

**Innovative Programs and
Promising Practices: Indian and
Native American Summer Youth
Employment Initiatives and the
2009 Recovery Act**

June 28, 2011

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ABSTRACT

The American Recovery and Reinvestment Act of 2009 (the Recovery Act) used various strategies to redress unemployment challenges experienced by disadvantaged youth. The Employment and Training Administration (ETA) in the U.S. Department of Labor (DOL) received \$1.2 billion for youth training and employment services. ETA allocated about \$17.8 million of these funds to Indian and Native American (INA) youth through the INA Supplemental Youth Services Program. INA grantees were encouraged to use these funds to provide employment experiences to youth in summer 2009 and summer 2010. INA grantees responded by building on existing summer youth employment programs to extend services to additional youth, including older youth, and create new program components as appropriate and needed.

This report describes the context in which programs for the INA Summer Youth Employment Initiative were created and provides a detailed discussion of how grantees used their Recovery Act funds to implement programs to serve youth in their communities. The analysis is based on INA grantees' performance measure data and qualitative data collected during site visits to a purposive sample of five diverse grantees in five states. This report also highlights key findings and innovations grantees made to better serve youth.

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The US recession of 2007 increased unemployment rates nationwide. Some groups were hit particularly hard by unemployment. Among these groups, Native Americans experienced an increase of 26 percent in their unemployment rate. Native American youth were affected even more deeply, with even higher rates of unemployment than the group as a whole. For these youth ages 16 to 19, for example, unemployment rose to 33 percent for females and 39 percent for males between 2007 and 2009.

The American Recovery and Reinvestment Act of 2009 (the Recovery Act) used various strategies to redress unemployment challenges experienced by all groups, including Native American youth. The Employment and Training Administration (ETA) in the U.S. Department of Labor (DOL) received \$1.2 billion for youth training and employment services. ETA allocated about \$17.8 million of these funds for the Indian and Native American (INA) Supplemental Youth Services Program (SYSP) and encouraged programs serving these groups to use the funds to provide employment experiences to youth in the summer of 2009. INA grantees responded by building on existing summer youth employment programs to extend services to additional youth, including older youth, and create new program components as appropriate and needed.

In order to understand how grantees utilized their Recovery Act funds to provide summer youth with workforce opportunities, ETA contracted with Mathematica Policy Research to conduct an evaluation of the implementation of the summer youth employment programs, which this report refers to as the INA Summer Youth Employment Initiative (SYEI). The purpose of the study is to identify lessons learned and promising practices that sites developed through their SYEI programs using Recovery Act funds. This study analyzed grantee performance measures and qualitative data collected during site visits to a purposive sample of five, diverse INA SYEI grantees.

Overview of the Evaluation

Five core research questions designed to focus and support a comprehensive data collection and analysis effort guided this study. In addressing these questions, this report provides ETA; national policymakers; and local program staff, administrators, and policymakers with an overview and analysis of how the Recovery Act-funded INA SYEI was implemented and the experiences of program staff and youth participants involved in the program. Primary research questions included the following:

1. How did sites plan for and organize summer youth programs with funding from the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act?
2. How did sites identify and recruit at-risk youth?
3. What program services were offered to youth who participated in the summer months?
4. What types of work experiences were offered to participating youth?
5. What are the characteristics of program participants?

The study employs two primary study data sources in addressing these questions: (1) in-depth, in-person site visits to five grantees to meet program staff and participants to learn about the summer youth employment programs from August through December 2010, and (2) site performance data submitted monthly to ETA that includes all Native American youth participating in Recovery Act-funded summer youth employment programs.

The evaluation of the implementation of the Recovery Act's Indian and Native American summer youth employment initiative in summer 2009 and 2010 identifies key strengths and successes as well as challenges experienced by sites in implementing their SYEIs. The evaluation also provides a set of summative findings about the program. The summative findings are designed to reflect the specific, topical findings dispersed throughout the report and to provide a set of observations on and central lessons learned from the implementation of the program overall and of potential use in future program implementation.

Program Strengths and Successes

Sites visited for this evaluation provided youth with a rich array of program activities and workforce experiences through the INA SYEI and reported relatively few implementation challenges. They used Recovery Act funds to build new components and target new populations into their established summer youth employment programs and to serve larger numbers of youth. Staff and youth identified a number of program strengths and successes and shared a deep enthusiasm for and appreciation of both the programs and additional Recovery Act funds. Among the most often referenced strengths and successes were the following:

Serving older youth. Four of the study sites noted that they extended their programs to youth up to age 24, a group that they typically found hard to serve because of limited resources for their adult programs. They recognized the high level of need of this group and regarded it as both a program strength and a real success that they could provide the program and work opportunities to these older youth. Many of these youth reported significant barriers to finding work either because jobs were meant for teenagers or went to older, more experienced adults. Several older youth also reporting having found permanent positions through the program after not being able to find employment for 6 to 12 months. The opportunity to serve older youth through summer youth employment programs was unique to the Recovery Act and regarded as a significant strength of the program. The opportunity to serve these youth, support their workforce readiness, and offer job placement formed a key program success.

Program staff's commitment and dedication. Youth at all study sites spent a significant amount of time professing their deep appreciation for program staff. They noted how much staff were "there for them" and "helped them get whatever they needed." Some staff were extraordinarily dedicated to youth and the community, joining youth in community service projects because "We're not going to ask them to do something we're not going to do." Youth described staff as "a blessing for them personally, and for the community," "outgoing and awesome," with several youth describing them "like family." One youth explained how a staff person who knew she had been struggling with depression and other challenges had gone to a rural reservation to let her know personally about the program and the opportunity to have a summer job and earn money for school. Youth noted that they could call staff "at any time" about "any issue" and knew that they would receive support if they did.

Consistent assessments and workforce readiness and life skills training. Youth at all study sites mentioned the value of workforce readiness training and job and life skills-building to them. They universally reported finding these trainings to be valuable and key inputs for their work and their lives. Youth found the more comprehensive career assessments that included a work interest inventory, work orientation and values inventory, and career exploration to be particularly helpful in learning more about their own interests and developing a career path. As discussed in Chapter IV, youth reported the usefulness of learning about application, cover letter, and resume

preparation; self-presentation and interview skills; and job searches, as well as how to have confidence and self-esteem through work.

Extending relationships with employers. Four of the five sites used the Recovery Act funding to extend their long-standing relationships with community employers. They reported close, historical relationships with employers that created a foundation upon which they could build the 2009 and 2010 programs. These relationships made it possible for sites to absorb and place more youth in workforce opportunities in a very short period, and to offer new kinds of employment to youth, including those appropriate for older youth and green jobs.

Larger community benefits. A strength and success of the program frequently cited by employers and staff involved how the SYEI benefitted not only the direct participants—youth and employers—but also the larger community as a whole. Employers received additional staff to help them complete work and accomplish goals they might not have been able to realize without the help of the youth. Youth learned the importance of their own tribes, the Native American community, and the need to serve other people, regardless of their race, gender, sexual orientation, or socioeconomic status. This helped them become more community- and more community service-oriented, something that program staff and employers felt would help them become good citizens of the tribe and the larger community. One site helped youth involved with the juvenile justice system make restitution, which could then support their reintegration into their communities. One director also noted that the program serves as a stimulus to the local economy by giving youth jobs and wages to spend in the community. As indicated throughout this report, the program served to benefit the larger community in multiple ways.

Providing positive experiences to youth. By far the most often reported program strength and individual success involved the provision of positive experiences to youth. Most fundamentally, youth had an opportunity to earn an income that enabled them to contribute to their families, pay off debts or restitution, save for the future, and support themselves. They also learned about their own interests; set future goals; acquired new workforce readiness, job, life and leadership, and academic skills; gained cultural knowledge and a sense of community service; learned the value of helping others; and earned valuable employment-related certifications. Importantly, youth reported an increased sense of responsibility, self-esteem, work ethic, and success and accomplishment through the program, all of which are essential to employment success. As one youth explained, “I didn’t know I could do this,” indicating professional and personal growth across a number of dimensions.

Program Challenges

Despite the richness of program components and workforce experiences offered to youth, staff reported relatively few challenges with their Recovery Act program. They attributed this to the existence of already well-established, generally WIA-funded summer youth employment programs. They were able to use Recovery Act funds to support and expand existing relationships with employers and well-established program procedures, such as workforce readiness training and worksite monitoring processes. The Recovery Act funds enabled sites to serve more youth and/or to expand program, academic, cultural, and/or worksite opportunities. At the same time, Recovery Act timing and program rules introduced new challenges for staff, which they had to resolve or redress largely in the course of planning and implementing their summer 2009 programs.

Many of the challenges faced pertained to the Recovery Act program itself and included the following:

Program lead time. Staff from two sites referred to the short lead time between the availability of Recovery Act funds and program start as a challenge. This gave them little time to develop additional activities, hire additional staff, and adapt data systems to Recovery Act performance indicators. Although ETA provided guidance and trainings on the latter, staff still had little time to integrate new reporting requirements. One program director discussed the desire to have had time to develop “an employability plan” with youth and provide more individual counseling. The director explained that had she received the final guidance on Recovery Act funds earlier, she would have been able to plan a “fuller” program.

Post-summer program reporting requirements. Staff felt that the requirement that they continue to report enrollment, completion, workforce readiness, and other data to ETA even after all Recovery Act funds were spent created more paperwork and required scarce program resources that staff would have liked to use on other program components. They were frustrated at having to continue to report and wished that their reporting requirements would have ended with the depletion of program funds. ETA staff confirmed that sites were required to report even after all Recovery Act funds had been spent.

Worksite placement limitations. Staff at two different sites expressed disappointment at what they regarded as strict limitations on where youth could be placed. According to their Recovery Act guidance, they were not allowed to have youth work at golf courses, swimming pools, casinos¹, or zoos. This proved to be a challenge for two sites, because in previous years they had placed youth in these types of worksites. One had previously placed several youth at a local golf course, where they felt you had learned valuable skills. Staff also mentioned youth interested in zoology and youth trained as lifeguards who wanted to pursue this profession but were not allowed to work at a pool or lake due to program rules.

Payroll processes. Staff and/or youth from two sites discussed challenges with their 2009 and 2010 payroll processes. In one case, there were too few staff in an office to review timesheets and organize checks. In another case, staff hired for the Recovery Act-funded program were paid late and irregularly. In still another site, youth experienced delays with receiving their paychecks. Sites created new process so that staff and youth could be paid promptly, but the addition of the Recovery Act rules and procedures had an adverse, if temporary, effect on payroll processes.

Favoritism. Staff from one site reported concerns over favoritism that they felt might have affected the program’s ability to serve youth with the greatest need and at greatest risk. They mentioned, in particular, the process for selecting program participants as perhaps subject to preference for some youth over others. As such, they feared that the selection process did not fully align with the program’s purpose and should be improved so that specific youth would not be chosen over other, potentially more needy applicants.

Sites also reported challenges not necessarily related to the Recovery Act-funded program and perhaps more endemic to the summer youth employment programs. Nonetheless, these challenges persisted during the Recovery Act funding period and included the following:

¹ One site noted that while a casino and resort complex served as a major community employer, no youth were placed there during their Recovery Act-funded summer youth employment program.

Paperwork requirements, especially eligibility determination. Program staff from three sites identified program-related paperwork as their biggest challenge. They pointed in particular to income verification and documentation. It was difficult for youth to provide proof of income for themselves and their parents either did not have or resisted sharing this information with the program, for fear it might affect their receipt of public assistance. Staff explained that it would have no effect on them, but staff continued to struggle with eligibility determinations for applicant youth. This has been a concern with WIA youth programs nationwide.

Post-program follow-up. Three sites expressed regret about their inability to follow up or continue to work with youth after the summer program. In some cases, staff felt that youth needed and would benefit from more post-program follow-up; staff continued monitoring the youth but lacked resources to provide this kind of ongoing support. In one case, staff hired college students to work in the summer program who returned to school and were not available to “continue to connect with the youth.” Youth often expressed a desire for work and program activities after the summer. Although many reported having developed lasting bonds through the program, they worried they would not be able to find another job, complete school, or “stay positive” after the program was over.

Excess demand for services. Staff from all five study sites discussed the significant demand for their summer youth employment programs. They cited the large numbers of applicants in relation to the relatively small numbers of youth they were able to serve as evidence of this. All worried about their inability to meet demand for the program and the excess need remaining in their communities. One site did additional fund raising to help support various program activities (for example, raffles, bake sales, and concession stands) but continued to be challenged by the large number of youth seeking summer youth employment opportunities verses the relatively small number of places for participants available, even with the addition of Recovery Act funds.

Summative Findings

The following set of key findings from the evaluation of the implementation of the Recovery Act Indian and Native American Summer Youth Employment Initiative are designed to consolidate the many topical findings dispersed throughout the report into a set of overarching observations and lessons learned from the 2009 and 2010 program implementation.

- Youth and their communities had very high levels of need for specific employment programs and for more general positive influences in the community.
- Recovery Act funds enabled sites to serve larger numbers of youth and older youth, up to age 24, than they had previously been able to serve, all of whom have significant need for employment training and work opportunities.
- Even with the introduction of additional Recovery Act funds, programs continued to experience excess of demand for services, with numbers of youth in need of and applying for SYEI programs far exceeding the number of participant slots available.
- Recovery Act funds supported the introduction of additional highly needed jobs skills and educational and cultural components into summer youth employment programs.
- Sites used Recovery Act funds to provide supplemental life skills training in such highly needed areas as leadership and financial literacy.

- Sites used Recovery Act funds to innovate by serving new groups of youth, such as those in the juvenile justice system, and offering new worksite opportunities, such as green jobs.
- Well-established summer youth employment programs and existing relationships with employers and other community partners enabled sites to absorb and use Recovery Act funds quickly and effectively.
- Dedicated program staff played a crucial role in designing, innovating, and implementing programs and in bonding with, providing guidance to, and mentoring youth.
- Most sites lacked the funds and staff available to provide post-summer/post-program follow-up to youth, despite youth interest in and demand for these kinds of post-program services.
- Despite acquiring new job skills and certifications, not all youth who wanted permanent job placement were able to obtain it through the SYEI or after program completion.
- Youth and employers regard summer youth employment programs as highly beneficial to youth, themselves, and their communities.
- A significant majority both of study sites and all sites nationally met their performance measures by a significant margin.

I. INTRODUCTION

The U.S. recession of 2007 increased unemployment rates nationwide. Some groups were hit particularly hard by unemployment. Among these groups, Native Americans experienced an increase of 26 percent in their unemployment rate. Native American youth were affected even more deeply, with even higher rates of unemployment than the group as a whole. For these youth ages 16 to 19, for example, unemployment rose to 33 percent for females and 39 percent for males between 2007 and 2009.

The American Recovery and Reinvestment Act of 2009 (the Recovery Act) used various strategies to redress unemployment challenges experienced by all groups, including Native American youth. The Employment and Training Administration (ETA) in the U.S. Department of Labor (DOL) received \$1.2 billion for youth training and employment services. ETA allocated about \$17.8 million of these funds for the Indian and Native American (INA) Supplemental Youth Services Program (SYSP) and encouraged programs serving these groups to use the funds to provide employment experiences to youth in the summer of 2009. INA grantees responded by building on existing summer youth employment programs to extend services to additional youth, including older youth, and create new program components as appropriate and needed.

In order to understand how grantees utilized their Recovery Act funds to provide summer youth with workforce opportunities, ETA contracted with Mathematica Policy Research to conduct an evaluation of the implementation of the summer youth employment programs, which this report refers to as the INA Summer Youth Employment Initiative (SYEI). The purpose of the study is to identify lessons learned and promising practices that sites developed through their SYEI programs using Recovery Act funds. This study analyzed grantee performance measures and qualitative data collected during site visits to a purposive sample of five, diverse INA SYEI grantees.

This report describes the context in which the INA SYEI program was created and provides a detailed discussion of how grantees used their Recovery Act funds to implement programs to serve youth in their communities. It also highlights key findings and innovations grantees made to better serve youth. Overall, the study found that although Recovery Act funds were relatively modest, grantees used these supplements to create innovative and concrete workforce experiences for youth in their communities, often in areas of high demand and high need.

A. The Indian and Native American Summer Youth Employment Initiative: The Economic Context

Beginning in December 2007, the U.S. economy entered an economic recession that included a mortgage crisis, an inability of many to access personal and business credit, and high unemployment (National Bureau of Economic Research 2010). Although official estimates indicate that the recession ended in 2009, many communities continue to experience economic hardship (National Bureau of Economic Research 2010). People of American Indian and Alaskan Native descent and tribal communities have been severely affected by the weakened economy. The percentage of American Indians and Alaskan Natives in poverty rose by 2 percentage points between 2007 and 2009 to reach 27 percent, a figure almost twice the nation average of 14 percent (U.S. Census Bureau 2007b, 2009d). Further, the unemployment rate of American Indians and Alaskan Natives rose by 26 percent between 2007 and 2009 to 16 percent (U.S. Census Bureau 2007a, 2009c). Native American youth experienced particularly high rates of unemployment. By 2009, the unemployment rate among Native Americans ages 16 to 19 was approximately 33 percent for females and 39

percent for males (U.S. Census Bureau 2009c). Native Americans ages 20 to 24 experienced unemployment rates of approximately 20 percent for females and 27 percent for males (U.S. Census Bureau 2009c). These unemployment rates represent a significant burden and challenge for Native Americans seeking to strengthen their communities and recover from one of the most significant recessions of the past century.

B. The History of U.S. Department of Labor Summer Youth Employment Initiatives in Native American Communities

Before the Workforce Investment Act of 1998 (WIA), Section 401 of the Job Training Partnership Act (JTPA) of 1982 provided federal funding of approximately \$50 million per year to tribal governments, intertribal consortia, and nontribal Native American organizations to implement employment and training programs (Social Policy Research Associates 1999). Section 401 states that eligible participants included American Indians, Alaskan Natives, or Native Hawaiians who were economically disadvantaged, unemployed, or underemployed. JTPA grantees reported that their eligible population often consisted of youth and adults, high school graduates and dropouts, and those with some or no previous work experience (Social Policy Research Associates 1999). Some Section 401 grantees also received additional Title II-B Summer Youth Employment and Training Program (SYETP) funding to provide summer work experience and training to youth ages 14 to 21.

The Workforce Investment Act of 1998 adjusted the federal system for youth employment, training, and development. The INA SYSP² authorized under Section 166 provides funding for summer and year-round employment and training activities for American Indian, Alaskan Native, and Native Hawaiian youth. A youth is eligible to receive services under SYSP if he or she is (1) an American Indian, as determined by the Native American grantee, (2) an Alaskan Native, as defined in Section 3(b) of the Alaskan Native Claims Settlement Act (ANCSA), 43 U.S.C. 1602(b); or (3) Native Hawaiian, as defined in WIA Section 166(b)(3). Youth participants must be no younger than 14 and no older than 21. Youth must experience at least one barrier to employment, such as deficiency in basic literacy skills; school dropout; homelessness, runaway, or foster child; pregnant or parenting; offender; or a person who requires additional assistance to complete an educational program or to obtain and maintain employment. Additionally, participants must be low-income individuals as defined in WIA Section 101(25). Funds can be used to support up to 5 percent of youth who do not meet the income criteria but who have other barriers to employment (for example, being a school dropout or having deficiency in basic skills). In 2010, SYSP received approximately \$14 million in grants from ETA (Federal Register 2010).

² In addition to programs currently funded by DOL, several other federal employment- and training-related initiatives serve American Indian, Alaskan Native, or Native Hawaiian youth. Examples within the U.S. Department of the Interior's Bureau of Indian Affairs (BIA) include the General Assistance (GA) Program, Tribal Work Experience (TWE) Program, BIA Employment Assistance—Adult Vocational Training (AVT) Program, BIA Employment Assistance—Direct Employment (DE) Program, BIA Higher Education Program, BIA Adult Basic Education (ABE) Program, and Johnson-O'Malley (JOM) Program. Examples within the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services include the Native Employment Works (NEW) Program, Tribal Temporary Assistance to Needy Families (TANF) Program, and Child Care and Development Fund Program. American Indian, Alaskan Native, or Native Hawaiian youth can also access services provided by local One-Stop Career Centers.

C. The American Reinvestment and Recovery Act of 2009

Recognizing the employment challenges youth face, especially in a recessionary economy, the Recovery Act targeted investment in youth employment and training. A key purpose of the Act was to develop a stronger workforce environment for youth and ease the transition between the labor market and further education and training. The Recovery Act allocated \$1.2 billion to ETA for youth training and employment services. ETA reserved about \$17.8 million of these funds for the INA SYSP. ETA made funds available to these communities on a formula basis. Grantees could spend the funds concurrently with their existing WIA Section 166 SYSP funding through June 30, 2011 (Training and Employment Guidance Letter No. 16-08).

Throughout this report we refer to the Recovery Act-funded employment and training initiatives as the SYEI. Other WIA-funded youth summer activities are referred to as SYSP or a grantee's regular summer program. In practice, however, sites could have used Recovery Act funds to (1) enhance a single, standard SYSP program; or (2) create separate summer initiatives funded exclusively by the Recovery Act.

ETA aligned the rules of the INA SYSP WIA-funded program with the specific circumstances of the recession, to ease execution of the program, and fulfill requirements of the Recovery Act. ETA guidance for SYEI included the following:

- **Develop new and existing strategies for serving at-risk American Indian, Alaskan Native, and Native Hawaiian youth.** ETA advised INA grantees to use Recovery Act funding to increase the number of youth served and expand services. ETA encouraged grantees to develop plans and strategies for services that produce positive educational and employment outcomes for at-risk youth. It stressed that education and training should be closely aligned with employment opportunities available on or near reservations and tribal lands (or near to where tribal members in Oklahoma, Alaskan Natives, and Native Hawaiians live). ETA also encouraged grantees to provide education and training services that support youths' advancement in school or at work or services that include assessments and certifications that met requirements for the next level of education and employment. Grantees could use Recovery Act funds to implement all youth activities authorized under the WIA Section 166 SYSP.
- **Identify and use workforce information and potential partnerships.** ETA noted that workforce information would help grantees identify businesses and economic sectors in need of workers or that would begin to grow as the economy recovered. ETA also encouraged grantees to consider working with state and local workforce investment areas³ to obtain information on how the Recovery Act was implemented in their state or surrounding communities.
- **Focus on summer employment.** The Congressional explanatory statement for the Recovery Act cited a particular interest in summer employment opportunities for youth. ETA encouraged grantees to use as much of their funding as possible to operate programs during the summer of 2009 and to provide high-quality summer employment

³ Within state and local workforce investment areas, Workforce Investment Boards (or WIBs) implement the employment and training activities prescribed by the Workforce Investment Act of 1998.

experiences to as many youth as possible. For the purpose of the Recovery Act, summer was defined as May 1 through September 30.

- **Develop green jobs and career pathways.** ETA encouraged grantees to develop employment experiences and program activities that exposed youth to opportunities in green career pathways. It also recommended that grantees provide opportunities to work in registered apprenticeship programs and that grantees use on-the-job training to introduce youth to industries and careers that employ green skills or technologies.
- **Ensure cultural appropriateness.** ETA encouraged grantees to incorporate culturally relevant training approaches to develop youths' academic, work readiness, and literacy skills. Such approaches might include mentorship, internships, and placement at tribal colleges or similar training centers.
- **Provide appropriate youth wages and compensation.** Grantees were required to pay youth a minimum wage of \$6.55 per hour effective July 24, 2008, and \$7.25 per hour effective July 24, 2009. Grantees could also provide youth with wages or stipends for classroom-based components of a summer employment program.
- **Give service priority for certain groups and expand eligibility.** The Recovery Act expanded program eligibility to serve youth up to age 24. ETA noted that veterans ages 21 to 24 have a particularly high rate of unemployment immediately after discharge. In response, they extended eligibility to youth up to 24 years old in order to make more veterans eligible for summer employment. ETA also required programs to give priority of service to veterans and eligible spouses.
- **Report two measures of program performance.** Congress required a single measure of achievement of work readiness goals to assess the performance of employment and training services. ETA then added summer employment completion rates as a second measure. ETA thus had grantees report two performance measures: youth work readiness attainment and youth summer employment program completion rate.

D. Overview of the Evaluation

In July 2010, ETA commissioned a research team from Mathematica to conduct a study of the implementation of the SYEI funded under the Recovery Act. The study focuses on how Native American communities are using these funds to create new summer youth employment initiatives and/or enhance existing ones. An analysis of in-depth, in-person site visits to five grantees to meet program staff and participants and to learn about the summer youth employment programs, as well as an analysis of aggregate program data on performance reported to ETA, provides the basis for this study. The evaluation focused in particular on promising practices including how to (1) motivate youth to achieve academic and job market success, (2) encourage youth to identify existing and acquire new employment skills, (3) encourage positive cultural identities, and (4) strengthen other youth employment programs. The overall goals of the study were to understand how different sites used Recovery Act funds to implement summer youth employment programs, to identify innovative and promising implementation practices, and to share this information with other communities implementing summer youth employment programs.

1. Research Questions

Five core research questions and several subquestions designed to focus and support a comprehensive data collection and analysis effort guided the study. In addressing these questions, this report provides ETA; national policymakers; and local program staff, administrators, and policymakers an understanding of how the Recovery Act-funded INA SYEI was implemented and the experiences of program staff and youth participants. Primary research questions included the following:

1. How did sites plan for and organize summer youth programs with funding from the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act?
2. How did sites identify and recruit at-risk youth?
3. What program services were offered to youth who participated in the summer months?
4. What types of work experiences were offered to participating youth?
5. What are the characteristics of program participants?

2. Selection and Conduct of Site Visits

ETA and Mathematica worked collaboratively to identify five grantees to participate in the study. The team sought a balance of geographic diversity, a mix of intertribal consortia and individual tribes, and any preliminary indicators of promising practices and program successes that could potentially be shared with other sites when choosing grantees to include in site visits. Based on these conversations and the selection criteria, ETA and Mathematica identified five sites for inclusion in the study. Participation in the study was entirely voluntary. As indicated in Table I.1, the study included intertribal consortia or individual tribes in five separate states, including two consortia and three individual tribes. Two of these groups have their main offices in or near urban areas, whereas three are located in or near moderately sized cities or rural areas. Most serve populations in primarily (but not exclusively) rural areas.

Table I.1. Sites Selected for Visits

INA Community	Intertribal Consortium or Individual Tribe	City, State
Four Tribes of Oklahoma	Intertribal consortium	Anadarko, OK
California Indian Manpower Association	Intertribal consortium	Sacramento, CA
Mississippi Band of Choctaw Indians	Individual tribe	Choctaw, MS
Oglala Sioux Tribe	Individual tribe	Pine Ridge, SD
Kewa (formerly Santo Domingo) Pueblo	Individual tribe	Santo Domingo, NM

In 2010, the team visited these five sites and met with program staff, employers who provided work experiences to program participants, instructors and administrators who provided training and instruction, and youth who participated in the program during the summer of 2009 and 2010 at each site.

Site visits were key to informing the study about how Recovery Act funds were used to provide important services to youth and the innovative strategies used to employ and support youth in Native American communities. This study focused on how youth were recruited and enrolled, how their needs were assessed and matched with jobs, and how work experiences were monitored and supported. This study also examined how the programs identified and engaged employers and linked to other community partners. Of particular interest were participating youth and what services were of use to them, their experiences in the program, and their work readiness after they completed the program.

3. Data Sources

The study employed two primary data sources: aggregate performance data, which grantees reported monthly to ETA, and in-depth site visits to a selected sample of five Recovery Act program intertribal consortia or individual tribal grantees.

Grantee performance data. For the Recovery Act funded program, each INA grantee delivered a monthly performance report to ETA. Grantees began reporting October 15, 2009, with a report that included all Recovery Act participants from March 19, 2009 through September 30, 2009, and thereafter reported on a monthly basis by the 15th of the following month. In these reports, grantees provided ETA with demographic information about youth participating in Recovery Act-funded services; the services and program activities youth received; and program performance information, including enrollment, completion, and work readiness rates. The study team obtained performance data submitted to ETA as of February 22, 2011. These data cover implementation in the period March 2009 through January 2011.

In-depth site visits. The core data for this study come from site visits with five selected grantees. Site visits were completed between August and December 2010. Visits lasted from two to three days each. While on site, study team members interviewed program staff, youth employers, worksite supervisors, and key program partners about program planning, implementation, challenges, successes, and lessons learned. Site visitors also conducted focus groups with a small number of youth program participants to explore youths' program experiences and perspectives. In sum, the study included discussions with 87 respondents, including 37 youth participants.

4. Analytical Approach and Limitations

The two primary data sources for the evaluation required different analytical approaches. For the aggregate performance indicator data, the descriptive analysis sought to provide an overall portrait of program implementation nationwide and a look at the five study sites in comparison with the program at the national level. Statistics from all of the sites funded by the Recovery Act were aggregated to produce national frequencies; study sites' statistics were aggregated to provide frequencies regarding those programs visited during the evaluation. The team also analyzed enrollment patterns. Given that states provided only aggregate data, analyzing subgroups was not feasible.

For the in-depth site visits, the analysis focused on the study's key research questions as the study team sought to identify emergent themes and well-supported cross-site findings within each individual site and across all sites visited. The analysis considered models of program planning and design; outreach, recruitment, and workforce preparations as well as approaches to monitoring, supervising, and mentoring youth through the program and work; employer recruitment and experiences; work sites and types of work conducted, as well as other program components related

to certification, skills building, academic opportunities, and cultural activities; and assessments and post-summer follow-up and services. The analysis also identified some implementation challenges faced across sites and primary program strengths and successes, as well as more overarching findings related to program implementation as a whole.

The purpose of the analysis of the qualitative data, which took the site visited as the unit of analysis, was to provide a more detailed portrait of implementation strategies and identify cross-site topical and summative findings about program implementation. The study identified differences between sites by noting when a particular strategy or practice occurred across all sites or within a subset of sites, focusing on those that occurred most frequently across sites. Given that the study did not include discussion with all local program staff, participants, employers, skills trainers, and other partners, the analysis does not include the universe of experiences of the five study sites. A program staff member at each site served as a site visit liaison and selected the program staff, employers, partners, and youth participants with whom team members met. As such, interview and focus group respondents formed a convenience sample for the study. The data analyzed are thus illustrative and are not representative of implementation strategies either at the site level or nationally.

Despite these limitations, the evaluation includes the perspectives of a significant number of differently situated respondents. Further, it is possible to draw some conclusions about implementation strategies and their potential to support and extend program strengths from these data. The report includes short text boxes on innovative local practices and youths' perspectives on the program. The practices described in these boxes are not intended to represent promising strategies, but rather to offer interesting examples of local innovations that sites and study team members found particularly inventive and worth sharing with program stakeholders. Similarly, brief quotes from program staff, employers, and youth are not intended to be representative, but rather include the voices and language of those who participated in these programs themselves.

E. Organization of the Rest of the Report

The purpose of this report is to provide a rich description of the implementation of the Indian and Native American SYEIs in the summers of 2009 and 2010.

- Chapter II of this report provides aggregate descriptive statistics on site performance data nationwide and from the five selected study sites.
- Chapter III describes the selected sites and their strategies for organizing and planning the summer initiative.
- Chapter IV discusses sites' efforts to recruit youth participants, most especially older youth newly funded by the Recovery Act, as well as their enrollment and workforce readiness training and other efforts to prepare youth for work.
- Chapter V describes the recruitment, involvement, and experiences of the employers that provided youth employment opportunities.
- Chapter VI details the range of summer experiences youth had and describes key supplemental program components, including certifications, additional skills building, academic opportunities, and cultural activities that programs offered. It then provides a discussion of the monitoring and mentoring of youth and youths' impressions of their workforce and program experiences.

- Chapter VII describes how sites assessed youths' progress generally at the end of their programs as well as any post-summer follow-up and services that sites provided to participants.
- Chapter VIII discusses primary challenges faced in implementing the program, as well as program strengths and successes. As a final observation, the report cumulates the specific topical findings interspersed throughout the report into a set of summative, overarching findings about the implementation of the Recovery Act-funded INA summer youth employment initiatives.

Under the various section headings, each of the chapters features key specific topical findings (noted in bold and with bullet points) throughout the text and then provides a discussion of each finding in order to maximize the utility of the report to policymakers, program implementers, advocates, and other stakeholders. Many chapters also include short vignettes in text boxes. These boxes highlight specific innovations offered at different program sites and demonstrate promising practices identified during field research.

II. THE NATIONAL INA SYEI CONTEXT AND THE STUDY SITES

Across the nation, INA SYEI grantees served approximately 3,300 youth from May to September 2009 and about 760 youth from May to September 2010 using Recovery Act funds. To record how grantees used these funds, ETA required each grantee to complete monthly performance reports on their youth employment and training activities. This report describes performance data submitted to ETA by the grantees covering the period April 2009 to January 2011.

This chapter uses these data to explore how the Recovery Act-funded INA SYEI program unfolded nationally and with the five grantees that received site visits for in-depth data collection. The chapter examines the number of youth served, youths' characteristics, the services provided to youth participants, and the outcomes experienced by the youth. The chapter begins with a brief discussion of Recovery Act funds received by INA SYEI grantees and reviews program enrollment during summer 2009 and summer 2010. It then provides an overview of the characteristics of INA SYEI youth participants, discusses the services youth received during summer 2009 and summer 2010, and concludes with the outcomes experienced by youth program participants served using Recovery Act funds.

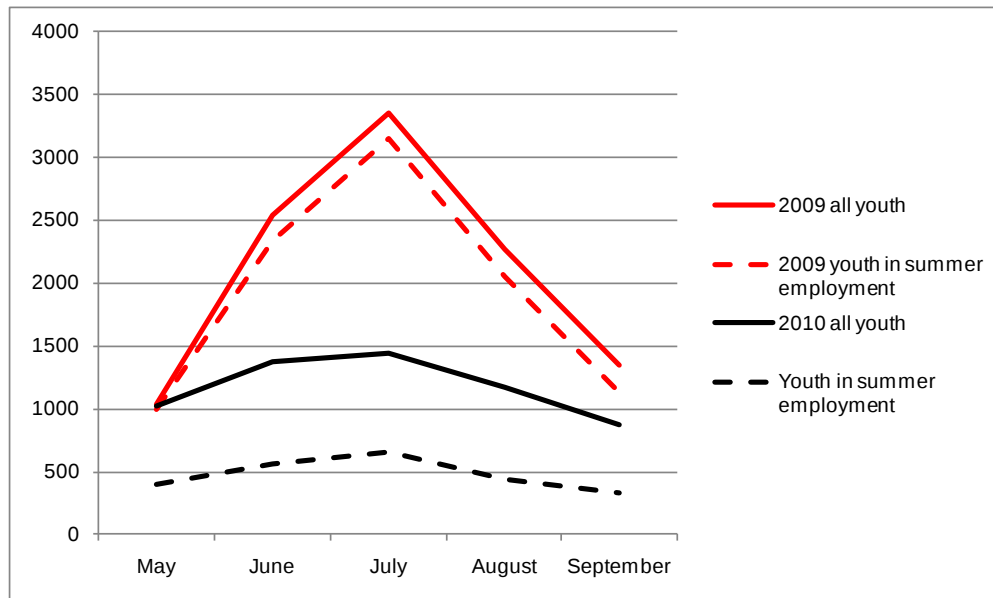
During site visits, some of the grantees mentioned that they had used Recovery Act funds to serve youth during summer 2010. However, monthly reporting data did not show site visit grantees using Recovery Act funds during summer 2010. Some site visit grantees simply had not submitted monthly reports for the summer months in the performance data analyzed for this study; the program year did not end until March 31, 2011 and the study data file was received prior to this date. The following discussion is thus limited to summer 2009 for the five study sites but includes both summer 2009 and summer 2010 for the national program.

A. Recovery Act Funds Received by INA SYEI Grantees, 2009 and 2010

ETA received about \$1.2 billion for youth employment and training services. It reserved about \$17.8 million for INA SYSP grantees and these funds were allocated on a formula basis. Program administrators at the five grantees that hosted site visits reported receiving Recovery Act awards ranging from about \$59,000 to \$536,000. According to quarterly reports required under Section 1512 of the Recovery Act, site visit grantees were awarded in total about \$984,000, which they used to supplement other WIA funds designated for summer youth employment programs.

B. Youth Enrollment, May–September 2009 and May–September 2010

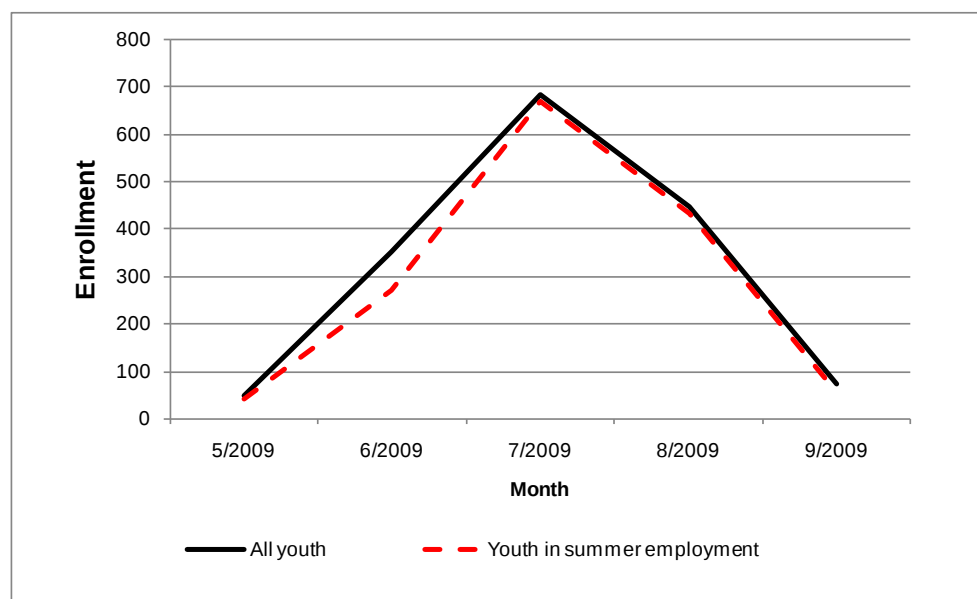
Figure II.1 shows monthly program enrollment for summers 2009 and 2010 for (1) the total number of youth participants that received a service funded by the Recovery Act, and (2) the total number of participants placed in summer employment. Large numbers of youth began enrolling in May 2009, with about 1,000 youth being served in May 2009 and 2,500 youth being served in June 2009. Enrollment rose again during July, peaking at about 3,300 and began to drop off during August and September 2009. Grantees' enrollment trends during summer 2010 mirrored those of summer 2009. Overall, fewer youth were served from May to September 2010 than in the same months of 2009.

Figure II.1. National Youth Enrollment, by Month, May to September 2009 and May to September 2010

Source: Grantee performance reports for Indian and Native American summer youth employment initiatives supported by the Recovery Act submitted to the U.S. Department of Labor as of January 31, 2011.

Notes: All youth refers to any youth served during the reference month using Recovery Act funds. Youth in summer employment refers to youth that participated in a work experience as part of their program participation during the reference month.

As Figure II.2 shows, enrollment trends for site visit grantees were similar to the national trends, with the highest level of enrollment experienced at the beginning of summer 2009, which reached a peak of about 680 youth during July, and declined at the end of summer. As noted earlier, data on 2010 participants were not available.

Figure II.2. Site Visit Grantee Youth Enrollment, by Month, May to September 2009

Source: Grantee performance reports for Indian and Native American summer youth employment initiatives supported by the Recovery Act submitted to the U.S. Department of Labor as of January 31, 2011.

Notes: All youth refers to any youth served during the reference month using Recovery Act funds. Youth in summer employment refers to youth that participated in a work experience as part of their program participation during the reference month.

These figures suggest that grantees followed ETA and Congress' guidance on how to implement their summer youth employment initiatives. As discussed in Chapter 1, grantees were encouraged to spend their funds on summer employment and to focus their efforts during summer 2009. As shown in Figure II.1, grantees tended to focus on providing services to program participants during the summer months. During both summer 2009 and 2010 large numbers of youth began enrolling in May and June. Enrollment remained high during July but dropped sharply during August and September as sites began to reduce the provision of services. Further, grantees focused their efforts on summer 2009. Nationally, both total employment and participation in summer employment were higher during summer 2009 than during summer 2010.

C. Characteristics of Youth Participants, May–September 2009 and May–September 2010⁴

Females and males participated at about equal rates. Most participants were in-school youth ages 14 to 18. Although the Recovery Act expanded eligibility to allow young adults between ages 22 and 24 to enroll, relatively few participants were in this age range (12 percent) compared with other age groups.

During summer 2009, grantees enrolled disadvantaged American Indian youth (see Table II.1). As would be expected given the high proportion of in-school youth, the largest share of participants did not have a high school diploma or equivalent. Another 23 percent had received their high school diploma or equivalent and about 9 percent were enrolled in postsecondary education. About 16 percent of youth were high school dropouts. Large numbers of youth received public assistance or experienced skills deficiencies. Slightly more than one in 10 youth were pregnant or parenting. Youth with disabilities and offenders each accounted for only 3 percent of participants.

Veterans and their spouses were given priority of service because of the high incidence of unemployment among veterans after discharge from the Armed Forces. Nonetheless, only 0.1 percent of participants served during summer 2009 were veterans.

Table II.1. Youth Participant Characteristics

	May–September 2009		May–September 2010
	All Grantees	Site Visit Grantees	All Grantees
All Participants	3,303	764	793
Summer Employment Participants	2,984	555	695
Sex			
Male	48.2%	49.6%	49.8%
Female	51.9%	50.4%	50.2%

⁴ Descriptive characteristics were not available for youth enrolled only in summer employment. These figures include all youth served using Recovery Act funds during May to September 2009 and May to September 2010.

	May-September 2009		May-September 2010
	All Grantees	Site Visit Grantees	All Grantees
School Enrollment			
High School or Pre-High School	51.7%	60.2%	48.4%
High School Graduate	23.3%	19.0%	18.4%
Postsecondary	8.9%	16.0%	6.6%
High School Dropout	16.1%	5.2%	26.6%
In School	60.6%	76.2%	55.0%
Out of School	39.4%	24.2%	45.0%
Youth Characteristics			
Pregnant or Parenting	12.7%	7.1%	15.6%
Offender	3.2%	3.1%	1.6%
Receives Public Assistance	46.7%	42.9%	60.8%
Skills Deficiency	29.5%	61.5%	5.3%
Has Disability	2.9%	3.1%	3.8%
Veteran	0.12%	0.0%	0.0%
Age			
Age 14–18	61.9%	67.4%	54.1%
Age 19–21	26.6%	21.7%	30.0%
Age 22–24	11.6%	10.9%	15.9%

Source: Grantee performance reports for Indian and Native American summer youth employment initiatives supported by the Recovery Act submitted to the U.S. Department of Labor as of January 31, 2011.

Note: Although during site visit interviews some site visit grantees reported using Recovery Act funds to serve youth in summer 2010, none reported using Recovery Act funds to serve youth during summer 2010 in monthly reporting.

During summer 2009, site visit grantees served participants who were similar to the nationwide program, although a few differences are notable. Site visit grantees served a greater number of youth with skills deficiencies and slightly fewer youth who were pregnant or parenting or receiving public assistance than were served in the national program. Among site visit grantees a slightly higher proportion of youth were ages 14 to 18. As might be expected in serving this age cohort, greater numbers of site visit grantee participants ages 14 to 18 were enrolled in school.

Across all grantees, youth participants during summer 2010 had different characteristics compared with youth served during summer 2009. During summer 2010 a smaller percentage of youth were either enrolled in pre-high school, high school, or postsecondary education. As would be expected with this trend, a smaller percentage of youth were in school. A much larger number of youth were high school dropouts. Sites also served greater numbers of youth receiving public assistance and smaller numbers of youth with identified or reported skills challenges.

D. Patterns of Service Participation and Completion, May–September 2009 and May–September 2010⁵

During 2009 and 2010, INA SYEI grantees focused their efforts on providing summer employment opportunities rather than other services to youth participants as urged by Congress and ETA (Table II.2). Among all youth served using Recovery Act funds during May to September 2009, a majority (90 percent) were placed in a summer job. Similarly, among all youth served during May to September 2010 through January 2011, 88 percent were placed in a summer job.

Table II.2. Select Services Completed or Education Attained by Youth Participants

	May–September 2009		May–September 2010
	All Grantees	Site Visit Grantees	All Grantees
All Participants	3,303	764	793
Summer Employment Participants	2,984	555	695
Completed Work Readiness	64.6%	74.5%	88.4%
Completed Internship or Vocational Exploration Program	11.8%	3.1%	0.0%
Completed Career Assessment	64.6%	85.6%	84.7%
Attained High School Diploma	0.2%	0.3%	0.0%
Attained General Equivalency Diploma (GED)	0.5%	0.7%	0.1%
Completed Occupational Skills Training	18.0%	18.3%	0.5%
Completed Leadership Skills Training	36.0%	10.3%	72.8%

Source: Grantee performance reports for Indian and Native American summer youth employment initiatives supported by the Recovery Act submitted to the U.S. Department of Labor as of January 31, 2011.

Note: Although during site visit interviews some site visit grantees reported using Recovery Act funds to serve youth in summer 2010, monthly reporting to ETA did not include the use of Recovery Act funds during summer 2010. Attained High School Diploma refers to the number of youth participants enrolled for the period that attained a state-recognized high school diploma as a result of program participation. Attained General Equivalency Diploma (GED) refers to the number of youth participants enrolled for the period that attained a state-recognized GED as a result of program participation.

In 2009, nearly two-thirds (64.6 percent) of the youth participants completed work readiness training and/or career assessment. In 2010, 88.4 percent of participants completed work readiness training and 84.7 percent completed career assessments. Work readiness skills training might have included career exploration, job search, survival and daily living skills, and youth development activities as described in the following chapter. Career assessment was a formal evaluation of occupational interests, values, skills, or aptitudes to identify careers for which the participants might be well suited. In summer 2009, 36 percent of participants completed leadership training and this figure rose to 73 percent in summer 2010. This training aimed to develop leadership ability and could have included exposure to postsecondary educational opportunities, community and service

⁵ Patterns of service receipt were not available for youth enrolled only in summer employment. These figures include all youth served using Recovery Act funds during May to September 2009 and May to September 2010.

learning projects, peer-centered mentoring and tutoring, organizational and team work training, citizenship training, or organized group counseling. In summer 2009, about 10 percent of youth completed some form of occupational skills training, which could have included vocational education and on-the-job training. A much smaller share of youth completed this training in summer 2010.

In general, program participants at site visit grantees completed program components similar to those reflected in the national data during summer 2009. Youth completed these components, however, at slightly different rates. Like all grantees, large numbers of youth completed work readiness training and career assessment during summer 2009, but site visit grantees were more likely than the national average to participate in these program components. Site visit grantees visited, however, were less likely than grantees on average to complete leadership skills training.

E. Short- Term Outcome Measures, 2009 and 2010

Congress required INA SYEI grantees to report on the percentage of participants in summer employment that made measureable progress in attaining work readiness as a performance measure for youth served with Recovery Act allocations. Work readiness attainment, as discussed further in Chapter V, could encompass youth progress in one of several areas (ETA 2009):

- World-of-work awareness, labor market knowledge, occupational information, values clarification and personal understanding, career planning, and decision making
- Job search techniques (resumes, interviews, applications, and follow-up letters)
- Survival/daily living skills, such as using the telephone, telling time, shopping, renting an apartment, opening a bank account, and using public transportation
- Positive work habits, attitudes, and behaviors such as punctuality, regular attendance, presenting a neat appearance, getting along and working well with others, exhibiting good conduct, following instructions and completing tasks, accepting constructive criticism from supervisors and co-workers, showing initiative and reliability, and assuming the responsibilities involved in maintaining a job
- Motivation and adaptability, obtaining effective coping and problem-solving skills, and acquiring an improved self image

In addition, ETA also required grantees to report the percentage of youth that completed their summer work experience.

Table II.3. Performance Indicators for Participants in Summer Employment

	Program Year 2009		Program Year 2010
	All Sites	Site Visit Grantees	All Sites
Work Readiness Attainment Rate	78.0%	81.5%	94.5%
Summer Employment Completion Rate	83.5%	84.7%	94.1%
Number of Participants in Summer Employment	3,145	633	697

Source: Grantee performance reports for Indian and Native American summer youth employment initiatives supported by the Recovery Act submitted to the U.S. Department of Labor as of January 31, 2011.

Note: Although during site visit interviews some site visit grantees reported using Recovery Act funds to serve youth in summer 2010, monthly reporting data sent to DOL did not report use of Recovery Act funds to serve youth during summer 2010. Data for Program Year 2010 are only through January 31, 2011 and do not encompass the entire program year. Some grantees may have missing or incomplete data. Therefore, the Program Year 2010 performance indicators should be interpreted with this in mind.

Grantees' performance information suggests that most youth involved in summer employment increased their work readiness and completed summer employment (Table II.3). Available data for program year 2009⁶ suggest that by the end of the program year, 84 percent of youth completed summer employment and 78 percent of youth had attained work readiness. For program year 2010 through January 2011, 95 percent of youth completed summer employment and 94 percent of youth had improved work readiness. Site visit grantees in program year 2009 did slightly better than grantees overall; 82 percent of site visit grantee youth completed summer employment and 85 percent of these youth improved their workforce readiness.

⁶ For the Indian and Native American Program within ETA, program year 2009 covered the period from April 1, 2009 to March 31, 2010. Program year 2010 covered the period from April 1, 2010 to March 31, 2011. Data were available only through January 31, 2011. The workforce readiness and completion of summer employment indicators represent only participants placed in any work experience (subsidized or unsubsidized) in the period between May 1 and September 30 of the program year.

III. STRUCTURE AND ORGANIZATION OF STUDY SITES

The previous chapter provided an overview of both the national INA SYEI program context and the national context in relation to the five selected study sites. In this chapter, we provide an overview of the individual study sites and brief profiles of each of the study sites' implementation of the summer youth employment initiative using Recovery Act funds. We then discuss key aspects of program planning, design, and organization. Primary findings related to the structure and organization of sites appear in bold text and set off with a bullet point, to distinguish them from section headings.

A. Characteristics of Selected INA SYEI Program Sites

The INA SYEI grantees selected for in-depth data collection are diverse across several dimensions. As referenced earlier and provided in further detail in Table III.1, three sites had service populations generally limited to a specific tribal community whereas two sites served Native American youth from a wide service area. Sites' populations vary from a few thousand to tens of thousands.

The recession had a major effect on the 2009 implementation of sites' INA SYEI. Sites reported a negative impact of the recession on the local community and on job opportunities for youth. Some sites noted that there was limited business or industry in the area even before the recession. Others discussed a more recent increase in competition for jobs, the closing of local businesses, and/or a reduction in tourism and thus service sector opportunities due to the recession.

As Table III.1 indicates, two sites have unemployment rates slightly above 10 percent; one site has an unemployment rate of 20 percent; and two sites have unemployment rates of more than 25 percent (U.S. Census Bureau 2009a, 2009b).

The profiles of the sites below describe the site's location, populations served, INA SYEI program enrollment, Recovery Act funding allocation, general organization, and the types and content of services provided to youth.

Table III.1. Characteristics of Study Sites

	California Indian Manpower Association	Four Tribes Consortium of Oklahoma	Kewa (formerly Santo Domingo Pueblo)	Mississippi Band of Choctaw Indians	Oglala Sioux Tribe of the Pine Ridge Reservation
Consortium or Individual Tribe	Consortium	Consortium	Individual tribe	Individual tribe	Individual tribe
Service Area	Affiliated with 98 reservations and rancherias and 41 counties in California, as well as some areas of Illinois and Iowa	Caddo County, OK	Kewa Pueblo, NM	Mississippi Choctaw Indian Reservation, MS	Pine Ridge Reservation, SD
City, State	Sacramento, CA	Anadarko, OK	Santo Domingo, NM	Choctaw, MS	Pine Ridge, SD
Total Population	20,086	6,867	3,333	7,692	18,623

	California Indian Manpower Association	Four Tribes Consortium of Oklahoma	Kewa (formerly Santo Domingo Pueblo)	Mississippi Band of Choctaw Indians	Oglala Sioux Tribe of the Pine Ridge Reservation
Unemployment Rate 16-64 Years	19.8%	30.3%	13.4%	10.5%	25.9%
Unemployment Rate 16-19 Years	N.A.	N.A.	55.3%	23.6%	58.2%
Unemployment Rate 20-24 Years	N.A.	N.A.	30.2%	13.4%	37.1%

Source: 2005-2009 American Community Survey 5-Year Estimates and site visit interviews.

Note: Unemployment rates and total population for the California Indian Manpower Consortium refer to American Indians and Alaska Natives within the Sacramento-Arden-Arcade-Roseville, California, Metropolitan Statistical Area. Unemployment rates and total population for the Four Tribes Consortium of Oklahoma refer to American Indians and Alaska Natives within Caddo County, Oklahoma. Unemployment rates and total population for Kewa (formerly Santo Domingo) Pueblo, the Mississippi Band of Choctaw Indians, and the Oglala Sioux Tribe of the Pine Ridge Reservation refer to all persons living within the geographic areas defined by the U.S. Census Bureau as “Santo Domingo Pueblo, NM”; “Mississippi Choctaw Reservation, MS”; and “Pine Ridge Reservation, SD”, respectively, for the purposes of the American Community Survey 2005-2009 five-year estimates.

N.A. = not available.

B. California Indian Manpower Association

California Indian Manpower Consortium, Inc. (CIMC) is a consortium of “federally recognized American Indian tribes, reservations, rancherias, bands, colonies, terminated rancherias, American Indian groups, entities, and organizations.”⁷ Its primary purpose is to provide job training and employment opportunities to its member groups through federal WIA funding⁸. It also provides programs designed to promote the educational and economic advancement of all peoples in its service areas. Through its headquarters and eight field offices, CIMC works with 98 reservations and rancherias and 41 counties in California and some areas of Illinois and Iowa.⁹

⁷ See http://www.cimcinc.org/cimc_aboutus.htm.

⁸ CIMC has been providing employment and training services to its members since its incorporation in 1978. Due to staff turnover and program changes, CIMC staff – as well as staff in the other four site visit locations – did not have precise information about how long they had been providing summer youth employment programs. Several staff did indicate, however, that they had been providing them for many years, often since before the passage of the Workforce Investment Act of 1998.

⁹ Since 1995, CIMC has also provided WIA services to residents of the State of Illinois and Clinton, Muscatine, and Scott Counties in Iowa. Native American groups in these areas learned about CIMC through personal contacts and ultimately joined the consortium in order to be able to benefit from CIMC’s experience and from membership in a consortium. CIMC did not, however, include their Illinois and Iowa service areas in their Recovery Act-funded SYEI program.

Each summer, CIMC runs four summer youth employment programs, supported by different combinations of federal, state, and county funding. In 2009, it received an INA SYEI Recovery Act supplement of \$151,000, with which it served 65 additional youth. CIMC also received other Recovery Act funding from the state, but those funds were used for a different program that also supported additional youth employment opportunities. For the Recovery Act-funded SYEI program, CIMC received an announcement in late March/early April 2009 and had a deadline of the second week in June for youth to submit their enrollment documents. It trained staff in May 2009 to help them understand the new outreach and eligibility requirements for the Recovery Act-funded SYEI program. Youth began the program in the last week of June 2009 and most completed the program by the end of September 2009. CIMC spent all of its INA SYEI Recovery Act allocation during the summer of 2009.

CIMC's goal for the Recovery Act-funded program was the same as its other summer youth employment programs: to provide youth with workforce readiness training and work experience, as well as an opportunity to earn income and have the experience of the responsibility of a job. Because it had well-established youth summer employment programs in place, CIMC used its Recovery Act funds to serve more youth through one of its existing programs.

All youth received a career assessment or interest survey to help them determine their career interests. They also participated in a test of workforce readiness, followed by job readiness training as a group, in which the program coordinator and the workforce development coordinator field office staff review with youth topics such as expectations for behavior at the worksite, appropriate appearance, grooming, attendance, what is appropriate to discuss with supervisors, self-esteem, positive attitudes, pride in their cultural heritage, honesty in their jobs, balancing work and home life, why workers lose their jobs, and substance abuse. Youth then participate in five to six weeks of employment, during which they work alongside regular employees and engage in tasks that regular employees in the position would do. At the end of the summer, youth take another, slightly longer post-test to assess any changes in workforce readiness.

C. Four Tribes Consortium of Oklahoma

The Four Tribes Consortium of Oklahoma (hereafter, Four Tribes) located in Anadarko, Oklahoma, serves the Apache Tribe, Wichita and Affiliated Tribes, Fort Sill Apache Tribe, and Caddo Tribe, as well all other Native Americans in Caddo County, Oklahoma. Before the Recovery Act, the consortium had operated a WIA-funded summer youth employment program that typically served about 35 youth each summer. Two staff members, the executive director and the program coordinator, run the summer youth program through the Four Tribes program office, which provides employment and training opportunities to Native Americans throughout Caddo County.

The Four Tribes' base of funding comes from WIA and was supplemented in 2009 with \$87,600 in Recovery Act funds. In 2009, it received approximately 300 applications for the summer program, served approximately 60 to 80 youth, and spent 100 percent of its Recovery Act allocation. With the Recovery Act-funded program in 2009, the Four Tribes' goal was to enroll older youth and to have at least half of them retain employment. It also worked with Anadarko's probation office to target youth who had community service obligations or fines to pay before being absolved by the court to give them opportunities to make restitution. As in other summers, the Four Tribes also sought to improve youths' academic skills or credits to grade level and provide them with skills training and "something to put on their resume" and "to give them experiences and knowledge so they feel confident if they were to leave for some place like Oklahoma City."

The Four Tribes' summer youth program offers classroom training and worksite employment experiences. Its application process for summer youth employment programs begins in May of each year and youths' work experiences run from approximately June 1 to mid-August. The program includes a measure of work-readiness via a career assessment, in which youth take a staff-developed employment test and complete an individual employment plan, including their two-year goals and steps they plan to take to reach their goals. They also receive some in-house career training or life skills building, on such topics as resume preparation, financial management, drug and alcohol abuse, or parenting as well as how to "compete for a job" and think about education beyond the general educational development (GED) test.

Older youth are matched to worksites, whereas younger youth, those ages 14 to 15, participate in one month of summer school that consists of reading or math enhancement and community service projects to support elders or their tribe. Some older youth also attend school if they need additional credits. The program includes one or two cultural activities with the Four Tribes community each summer.

D. Kewa (Santo Domingo) Pueblo

The Kewa (Santo Domingo) Pueblo Office of Employment and Training (OET) provides adult and youth employment and training to residents of Kewa Pueblo, a community of about 5,000 residents located north of Albuquerque, New Mexico. In addition to implementing a summer youth employment program prior to the Recovery Act, OET provides a WIA adult program that links adult workers to employment and delivers job readiness training that includes resume writing, basic skills, and academic skills and assessments

During summer 2009, program staff hoped to provide employment experience to youth as well as youth development and experiential education. OET was awarded approximately \$59,000 and used these funds to serve 20 participants in the 2009 summer youth employment initiative. Participants entered the program during June 2009 and exited during August 2009. OET used about one-sixth of its Recovery Act allocation to develop and implement a pilot GED course, Kewa FOCUS, which ran from August 2009 to March 2010. This pilot course enrolled about 20 participants. The course was designed to help Kewa youth and adults earn a high school diploma in a local, culturally appropriate program. The director and coordinator of OET implemented the SYEI with the assistance of two youth advisors hired specifically for the 2009 summer program. OET contracted with Lifework Learning, Inc. to provide the pilot GED course and OET staff handled recruitment and outreach.

In addition to workforce participation experiences, youth attended a weekly training day that taught them job readiness and life skills. OET staff or guest speakers from the community delivered this training. Program participants also attended camps, conferences, or other training activities focused on youth development, experiential education, and Pueblo Indian culture. Youth participants led an effort to form a youth council, the Kewa TRUTH Council, and were advised by program staff. Youth also visited local postsecondary institutions and participated in community service projects.

Students enrolled in the pilot GED course received instruction in the five traditional core GED areas. Students also visited postsecondary institutions and received life skills and job readiness training, including financial literacy, resume writing, and job interviewing.

E. Mississippi Band of Choctaw Indians

The Mississippi Band of Choctaw Indians (MBCI) Department of Employment and Training (DET) provides adult and youth employment and training services to the Mississippi Choctaw Indian Reservation near Philadelphia, Mississippi. While staff did not have precise information about how long they had been running a summer youth employment program, DET has been implementing one since before WIA came into effect in 1998. They provide these and other employment services to all eight of the tribe's communities: Bogue Chitto, Bogue Homa, Conehatta, Crystal Ridge, Pearl River, Red Water, Tucker, and Standing Pine. DET was awarded approximately \$106,000 and used the funds to develop a distinct program serving youth ages 18 to 24 that was implemented alongside its standard summer youth employment program. Program staff's goals for the program were for youth to complete job readiness training with classroom-based learning and complete work experience activities. For the 2009 Recovery Act-funded program, DET staff also wanted to make sure youth completed a comprehensive career assessment and obtained certifications that would increase their employability and competitiveness in the job market. In practice, both programs participated in similar activities although youth in the Recovery Act-funded program spent more time in work experience and less time in classroom-based learning than their counterparts in the existing program. The Recovery Act-funded program enrolled two groups of program participants during summer 2009 in June 2009 (20 participants) and August 2009 (16 participants). New youth entered the program during each session. The program also served a third group of 7 participants during January 2010. Each group was enrolled for six weeks.

During summer 2009, youth engaged in several different program activities. All program participants worked with the MBCI Natural Resource Department for their six weeks with the program. DET administered job readiness workshops during each summer session. DET partnered with East Central Community College's Integrated Technologies Center to provide youth classroom-based and hands-on instruction in basic manufacturing safety, computer skills, hand and power tools, blueprint reading, basic measurement, precision measurement tools, statistical process control, and control chart operation; successful completion of the course earned youth a modern multiskill manufacturing (M3) production certification. Youth also participated in several youth development and cultural activities, including an annual MBCI Youth Leadership Conference, a ropes course, and two cultural exchanges with other tribes.

F. Oglala Sioux Tribe of the Pine Ridge Reservation

The Oglala Sioux Tribe WIA Office provides adult and youth employment and training to Pine Ridge Reservation's nine districts. The WIA Office was awarded \$536,000 and used most of its Recovery Act funds during summer 2009 and had only a small amount left over for summer 2010. Program staff's goals for the program included providing youth with paid work experience, valuable work skills, and giving them an idea of the real world. Staff also hoped to provide youth in summer school the opportunity to earn wages while completing their education. They said that this goal was unique to the summer 2009 program and had not been a goal in previous years or in 2010. The WIA Office served about 500 youth using Recovery Act funds during summer 2009. During summer 2009, youth (1) worked at worksites and received wages, some of which were funded by the Recovery Act; or (2) attended summer school and received wages, funded completely by the Recovery Act. During summer 2010, Recovery Act funds were used for workforce participation experiences only for youth ages 18 to 24, who typically worked with local business or tribal organizations. In both 2009 and 2010, the summer program was organized into two four-week sessions with new youth entering during each session. In both summer sessions, the first four-week session began during mid-June and the second began during late July.

In addition to the summer 2009 and 2010 work experience (and summer school attendance in the case of 2009), WIA Office staff held an orientation and two education sessions with youth in each district during both summer sessions. The WIA Office also partnered with a local community financial development institution to provide financial literacy education to youth. During both summer 2009 sessions a job skills trainer visited youth in each district during each session and held a meeting on job skills training. At the end of summer 2009 the program held a celebratory meeting. The program brought in youth program participants (from both program sessions) from each of the districts and provided food, games, sports, speakers, education, and presentations at a local park.

G. INA SYEI Program Planning, Design, and Organization 2009 and 2010

The infusion of Recovery Act funds presented sites with an opportunity to expand, modify, or enhance their summer youth employment programs. None of the five study sites used the funds to create wholly new program structures, although some did create new program components, including new workforce experiences, skills trainings, and cultural activities. According to staff, this was largely because after the Recovery Act was signed into law in early 2009, sites had only a limited amount of time to prepare for their summer youth employment programs. Sites had to develop goals for the new program, determine the services youth would receive, and decide who would provide youth services.

Crucially, they also had to develop strategies both for serving older youth and for measuring and reporting two performance measures—program completion and workforce readiness—required by the Recovery Act rules. This short time frame, federal guidance, and sites' previous experiences had a critical influence on the planning and design process during summer 2009. Most sites expended most of their funds in summer 2009 and thus were not able to make significant changes or improvements in their 2010 summer youth employment programs.

The goals discussed by the five site visit grantees tended to reflect key existing goals for their summer youth employment programs, with some additional goals in response to the Recovery Act: Program staff hoped to provide youth with work experience so youth could earn income, increase their awareness of the world of work, and learn positive work skills and on-the-job behaviors.

Program staff discussed wanting to provide youth with job readiness training, certifications, or academic training to increase their employability and competitiveness in the job market. They also used career assessments in their programs to help youth learn about their own interests and goals and explore potential careers. Some sites also wanted to provide experiences that would increase youths' confidence, self-esteem, development, and awareness of and pride in their cultural heritage.

- **Providing paid work experiences and serving older youth were key goals for Recovery Act-funded programs.**

Sites also mentioned goals linked directly to the Recovery Act or ETA guidance, such as serving older youth and providing green job opportunities. Most sites sought to use the Recovery Act funds to serve more youth than during a typical summer and to serve older youth as outlined in the federal guidance. Most sites also sought to serve these older and larger numbers of youth with green job opportunities. As discussed in the following pages, their ability to provide green jobs depended upon existing relationships with employers, but all sites were able to expand the number of youth served and to modify program services to meet the needs of older youth.

1. Planning

- **The summer 2009 planning process was brief, and program staff typically served as the primary planners.**

Most sites reported that their planning process was not different from their established process with the exception of training staff on Recovery Act rules and procedures, particularly the performance measures. Program administrators were the primary planners in collaboration with other program staff. They typically discussed how they could best use the Recovery Act funds to serve youth and meet ETA's requirements. One site, however, involved its tribal planning office to discuss the federal guidance and the program's design. Another site reviewed labor market information, population figures, and area poverty rates to determine the locations most in need of a Recovery Act-funded summer youth employment program. Youth providers and employers were typically not involved in the planning process. In cases in which they were involved, their participation was limited to a discussion of program staff's plans or an affirmation that they would provide services or employment to youth within the program. Sites that used Recovery Act funds during both summer 2009 and summer 2010 did not make significant changes to their planning processes during summer 2010 based upon their 2009 experiences.

2. Program Design

Most sites had experience delivering summer youth employment and training programs before summer 2009. Some program staff noted that in prior years the primary source of funding for their summer program was their WIA allocation from ETA. Some program staff and employers said that there were other employment, education, and training opportunities in the area, but most stressed that the summer youth employment program was the main—and sometimes only—source of youth employment.

Sites were able to utilize their previous experience planning summer youth employment programs to plan for their SYEI. At the same time, they still needed to develop a plan for how best to utilize Recovery Act funding and align their programs with Recovery Act stipulations related to serving more and older youth. In practice, all sites used Recovery Act funds to serve more youth. One site also used Recovery Act funds to create a program to target youth ages 18 to 24 separate from its standard summer program, which targeted youth ages 14 to 21. Although both programs provided similar services, the program for older youth was designed to have a greater focus on work experience, work readiness skills, career pathways, and green jobs. Other sites used Recovery Act funds to target older youth only and then served their younger youth with other WIA funds. One site designed its program to focus on community service to address local needs in the wake of a natural disaster. Two sites used Recovery Act funds to support youth attending summer school. One site worked with the local juvenile justice system to allow youth with community service obligations or fines to enroll in the summer program and use the program activities and wages to fulfill these obligations. Two sites also added additional youth and cultural development components during summer 2009 with Recovery Act funds, including attending conferences, camps, or cultural exchanges with youth of other tribes.

3. Staffing

Several sites hired new staff to assist with their implementation of an expanded summer youth employment program during summer 2009. Several sites saw a need for additional staff to connect with and support the increased number of program participants. One site doubled its number of direct service staff—funding half of them with Recovery Act funds—so it could increase its worksite monitoring. Two sites created a new direct service position and hired additional program staff. In each of these cases, the additional direct service staff were involved as mentors, monitors of worksite experiences, chaperones for trainings or events, and as role models and coaches. In one of these sites, the additional staff were drawn from the organization’s adult WIA program. One site hired a trainer to visit each area of the tribe’s communities during summer 2009 and provide culturally appropriate job skills training to youth participants. Two sites, however, had sufficient staff in place and thus did not hire additional staff with Recovery Act funds.

- **Most sites did not continue program expansions or enhancements during summer 2010.**

Most sites did not continue their program modifications from summer 2009 into summer 2010 and sites that had hired additional staff the previous summer did not refill those positions. Most sites used all or most of their Recovery Act funds during 2009 and did not have the same level of funding to support summer 2010 programs. Sites that did create new activities and expanded staff and participants in 2009 reported having to scale back their design and implementation of these modifications because they did not have any remaining Recovery Act supplemental funds to use in 2010.

IV. YOUTH RECRUITMENT, INTAKE, ORIENTATION, AND SUPPORT

In this chapter, we discuss strategies the study sites used to recruit, enroll, orient, and provide supportive services to youth in their Recovery Act-funded INA SYEI programs. We also provide key findings related to these strategies, as appropriate, in order to offer insight into these components of implementation. Among these findings are the importance of word of mouth to outreach and recruitment, the strength of workforce readiness training, and youths' need for additional supportive services. These findings are designed to highlight promising practices and lessons learned of potential interest to other sites that offer summer youth employment programs.

A. Program Outreach, Recruitment, and Application

- **Although sites employed various established outreach and recruitment strategies for the Recovery Act-funded INA SYEIs, word of mouth remained one of the most noted modes of information sharing about the program.**

Outreach and recruitment strategies varied somewhat by site, but all sites employed the same established and successful recruitment strategies used in previous summers. Staff from all five sites most often discussed disseminating program information via paper flyers posted at community cultural events or sent to field offices, tribal offices, recreation centers, social service agencies, tribal employment program offices, health centers, schools, and other Native American organizations. Youth often mentioned seeing a flyer or hearing about the program from a relative or friend who had seen a flyer.

Other modes of outreach and recruitment included announcing the program on a local radio station; sending out several email “blasts” to all tribal members with email contact information; and making presentations at regional tribal meetings, cultural events, or development clubs that promote “the development and advancement of each of the reservation’s communities.” Interestingly, only one site mentioned posting information about its program on its website and noted that few applicants came to it via the website. No study sites mentioned using social networking sites (for example, Facebook or Twitter), an increasingly common form of information sharing with youth target groups, as a way to publicize the program.

Of note was youth participants' frequent mention of word of mouth as the means by which they learned about and approached the program. Youth at four of the five sites explicitly discussed learning about the program via word of mouth from family and friends. As one participant explained, “Living on a reservation, you learn of things from other people.” Youth specifically mentioned hearing about it from their mothers, grandparents, cousins, and family friends, many of whom worked in tribal offices or were friends with tribal office staff who were familiar with existing tribal youth summer employment programs. For the one site where youth did not directly mention word of mouth, program staff noted that there was already “knowledge of the program in the community” that helped them to recruit youth for the program. In another site, staff noted that “advertising by word of mouth was also effective” for recruiting participants.

- **Tribal summer youth employment programs have more applicants than they can serve, even with the addition of supplemental Recovery Act funds.**

All sites reported having more applicants than they could serve with their summer youth employment program, even when Recovery Act funds enabled them to expand their programs, sometimes by as much as 100 percent. Staff from one site reported having 300 applicants and serving about 60 youth. Another site had 70 applicants but only 20 slots for its summer program. A third site typically served 10 youth each summer and noted how advantageous it was to be able to serve 20 youth in 2009. At the same time, it reported having approximately 200 youth eligible for the program. A fourth site noted that with its INA SYEI Recovery Act funds, it was able to serve 65 more youth than in other summers and still had outstanding demand for the program.

Youth reported applying to the program because of the significant challenges they faced finding a job “on their own.” Some older youth with experience had been looking for employment for as long as 12 months. Others said that they were now competing with adults with experience for jobs they used to be able to get even without a lot of experience. Other youth were attracted to the program because they needed “something to do” for the summer, as well as wanting to earn an income, assist with family bills, have a “new and interesting experience,” and acquire new job skills. A number of youth also talked about the benefits of having the responsibility of a job—having to get up in the morning and be somewhere, perform job duties, and work with others—as beneficial to their self-esteem and level of confidence.

Box IV.1. Recruiting Youth in Need

Among the many recruitment strategies study sites employed, one particularly innovative program worked with the local juvenile justice system to involve youth who had community service obligations or fines to pay before being absolved by the court. These often older youth worked in community service jobs through the Recovery Act-funded summer youth employment initiative to meet their existing obligations as well as to earn additional income and acquire needed workforce skills. Youth appreciated these opportunities and staff reported the value of helping youth in the community to find an opportunity to make restitution. As one staff member explained, “It’s a great thing. We could have really lost a lot of kids.... Most of them did go around trying to do their hours, but because of liability, nobody would let them. So it’s a great thing, a program like ours, because we give them a second chance.”

B. Target Groups and Enrollment Activities

- **Recovery Act funds led programs to target and enroll older youth, as well as to create new workforce activities and opportunities to meet their specific needs.**

Four of the five study sites targeted and enrolled youth up to age 24 in their 2009 summer employment initiative. The fifth site enrolled youth up to age 21. One site specifically designed its 2009 program to take advantage of the higher age limit and created workforce opportunities for older youth who could work with limited supervision and engage in skilled activities appropriate for their age, such as driving or operating machinery. Another site created a new program for older youth that focused on having them complete a course and receive job-specific certifications that had the potential to support finding a more permanent position.

Sites did not alter their intake and enrollment procedures for the Recovery Act program. They utilized their existing application and enrollment processes that typically asked youth for

demographic, household, and income information, and about youths' skills, goals, and interests. The sites then verified eligibility by asking youth to provide parental income information via a pay stub or public assistance award letter. Other sites asked for a Social Security card and proof of income (if the youth was 18 or older) and proof of tribal membership or Certificate Degree of Indian Blood (CDIB). Two sites reported selecting youth based on need: those with the lowest or no income. Those sites also considered household size and if youth were parenting. As discussed further in Chapter VIII, staff frequently faced challenges verifying income, as some parents either did not have this documentation or were concerned that sharing it might affect their TANF assistance. In general, however, because application, intake, and enrollment are well-established components of pre-Recovery Act summer youth employment programs, sites did not feel compelled to change these processes, nor did they face any significant challenges.

C. Youth Employment Barriers

- **Youth participants face significant barriers to employment, ranging from a lack of skills and experience to serious mental health, substance abuse, and family instability challenges.**

Youth in the study sites reported a general lack of employment opportunities in their areas of residence. In some cases, this meant that there were few employment options for them on or near the reservation or tribal community where they live. In other cases, this involved facing employers unwilling to hire youth or someone without an established work history. Most nonprogram employment options available to youth involved fast-food restaurants or large retail stores. Youth from all study sites reported that in 2009 and 2010 they had to compete with adults for jobs that used to go to youth before the recession.

Youth also faced logistical barriers to employment, most often with transportation to get to work, which was sometimes off the reservation or at some distance from where youth lived. When relying on public transportation, youth often did not have an alternative mode of transportation if the bus did not come. Some parenting youth had challenges finding consistent child care for their children. Youth also had a number of serious personal challenges, from “pervasive poverty” to drug and alcohol abuse, gang issues and violence, and criminal histories. They often lacked a “good adult role model,” had not completed high school or a GED program, and came from what they called “difficult backgrounds” and “unstable families” in poverty. Some were pregnant; others experienced depression. Staff in two sites noted a “very high youth suicide rate.” In one case, staff reported that culturally specific gender norms formed an employment barrier for some young women whose socially proscribed gender roles were not entirely aligned with such expected work norms and behaviors as the need to go out and locate a job, be assertive, speak directly, and find success.

D. Orientation, Assessment, and Individual Employment Plans

All programs in the study offered some type of orientation, assessment, and workforce readiness training, as discussed further in the following pages. Orientations tended to follow a lecture format and cover topics such as program rules and expectations, work rules and regulations, time sheets, and attendance tracking.

Assessments tended to focus on helping youth identify existing employment skills and/or personal career interests as well as a worksite of interest. Three of the sites reported using formal tools provided by the local One-Stop Career Center to help youth identify skills or career interests. Staff sought to use both formal and informal assessments to help youth understand their skills and interests as well as to begin to develop a career path. Two sites also administered more comprehensive skills assessments to older youth, for example, WorkKeys and the Tests of Adult Basic Education (TABE). The staff used the assessments to match youth to a worksite of interest. In some cases, however, they had to rely upon existing or available work opportunities and could not always find a worksite that matched a youth's interests. Only one site developed formal written, individual employment plans with youth, which staff noted as a way of helping youth set long- and short-term goals related to their education and skill-building interests. Other sites said that they had more informal or nonwritten strategies and plans for the youth.

E. Workforce Readiness Training

- **Comprehensive and detailed workforce readiness training was available across all study sites at program start or during the program, with some sites providing an additional end-of-program meeting and reassessment.**

All sites offered some type of workforce readiness training to help youth extend their knowledge of the work world (one site called workforce readiness training “World of Work”) and build the specific skills required to locate, acquire, and succeed in a job long-term. In general, workforce readiness training was already well integrated into sites’ summer youth employment programs and thus did not change significantly for the Recovery-Act funded program. Some sites did, however, add new features in 2009 that targeted training and skills building to older youth, for example, instruction in manufacturing safety, computer skills, hand and power tools, blueprint reading, and basic measurement.

Workforce readiness training ranged from several two-hour meetings interspersed throughout the work experience period to a single five-day session at program start. One site provided a weekly training day. Formats ranged from lecture to group discussions to leadership games and role playing. Many of the trainings were run by the site’s program staff, often the program coordinator, but also involved guest speakers, for example, financial skills management trainers or staff from vocational and technical schools to discuss local training options. Other sites brought in outside staff, for example, an employability trainer or a job skills trainer to run the entire workforce readiness training.

Topics covered in workforce readiness included positive attitudes and work habits, the importance of punctuality and regular attendance, time management and following a schedule, proper dress and behavior at work, following instructions, completing tasks efficiently and with quality, accepting constructive criticism from a supervisor and co-workers, showing initiative and reliability, taking responsibility for your actions on the job, and such work ethics as integrity and honesty. Most sites also incorporated life skills and topics into their workforce readiness training. They provided training on money management and financial literacy, how to address substance abuse challenges, goal setting and persevering toward goals, higher education and scholarships, positive self-esteem, and believing in oneself. Almost all sites included specific tasks such as how to complete a job application, cover letter, and resume.

Several sites included cultural elements in their workforce readiness training, for example, discussions of Native American history; pride in heritage; and presentations from tribal elders on traditions, language, proper greetings, values and practices, and their continued importance. Some sites also incorporated tours of the local One-Stop Career Center into their training to enable youth to practice job search skills and identify future career assessment, skills-building, and training resources. Another site offered a tour of a local technical college and area community colleges and universities.

Four of the five sites also included an end-of-program component, in which youth would revisit skills and assess workforce readiness after they had completed the program. Some sites administered a short post-test that staff designed to assess any gains in workforce readiness skills to use to support youth, improve their program, and report on these skills to ETA. One such test, for example, asked a series of 15 questions on topics such as whether youth had been on a job interview, had employment, or had written a resume over the past three months. In these end-of-program sessions, youth might practice interviewing and writing cover letters and resumes and discuss performance reviews provided by on-site supervisors. One program provided youth with certificates to show they had completed the program and, as noted by the program coordinator, “reiterate the sense that they can complete each step of the program and succeed.” Staff from another site explained that they worked with youth to edit and update resumes and explain other WIA programs available to them. They then presented youth with a financial incentive, which youth were encouraged to use to cover the cost of interview and work clothes. One site used the end-of-program meeting as a celebration attended by the tribal president and other officials who spoke to the youth. They discussed tribal culture as well as focused on public health topics, such as HIV/AIDS, safe sex, and suicide awareness.

Youth were very positive about work readiness training, accurately recounting topics covered as reported by program staff. They discussed the usefulness of learning how to write a cover letter and resume, how to present yourself at an interview, and how to use the One-Stop Career Center to search for employment. They felt that it helped them learn how to figure out career options, how to have confidence in themselves, and how to be responsible, all of which helped increase their self esteem.

F. Supportive Services

- **Youth needed and received additional supportive services in order to be able to work. Some needed additional supports that were not readily available through the SYEI or established referral processes.**

Four of the five sites reported high levels of need among youth for work-related supports. Most often this involved supports that sites could provide through existing partners and with established procedures—proper work shoes and clothing, bus passes, gas vouchers, local shuttle service passes, or other transportation assistance. In two sites, program staff gave individual youth rides to work. One site helped youth with car insurance. Other youth needed support to pay electricity bills. One site reported providing funds for youth to use to pay electric bills. Some youth required child care assistance, which programs generally lacked the resources and referral mechanisms to provide. In one case, however, youth could access funds to pay for child care. In at least two cases, youth reported being homeless and needing housing. Generally, programs did not have the resources to address housing challenges, but did try to refer youth to other services. In one case, the program coordinator sought to help a youth directly by helping him search for an apartment he could afford.

V. RECRUITMENT AND INVOLVEMENT OF EMPLOYERS

Employers played a critical role in the implementation of summer youth employment initiatives during summer 2009 and 2010. While Recovery Act funds compensated youth participants, employers had to voluntarily agree to train, support, and hire youth. Program staff and employers had to work collaboratively to facilitate the program and to ensure that youth had a positive work experience. This chapter provides findings related to how sites recruited and oriented employers and concludes with a discussion of employer experiences and motivations for participating. Key findings include the importance of pre-existing employer-program relationships, the significance of collaboration with tribal employers, the use of similar methods to screen and orient employers, and employer motivations to participate related to the importance of working with youth in their community.

A. Employer Recruitment

- **Programs' existing relationships with employers were crucial to finding placements for youth funded under the Recovery Act.**

Program staff from all study sites noted the importance of their established relationships with area employers for their Recovery Act-funded programs. All sites contacted, and in two cases were contacted by, organizations that were previously involved in their summer program. Employers that had participated in the summer program in previous years made up all or the majority of employers in several sites. Some sites noted that these existing relationships with employers eased the recruitment and implementation process, especially given the brief window—from March or April to June 2009—for program planning. Three sites contacted employers with which they worked in previous summers in their service area to discuss the program and the need for additional employment opportunities. One site advertised in local media and used word of mouth to make employers aware of the summer program. Although all sites described a scarcity of industry or private business in the area, few described any trouble finding enough worksites for the additional youth funded by the Recovery Act.

Program staff did not typically target specific industries or employers. Although three sites mentioned seeking green jobs for youth, only one worked extensively with an employer to provide youth jobs in the green sector. Two sites noted their limited industrial base and employment opportunities and the need to be flexible in finding worksites. Although they did not target specific industries, some sites said that the extension of the program to youth ages 21 to 24 created an opportunity for new employers to participate or for previous employers to provide new jobs for older youth.

- **Tribal employers played a central role in providing youth with Recovery Act-funded summer employment opportunities.**

Tribal employers played a key role in the summer program. Their existing familiarity with the summer youth employment programs and their proximity to tribal communities or on-reservation location were particularly important to the program. Staff from all sites discussed placing youth with tribal businesses or tribal agencies. Tribal employers included housing authorities, local schools, health clinics, libraries, tribal administration offices, vocational rehabilitation facilities, and centers for the elderly. Tribal employers were especially important in rural areas where there were fewer businesses or industries than in urban settings. Several youth expressed appreciation at the opportunity to work with tribal employers. One youth placed at a housing authority described the

importance of being able to assist the elderly and give back to the community. Another youth placed at the front desk at a tribal administration office said that by the end of summer she got to know and assist several community members and that she now felt more at home when she returned to the community. Although tribal employers were an important part of the summer program, staff from three sites described also trying to find employers outside of the tribal community to give youth a different perspective and experience.

B. Employer Screening, Orientation, and Support

- **Staff sought employers committed to providing personal support and work skills training and development to youth.**

When recruiting employers, staff assessed whether they could provide a positive experience to youth at both personal and professional levels. Staff sought employers not only willing to supervise youth, but also those committed to and willing to take responsibility for the youths' development. They wanted employers that would give youth valuable experiences and training and contribute to their workforce skills, rather than just employ them to do busy work. They searched for employers that could teach youth important job-specific skills, educate them on work ethics, and build their confidence. Sites also sought employers that were patient with the youth and understood that they were young and would make mistakes.

To determine whether a site would be a good placement for youth, sites typically contacted or visited the employer and discussed employer expectations and responsibilities for training and supervising youth, as well as the number of youth that could be placed at the site and their job responsibilities. The formality of the process varied depending upon whether a particular employer had participated in past summer youth employment programs. However, all sites completed formal worksite agreements with employers to establish the various responsibilities of program staff, youth, and employers for supervision, payment, and worksite monitoring.

C. Employer Experiences

- **Employers enjoyed working with youth and believed the program benefited them, other employees, the youth, and the community.**

Across all sites, employers expressed their enthusiasm for the program, program staff, and especially for the youth themselves. They had been motivated to participate by a desire to support and develop youth and by positive experiences with youth in the past.

The employers enjoyed developing relationships with youth. Employers appreciated the opportunity to teach youth about their work, impart job skills, and promote continual learning. They enjoyed teaching youth life skills by being role models; discussing their personal experiences; and promoting a work ethic, responsibility, commitment, confidence, and a positive attitude. Employers from all sites noted developing a mentoring relationship with many of the youth, supporting them, and helping them to think about their futures. Employers from four different sites noted how personally rewarding they found the relationships that developed with youth. Three employers from three different sites also noted that they or other staff developed close relationships with youth over the course of the summer. Employers also reported trying to reach out to youth to provide mentorship in their personal lives.

In addition to personal fulfillment, employers from all sites said youth helped complete important projects or provided additional work for their organizations. Employers from three sites discussed the benefits to other employees of having the youth at work, which they felt improved overall morale and enhanced the work environment.

Box V.1. Employment and Cultural Heritage

One particularly innovative worksite provided 10 youth ages 18 to 24 the opportunity to help construct and maintain a new rodeo arena and horse racetrack. The worksite supervisor envisioned the project as an informal apprenticeship and taught youth skills in carpentry, mechanics, fencing, welding, and torching. Over the eight weeks of the program, the employer had occasion to teach youth about their cultural heritage, discuss his own personal spiritual journey, and encourage youth to find meaning inside their culture in addition to looking for meaning outside of it. By the end of the summer, both youth and supervisors felt that the group had formed a lasting bond.

Several employers reported that having the youth work through the summer youth employment program also benefited the greater community. Youth were able to earn wages and have money for themselves or to assist their families. Employers said that it was beneficial for the community to see youth being industrious and engaged in positive activities. Employers also appreciated that the program kept youth away from such unproductive behaviors as substance abuse or gang violence. They felt that the program provided youth with a sense of self-worth and some noted that it prevented or helped alleviate youths' depression. Employers also said that the program enabled the community to complete important projects that it might not have been able to accomplish otherwise.

VI. SUMMER EXPERIENCES OF YOUTH

In this chapter, we discuss the experiences of youth during the Recovery Act-funded programs. We focus on how youth were matched to summer jobs; the variety of worksites and multiple work experiences they enjoyed; and several of the supplemental components of the program, including community service, academic activities, and cultural experiences. Findings focus on the rich array of worksites, jobs, and skill-building activities available to youth; the importance of community service, academics, and especially cultural activities to the program; and the very positive experiences youth had in the summer youth employment initiatives across all study sites. In this chapter, findings are offset from the text with bold text and bullet points only in cases in which a finding of particular strength emerged.

A. Matching Youth to Summer Jobs

All sites developed processes that enabled them to assess youth skills and interests and sought to match youth to worksites based on them. They had youth complete surveys or career assessments to identify youths' skills and interests at orientation or at workforce readiness training before placing them in a job. They tried to find what staff described as "a good fit" for the youth. For example, when youth indicated they did not want to be in an office, staff placed them in grounds maintenance or community clean-up jobs.

In practice, however, program staff had to place youth in jobs that were available from participating employers. In one site, staff explained that there were not enough employers to base the youth–employer match on the youths' interests or career goals. Instead, they described the types of jobs available and then allowed youth to select the ones they preferred, as available. In another site, however, the director maintained an extensive list of contacts throughout the year and was better able to find work opportunities that aligned with youths' interests while still meeting employer needs. Among this program's goals was the desire to place youth outside of the local area to expose them to broader opportunities, other kinds of employment, and other ways of life. Youth from this site expressed a strong appreciation for the quality of the match/job they received.

When mismatches between a youth and an employer occurred, four sites reported having procedures in place to address this; the fifth site did not discuss any cases of mismatches or procedures for redressing them. Most often, they sought to find a new placement for the youth, rather than having the youth exit the program. Staff noted that they did not pursue additional placements only when problems at home or challenges with finding reliable transportation appeared to be the reason for poor performance, and thus the source of what appeared to be a mismatch.

B. Summer Work Experiences

- **Across programs, youth enjoyed a wide diversity of workforce experiences. Most sites worked closely with Native American employers to offer youth workforce experiences.**

Across the five study sites, there was a rich array of worksites available to youth through the Recovery Act-funded program. Within two sites, however, worksites or types of jobs available were limited to local employers willing to work with the program. Across all sites, youth had the opportunity to work with local parks departments, recycling centers, the city manager, city and tribal libraries, rodeo grounds, tribal health clinics, tribal finance departments, vocational rehabilitation programs, public assistance offices, grocery stores, elder care programs, early childhood programs,

cultural centers, a hotel resort and spa, a housing authority, fire and emergency medical departments, fitness centers, gas stations, and grocery stores.

Youth engaged in various types of work and were able to build various work-related experience and skills. Youth in office positions learned how to interact with the public, answer telephones, use office equipment, make appointments, maintain client and patient records, and use an office database. Youth in outdoor work, largely forestry and maintenance, learned how to remove debris and maintain public grounds and how to operate forklifts, bulldozers, farm tractors, skid steer loaders, all-terrain vehicles, amphibious buggies, dibble bars, and brush mowers. Other youth learned about farming and sold fruits and vegetables at a farmer's market. Youth in construction work learned how to use construction equipment and to install energy-efficient building materials, windows, and doors as well as carpentry, welding, and torching, among other skills. Youth in customer service positions learned how to meet client needs and work with a diversity of people.

In two sites, staff reported limited types of work available, but across all sites youth enjoyed a variety of opportunities through which they were able to gain valuable work experience and acquire new skills likely to assist them in future job searches.

Most sites were not able to develop green jobs for all youth served. As discussed earlier, they had to rely on existing relationships with employers to find jobs for their participants, many of which were not green employers. Three sites did, however, mention that they explicitly sought green opportunities. By working with its natural resources department, one of these sites was able to offer placement in a green job to almost all Recovery Act-funded youth (see Box VI.1). Staff from another site reported seeking to ensure that 10 percent of all Recovery-Act funded jobs were green, which they achieved by working with a green grocery store to employ youth. Another site placed youth in jobs related to green construction practices, including energy efficiency in construction and appliances and replacement of old doors and windows with energy-efficient ones.

Box VI.1. Comprehensive Inclusion of Green Jobs

One site required all youth to work in a job with a green focus. Youth were able to choose what type of work they would do within the natural resources and green sectors but all were required to work a green job. Program staff collaborated with several divisions of their local Natural Resource Department with which they had a preexisting relationship to place youth in summer jobs. Youth worked in, for example, the Forestry Department, recycling center, greenhouse, and farmer's market.

Youth performed a wide variety of duties, including cutting, storing, and delivering wake wood for traditional funeral rites; removing trees in yards, public areas, and for highway projects; maintaining and repairing Natural Resource's equipment and facilities; learning about herbicides and invasive animal and insect species; maintaining and growing plants and vegetables; controlling animal populations through planting trees to hinder beavers; working in the local farmers' market; and planting and harvesting fruits, vegetables, and flowers.

C. Certifications and Skills Building

- **Innovative job-related certifications and life skill-building opportunities were integrated into several Recovery Act-funded programs.**

One site visited offered formal certifications through its SYEI. This site worked with a local community college's integrated technologies center to offer job training to older youth. Two days a week, youth attended training that included both classroom-based and hands-on instruction in basic manufacturing safety, computer skills, hand and power tools, blueprint reading, basic measurement, precision measurement tools, Statistical Process Control, and control chart operation. Those participants who successfully completed the training received the M3 production certification, Level I or II. The M3 credential demonstrates the acquisition of core skills and knowledge needed to perform multidiscipline industrial and environmental work and is part of a regional initiative and economic collaboration between two states. Youth in this program reported earning several certificates such as the M3, an integrated technologies certificate, a summer employment program completion certificate, a forklift operator certification, and a certificate for applied geotechnologies. Youth valued these certificates and hoped to use them to demonstrate their qualifications to potential employers and to "show that they are a good worker and know they'll be able to do a good job."

Although most sites did not offer formal certifications to youth through their Recovery Act-funded programs, they did provide opportunities to build specific skills. One site offered leadership skill building to youth off site, through a two-day camp on emergent leadership. The program was designed to help youth grow personally; increase their individual confidence, capabilities, and insight; help them understand their identity; and improve their interpersonal skills and ability to build trusting relationships. The youth participated in a variety of activities, such as high and low ropes courses and team- and trust-building activities.

One site provided a financial literacy program as part of its life skills training. The site brought in a fund manager to teach financial literacy and economics, including the local economy, the U.S. economy, and the history of the tribal economy, to youth. Participants learned about such topics as how to create and maintain a budget; how to open and track a checking account; and about interest rates, credit reports and scores, and loan scenarios.

D. Community Service

- **Many sites emphasized and valued community service activities but few sites paid youth for community service or had youth engage in volunteer activities.**

As was true for summer youth employment initiatives implemented by state and local workforce investment boards, community service was a key activity in some programs. Community service constituted a fundamental part of two sites' summer youth employment programs. One site integrated volunteer activities into its program throughout the summer. It had youth participate in the preparation of tribal summer events and feast days, as well as respond to requests from other tribal programs for assistance. Another site devoted a substantial portion of its program to community service and paid youth to help rebuild the local community after a summer 2009 natural disaster had damaged the community. In response, the program hired youth (especially older youth) to remove heavy debris and operate machinery. Program staff targeted and recruited older youth in line with Recovery Act guidance and because they could often work with limited supervision, drive trucks, assist with the restoration of water and electricity, and use heavy clean-up machinery.

Younger youth also performed community service and assisted with disaster clean-up by visiting the homes of elders and helping to clear debris, cut grass, and repair buildings. This enabled the program to help with the repair of the town and to engage the youth in making a difference in their own community. In a third site, program participants were asked to volunteer at the request of tribal programs or during community-wide summer events. They assisted with roadside clean-up, helped at a community picnic, and assisted with graffiti removal. The youth also sponsored a back-to-school dance for the community at the end of August 2009.

E. Academic Activities

- Academic activities played a key role in many of the SYEI programs.

Three of the sites visited offered explicitly academic program components to participants who spent all or a portion of the summer engaged in academic learning. In one site, youth ages 14 and 15 participated in one month of reading or mathematics enhancement courses. When the month ended, youth went to a worksite for the remainder of the program. Program staff also encouraged youth who had dropped out of high school to enroll in a GED program. The youth would attend the GED program either full-time before starting work or for a half day while they worked. Staff also worked to place youth in need of credits in summer school. In the other site, youth were enrolled in local schools during their time in the program. These youth worked toward recovery of academic credits or completion of their high school education. These youth were also involved in other program activities, but did not have a worksite placement. Direct service staff worked with summer school teachers to obtain youths' timesheets and monitor youths' progress. However, staff's interaction with the summer school youth was limited compared with those placed in worksites.

Box VI.2. Culturally Competent High School Completion

Over several years a program director at one site recognized the need for residents to earn a GED. The director also knew that many residents had significant barriers to degree completion, especially when working through nontribal institutions. From August 2009 to March 2010, this site used about one-sixth of its Recovery Act funds (along with other funding) to pilot a culturally appropriate GED course. It partnered with a local GED provider to administer a GED course while the site handled outreach and enrollment. The course enrolled about 10 youth and adults. Instructors adapted the course to the group's learning style and then taught students the five traditional core GED areas. Students also received instruction in work readiness and life skills, such as personal finance, fitness, and interviewing. Students also visited a local postsecondary institution and learned about academic programs and financial aid options.

While not designed to build academic skills, a third site enrolled all program participants in an occupational skills training program administered by a local community college. The program included classroom-based and hands-on instruction in manufacturing, safety, computer skills, hand and power tools, blueprint reading, basic measurement, precision measurement tools, SPC, and control chart operation. Participants who successfully completed the course received a certificate that showed they had achieved competency in basic manufacturing and production.

Another program sought to make academic opportunities in the area available to youth. Youth visited three local postsecondary institutions during summer 2009, one of which had a mission to serve Native American students. Program staff conducted these visits to (1) encourage youth to complete their secondary education and (2) know and understand ways to continue their education.

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Across these visits, youth toured academic programs, athletic facilities, and student unions. Youth also learned about the admissions process and financial aid options.

Most sites described how cultural elements were woven into summer program activities, including work readiness and life skills training. For example, financial literacy training at one site began with a lesson on the history of the tribal economic system and how intervention from outside groups had adversely affected it. Job skills training at one site included discussions of the traditional roles of men and women and the importance of keeping balance among all areas of life, including heritage and spirituality. As a group, youth attended community-wide cultural conferences, festivals, and ceremonies during the summer. Sites also brought in community leaders, tribal elders, and other guest speakers to discuss culturally specific topics with the youth, including health or social issues, their personal experiences or development, and motivation to succeed. Another site held a celebratory event at a local park at the end of summer 2009. The tribal president and other officials attended and spoke to the youth. A local group performed educational skits. Speakers and performers took time to discuss several topics with program participants, including, for example, the importance of cultural heritage, education, and major public health issues affecting their community. At another site, an elder served as a guest speaker and discussed cultural traditions, values, and practices; language and proper greetings; and why these things are important.

Box VI.3. Investing in Cultural Awareness

During spring 2009, program staff at one site decided to offer youth more cultural, youth development, and experiential education activities than in previous years. During early summer 2009, youth attended a two-day camp on emergent leadership, designed to help them increase confidence, understand their identity, and build teamwork and trust.

Youth also attended the John Hopkins Center for Native American Health's Native Visions camp in June 2009. Youth participated in one of six different sports clinics run by professional athletes. These clinics were paired with breakout sessions that discussed the importance of discipline, teamwork, health, education, and attitude. The camp also involved other activities, such as arts, crafts, and cooking. The White Mountain Apache provided cultural events.

Participants attended the United National Indian Tribal Youth 2009 Conference. Participants met Native American youth from around the country, participated in games and social activities, and heard speakers and saw performances on issues relevant to Native American youth and communities.

One youth noted that participating in these activities inspired her to use her talents to address the problems affecting her community. Another youth said that these activities increased his desire to learn about his cultural heritage and helped him recognize the interconnectedness of all Native peoples. Across sites, youth mentioned their appreciation of the cultural components of their programs, especially the opportunity to learn about their own histories and backgrounds, which helped engender a sense of pride in their heritage.

Two sites also used Recovery Act funds to pay for trips, conferences, or camps that focused on culture and youth development.¹⁰ One site engaged in two cultural exchanges in which program participants visited summer youth employment program participants from other tribes. Youth at another site attended several national conferences or camps in neighboring states or communities. Youth had the opportunity to network with other Native American youth and learned about health and social topics related to the Native American community. Program participants at this site also formed a youth council during summer 2009. Youth led an effort to develop and approve bylaws, elect officers, and hold council meetings with guidance from program staff. The tribal council approved a resolution drafted by the youth council to recognize the group as the tribe's official youth council. In addition, two sites attended ropes courses or leadership training to promote youths' leadership development, confidence, and teamwork. One of these sites had youth mentor younger children during a large group trip to a sports camp to develop participants' leadership abilities.

F. Hours, Wages, and Processes for Compensating Youth

The Recovery Act presented sites with an opportunity to adjust the intensity and length of the summer youth employment initiative. As discussed in Chapter II, most sites expended their funds during summer 2009. In preparation for the 2009 program, sites had to decide whether to provide a short, less intensive experience to a large number of youth or longer, more intensive experiences to fewer youth. Sites also had to decide when to start and end the program and how many cohorts of youth to serve. In general, sites enrolled youth for four to six weeks and served from one to three cohorts of youth over the course of the summer.

More specifically, most sites did not begin serving youth until late June or early July. Youth were enrolled in the program for six weeks at three sites, about five to six weeks at one site, and four weeks at one site. Two sites served two separate groups of participants from May to September 2009; one of these sites served a third group beginning in January 2010. Sites did not adjust the timing or length of their 2010 summer program based upon their experiences in 2009.

Sites also had an opportunity to adjust the hours worked by youth during a typical workday to increase their potential earnings or provide additional experience. One site noted that the Recovery Act funds enabled it to increase the typical hours youth worked from six to eight hours. Youth worked with program employers eight hours a day at one site, six hours a day at two sites, and four hours a day at a fourth site. At the fifth site, younger youth (14 and 15) participated in community service activities six hours a day while older youth typically worked eight hours a day.

G. Youths' Earnings

Sites had to make a tradeoff between providing a small number of youth higher wages or a larger number of youth lower wages during the program. Sites also had to decide whether to

¹⁰ Allowable activities under the INA SYSP program, and by extension the INA SYEI as discussed in Chapter 1, include a variety of leadership development opportunities. Leadership development as defined by 20 CFR 664.420 may include: (1) exposure to postsecondary educational opportunities; (2) community and service learning projects; (3) peer-centered activities, including peer mentoring and tutoring; (4) organizational and team work training, including team leadership training; (5) training in decision-making, including determining priorities; and (6) citizenship training, including life skills training such as parenting, work behavior training, and budgeting of resources.

compensate youth for training activities as allowed under ETA guidance. All sites reported paying youth the federal minimum wage of \$6.55 per hour, which then rose to \$7.25 per hour. Two sites noted that they choose this wage because it enabled them to serve more youth. One site said that using the federal minimum wage simplified its administrative processes. At one site, youth also received a stipend at the end of the program, which several youth used to purchase job interview clothing. Another site paid youth when they attended orientation and training during the summer.

Most sites tracked youths' work hours using a timesheet on which youth or an employer recorded hours worked; employers signed youths' timesheets. However, their processes for collecting timesheets varied from staff picking up timesheets from worksites, youth dropping off timesheets with program staff, or employers sending or faxing timesheets to the program. Paychecks were generally either distributed by staff through visits to the worksites or youth picking them up from program staff.

H. Worksite Monitoring, Supervision, and Youth Mentoring

- **Worksite monitoring was a consistent, careful, and well-established component of all programs.**

All study sites had well-established worksite monitoring procedures in place before the Recovery Act funding and utilized them to monitor the 2009 and 2010 programs. During 2009 and 2010, program staff reported monitoring worksite safety, employer fulfillment of agreed-upon roles, youths' behavior and work habits, and youths' attendance. They sought to help employers and youth prevent and address any problems or challenges that might emerge. Most sites provided this monitoring via in-person visits. Two sites had program staff visit youths' worksites on a weekly basis. A third site reported having program staff visit as many as three times a week. These more frequent visits, staff explained, provided them with an opportunity to talk with youth and their supervisors about youths' progress and to ensure that the worksite was appropriate and that youth were fulfilling their responsibilities. One site had staff arrive at worksites unannounced to observe youths' behavior and worksite safety. All sites reported visiting sites in person at least twice a month.

In two sites, staff also used the telephone to monitor worksites. In 2009, for example, one office received a heat advisory, which prompted staff to call youths' worksites to ensure that youth were not in the sun and were remaining well hydrated. One site also asked youth to call staff to report any worksite issues, including if they were going to be late or absent so that program staff could communicate with the employer and identify any challenges youth might have related to the absence. Staff at four of the study sites also monitored youth via their timesheets, either picking up timesheets in person or reviewing those sent in via fax. The fifth site also employed timesheets, but

Box VI.4. Formalizing Monitoring and Mentoring

One program hired formal youth advisors for its summer 2009 program; their job was to monitor youths' progress and develop mentoring relationships with them, "to keep them positive ... and encourage them to keep going," as well as to avoid destructive activities, such as gang violence, recently on the rise in the area. The youth advisors encouraged youth to be assertive and advocate on their own behalf, especially the young women, while encouraging the young men to respect women. They focused on understanding the challenges youth were facing and on helping them not know that "no matter what was happening, they had the potential to do great things." Youth, in turn, spoke highly of program staff, calling them "outgoing and awesome" and talked about how staff helped them "think about who they were and where they wanted to be."

did not discuss them as a formal monitoring tool. Those sites that did refer to attendance tracking as a monitoring mechanism noted that following youths' attendance via timesheets helped them to identify and proactively address any problems that poor attendance might indicate. It also helped them track the performance measure of program completion.

- **Worksite monitoring and employer supervision led to the development of mentoring relationships between program staff and/or employers and youth.**

Through frequent monitoring visits, staff and youth reported that they developed mentoring relationships. In four sites, youth specifically mentioned that seeing program staff frequently and interacting with them at their worksites led to the formation of strong bonds with staff, often with mentoring and guidance qualities.

In three sites, youth discussed at length how involved and supportive program and workforce development coordinators were. Youth noted how the program staff would help them with any problems they had, answer questions about any topic, help them find “shoes and clothes and anything they needed,” and were constantly available to them. One youth talked about how she developed a close relationship with a program director, who then helped her identify and gain admittance to a certified nursing program, which she completed and where she now works as a nurse's aide.

In other cases, mentoring relationships formed between employers and youth through employers' supervision of the youth. Three male youth from one site talked about forming a strong bond with their employer supervisor, a former law enforcement officer and fellow employee whom the employer had assigned to supervise the youth. The youth recounted how the supervisor talked to them daily about “getting on the right path” and “not getting in trouble.” Program staff also talked about this particular employer supervisor, noting how he had become a positive male role model to the youth who lacked this kind of support at home. A youth at a different study site talked about how, after working his summer job, his supervisor and co-workers now “felt like a family.” Program staff discussed how youth would often “latch” on to their supervisor or another employee through which a mentoring relationship might develop. There were cases in which full-time employees did not want the responsibility of mentoring youth, but in general, program staff consistently reported positive mentoring relationships developing through monitoring and employers reported them as forming through supervising the youth.

I. Youths' Perspectives on Summer Work Experiences

- **Youth responded very positively to their summer youth employment opportunities.**

Youth expressed high levels of satisfaction and gratitude for the opportunity to have a job and participate in the summer work experiences. Youth mentioned enjoying the type of work they did—from working outside with the forest service to helping out in a public assistance office. Some youth regarded their work experience as an invaluable opportunity to acquire specific skills that also helped them realize what type of work they would like to do in the future. Others highlighted the opportunity to attend summer school and how much it made them realize that they could and should finish school.

Many also discussed how important it was for them to stay busy and have something to do each day. Just the responsibility of a job helped them become more focused, think about the future, and

set specific goals. Other youth discussed how having a job helped them think about who they are and what they want to be. They reported that they learned that through work they could make a difference and be productive members of their communities. Another youth noted that after going through the program, she learned that what she really wanted to do with her life was to help her community. She then changed her focus from wanting to attend business school to wanting to attend law school, which she felt would help her directly help her community.

Through job training and work, youth received encouragement and positive feedback and learned how to be honest and respectful. In a few cases, youth talked about how having a job and participating in the program helped them fight depression and feelings of hopelessness. Youth also mentioned work as an opportunity to build relationships with community members and co-workers, which in turn made them feel more comfortable in their own communities.

A few youth were less enthusiastic about the work itself but were still very grateful for the program, the staff, and the opportunity to earn an income. Given the challenges and barriers youth identified in relation to finding a job, as discussed earlier, youth talked about earning an income as an important benefit both directly, as money they needed, and psychologically, as proving to themselves and others that they could be responsible and succeed.

VII. ASSESSING YOUTHS' PROGRESS

Sites assessed the experiences of participants through both formal performance measures and feedback from participants. As discussed in Chapter II, ETA requested two performance measures for the Recovery Act-funded program: the summer employment completion rate and attainment of work readiness. When the summer program ended, youth sought new work and educational opportunities while staff sought to support them in building on their summer experiences and transitioning into new opportunities. This chapter discusses findings related to program sites' methods of assessing youths' experiences and their attempts to provide and track post-summer transitions and progress. Key findings focus on methods used to assess youths' program experiences, the lack of resources for program services beyond summer, and attempts to locate additional programs that could support youth with new services.

A. Assessment of Youths' Experiences and Goals

- **Program staff typically used both formal and informal methods to assess youths' experiences both during and at the end of the program.**

Sites typically incorporated both formal and informal modes of assessing youths' progress into their SYEI programs. Many sites employed a formal survey, questionnaire, or meeting to obtain information on youths' experiences in the program. One site created a pre-post work readiness assessment for the summer 2009 program to help it measure and report on work readiness. It asked participants if in the past six months they had (1) any work experience, (2) prepared a resume, (3) been to a job interview, and (4) someone give a reference for them, among other topics. Program participants who answered no to these questions on the pre-test but then changed the answer to yes were considered to have gained a level in workforce readiness.

Another site asked youth to formally evaluate their worksite and the program at the end of the summer using a questionnaire. It asked youth to describe their experiences, including suggestions to improve training, additional components the program needed, and how their personal and work skills had improved. Program staff used this information to plan for the following year. They also discussed employer-specific questions with worksites to let them know how youth felt about their experiences and ways to improve in the future.

Sites also sought information from employers to assess youths' progress. Three sites had employers complete a performance evaluation that asked about employee traits, such as attitude and quality of work, and job-specific skills, such as following employee policies and use of safety equipment. Employers conducted this assessment at least twice during the program and used it to track youths' progress over the course of the program.

As discussed in Chapter VI, worksite monitoring also served as a key means of connecting with youth and assessing their progress more informally. Sites used group meetings and trainings as an opportunity to assess youths' progress more informally. Staff noted that through casual conversations during monitoring visits or in meetings they received quite a lot of informal, usually positive feedback from youth, which enabled them to determine how youth were progressing through the program.

B. Youths' Impressions

- Youth found the program and work experiences “extremely valuable” and “motivating” and crucial to their self-esteem, careers, and life goals.

Youth consistently reported very positive experiences in summer employment program. Youth said they were thankful to have a job during summer. Many reported they would likely have been searching for a job in the absence of the program or “doing nothing.” A few youth remarked that having a job increased their confidence or feeling of self-worth. Although some youth would have preferred higher wages, most expressed satisfaction with the wage level and pay periods and appreciated being able to earn income over the summer. Youth used wages for a variety of purposes, including assisting family members with expenses, paying personal expenses, savings, and/or for child care.

Youth discussed improving themselves as a result of work readiness and life skills training and work experiences. Youth said they improved their communication skills and learned about honesty, work ethic, and respect. Youth also said they had a better understanding of the world of work, different jobs, and what careers they might want to pursue.

Youth felt the program enabled them to develop valuable relationships with peers, program staff, and employers. These relationships were important at a social level and as resources for future employment. Youth generally reported that their experiences with worksite supervisors were positive. Most youth said that they felt they could go to their supervisor or co-workers if they had a work issue and that those supervisors and co-workers would be patient and help them out. Several youth reported that their work environment was comfortable and that they could joke around with their supervisor or go to them with a personal problem.

Youth who engaged in academic or classroom-based training enjoyed their experiences. One youth remarked that she appreciated being able to attend summer school and not have to make the choice between furthering her education and getting a job. Youth who engaged in occupational skills training said that they liked being able to learn new things and develop skills that would make them more attractive workers.

Youth who had the opportunity to participate in conferences, trips, and cultural activities reflected positively on their experiences. Youth found these activities educational and liked being able to make connections with Native American youth outside of their community. They said they learned about important social and health topics, such as alcoholism, teen pregnancy, diabetes, and depression. Some youth said that these activities motivated them to want to do more for their community and work to address its problems.

C. Youths' Post-Summer Progress

- Most sites were unable to offer post-summer services or formal follow-up with youth, but worked to connect youth with other services.

Only one site reported having a year-round opportunity available to summer program participants; four other sites did not serve youth after the summer program was over. Staff from all sites said they informed youth of other employment or education programs in the area and available to them when the summer program ended. These included Job Corps, NEW Programs, GED programs, WIA adult programs, and vocational education programs. Staff from one site said they

completed a formal follow-up call with youth and had a post-program participant-tracking process. Other sites said that youth would check in with program staff from time to time. Sites also said that they told youth that program staff were there to help them if they needed any assistance in the future. One site discussed connecting youth to additional social and health services, including clothing assistance, housing, and mental and behavioral health.

Staff appeared to have a sense of what youth would do when the program ended. One site noted that about 66 percent of program participants returned to school after the summer program ended. At another site, most youth focus group participants mentioned applying for the adult WIA program, but program staff said only one youth from the program had been accepted. At another site, a youth enrolled in a Job Corps program following the summer program and had almost completed her GED. At the same site, a youth noted that he and three other program participants enrolled in a community college in another state as a result of networking through the summer program. One site reported calling all of its summer participants in the fall, just "to see how they are doing." Thus, informal conversations enabled staff to have some sense of youths' post-program plans and activities.

- **Opportunities to transition youth to permanent employment were limited, but some youth did obtain permanent positions.**

Program staff said they encouraged youth to explore permanent employment with their summer employers. Some sites said they worked with youth to help them develop the skills and work habits that could earn them a reputation as a good worker, which could then increase their chances of being hired permanently or obtaining a strong reference. At three sites, program staff and employers said that opportunities to transition to permanent employment were limited because employers often did not have the funds to hire additional workers at the end of summer. Several employers said, however, that they considered hiring summer workers or would be open to the possibility. Some employers said that they had hired workers in the past, but this was rare.

Across sites, program staff reported varying levels of success in youth locating full-time employment. One site said about 40 percent of summer 2009 program participants found permanent employment. Another site said that only 6 percent of participants found full-time jobs.

Across sites, youth focus group participants reported varying levels of success in finding permanent employment. Several youth reported applying for jobs to which they were referred by program staff, although not all youth were hired.

Box VII.1. Transitioning to Permanent Employment at a Green Worksite

One site partnered with Whole Foods as a green worksite to place one youth during summer 2009 and six youth during summer 2010 in work experiences. Whole Foods' "Green Mission" includes offsetting 100 percent of its energy use with wind energy credits, green building, the use of solar power, company-wide recycling programs, support for organics, biodegradable food packaging, converting its truck fleet to biodiesel fuels, and water conservation programs, among other elements.

While working at Whole Foods, youth participated in these green programs at the same time that they learned traditional customer service, food preparation, and food safety skills. Youth reported participating in the operations of the store, food preparation and storage, customer service, food contamination prevention, preventing safety hazards, composting, recycling, and green waste disposal. They also reported that Whole Foods had employee-friendly policies such as workforce team building, health care coverage, and profit sharing, which they deeply appreciated. At the end of summer 2010, three of the six SYEI participants were hired as permanent employees.

VIII. REFLECTIONS ON THE SYEI AND FUTURE CONSIDERATIONS

This chapter reflects on the implementation of the Recovery Act's Indian and Native American summer youth employment initiative in summer 2009 and 2010. In it, we discuss the specific challenges, strengths, and successes sites had in implementing the SYEI program. We conclude this chapter and this report with a set of overarching or summative findings about the program. These findings are designed to reflect the specific, topical findings dispersed throughout the previous chapters of this report and to provide a summative set of observations on the implementation of the program.

A. Program Challenges

Despite the richness of program components and workforce experiences offered to youth, staff reported relatively few challenges with their Recovery Act program. They attributed this to the existence of already well-established, generally WIA-funded summer youth employment programs. They were able to use Recovery Act funds to support and expand existing relationships with employers and well-established program procedures, such as workforce readiness training and worksite monitoring processes. The funds enabled sites to serve more youth and/or to expand program, academic, cultural, and/or worksite opportunities. At the same time, Recovery Act timing and program rules introduced new challenges for staff, which they had to resolve or redress largely in the course of planning and implementing their summer 2009 programs.

Many of the challenges faced pertained to the Recovery Act program itself and included the following:

- **Program lead time.** Staff from two sites referred to the short lead time between the availability of Recovery Act funds and program start as a challenge. This gave them little time to develop additional activities, hire additional staff, and adapt data systems to Recovery Act performance indicators. Although ETA provided guidance and trainings on the latter, staff still had little time to integrate new reporting requirements. One program director discussed the desire to have had time to develop “an employability plan” with youth and provide more individual counseling. The director explained that had she received the final guidance on Recovery Act funds earlier, she would have been able to plan a “fuller” program.
- **Post-summer program reporting requirements.** Staff felt that the requirement that they continue to report enrollment, completion, workforce readiness, and other data to ETA even after all Recovery Act funds were spent created more paperwork and required scarce program resources that staff would have liked to use on other program components. They were frustrated at having to continue to report and wished that their reporting requirements would have ended with the depletion of program funds. ETA staff confirmed that sites were required to report even after all Recovery Act funds had been spent.

- **Worksite placement limitations.** Staff at two different sites expressed disappointment at what they regarded as strict limitations on where youth could be placed. According to their Recovery Act guidance, they were not allowed to have youth work at golf courses, swimming pools, casinos¹¹, or zoos. This proved to be a challenge for two sites, because in previous years they had placed youth in these types of worksites. One had previously placed several youth at a local golf course, where they felt you had learned valuable skills. Staff also mentioned youth interested in zoology and youth trained as lifeguards who wanted to pursue this profession but were not allowed to work at a pool or lake due to program rules.
- **Payroll processes.** Staff and/or youth from two sites discussed challenges with their 2009 and 2010 payroll processes. In one case, there were too few staff in an office to review timesheets and organize checks. In another case, staff hired for the Recovery Act-funded program were paid late and irregularly. In still another site, youth experienced delays with receiving their paychecks. Sites created new process so that staff and youth could be paid promptly, but the addition of the Recovery Act rules and procedures had an adverse, if temporary, effect on payroll processes.
- **Favoritism.** Staff from one site reported concerns over favoritism that they felt might have affected the program's ability to serve youth with the greatest need and at greatest risk. They mentioned, in particular, the process for selecting program participants as perhaps subject to preference for some youth over others. As such, they feared that the selection process did not fully align with the program's purpose and should be improved so that specific youth would not be chosen over other, potentially more needy applicants.

Sites also reported challenges not necessarily related to the Recovery Act-funded program and perhaps more endemic to the summer youth employment programs. Nonetheless, these challenges persisted during the Recovery Act funding period and included the following:

- **Paperwork requirements, especially eligibility determination.** Program staff from three sites identified program-related paperwork as their biggest challenge. They pointed in particular to income verification and documentation. It was difficult for youth to provide proof of income for themselves and their parents either did not have or resisted sharing this information with the program, for fear it might affect their receipt of public assistance. Staff explained that it would have no effect on them, but staff continued to struggle with eligibility determinations for applicant youth. This has been a concern with WIA youth programs nationwide.
- **Post-program follow-up.** Three sites expressed regret about their inability to follow up or continue to work with youth after the summer program. In some cases, staff felt that youth needed and would benefit from more post-program follow-up; staff continued monitoring the youth but lacked resources to provide this kind of ongoing support. In one case, staff hired college students to work in the summer program who returned to school and were not available to "continue to connect with the youth." Youth often

¹¹ One site noted that while a casino and resort complex served as a major community employer, no youth were placed there during their Recovery Act-funded summer youth employment program.

expressed a desire for work and program activities after the summer. Although many reported having developed lasting bonds through the program, they worried they would not be able to find another job, complete school, or “stay positive” after the program was over.

- **Excess demand for services.** Staff from all five study sites discussed the significant demand for their summer youth employment programs. They cited the large numbers of applicants in relation to the relatively small numbers of youth they were able to serve as evidence of this. All worried about their inability to meet demand for the program and the excess need remaining in their communities. One site did additional fund raising to help support various program activities (for example, raffles, bake sales, and concession stands) but continued to be challenged by the large number of youth seeking summer youth employment opportunities verses the relatively small number of places for participants available, even with the addition of Recovery Act funds.

B. Program Strengths and Successes

As discussed in the previous chapter, sites provided youth with a rich array of program activities and workforce experiences through the INA SYEI and reported relatively few implementation challenges. They used Recovery Act funds to build new components and target new populations into their established summer youth employment programs and to serve larger numbers of youth. Staff and youth identified a number of program strengths and successes and shared a deep enthusiasm for and appreciation of both the programs and additional Recovery Act funds. Among the most often referenced strengths and successes were the following:

- **Serving older youth.** Four of the study sites noted that they extended their programs to youth up to age 24, a group that they typically found hard to serve because of limited resources for their adult programs. They recognized the high level of need of this group and regarded it as both a program strength and a real success that they could provide the program and work opportunities to these older youth. Many of these youth reported significant barriers to finding work either because jobs were meant for teenagers or went to older, more experienced adults. Several older youth also reporting having found permanent positions through the program after not being able to find employment for 6 to 12 months. The opportunity to serve older youth through summer youth employment programs was unique to the Recovery Act and regarded as a significant strength of the program. The opportunity to serve these youth, support their workforce readiness, and offer job placement formed a key program success.
- **Program staff's commitment and dedication.** Youth at all study sites spent a significant amount of time professing their deep appreciation for program staff. They noted how much staff were “there for them” and “helped them get whatever they needed.” Some staff were extraordinarily dedicated to youth and the community, joining youth in community service projects because “We’re not going to ask them to do something we’re not going to do.” Youth described staff as “a blessing for them personally, and for the community,” “outgoing and awesome,” with several youth describing them “like family.” One youth explained how a staff person who knew she had been struggling with depression and other challenges had gone to a rural reservation to let her know personally about the program and the opportunity to have a summer job and earn money for school. Youth noted that they could call staff “at any time” about “any issue” and knew that they would receive support if they did.

- **Consistent assessments and workforce readiness and life skills training.** Youth at all study sites mentioned the value of workforce readiness training and job and life skills-building to them. They universally reported finding these trainings to be valuable and key inputs for their work and their lives. Youth found the more comprehensive career assessments that included a work interest inventory, work orientation and values inventory, and career exploration to be particularly helpful in learning more about their own interests and developing a career path. As discussed in Chapter IV, youth reported the usefulness of learning about application, cover letter, and resume preparation; self-presentation and interview skills; and job searches, as well as how to have confidence and self-esteem through work.
- **Extending relationships with employers.** Four of the five sites used the Recovery Act funding to extend their long-standing relationships with community employers. They reported close, historical relationships with employers that created a foundation upon which they could build the 2009 and 2010 programs. These relationships made it possible for sites to absorb and place more youth in workforce opportunities in a very short period, and to offer new kinds of employment to youth, including those appropriate for older youth and green jobs.
- **Larger community benefits.** A strength and success of the program frequently cited by employers and staff involved how the SYEI benefitted not only the direct participants—youth and employers—but also the larger community as a whole. Employers received additional staff to help them complete work and accomplish goals they might not have been able to realize without the help of the youth. Youth learned the importance of their own tribes, the Native American community, and the need to serve other people, regardless of their race, gender, sexual orientation, or socioeconomic status. This helped them become more community- and more community service-oriented, something that program staff and employers felt would help them become good citizens of the tribe and the larger community. One site helped youth involved with the juvenile justice system make restitution, which could then support their reintegration into their communities. One director also noted that the program serves as a stimulus to the local economy by giving youth jobs and wages to spend in the community. As indicated throughout this report, the program served to benefit the larger community in multiple ways.
- **Providing positive experiences to youth.** By far the most often reported program strength and individual success involved the provision of positive experiences to youth. Most fundamentally, youth had an opportunity to earn an income that enabled them to contribute to their families, pay off debts or restitution, save for the future, and support themselves. They also learned about their own interests; set future goals; acquired new workforce readiness, job, life and leadership, and academic skills; gained cultural knowledge and a sense of community service; learned the value of helping others; and earned valuable employment-related certifications. Importantly, youth reported an increased sense of responsibility, self-esteem, work ethic, and success and accomplishment through the program, all of which are essential to employment success. As one youth explained, “I didn’t know I could do this,” indicating professional and personal growth across a number of dimensions.

C. Summative Findings

A list of key findings from this evaluation of the implementation of the Recovery Act Indian and Native American Summer Youth Employment Initiative follows. These findings are designed to consolidate the many topical findings dispersed throughout the report into a set of overarching observations and lessons learned from the 2009 and 2010 program implementation.

- Youth and their communities had very high levels of need for specific employment programs and for more general positive influences in the community.
- Recovery Act funds enabled sites to serve larger numbers of youth and older youth, up to age 24, than they had previously been able to serve, all of whom have significant need for employment training and work opportunities.
- Even with the introduction of additional Recovery Act funds, programs continued to experience excess of demand for services, with numbers of youth in need of and applying for SYEI programs far exceeding the number of participant slots available.
- Recovery Act funds supported the introduction of additional highly needed jobs skills and educational and cultural components into summer youth employment programs.
- Sites used Recovery Act funds to provide supplemental life skills training in such highly needed areas as leadership and financial literacy.
- Sites used Recovery Act funds to innovate by serving new groups of youth, such as those in the juvenile justice system, and offering new worksite opportunities, such as green jobs.
- Well-established summer youth employment programs and existing relationships with employers and other community partners enabled sites to absorb and use Recovery Act funds quickly and effectively.
- Dedicated program staff played a crucial role in designing, innovating, and implementing programs and in bonding with, providing guidance to, and mentoring youth.
- Most sites lacked the funds and staff available to provide post-summer/post-program follow-up to youth, despite youth interest in and demand for these kinds of post-program services.
- Despite acquiring new job skills and certifications, not all youth who wanted permanent job placement were able to obtain it through the SYEI or after program completion.
- Youth and employers regard summer youth employment programs as highly beneficial to youth, themselves, and their communities.
- A significant majority both of study sites and all sites nationally met their performance measures by a significant margin.

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