included in this report were justice involved, by far the largest documented share of justice involved individuals in the program array supported by Travis County.<sup>28</sup>

For FY 2016, R2W services are delivered through WERC-TC funds administered by Workforce Solutions. There was little change in the program when R2W was folded into WERC-TC. Both share the focus 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

---

<sup>28</sup> Goodwill is the only provider that reports Judicial Involvement 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.

collaboration with WERC-CoA partners along a continuum of education, training, and employment 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 for the County program in 2015 was \$10 per hour for Ready to Work overall and rose to \$11 under WERC-TC. Goodwill targets \$12.50 internally as a livable wage threshold for those who receive substantive training through the Goodwill Career Academy and WERC partners.<sup>29</sup> GCA is now known as the Goodwill Career and Technical Academy (GCTA). In September 2015, Goodwill re-organized its three workforce divisions (Job Source, Youth and Community Rehabilitation Program) as Workforce Advancement (WFA), which is staffed by Business Solutions Placement Specialists and Career Case Managers. Beyond Goodwill sites, CCMs are outstationed at several community partners, including the Austin Resource Center for the Homeless (ARCH), Salvation Army, Safeplace, and Foundation Communities.

Since 2004, Goodwill's workforce development emphasis has grown exponentially. From a staff of 7 in 2004, the team now has approximately 70 full-time employees. Target groups include not only justice involved individuals, but also those with low-levels of education, the disabled, and the homeless. GICT Workforce Advancement is functionally a One-Stop shop for workforce services providing a service array that spans assessment, service planning, job readiness and placement services and short- to long-term training. Goodwill staff not only input client service data for WERC-TC clients in the Empowered Case Management system for

---

<sup>29</sup> Goodwill closed the GCA on East 6<sup>th</sup> Street in 2015 and relocated 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>.

that effort, but also collect much more detailed information from clients in its in-house ECM system to assure that the most appropriate array of resources and opportunities for advancement can be packaged for its clients.

The County funding permits Goodwill to provide paid internships for WERC-TC participants, an option that boosts the prospects for client success in the labor market. Additionally, all training provided with County funds must be with entities on the Workforce Solutions Eligible Training Provider list and lead to a credential. Goodwill goes a step further by requiring the credential to be industry recognized. Truck driver/CDL training has proven an effective training path for the employment of the justice involved.

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 justice involved individuals to develop strategies for responding to employers' questions about their judicial involvement. 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.

Approximately 16 percent of its clients in 2015 came from Del Valle Correctional Center and nearly 19 percent were from ARCH and other downtown homeless service providers. All Goodwill workforce staff members are certified in Offender Employment Services. The Ready-to-Work program offered classes pre- and post-release for Del Valle inmates (and WERC-TC continues to do so) that focused on peer support and mentoring. This is part of the effort towards simplifying reentry into the community. Job readiness training for the justice involved 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 justice involved individuals, 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>30</sup>

### **SUPPORT SERVICES**

As part of County-funded 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 participants, based on their individual needs, include transportation, help in obtaining identification cards, childcare 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. 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 Integral Care Assistance 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>31</sup>

Of the 1,218 exiters from 2010 to 2015 in the outcomes evaluation, most were male (57.3%) and just over a third were Black (36.5%) or White (28.3%) with a lower share of

---

<sup>30</sup> Goodwill's operative approach is called Transtheoretical Cognitive Transformation.

<sup>31</sup> As noted by staff, a state prison ID card is not a good employment tool.

Hispanic (26.6%) participants. More than half (51.8%) were between 30 and 49 years old, with an average age of 41. Goodwill participants were more likely to live in east Austin (29.6%) than in other areas of town. Over half (64.9%) of the sample were judicially involved and 10.8% received public benefits. Demographic details are provided in Appendix A.

## PARTICIPANT OUTCOMES

Table 5 provides an overview of Goodwill’s 2011-2015 exiter outcomes.

**Table 5. Goodwill 2011-2015 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):	1217	1217	1217	966	539	445	348	
<b>Quarterly Employment:</b>								
2011	34.1%	50.0%	50.0%	46.6%	49.5%	49.0%	49.5%	50.0%
2012	36.2%	67.5%	69.0%	68.0%	63.6%	60.6%	58.5%	63.7%
2013	36.2%	56.9%	58.6%	58.6%	51.7%	63.9%	.	59.1%
2014	36.1%	56.6%	57.5%	55.7%	37.5%	.	.	53.3%
2015	54.4%	76.8%	74.9%	69.5%	.	.	.	72.4%
Overall	39.4%	61.6%	62.0%	59.7%	50.6%	57.8%	54.0%	59.7%
<b>Average Qrtly Earnings:</b>								
2011	\$3,267	\$3,621	\$3,857	\$4,309	\$4,788	\$4,962	\$6,261	\$4,988
2012	\$2,866	\$4,048	\$4,410	\$4,718	\$5,394	\$5,585	\$6,285	\$5,302
2013	\$3,237	\$3,355	\$4,590	\$4,187	\$4,978	\$4,556	.	\$4,573
2014	\$3,123	\$3,403	\$3,746	\$4,603	\$4,324	.	.	\$4,408
2015	\$3,931	\$4,450	\$5,378	\$5,283	.	.	.	\$5,413
Overall	\$3,285	\$3,776	\$4,396	\$4,620	\$4,871	\$5,035	\$6,273	\$4,937
<b>Qualified for UI Benefits:</b>								
2011	30.5%	.	.	42.7%	45.6%	48.5%	44.2%	44.6%
2012	33.0%	.	.	64.5%	60.1%	61.1%	52.1%	60.7%
2013	31.5%	.	.	55.2%	53.5%	63.9%	.	56.2%
2014	26.8%	.	.	48.8%	37.5%	.	.	46.6%
2015	41.2%	.	.	71.9%	.	.	.	.
Overall	32.6%	.	.	56.6%	49.2%	57.8%	48.1%	52.0%
<b>Filed UI Claim:</b>								
2011	3.5%	2.4%	3.4%	3.9%	1.9%	3.4%	0.0%	1.9%
2012	4.2%	3.0%	3.9%	1.5%	2.0%	0.0%	0.0%	1.9%
2013	5.2%	1.7%	1.7%	5.2%	0.0%	0.0%	.	1.5%
2014	2.4%	2.1%	0.6%	0.0%	0.0%	.	.	0.2%
2015	2.0%	2.4%	2.2%	2.4%	.	.	.	1.8%
Overall	3.5%	2.3%	2.4%	2.6%	1.0%	1.1%	0.0%	1.5%

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 2015 had large employment gains in the last quarter of service compared to 2014 participants (76.8 vs. 56.6, respectively). 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. Across all post-service quarters, approximately 60% of Goodwill’s 2011-2015 exiters were employed. Figure 9 illustrates the employment outcomes for Goodwill participants.

**Figure 9. Average Quarterly Employment of Goodwill 2011-2015 Exiters<sup>a</sup>**

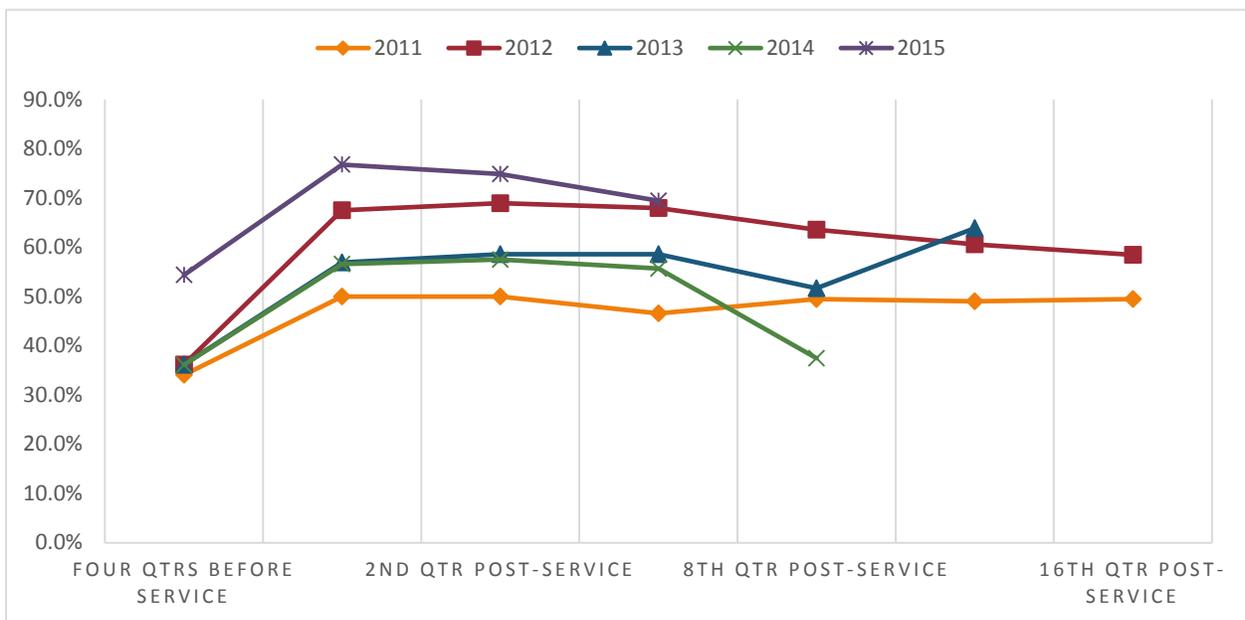
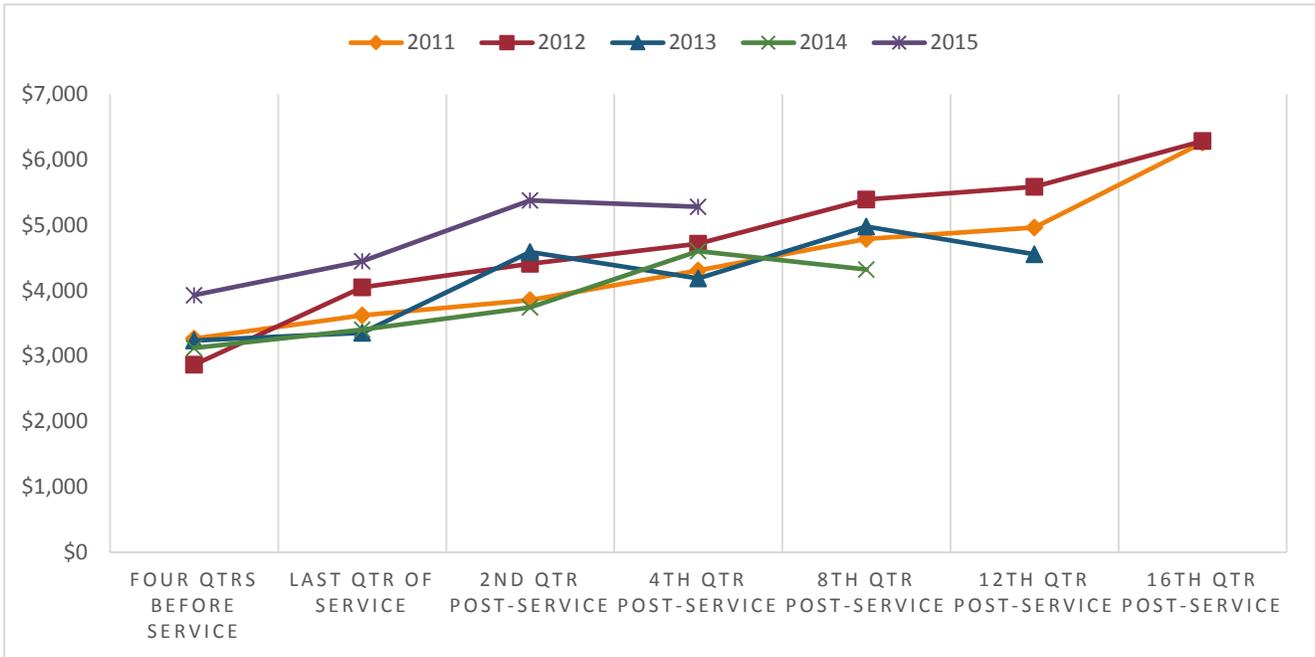


Figure 10 illustrates the average quarterly earnings of employed Goodwill participants. The 2015 exiters who were employed experienced, on average, a sizeable increase over 2014 participants in wages during the second quarter post services (\$5,378 vs. \$3,746, respectively). Overall, across the 2011-2015 cohorts, earnings average \$4,937 per quarter.

**Figure 10. Average Quarterly Earnings of Employed Goodwill 2011-2015 Exiters**



Based on their employment and earnings histories in the pre-service period, approximately 33% of Goodwill participants qualified for UI benefits. Across all post-service quarters, the share monetarily eligible for UI benefits grew to 52%. Three point five percent of Goodwill participants filed a claim for UI benefits in the four quarters prior to entering Goodwill training.

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 2011 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. Total County funding came to \$493,580 in FY 2015. 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.

Skillpoint's offerings are aligned with demand occupations with promising career pathways. 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.<sup>32</sup> 2012 saw HVAC and computer literacy added to the occupational options, followed by machinists in 2014.<sup>33</sup> More recently, Skillpoint added training for culinary arts and office administration. Currently, Skillpoint is researching welding with some concern for the cost of training, yet retaining the possibility that welding may be launched in FY 2017. Skillpoint had offered machine operator training in Travis County, but struggled with appropriate local placements.<sup>34</sup>

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

---

<sup>32</sup> Presently, some 60-65% of participants receive CNA training, followed by HVAC and electrical at about 10% in each. Conversation with Ben Holquist, Compliance & Evaluation Manager, and Amanda Longtain, Program Director, August 19, 2016. Skillpoint is concerned about low-wage (about \$10 per hour) for CNA, but appreciates rapid placements.

<sup>33</sup> In FY 2014-2015, Travis County funding supported the *Next*, a customized, fee-based, career advancement training and Empower, a computer literacy program. Beginning FY 2016, County funds were no longer applied to these options.

<sup>34</sup> Completers were under-employed as maintenance techs in the Austin area. Training was moved to Waco to take advantage of more robust manufacturing opportunities according to Ben Holquist, Compliance & Evaluation Manager, and Amanda Longtain, Program Director, August 19, 2016. Skillpoint's service catchment extends roughly from Waco in the North thru Hays County in the South, and from Taylor in the East to the fringe of the Hill Country in the West.

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) as a training provider, 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. Other training sites have included community centers and local ISD facilities. Since 2011, Gateway has expanded into other Central Texas counties, often through training partnerships with apprenticeship programs or unions. Credentials earned are industry recognized and many entry-level placements receive additional training from employers, notably so in construction.<sup>35</sup>

### **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. Childcare 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. Skillpoint regularly receives referrals for entry-level training from other local agencies to serve judicially involved and high-risk individuals.

### **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>

---

<sup>35</sup> Conversation with Ben Holquist, Compliance & Evaluation Manager, and Amanda Longtain, Program Director, August 19, 2016.

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>36</sup> Skillpoint estimates that 75-80 percent of their participants are fully unemployed and between 0-50 percent of FPIG, including juveniles involved with the justice system. Gateway serves individuals as young as 14 through 60 years of age. Increasingly, the lack of affordable housing has changed the county demographics and pushed many of the potential participants to ring counties; they cannot be served with County funds.

For Skillpoint, 750 exiters were included in the analyses. About one-third (36.3%) of participants were Hispanic, over a quarter was Black (29.6%), and another quarter was White (26.1%). Approximately 64% were between 20 and 39 years old, with an average age of 34. Gender distribution is uncertain because it is unknown for 11% of the exiters. Of the other 89%, 40.5% are male. Most had a high school education at program entry and 16.8% had attended or graduated from post-secondary schooling. Participants were more likely to come from south (21.2%) or east (20.5%) Austin, with a sizeable share coming from north Austin or the suburbs

---

<sup>36</sup> Conversation with Cat Newlands, Deputy Director, and Ben Holquist, Compliance and Evaluation Manager at Skillpoint, August 27, 2015.

north of the city (17.5% together). Less than a quarter (23.7%) of the sample had known judicial involvement. Demographic details are provided in Appendix A.

The largest shares of exiters had attended the CNA program, followed by the electrical program and construction, while the remaining enrolled in bookkeeping/office administration, HVAC, plumbing or machine operation. Skillpoint was a WERC-CoA partner through FY 2015.

#### **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>37</sup> Therefore, the outcomes presented here likely under-estimate actual outcomes for Gateway participants. Skillpoint noted that Gateway participants benefit from the regional construction boom and the high worker demand in the industry, CNA market demand is also high, in part due to an aging population, but that wages have been flat for the last three years. As a result, achieving placement wage targets is a challenge, given the large share of CNA participants. The target wage in 2015 of \$11 per hour rose to \$12 in FY 2016, but average placement wage has remained the same at about \$11.20 per hour.<sup>38</sup>

As presented in Table 6, the four quarters prior to entry, quarterly employment in a UI-covered job in Texas averaged 48.2% but varied widely among the exiting cohorts, from 37.3% for those who exited in 2011 up to 56.4% for those who exited in 2015. All cohorts exhibited stronger employment rates in the second quarter after leaving services, at an average employment rate of 69.5%, after which employment rates remained stable or dropped slightly. Across all post-service quarters, more than half (68.6%) of the Gateway program’s participants were employed, an impressive 20.4 percentage point increase over pre-program employment rates. Table 6 also indicates that in the four quarters prior to entering Gateway roughly 41% of the program’s participants met the monetary eligibility requirements for UI benefits. Across all

---

<sup>37</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.

<sup>38</sup> Conversation with Ben Holquist, Compliance & Evaluation Manager, and Amanda Longtain, Program Director, August 19, 2016.

post-service quarters, 64.3% of Gateway's 2011-2015 exiters met the monetary eligibility standard. Approximately 4% participants filed a UI benefit claim before entering training; only 0.8% filed a claim across all post-service quarters.

Figure 11 illustrates the quarterly employment outcomes for 2011 through 2015 Gateway program exiters. Table 6 provides an overview of Gateway participant outcomes.

**Table 6. Skillpoint Alliance’s Gateway Program 2011-2015 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):	749	749	749	653	512	406	232	
<b>Quarterly Employment:</b>								
2011	37.3%	40.0%	65.0%	65.0%	67.1%	60.0%	57.9%	61.3%
2012	48.6%	48.7%	68.7%	70.3%	69.7%	64.6%	54.4%	66.5%
2013	44.4%	52.9%	65.6%	68.2%	68.8%	76.1%	.	70.1%
2014	54.1%	64.1%	71.8%	72.7%	65.0%	.	.	70.6%
2015	56.4%	57.1%	76.4%	77.3%	.	.	.	74.2%
Overall	48.2%	52.6%	69.5%	70.7%	67.7%	66.9%	56.1%	68.6%
<b>Average Qrtly Earnings:</b>								
2011	\$3,266	\$2,144	\$4,520	\$4,741	\$5,138	\$6,033	\$6,678	\$5,531
2012	\$4,066	\$2,976	\$4,571	\$4,767	\$5,169	\$6,499	\$5,218	\$5,382
2013	\$4,003	\$3,230	\$4,826	\$4,945	\$6,100	\$5,580	.	\$5,269
2014	\$3,652	\$2,348	\$4,343	\$4,656	.	.	.	\$4,740
2015	\$4,099	\$2,808	\$4,708	\$5,329	.	.	.	\$4,565
Overall	\$3,817	\$2,701	\$4,593	\$4,888	\$5,469	\$6,038	\$5,948	\$5,097
<b>Qualified for UI Benefits:</b>								
2011	32.9%	.	.	61.4%	62.1%	57.1%	55.7%	58.6%
2012	46.8%	.	.	66.2%	64.6%	61.0%	48.9%	63.1%
2013	43.0%	.	.	65.0%	68.2%	78.9%	.	66.8%
2014	40.6%	.	.	71.8%	60.0%	.	.	68.8%
2015	50.7%	.	.	72.7%	.	.	.	.
Overall	42.8%	.	.	67.4%	63.7%	65.7%	52.3%	64.3%
<b>Filed UI Claim:</b>								
2011	3.0%	5.7%	0.0%	2.1%	1.4%	0.0%	0.0%	1.1%
2012	6.7%	2.1%	2.6%	5.1%	2.1%	0.0%	0.0%	1.5%
2013	3.8%	3.2%	3.2%	1.3%	0.0%	0.0%	.	1.2%
2014	2.4%	0.9%	0.9%	0.0%	0.0%	.	.	0.3%
2015	3.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	.	.	.	0.2%
Overall	3.8%	2.4%	1.3%	1.7%	0.9%	0.0%	0.0%	0.8%

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.

Table 6 also indicates that in the four quarters prior to entering Gateway roughly 41% of the program’s participants met the monetary eligibility requirements for UI benefits. Across all post-service quarters, 64.3% of Gateway’s 2011-2015 exiters met the monetary eligibility standard. Approximately 4% participants filed a UI benefit claim before entering training; only 0.8% filed a claim across all post-service quarters.

**Figure 11. Average Quarterly Employment of Skillpoint Alliance’s Gateway Program 2011-2015 Exiters<sup>a</sup>**

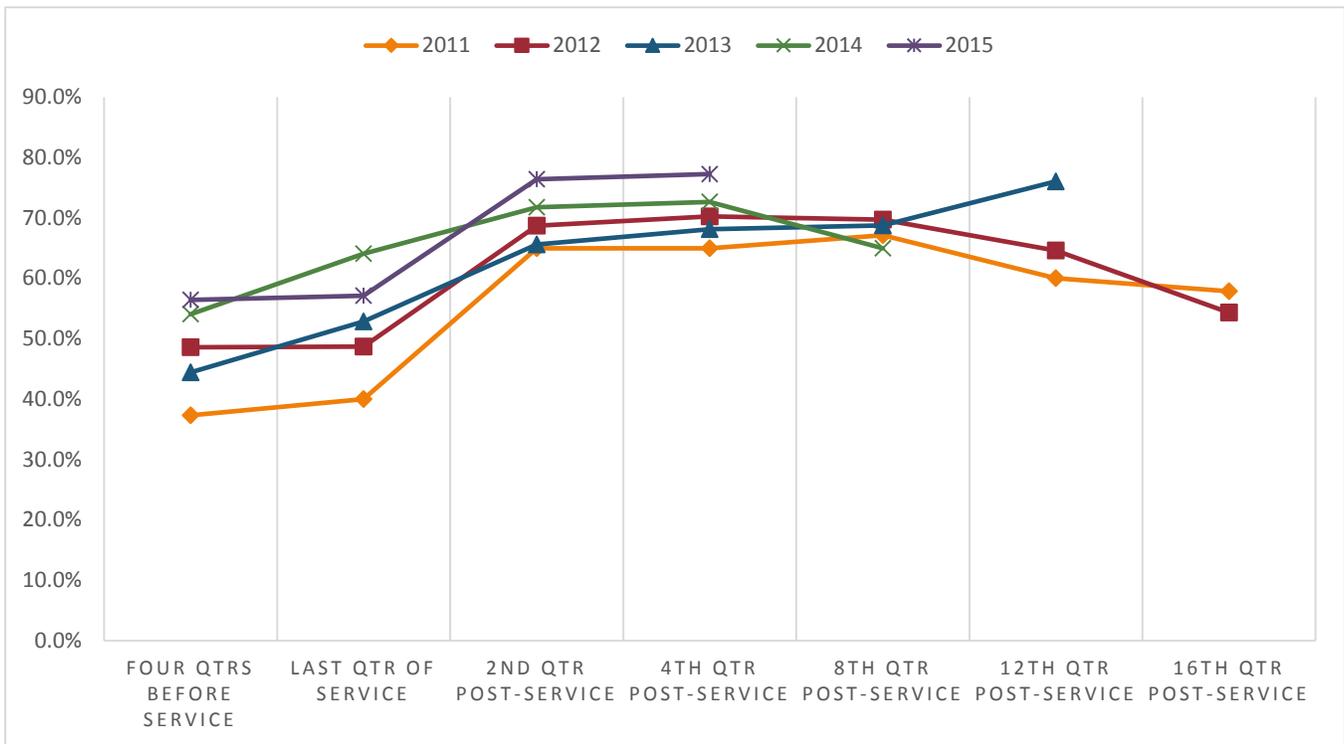
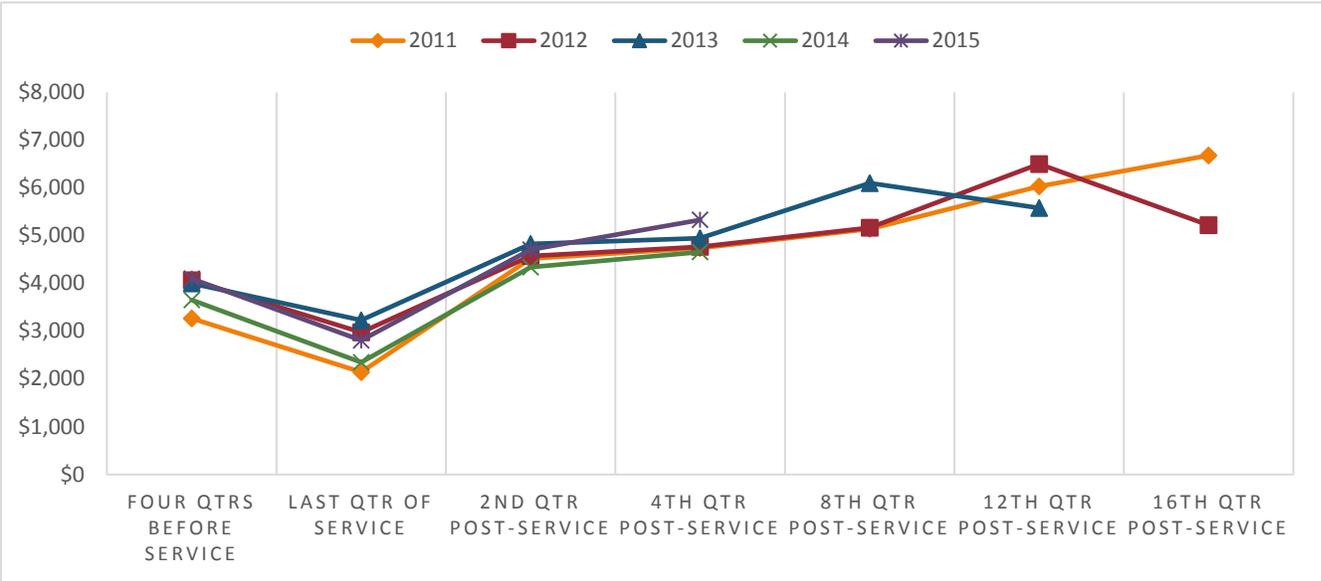


Figure 12, earnings rose rapidly in the first two quarters after exiting Gateway for all cohorts. In the post-service period, most cohorts showed earnings gains, on average, in each quarter studied. Across all exiting cohorts, average earnings were 33% higher in post-service quarters than in pre-service quarters.

**Figure 12. Average Quarterly Earnings of Employed Skillpoint Alliance’s**

### Gateway Program 2011-2015 Exiters



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, and rose to \$493,580 in FY 2015.

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



For more information visit:  
[www.wfscapitalarea.com](http://www.wfscapitalarea.com)

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

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

Workforce Solutions—Capital Area Workforce Board operated the Travis County-funded Rapid Employment Model (REM) program through FY 2015. It launched in 2006 as a pilot demonstration project, then transitioned to regular workforce program operations embedded in the continuous workforce services array available at the Workforce Solutions career centers and through its community partnerships. The program was funded exclusively by Travis County. In FY 2016 the program and its funding were folded into the WERC-TC effort. The Board subcontracts with C2-GPS, which delivers services as part of its Workforce Solutions operating contract.

### **RAPID EMPLOYMENT MODEL**

The purpose of the REM program was 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 justice involved individuals, 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 keynote features 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 2015 was \$16.31 per hour, well above the \$12 target set in the contract.<sup>39</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/Literacy Coalition, 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 for identifying participants' barriers, needs, and goals for employment, as well as considerations related to working conditions, and other factors related to target occupations. The program specialist discusses training options and opportunities with

---

<sup>39</sup> Miranda, 2016, p.62

each participant. The focus is on employment rather than training with those for whom this is an appropriate service track. The TABE test is given to those seeking short-term training services to assess their readiness level for the desired skills training.<sup>40</sup> Since October 2011, REM has provided “individualized, tailored case management services to clients.”<sup>41</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. REM was discontinued at the end of FY2015 and participants were transitioned into WERC-TC, mainly for follow-up services.<sup>42</sup> The employment and training service options basically remained consistent and there was a slight change in policy regarding incentives. The notable change in the WERC transition is the availability of paid internships with County funds.

#### **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 four years the incentive or “stipend” had been set at \$25 per week for perfect attendance in training only; no longer are any payments held in reserve.<sup>43</sup> Under WERC-TC there is no incentive for weekly

---

<sup>40</sup> TABE scores may be entered in TWIST. RMC will investigate the policies and consistency of data entry in the 2017 update. Scores may provide a reasonable data source for measuring educational learning gains for WERC-TC participants.

<sup>41</sup> Lyman. (2013). P. 58.

<sup>42</sup> There were no new enrollments in REM training towards the end of 2015 as Workforce Solutions prepared for the transition to and implementation of WERC-TC. Conversation with Yael Trevino, Manager, Workforce Development Contracts and Amy Dutton, Special Projects Manager at Capital Area WIB on August 29, 2016.

<sup>43</sup> Conversation with Tamara Atkinson, Deputy Executive Director, and Yael Trevino, Manager, Workforce

attendance and the incentive amount for employment entry and retention milestones has been set at \$25.<sup>44</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 justice involved individuals.<sup>45</sup> Workforce Solutions regularly conducts “in-reach” for REM and WERC-TC prospects at the County’s Del Valle Corrections Facility and also seeks referrals from probation officers. Other referral sources for REM include TANF Choices and SNAP. WERC-TC partners recruit at criminal justice transition sites and other community centers which subsequently results in referrals to Workforce Solutions as well. Through co-enrollment, these programs provide the 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 487 REM exiters included in this report, more than 70% were male and nearly half were Black (43.6%) with Hispanic and White participants each making up about a quarter of the sample (27.4% and 22.6%, respectively). The average age was 38 years old and participants were most likely to live in east (27%) or south (23%) Austin. Just over half of the participants (52.1%) had a high school diploma or GED at program entry, and a sizeable share (40%) reported having attended or graduated from post-secondary schooling. A large share of the sample (nearly 43%) have been judicially involved. Demographic details are provided in Appendix A.

---

Development Contracts at Capital Area WIB on August 28, 2015.

<sup>44</sup> Conversation with Yael Trevino, Manager, Workforce Development Contracts and Amy Dutton, Special Projects Manager at Capital Area WIB on August 29, 2016.

<sup>45</sup> Authorization and appropriations for Project RIO ceased in November 2011 following action by the Texas Legislature.

## **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 7 below provides an overview of labor market outcomes of REM 2011-2015 exiters.

**Table 7. Workforce Solutions – REM Program 2011-2015 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):	486	486	486	481	374	207	63	
<b>Quarterly Employment:</b>								
2011	22.0%	23.8%	45.2%	52.4%	52.4%	42.9%	52.4%	49.2%
2012	42.4%	60.5%	59.3%	66.3%	62.8%	64.0%	66.7%	62.9%
2013	44.8%	62.0%	67.4%	68.2%	62.8%	53.2%	.	64.2%
2014	58.2%	58.7%	65.7%	65.2%	60.7%	.	.	64.6%
2015	62.5%	67.9%	60.7%	82.6%	.	.	.	70.9%
Overall	46.0%	54.6%	59.7%	66.9%	59.7%	53.3%	59.5%	62.4%
<b>Average Qrtly Earnings:</b>								
2011	\$2,536	.	.	\$3,136	\$3,989	.	\$7,283	\$5,155
2012	\$3,221	\$3,897	\$5,236	\$5,870	\$6,964	\$6,859	.	\$6,614
2013	\$4,866	\$4,927	\$6,967	\$7,504	\$8,025	\$7,590	.	\$7,353
2014	\$5,481	\$4,871	\$5,305	\$6,125	\$6,770	.	.	\$5,955
2015	\$3,424	\$2,119	\$5,813	\$6,230	.	.	.	\$5,492
Overall	\$3,906	\$3,954	\$5,830	\$5,773	\$6,437	\$7,224	\$7,283	\$6,114
<b>Qualified for UI Benefits:</b>								
2011	29.8%	.	.	40.5%	40.5%	42.9%	40.5%	41.0%
2012	36.9%	.	.	53.5%	60.5%	60.5%	52.4%	59.4%
2013	45.7%	.	.	67.4%	59.7%	53.2%	.	63.7%
2014	50.3%	.	.	62.7%	61.5%	.	.	63.0%
2015	41.1%	.	.	78.3%	.	.	.	.
Overall	40.7%	.	.	60.5%	55.5%	52.2%	46.4%	56.8%
<b>Filed UI Claim:</b>								
2011	4.2%	2.4%	0.0%	2.4%	2.4%	2.4%	0.0%	1.0%
2012	6.7%	3.5%	1.2%	2.3%	4.7%	0.0%	0.0%	1.7%
2013	11.8%	3.1%	3.9%	3.9%	0.0%	0.0%	.	1.7%
2014	6.1%	5.5%	1.0%	0.0%	0.0%	.	.	0.3%
2015	1.8%	7.1%	3.6%	0.0%	.	.	.	0.9%
Overall	6.1%	4.3%	1.9%	1.7%	1.8%	0.8%	0.0%	1.1%

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. 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 13. Employment in pre-service quarters ranged from 22% for the 2011 exiters to 62.5% for the 2015 exiters. 2015 exiters were substantially more likely to be employed in the 4<sup>th</sup> quarter post service than their 2014 counterparts (82.6% vs. 65.2% respectively). Across all post-service quarters, approximately 62.4% of REM 2011-2015 exiters were employed.

**Figure 13. Average Quarterly Employment of REM Program 2011-2015 Exiters**

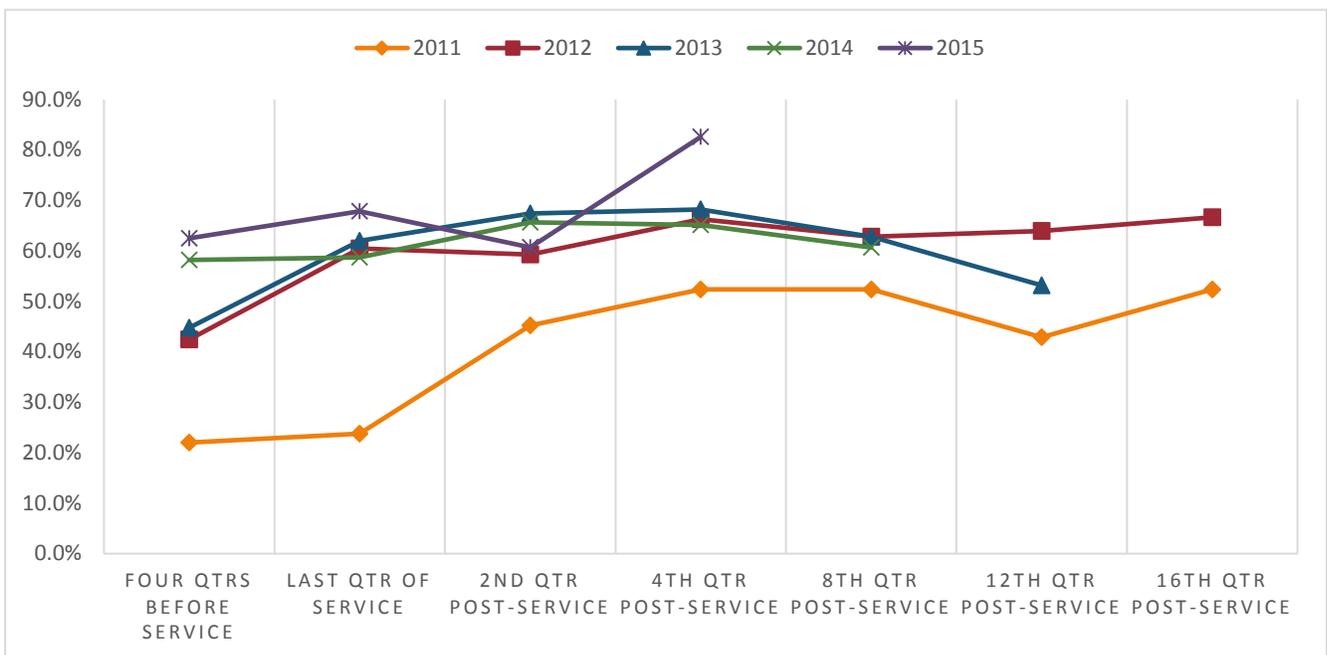
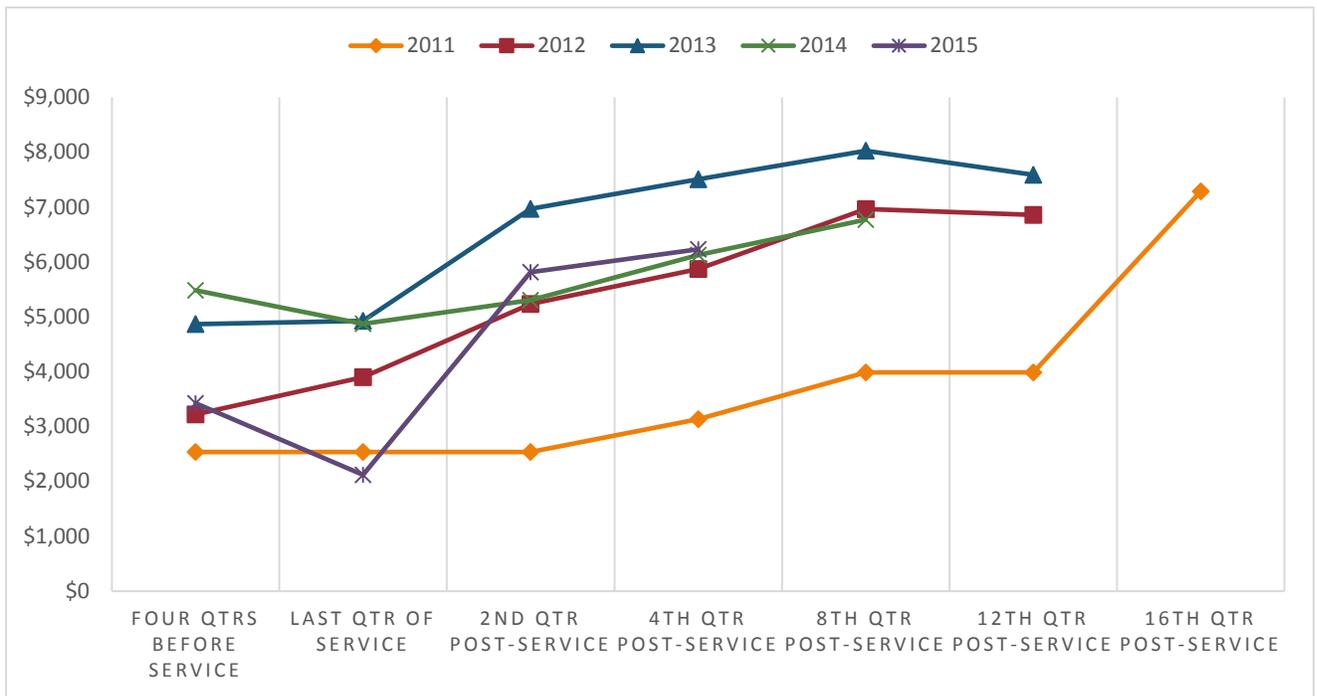


Figure 14 illustrates that the average quarterly earnings of employed REM participants varied widely by annual cohort. As with employment rates, the later cohorts experienced higher income prior to entering the program; the 2015 exiting cohort had pre-service earnings 35% higher than those of the 2011 exiting cohort. On average, overall earnings across all quarters is \$6,114, which is a 56% increase over pre-service earnings.

**Figure 14. Average Quarterly Earnings of Employed REM Program 2011-2015 Exitters**



The share of participants who met monetary eligibility requirements for UI benefits also varies significantly by cohort. Overall, almost 40.7% of participants were qualified based on their employment histories in the pre-service period. Across all post-service quarters, that share rose to 56.8%. The overall share filing a claim for UI benefits dropped from an average 6.1% in the four quarters prior to entering REM to just about 1% per quarter on average in the post-service period.

## **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/Literacy Coalition and service learning at American YouthWorks; short-term skills training and job readiness at REM, Goodwill, Skillpoint, and 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 justice involvement, 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 21 years compared to 41 years in Goodwill's Ready-to-Work program; Goodwill serves nearly two-thirds males, while Ascend/Literacy Coalition serves 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 (2011-2015) 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 YouthWorks 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%, with the exception of the 2015 cohort at 29%), the overall employment rate at American YouthWorks increased nearly 28 percentage points (from 22.1% prior to service, to an average of 49.8% across all cohorts and all post-service quarters) among 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 nearly an 8.5 percentage point gain in all post-service quarters. Ascend/Literacy Coalition and Austin Area Urban League had similar gains overall between the pre- and post-service quarters overall, at 13.2 and 15.4 percentage point gains, respectively. The pre- post- quarterly employment gain stood at about 16.4 percentage points for Workforce Solutions REM and 20.4 percentage points for Skillpoint and Goodwill.

The earnings outcomes associated with the increased employment also varied across providers. Although positive overall, the quarterly earnings gains by the fourth year post-service from the earliest cohort (2011) of participants covered in this report for AAUL participants (\$1,607), Ascend/Literacy Coalition (\$1,404), were relatively low. Skillpoint (\$3,412), Goodwill (\$2,994), American YouthWorks (\$2,732), and Workforce Solutions (\$4,747) registered more substantial gains. As in all previous analyses, participants of Capital IDEA, the long-term, career path training provider in the evaluation, showed the strongest earnings gains (\$4,756) in the post-service period.<sup>46 47</sup> Across all cohorts from 2011 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>48</sup> Only Capital IDEA, at earnings of \$7,594, annualized at \$30,376, for employed exiters across all post service quarters

---

<sup>46</sup> See Smith, et al., various years.

<sup>47</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>48</sup> Per capita income reported in June 2014 at <http://www.bestplaces.net/economy/city/texas/austin>.

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>49</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 range for all post-service quarters range from 44% at American YouthWorks to 75% at Capital IDEA. American YouthWorks, where very few participants (12.2%) qualified for UI in the four quarters prior to service, exhibits the largest gain in this measures (32.1 percentage points); Capital IDEA (12.9 percentage points), Goodwill (9.4 percentage points), and Ascend/Literacy Coalition (8.2 percentage points) registered much smaller gains, although Capital IDEA and Goodwill began with relatively larger shares of their participants having qualified for benefits prior to service. Skillpoint (21.5 percentage points), Workforce Solutions (16.1 percentage points) 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 (generally fewer than 2%). Overall, Ascend/Literacy Coalition participants saw a 77% reduction in claims filed over all post-service quarters when compared to claims filed prior to program entry; AAUL saw a 63% reduction; Capital IDEA saw a 67% reduction; Goodwill saw a 57% reduction; Skillpoint saw a 79% reduction; and Workforce Solutions saw the largest reduction among all of the programs of 82%.

## **NEXT STEPS**

The 2016 update assesses outcomes and impacts of exiters through December 2015. Both providers and programs were in transition for all or part of that year. For example, Ascend merged with 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

---

<sup>49</sup> See the Center for Public Policy Priorities budget calculator at <http://www.familybudgets.org/>.

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 YouthWorks, 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 increased the capacity and breadth of workforce services available to residents in need of assistance. Target numbers served are 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 are also used as the local match for drawing down Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program Employment and Training (SNAP E&T) funds which will strengthen and increase services for REM/WERC participants.

As such, the Ray Marshall Center and Travis County agreed that the annual evaluation updates as presently produced will change after this report on program outcomes through December 2015. Researchers have met with the Director of the Research & Planning Division and staff at Travis County HHS to probe methods for potential “value add-ons” for the future reports and the transition to the new series beginning with FY 2016. There are several approaches being considered to enhance the evaluation next year and beyond, including analyses of effects associated with WERC-TC and results for key target populations (e.g., at-risk/homeless, justice involved, persons with disabilities, age groups, race/ethnicity, etc.). The analysis will switch 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. 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 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. The *Travis County Workforce Evaluation FY 2017-2021 Prospectus*, which should be understood as a working document as research details, data availability, resources, and capacity are under continuing review, is attached as Appendix C.

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. 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.

## BIBLIOGRAPHY

- Bissonnet Lucas, Courtney (2011). *2010 Community Impact Report Part II: Performance Highlights*. Austin, TX: Travis County Health and Human Services & Veterans Service Department. March.
- Bissonnet Lucas, Courtney (2012). *2011 Community Impact Report Part II: Performance Highlights*. Austin, TX: Travis County Health and Human Services & Veterans Service Department. March.
- Card, J. Kluge and A. Weber (2009). *Active Labor Market Policy Evaluations: A Meta-Analysis*, CESifo Working Paper No. 2570, March.
- Glover, Robert W., Dan O'Shea, Christopher T. King, Laura Stelling and Richard Fonté (2012). *Workforce Potential Project: Analysis of Area Labor Market and Provider Capacity Final Report*. Austin, TX: Ray Marshall Center for the Study of Human Resources, Lyndon B. Johnson School of Public Affairs, University of Texas at Austin, September.
- Lyman, Lawrence (2013). "Workforce Development." *2012 Community Impact Report*. Austin, TX: Travis County Health and Human Services & Veterans Service Department. March.
- Miranda, Lori Axler (2014). *2013 Community Impact Report Part II: Performance Highlights*. Austin, TX: Travis County Health and Human Services & Veterans Service Department. March.
- Miranda, Lori Axler (2015). "Workforce Development." *2014 Community Impact Report*. Austin, TX: Travis County Health and Human Services & Veterans Service Department. March.
- Miranda, Lori Axler (2016). "Workforce Development." *2014 Community Impact Report*. Austin, TX: Travis County Health and Human Services & Veterans Service Department. March.
- Matvy, Rachel. (2012). "Job Training for Youth – Service to Low Income Home Owners." Blog post. Austin, TX: American YouthWorks. October 4, 2012.
- O'Shea, Dan, Christopher T. King and Harry Lindner (2011). *Strategically Positioning Goodwill Industries of Central Texas*. Austin, TX: Ray Marshall Center for the Study of Human Resources, Lyndon B. Johnson School of Public Affairs, University of Texas at Austin, June.
- O'Shea, Dan, Kristin Christensen, Greg Cumpton. (2016). *An Evaluation of Local Investments in Workforce Development: 2015 Update*. Austin, TX: Ray Marshall Center for the Study of Human Resources, Lyndon B. Johnson School of Public Affairs, The University of Texas. June.
- Smith, Tara C., Christopher T. King, and Daniel G. Schroeder (2011). *Local Investments in Workforce Development: 2011 Evaluation Update*. Austin, TX: Ray Marshall Center for the Study of Human Resources, Lyndon B. Johnson School of Public Affairs, The University of Texas. April.
- Smith, Tara C., Christopher T. King, and Daniel G. Schroeder (2012). *Local Investments in Workforce Development: 2012 Evaluation Update*. Austin, TX: Ray Marshall Center for the Study of Human Resources, Lyndon B. Johnson School of Public Affairs, The University of Texas. January.
- Smith, Tara C., Christopher T. King, and Daniel G. Schroeder (2012). *Evaluation of Local Workforce Demonstration Projects: Travis County's REM and GEM Projects*. Austin, TX: Ray Marshall Center for the Study of Human Resources, Lyndon B. Johnson School of Public Affairs, The University of Texas. January.
- Smith, Tara, Kristin Christensen, Daniel G. Schroeder, and Christopher T. King. (2012). *The Local Investments in Workforce Development Evaluation: Travis County-funded 2009/2010 Participants Plus Longer-Term Outcomes for Capital IDEA*. Austin, TX: Ray Marshall Center for the Study of Human Resources, Lyndon B. Johnson School of Public Affairs, The University of Texas. December.
- Smith, Tara, Kristin Christensen, Daniel Schroeder. (2013). *An Evaluation of Local Investments in*

*Workforce Development: 2013 Update*. Austin, TX: Ray Marshall Center for the Study of Human Resources, Lyndon B. Johnson School of Public Affairs, The University of Texas. December.

Smith, Tara, Kristin Christensen, Greg Cumpton. (2015). *An Evaluation of Local Investments in Workforce Development: 2014 Update*. Austin, TX: Ray Marshall Center for the Study of Human Resources, Lyndon B. Johnson School of Public Affairs, The University of Texas. June.

Stevens, David W. (2007). *Employment That Is Not Covered by State Unemployment Insurance Laws*. Technical Paper No. TP-2007-04. Suitland, MD: U.S. Census Bureau, LEHD Program, May.

Workers Defense Project (2009). *Building Austin, Building Injustice*. Austin, TX: Workers Defense Project.

## 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 2011-2015 Program Exiters**

	Austin Area Urban League	American Youth Works	Capital IDEA	Goodwill	Ascend/Literacy Coalition	Skillpoint	Workforce Solutions
<b>Number of Participants</b>	648	648	659	1218	476	751	487
Number of records removed due to no SSN	5	0	0	0	0	1	1
<b>Number of unduplicated participants included in analysis</b>	643	648	659	1218	476	750	486
<b>Gender</b>							
Female	56.0%	44.4%	58.7%	42.5%	66.2%	48.5%	28.4%
Male	43.9%	55.6%	21.7%	57.3%	33.6%	40.5%	71.2%
Missing/Unknown	0.2%	0.0%	19.6%	0.2%	0.2%	10.9%	0.4%
<b>Race/Ethnicity</b>							
White	11.4%	42.7%	21.9%	28.3%	16.4%	26.1%	22.6%
Black	64.9%	11.0%	26.3%	36.5%	28.4%	29.6%	43.6%
Hispanic	18.8%	39.4%	13.7%	26.6%	50.0%	36.3%	27.4%
Other	5.0%	6.2%	27.9%	3.8%	3.8%	5.3%	6.4%
Missing/Unknown	0.0%	0.8%	10.3%	4.8%	1.5%	2.7%	0.0%
<b>Age</b>							
14 - 19 years	8.9%	43.2%	6.1%	1.1%	9.2%	5.3%	0.6%
20 - 29 years	24.7%	54.2%	39.8%	18.6%	37.0%	35.7%	16.0%
30 - 39 years	20.7%	0.3%	29.0%	26.1%	26.9%	28.4%	27.6%
40 - 49 years	18.7%	0.0%	10.9%	25.7%	12.6%	17.3%	21.8%
50 - 59 years	19.6%	0.0%	3.5%	22.8%	11.3%	10.5%	9.5%
60 years and older	6.4%	0.0%	0.5%	5.3%	1.9%	1.7%	2.3%

	Austin Area Urban League	American Youth Works	Capital IDEA	Goodwill	Ascend/Literacy Coalition	Skillpoint	Workforce Solutions
Missing/Unknown	1.1%	2.3%	10.3%	0.4%	1.1%	0.9%	22.2%
Average Age	38	21	31	41	33	34	39
<b>Education Level</b>							
Less than 12th grade	15.4%	55.1%	3.0%	10.4%	70.0%	9.7%	7.2%
12th grade or GED	56.1%	32.9%	56.6%	32.9%	21.6%	70.1%	52.1%
Attended or Graduated College	26.4%	10.0%	40.1%	25.5%	8.0%	16.8%	40.7%
Missing/Unknown	2.0%	2.0%	0.3%	31.2%	0.4%	3.3%	0.0%
<b>Area of Residence</b>							
Central Austin	5.8%	6.3%	1.2%	16.6%	5.5%	3.1%	2.5%
North Austin	33.0%	9.4%	21.9%	17.9%	13.9%	16.1%	18.9%
Northern Suburbs	9.0%	1.4%	5.8%	3.2%	3.6%	12.8%	7.8%
East Austin	33.7%	29.6%	16.5%	29.6%	39.9%	21.2%	25.7%
Eastern Suburbs	4.2%	2.6%	4.7%	10.2%	6.3%	8.8%	9.7%
South Austin	5.9%	34.6%	16.7%	16.3%	20.4%	20.5%	23.5%
Southern Suburbs	1.4%	2.0%	0.2%	1.6%	0.8%	5.5%	1.0%
West Austin	3.6%	2.2%	3.9%	2.5%	1.7%	3.3%	4.7%
Western Suburbs	0.9%	0.5%	0.3%	0.7%	0.2%	1.9%	1.2%
Other/Unknown	2.5%	11.4%	28.8%	1.4%	7.8%	6.8%	4.9%
<b>Judicial Involvement</b>							
Yes	10.7%	8.3%	13.2%	64.9%	20.2%	23.7%	42.6%
No	18.2%	7.6%	73.4%	34.8%	37.6%	75.3%	33.5%
Missing/Unknown	71.1%	84.1%	13.4%	0.2%	42.2%	0.9%	23.9%
<b>Receives Public Benefits</b>							
Yes	5.9%	0.0%	41.6%	10.8%	31.1%	4.7%	22.8%
No	12.6%	0.0%	58.4%	18.5%	25.2%	0.0%	3.9%
Missing/Unknown	81.5%	100.0%	0.0%	70.8%	43.7%	95.3%	73.3%
<b>Veteran</b>							
Yes	1.6%	0.0%	0.0%	2.7%	0.0%	0.0%	0.4%
No	6.1%	0.0%	0.0%	28.6%	6.1%	17.2%	5.3%
Missing/Unknown	92.4%	100.0%	100.0%	68.7%	93.9%	82.8%	94.2%

**Table A-2: Demographics of 2015 Exiters**

	Austin Area Urban League	American Youth Works	Capital IDEA	Goodwill	Ascend/Literacy Coalition	Skillpoint	Workforce Solutions
<b>Number of Participants</b>	49	119	112	433	37	310	29
Number of records removed due to no SSN	0	0	0	15	8	170	1
<b>Number of unduplicated participants included in analysis</b>	49	119	112	418	29	140	28
<b>Gender</b>							
Female	42.9%	36.1%	75.0%	53.8%	72.4%	51.4%	14.3%
Male	55.1%	63.9%	25.0%	45.7%	27.6%	48.6%	85.7%
Missing/Unknown	2.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.5%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%
<b>Race/Ethnicity</b>							
White	18.4%	52.1%	36.6%	22.7%	24.1%	23.6%	10.7%
Black	71.4%	14.3%	25.9%	39.2%	24.1%	33.6%	53.6%
Hispanic	10.2%	25.2%	8.0%	31.3%	48.3%	33.6%	25.0%
Other	0.0%	7.6%	29.5%	6.5%	3.4%	5.0%	10.7%
Missing/Unknown	0.0%	0.8%	0.0%	0.2%	0.0%	4.3%	0.0%
<b>Age</b>							
14 - 19 years	0.0%	24.4%	0.0%	0.2%	0.0%	2.1%	0.0%
20 - 29 years	16.3%	71.4%	37.5%	21.5%	37.9%	36.4%	17.9%
30 - 39 years	14.3%	0.0%	39.3%	28.7%	37.9%	29.3%	35.7%
40 - 49 years	26.5%	0.0%	15.2%	20.3%	6.9%	13.6%	28.6%
50 - 59 years	26.5%	0.0%	7.1%	23.9%	17.2%	15.7%	14.3%
60 years and older	14.3%	0.0%	0.9%	5.0%	0.0%	2.9%	3.6%
Missing/Unknown	2.0%	4.2%	0.0%	0.2%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%
Average Age	46	23	33	41	34	36	40
<b>Education Level</b>							
Less than 12th grade	8.2%	34.5%	0.9%	1.0%	65.5%	17.1%	3.6%
12th grade or GED	34.7%	16.8%	56.3%	2.2%	20.7%	27.9%	50.0%
Attended or Graduated College	30.6%	37.8%	41.1%	6.0%	6.9%	37.1%	46.4%
Missing/Unknown	26.5%	10.9%	1.8%	90.9%	6.9%	17.9%	0.0%
<b>Area of Residence</b>							
Central Austin	14.3%	8.4%	0.9%	6.0%	6.9%	3.6%	3.6%
North Austin	26.5%	7.6%	22.3%	25.4%	10.3%	20.0%	25.0%

	Austin Area Urban League	American Youth Works	Capital IDEA	Goodwill	Ascend/Literacy Coalition	Skillpoint	Workforce Solutions
Northern Suburbs	2.0%	1.7%	6.3%	2.9%	3.4%	9.3%	3.6%
East Austin	42.9%	36.1%	29.5%	25.8%	37.9%	27.9%	25.0%
Eastern Suburbs	8.2%	0.8%	5.4%	16.3%	3.4%	5.7%	7.1%
South Austin	6.1%	21.0%	29.5%	17.0%	37.9%	25.7%	28.6%
Southern Suburbs	0.0%	3.4%	0.9%	0.7%	0.0%	1.4%	3.6%
West Austin	0.0%	1.7%	3.6%	4.1%	0.0%	5.0%	3.6%
Western Suburbs	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%
Other/Unknown	0.0%	19.3%	1.8%	1.9%	0.0%	1.4%	0.0%
<b>Judicial Involvement</b>							
Yes	44.9%	12.6%	17.9%	71.8%	20.7%	15.7%	32.1%
No	55.1%	13.4%	82.1%	27.5%	79.3%	84.3%	28.6%
Missing/Unknown	0.0%	73.9%	0.0%	0.7%	0.0%	0.0%	39.3%
<b>Receives Public Benefits</b>							
Yes	22.4%	0.0%	40.2%	0.0%	51.7%	0.0%	32.1%
No	77.6%	0.0%	59.8%	0.0%	41.4%	0.0%	67.9%
Missing/Unknown	0.0%	100.0%	0.0%	100.0%	6.9%	100.0%	0.0%
<b>Veteran</b>							
Yes	20.4%	0.0%	0.0%	7.9%	0.0%	0.0%	7.1%
No	79.6%	0.0%	0.0%	83.3%	100.0%	92.1%	92.9%
Missing/Unknown	0.0%	100.0%	100.0%	8.9%	0.0%	7.9%	0.0%

**APPENDIX C.**  
**TRAVIS COUNTY WORKFORCE EVALUATION FY 2017-2021 PROSPECTUS**

## **INTRODUCTION**

This Research Prospectus presents the background and options for restructuring the assessment of employment-related services, outcomes, and net impacts of Travis County investments in workforce development for the current five-year funding cycle. Since 2006, the Ray Marshall Center has been conducting successive annual evaluations of local workforce programs and services supported by Travis County funding. There is a one-year time lag between the latest operational year and the evaluation year in order to collect a minimum of four quarters of employment-related follow-up data. Hence this Prospectus addresses the prospective approaches for the FY 2017-FY 2021 annual evaluations that the Ray Marshall Center may prepare for the FY 2016-FY 2020 operational time frame. Senior staff at the Travis County Health and Human Services & Veterans Service Department (HHSVS) have consulted with research staff to develop the approach contained herein.

## **BACKGROUND**

The County currently provides a total of \$2,517,165 million funds in contract for nine providers to deliver an array of education, training, and employment services designed to enhance the labor market prospects of low-income residents who tend to face challenges to steady employment with sufficient earnings to support themselves and their families. The contracts are administered by the Travis County Health and Human Services & Veterans Service Department. In the past, the Ray Marshall Center has focused on seven providers with long-standing County contracts. These are:

- American YouthWorks (AYW)
- Literacy Coalition of Central Texas (LCCT)
- Austin Area Urban League (AAUL)
- Capital IDEA
- Goodwill Industries of Central Texas (GICT)
- Skillpoint Alliance
- Workforce Solutions–Capital Area Workforce Board

These contracts support an array of services. Several providers (e.g., Workforce Solutions, American YouthWorks, Austin Area Urban League, Goodwill, Skillpoint) offer 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 (e.g., Ascend/Literacy Coalition of Central Texas, American YouthWorks, and Skillpoint) or referral to education services ranging from adult basic education and English language classes through the acquisition of a GED or high school diploma. The County also invests in college readiness and long-term skills training (e.g., Capital IDEA), 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. Some also provide (e.g., Workforce Solutions, Capital IDEA, Goodwill) or refer to job readiness, search, and development services, as well as post-employment entry follow-up services. All contractors provide limited or “wrap-around” support services and refer participants to other supplemental services elsewhere in the community.

Since at least 2011, Central Texas area education and workforce training providers have been designing and implementing a *continuum of services* approach. Travis County workforce contractors 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. As may be inferred from the above array of workforce development services, the County invests in such a progression of services. In FY 2016, four of the former contractors (Workforce Solutions, American YouthWorks, Austin Area Urban League, and Goodwill) submitted a joint proposal for County-funded assistance as the Workforce Education and Readiness Continuum – Travis County (WERC-TC). WERC-TC embodies the local commitment to a progression of workforce and supportive human services that prepares less-skilled and educated, low-income residents of the area to more successfully participate in the labor market. WERC – TC is a subset of eight providers in the Workforce and Education Readiness Continuum (WERC - CoA), a collaborative initially funded by the City of Austin in FY 2012.<sup>50</sup>

---

<sup>50</sup> Other current WERC – CoA agencies are the Literacy Coalition of Central Texas (also directly funded by the

Having combined four agencies and their programs under a single contract, Travis County HHSVS is funding six and possibly seven providers who will be subject to evaluation in FY 2017, which begins with the program year of FY 2016. This will be the first year of build out for a new time series. The subject agencies and programs for Year One of the revamped evaluation are:

1. Literacy Coalition of Central Texas: Workforce Infusion
2. American Youthworks: Metro Parks and Youth Build<sup>51</sup>
3. Capital IDEA: Long-Term Training
4. Lifeworks: Workforce Development
5. Skillpoint Alliance: Gateway, Next, and Empower<sup>52</sup>
6. Workforce Solutions Capital Area – Workforce Education and Readiness Continuum – Travis County (WERC-TC)
7. Travis County Emergency Services District #4 – Fire and EMT Academy (ESD-4)<sup>53</sup>

## **TRANSITION**

Because of the new mix of providers, the enhanced focus on a progression and provision of services along a continuum through WERC, the potential receipt of services from more than one agency or program due to increased collaboration, and the emergence of potentially richer and more granular data, Travis County HHSVS and the research team decided to revisit current content and approaches of the annual updates. Travis County and the Ray Marshall Center have reached consensus on several components of future evaluations.<sup>54</sup> These are:

---

County), El Buen Samaritano Episcopal Mission, Foundation Communities, and Manos de Cristo. These agencies variously offer Adult Education and Literacy classes, “light touch” job readiness and job search services, and basic occupational skills training, alongside services targeted to meeting basic human needs, such as nutrition, shelter, and dental/health care.

<sup>51</sup> Metro Parks contract’s metrics are rolled into the YouthBuild Workforce Development program.

<sup>52</sup> Next and Empower received County funding in 2015, but not 2016. (Ben Holquist, Compliance & Evaluation Manager at Skillpoint. August 19, 2016).

<sup>53</sup> ESD-4 has not historically been included in this evaluation process; their participation for FY17 remains to be determined.

<sup>54</sup> The County and the Ray Marshall Center will continually assess the capacity of expanding the research agenda in line with data access and reliability, as well as the availability of resources to keep the leveraged effort of the researchers within acceptable bounds.

- 1) Continue estimating results aggregated by independent programs with the addition of education outcomes to the extent feasible;
- 2) Expand the evaluation approach of the last ten years to capture the effects associated with a progression of services through WERC-TC and inter-agency/program collaboration;
- 3) Examine clusters of services by duration and intensity across all programs providing similar services; and
- 4) Introduce analyses disaggregated by sub-populations within the low-income residents served in order to probe which programs and services appear to be most effective for specific groups.

**Core Analysis.** The core of the evaluation will continue to be the outcomes and impacts of the efforts by individual contractors. The Center's evaluations in recent years have presented a rolling five year series of outcomes and net impacts covering successive annual cohorts of those who exit from the programs in any of the subject years. The report has been prepared one year after the most recent exit year in the five-year series. For example, the most recent report prepared for FY 2016 included those who exited from one of the programs in the years 2011 through 2015. As mentioned above, the time lag permitted researchers to gather at least one full year of results from the latest annual cohort. Individuals served by more than one program have been included in the analysis of each program independently.

The outcomes evaluation through the 2015 service year in the FY 2016 update has focused 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.

Future outcomes reported will be extended, however, beyond solely examining participants' labor market experiences prior to entering the program and then tracking their labor market outcomes following training. The County has long been aware of the effects of literacy

and educational advancement on employment, earnings, and job stability.<sup>55</sup> To better evaluate the effects of these services, for the FY 2017 update, the Ray Marshall Center’s evaluation will also begin to examine educational outcomes to the extent possible within available data and evaluation resources. This will likely require more data collection and reporting from those agencies providing education services. Education outcomes of interest may be:

- 1) Education Learning Gains in Adult Education and Literacy (AEL)
- 2) Attainment of GED, high school diploma, or equivalent prior to exit
- 3) College readiness attained
- 4) Postsecondary enrollment
- 5) Postsecondary completion

**Education Learning Gains** in AEL may be defined by Travis County as a full academic grade-year gain or 12.9 grade equivalent score in each subject area as measured by a pre-post testing in TABE or other assessment tool. The other outcomes measures are self-evident. To attain this new information, the county could require that programs collect the data and finance the additional burden on providers by providing line item status or another method to cover any cost and effort required to collect and share additional data. The Ray Marshall Center, beginning in FY 2017 will also be entering data sharing agreements (DSAs) with the agencies. These DSAs are in addition to the existing authorization established in the services contracts.

TWIST is a promising initial source to access educational learning gains and credentials attained data, at least for WERC-TC participants. As a result of the 2013 transfer of AEL programs to the Texas Workforce Commission (TWC), the agency has recently opened TABE score fields in TWIST.<sup>56</sup> Although the quality of the data is yet to be determined—Workforce Solutions Capital Area suggests that the field may not be consistently used since it is not required—researchers may be able to access pre-post TABE scores for WERC-TC participants

---

<sup>55</sup> Miranda, Lori Axler (2016). “Workforce Development.” *2014 Community Impact Report*. Austin, TX: Travis County Health and Human Services & Veterans Service Department. February.

<sup>56</sup> On May 18, 2013, Governor Rick Perry signed Texas Senate Bill (SB) 307, 83rd Legislature, Regular Session (2013), which transferred responsibility for adult education from the Texas Education Agency to TWC. Adult Education and Literacy (AEL) rules were adopted by TWC on February 4, 2014. The AEL rules position TWC to reestablish and prioritize adult education and literacy services for Texas around current and future education demands and workforce development needs. (<http://www.twc.state.tx.us/partners/adult-education-literacy>)

who receive ABE/ESL/GED or other education services.<sup>57</sup> Additionally, Travis County could request literacy providers to track and share pre-post literacy assessments in their in-house database and could support request from researchers regarding academic achievement (e.g., pre-post test scores, GED, high school diploma, college readiness as measured by passing the Texas Success Initiative Assessment (TSIA), and post-secondary enrollment). The capture of education outcomes that are part of the County’s workforce investments merit inclusion in a more comprehensive outcomes assessment.

**Supplemental Analysis.** The latter three approaches represent an even greater expansion of the evaluation services provided by the Ray Marshall Center to the County. The end purpose of these approaches is to find out what programs and services work better for which sub-groups and why. To accomplish such ends, each annual core report will be accompanied by a supplement report regarding the continuum/collaborative efforts, an examination of clusters of services by duration and intensity across all programs providing similar services, or a focus on the effects of program services on a specific sub-population/target group of interest determined by the County.

## **PROPOSED SEQUENCING OF CONTENT AND APPROACH FY 2017-FY 2021**

The Ray Marshall Center proposes the following Research Agenda for the successive annual evaluations of Travis County investments in workforce development as a starting point for negotiation of feasibility and resources.

### **Year One—FY 2017**

Researchers will conduct the expanded Core Analysis, plus a Supplemental Analysis that assesses the outcomes associated with the WERC-TC progression of services. Program and descriptive data will be requested from ECM and TWIST. Researchers will prepare and share the Analysis Plan with HHSVS. Year One may also serve as a “ramp-up” year for new data collection by contractors for supplemental analysis. Researchers will spot check data request quality at the end of the 3<sup>rd</sup> and 4<sup>th</sup> quarters of the fiscal year.

---

<sup>57</sup> Workforce Solutions enters WERC – TC participant data in the program’s Empowered Case Management (ECM) information system as well as TWIST.

**Year Two—FY 2018**

Researchers will conduct the expanded Core Analysis, plus a Supplemental Analysis that assesses the effects of Low Skills Training across programs and sub-analyses regarding the distribution of these effects across select sub-populations. Researchers will share the Analysis Plan with HHSVS.

**Year Three—FY 2019**

Researchers will conduct the expanded Core Analysis, plus a Supplemental Analysis that assesses the effects of Intermediate Skills Training across programs and sub-analyses regarding the distribution of these effects across select sub-populations. Researchers will share the Analysis Plan with HHSVS.

**Year Four—FY 2020**

Researchers will conduct the expanded Core Analysis, plus a Supplemental Analysis that assesses the effects of Advanced Skills Training across programs and sub-analyses regarding the distribution of these effects across select sub-populations. Researchers will share the Analysis Plan with HHSVS.

**Year Five—FY 2021**

Researchers will conduct the expanded Core Analysis. At the end of the five-year cycle, the Ray Marshall Center suggests that the County consider supporting a multi-year analysis (FY 2016-FY 2020) of the outcomes and impacts for the entire population served across the time-frame and sub-analyses regarding the distribution of these effects across select sub-populations. Researchers will share the Analysis Plan with HHSVS. Additional resources would be required to undertake this comprehensive analysis.

**RESEARCH QUESTIONS**

In addition to the ongoing core analysis questions, which are addressed in each annual update, the Ray Marshall Center will address specific research questions for the various annual supplemental analyses. Research questions are to be refined, but will include questions such as:

### *Annual Core Analysis*

- How effective are County-funded workforce development services, as measured by increased eligibility for UI benefits, increased employment and employment retention, and increased earnings?
- What do programs with different yet overlapping service regimes vary in effectiveness and why?
- What changes can be made to services/treatments to improve outcomes for participants?
- How do participant outcomes compare to those of similar individuals who did not receive Travis County-funded workforce development services?
- How effective are the Travis County investments in supporting AEL and academic progress?

### *Annual Supplemental Analyses*

- Which services or progression of services are most effective over all in terms of workforce outcomes?
- What is the client profile for those who seem to benefit more from workforce or education services?
- What are the effects of “light touch”, short-term services (basic-skills training)?
- What are the effects of short-term occupational training and job readiness/search/placement services (intermediate skills training)?
- What are the effects of long-term occupational training and job readiness/search/placement services (advanced skills training)?
- What are the estimated effects of supportive services on outcomes?

## **DATA SOURCES AND METHODOLOGIES.**

The evaluation of Travis County-funded workforce development programs has drawn from multiple data sources and will continue to do so. These include 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. The proposed expanded core and supplemental analyses will require additional and more robust data collection by the contractors to conduct the proposed analyses. Methodologies of outcomes and impact analyses will basically remain the same: aggregation of individual data elements by program within annual time frame for the former, and a quasi-experimental design using propensity score matching to estimate annual net impacts by program for the selected labor market measures.

Travis County has established output and outcome performance measures and standards for each contractors 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.

In order to conduct the proposed analyses, the County would also require contractors to record more granular data, such as:

### **Demographic Variables**

- Name
- Date of birth
- SSN

- ZIP Code
- County of residence
- Gender (male, female, transgender)
- Parent (2-parent or single parent)
- Number and age of children (#< 5 years; # between 5 and 17 years)
- Race/ethnicity
- Highest education level completed (1 thru 20?)
- Public benefits received (i.e., TANF, Food Stamps)
- Housing stability (stable, at-risk of homelessness, homeless)

### **Target Groups**

- Veterans (y/n or check box)
- Immigrant or first generation resident
- Single parent
- Opportunity youth
- Disabled
- Person with Disabled dependent
- Judicially involved (misdemeanor or felony)
- Homeless/at risk
- Foster care/aging out
- Other as determined by Travis County HHSVS and Ray Marshall Center

### **Program Variables (Outputs and Outcomes)**

- Program start date
- Program exit date
- Program components / services received (Service component 1 thru Service component X)<sup>58</sup>
- Service provider
- Service start date
- Service end date
- Service successfully attended (student persists thru entire planned duration)
- Initial/baseline and final/exit TABE scores
- Adult Education and Literacy students: Educational Learning Gain (as defined, possibly average one year increase of combined score on TABE)
- Secondary education credential (High School diploma/, GED)
- College Readiness Academy

---

<sup>58</sup> Researchers will gather information regarding types, intensity, and duration of education and training services through site visits, document reviews, and web-based description. Researchers will also prepare a matrix based on low, intermediate, and advanced services within and across all grantees.

- Passed Texas Success Initiative Assessment (TSIA)
- Entered postsecondary education in Continuing Education (CE)/Workforce Development
- Credential earned in CE/WFD
- Entered postsecondary academic track (y/n)
- Credential earned in postsecondary academic track
- Credential earned industry-recognized (y/n)
- Occupational Training credential type (Certificate of Completion, Marketable Skills Award, Institutional Certification, One-year Certificate, 2-yr degree, 4-year degrees)
- Employment start date
- Employment starting wage
- Employed in field of training

### **Support Services Received**

- Individual case management (“light touch” or intensive?)
- Group case management
- Individual academic counseling
- Individual occupational and career pathway counseling
- Peer support groups
- Transportation Assistance
- Childcare
- Work-related expenses (tools, uniforms, etc.)
- Housing Assistance
- Emergency Assistance (food, auto repair, medical, etc.)
- Incentives for attendance
- Incentives for completion
- Incentives for employment entry
- Incentives for employment retention
- Other as determined by Travis County HHSVS and Ray Marshall Center

### **NEXT STEPS**

This is a working Prospectus: researchers and senior staff at Travis HHSVS will continue to refine the proposed design in accord with emerging research interest. The Ray Marshall Center research team will also be reviewing the feasibility of the design as related to available resources to ensure that the level of leverage provided the county does not exceed commitment and capacity of the team