Adapting to Local Context

Findings from the YouthBuild Evaluation Implementation Study

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BUILDING KNOWLEDGE TO IMPROVE SOCIAL POLICY

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Overview

YouthBuild is intended to help high school dropouts, ages 16 to 24, who face an array of impediments to their educational and employment success as they progress into adulthood. Stemming from one program launched in the late 1970s, today over 270 YouthBuild programs operate nationwide. YouthBuild is a principles-based model that values a family-like environment, in which young people are cared for, respected, and empowered by staff members who understand their experiences and serve as role models, all while providing meaningful work and educational opportunities. Programs have rigorous recruitment processes and applicants undergo an extensive assessment process. Once young people are deemed eligible and enrolled, YouthBuild staff members identify their needs and work with them to develop goals. Over 6 to 12 months, young people participate in youth-driven education and vocational training, community service and leadership development, case management and counseling, work-readiness training, and preparation for postsecondary education. Follow-up services are also available for at least nine months following graduation to support future success. This comprehensive set of services is provided in classrooms, on construction sites or other work sites, in the community, in groups, and individually; young people also typically receive modest stipends during their participation. The YouthBuild evaluation focused exclusively on a subset of 75 YouthBuild programs funded by the U.S. Department of Labor and the Corporation for National and Community Service, operating throughout the United States.

Key Findings

- Programs in the evaluation were highly diverse, varying in their geography, longevity, funding, and staffing. Overall, the 75 programs in the evaluation were highly similar to the overall pool of programs receiving federal funding during the study period, suggesting that findings from the impact study to come will be representative of the broader pool of programs.

- The YouthBuild programs in the evaluation extensively screened applicants prior to enrollment yet programs still enrolled a disadvantaged and at-risk population. Because of the screening, young people who did enroll were more likely to be highly motivated to succeed than the general population eligible for YouthBuild.

- The YouthBuild model is not highly prescriptive. It was consciously designed to allow YouthBuild programs to vary its implementation in response to local conditions. Variation is introduced by differences in the philosophies of the organizations sponsoring programs, their sources of program funding, their competing funding priorities or performance measures, and their community contexts.

- Based on information collected from interviews with YouthBuild staff members and participants, YouthBuild was implemented with reasonably high fidelity to the core model by the programs in this evaluation. However, due to local adaptations, fidelity to the model was manifested in different ways; any two programs might operate differently while still maintaining strong overall fidelity. Fidelity was highest in vocational services but varied more across programs in youth leadership, community service, and postsecondary education.

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The Authors

Executive Summary

Approximately 3 million young people in the United States between the ages of 16 and 24 are high school dropouts.[1] The consequences of dropping out have increased dramatically over time, driven largely by changes in the labor market that require greater skills in the workplace. As technological changes and other factors have increased employer demand for higher-skilled workers, those without a high school diploma have fallen farther behind and face daunting challenges to finding careers that enable them to be self-sufficient. Furthermore, young people were disproportionately affected by the recent recession, which led to rising unemployment rates overall, but with the youth unemployment rate rising much more steeply than that of adults. The rate of unemployment among high school dropouts remains higher still, reflecting the difficult challenges these young people face in even finding employment, much less employment that pays them a living wage.[2]

Finding ways to reengage high school dropouts and help them make successful transitions to adulthood is thus a critical social policy challenge. However, the realities of today's labor market pose a particular challenge for out-of-school young people, who often are no longer connected to institutions designed to provide them with training and link them to good jobs. Thus, there is increasing need for programs that offer young people a "second chance" to reconnect with those institutions, thereby enabling them to receive their high school diplomas or equivalents and providing stepping stones to future success.

This report presents program implementation findings from the national evaluation of YouthBuild, which is one such "second-chance" program providing a mix of academics, vocational training, leadership development, community service, and other activities to high school dropouts facing an array of challenges to educational and employment success. YouthBuild distinguishes itself from many other programs serving young people through the stipend it pays to participants and through a culture that emphasizes youth development and leadership, capitalizing on participants' strengths and empowering participants to take responsibility for their lives. Primary funders of YouthBuild programs include the Department of Labor (DOL), the Corporation for National and Community Service (CNCS), private foundations, and states

[1]U.S. Department of Education, National Center for Education Statistics, "Table 219.80: Percentage of high school dropouts among persons 16 through 24 years old (status dropout rate) and number of status dropouts, by noninstitutionalized or institutionalized status, birth in or outside of the United States, and selected characteristics: 2010 and 2011" (in *Digest of Education Statistics*, website: http://nces.ed.gov/programs/digest/index.asp, June 2013).

[2]Mishel, Lawrence, Josh Bivens, Elise Gould, and Heidi Shierholz, *The State of Working America*, 12th ed. (Ithaca, NY: Economic Policy Institute, 2012).

and localities. The evaluation was launched in 2010, and uses a random assignment design to examine the impacts of YouthBuild as implemented by 75 programs operating the program nationwide.[3] For the evaluation, eligible applicants were assigned at random either to a program group, which was eligible for YouthBuild, or to a control group, which was not eligible for YouthBuild. Both groups had access to all other services available in the community. A second report, scheduled for release in 2017, will present impacts of the program on the study group at 12 and 30 months after random assignment. The evaluation is being funded by DOL, with initial support from CNCS, and is being conducted by MDRC and its partners, Social Policy Research Associates and Mathematica Policy Research.

Some of the key findings presented in this report include the following, which highlight how a principle-based model like YouthBuild can be implemented differently in different places while still remaining true to the model's essence:[4]

- **YouthBuild was implemented with reasonably high fidelity among the programs in this evaluation.**[5] Fidelity was consistently high in vocational training, but varied more among programs in leadership development (including community service) and preparation for postsecondary education.

- **Fidelity to the YouthBuild model manifested itself in different ways in different programs.** Because the model is not highly prescriptive and programs can achieve fidelity in varying ways, any two programs might operate very differently while still maintaining strong overall fidelity.

- **There was variation in the degree to which programs fully embraced the YouthBuild culture and value system.** One reason fidelity to the YouthBuild model varied somewhat is because programs embraced the culture of YouthBuild to varying degrees. This culture focuses on youth development and leadership. While many programs emphasized these values, others embraced them to a lesser degree. For example, only about three-quarters of programs reported having a working policy committee composed of partici-

[3]Approximately 200 federally funded YouthBuild programs operate nationally. This evaluation includes a subset of these.

[4]A principle-based model is one based on broad guidelines rather than specific instructions.

[5]Fidelity to the YouthBuild model was assessed by site visitors using a tool derived from YouthBuild USA's Program Design and Performance Standards. Fidelity was rated with regard to the following program components: general program operations, academic services, postsecondary preparation, vocational and construction training, supportive services, and leadership development. An overall score was also calculated. The majority of programs had fidelity scores of 80 or above out of a maximum of 100. See Chapter 2 for more about the fidelity measure.

pants, and among those programs that did, there was wide variation in how frequently it met and in its ability to influence program policies.

- **YouthBuild programs targeted young people who were demographically at risk, but actually enrolled young people who demonstrated a "readiness to change" by making it through a demanding screening process and Mental Toughness Orientation.** On average, programs recruited nearly four applicants for each available YouthBuild slot, because so many applicants were deemed ineligible or unsuitable, or dropped out during the screening process. The young people who did enroll were therefore more likely to be highly motivated to succeed than the general population eligible for YouthBuild.

- **YouthBuild programs were generally successful in augmenting their core educational and vocational services with a broad array of supplemental services, including life-skills training and workforce-preparation activities.** Because participants faced multiple barriers to success, most programs emphasized life-skills training and workforce-preparation activities such as soft-skills training, career exploration, and job-search assistance. At times, these services tended to outweigh an emphasis on other supportive services that might be expected to assist young people, such as job development and job placement.

- **Programs' ability to successfully implement the core components of YouthBuild varied.** Key dimensions of this variation included whether or not programs developed strong and meaningful partnerships that were integrated into the program rather than being stand-alone services, whether or not they maintained low participant-to-staff ratios to meet the varying needs of participants, and whether or not they retained a commitment to the core values and principles of the YouthBuild model.

- **YouthBuild is typically more robust and comprehensive than other youth programs located in the same communities.** Similarly, few alternative programs in the communities seemed to create cultures among their participants that rivaled those developed by most of the YouthBuild programs in this study. YouthBuild participants in this evaluation therefore probably received a wider array of services than those who were not allowed to enroll in YouthBuild.

- **The impact analysis will be able to provide a rigorous assessment of YouthBuild's effects.** Because the programs participating in the evaluation

generally demonstrated high fidelity to the YouthBuild model, the impact analysis will provide a good assessment of the effects of YouthBuild. Further, because there is some variation in fidelity across programs, and substantial variation in services and organizational characteristics, the impact analysis will be able to examine whether this variation affects impacts. The impact analysis will also be able to capitalize on the differences between the services offered by YouthBuild and those offered by other providers in the same communities to examine whether differences in local context are associated with differences in impacts. Finally, the analysis will be able to use the variation in the characteristics of participants to explore whether those participant characteristics are associated with different impacts.

The YouthBuild Model

All YouthBuild programs in operation are modeled to some degree on the original YouthBuild program — the East Harlem Youth Action Program founded in the late 1970s in New York City — which was designed to address the complex needs of participants and their community with a culture of respect for young people that is still emphasized today. In the late 1980s and early 1990s, other programs modeled on the Youth Action Program were developed under the new name of YouthBuild.[6] Today, over 270 YouthBuild programs are operated nationwide by a variety of nonprofit organizations, public agencies, community colleges, and school districts. YouthBuild USA works with federal funding agencies to ensure program quality, and supports local YouthBuild programs in a variety of ways to complement and supplement the federal funds many receive. One important function of YouthBuild USA is maintaining the spirit of YouthBuild throughout its network.

The YouthBuild model is designed to address comprehensively the multifaceted needs of participants in the areas of educational and vocational training, youth leadership and community services, and other supportive services, in an environment that strives to capitalize on young people's assets to empower them, promote their civic activism and engagement, and encourage them to take on roles of responsibility and leadership in their personal lives and broader communities. The program targets young people who are out of school, who are between the ages of 16 and 24, and who satisfy at least one of the following criteria: they come from low-income or migrant families, they are currently or were formerly in foster care, they

[6]To support these replication efforts, key staff members from the Youth Action Program incorporated YouthBuild USA in 1990 to provide technical assistance and training to new YouthBuild programs.

have disabilities, they have histories with the criminal justice system, or they are children of incarcerated parents.[7]

YouthBuild programs are quite diverse in structure and size, and in their overall adherence to a general YouthBuild model. This is partly the result of a conscious decision to expand YouthBuild by allowing individual organizations to implement the program in response to the specific needs of their communities and young people, and partly the result of their varied funding sources and performance measures, which often result in varied emphases on education and vocational training. Specifically, YouthBuild programs vary in response to the local contexts in which they operate, responding to the local economy, the characteristics of young people in the area, and the number and range of other educational, vocational, and other service providers that could serve as their partners.

Programs recruit or rely on word of mouth to identify interested applicants, who then undergo preenrollment assessments such as basic-skills tests and one-on-one interviews. Usually, programs then implement a rigorous Mental Toughness Orientation, which can last from a single day to several weeks and which is intended to facilitate group bonding, help participants develop trust in the staff, emphasize setting goals and overcoming obstacles, and prepare participants for the activities they will engage in as part of the program.[8] Mental Toughness Orientation is also used as an extension of the screening process, as programs use it to assess each applicant's commitment to the program. Likewise, young people may also decide to stop participating during Mental Toughness Orientation. The variation in intensity and screening activities across programs means there is corresponding variation in the characteristics of the young people who enroll. As will be further described in the next section, the structure of Mental Toughness Orientation was an important factor in determining the timing of random assignment in each program.

Most young people who make it through Mental Toughness Orientation are enrolled, typically in cohorts of at least seven, and participate in the YouthBuild program for between 6 and 12 months, receiving a mix of services including:

- **Education services** such as basic-skills instruction, remedial education, alternative education leading to a high school diploma or General Educational Development (GED) certificate, or (increasingly) postsecondary preparation.

[7]Up to 25 percent of the participants in programs funded by DOL can have high school diplomas or not be in one of the target populations, as long as they are deficient in basic skills or are referred to a high school diploma-granting YouthBuild program by another high school.

[8]More detailed information about Mental Toughness Orientation is available in Chapter 4.

- **Vocational training** leading to an industry-recognized credential, typically construction training in which participants rehabilitate or build housing for low-income people, less frequently training for other vocations such as Certified Nursing Assistant, commercial driver, or information technology professional.

- **Youth development services,** including leadership training and community service. YouthBuild's culture focuses on youth development and leadership, seeking to capitalize on the strengths young people bring to the program and empower them to take responsibility for their lives and choices. Leadership training occurs in the classroom, at the work site, and throughout the daily operation of the program. Additionally, Youth Policy Councils, in place at most programs, provide participants with the power to make significant decisions about program activities and structure. Community service includes organized volunteering opportunities at local organizations and the production of housing for low-income individuals.

- **Supportive and transition services** such as counseling, case management, life-skills training, support services, workforce preparation, follow-up services, and stipends paid during participation, all of which are intended to help young people address barriers that may prevent them from participating in YouthBuild or achieving success in the future.

The components of the YouthBuild model are intended to be complementary and are designed to be offered as a whole service model, not individually. This distinguishes YouthBuild from other youth programs, which may only offer some of the services it provides. Furthermore, most YouthBuild programs also provide participants with a modest stipend for work at a construction site or other subsidized work experience, which also distinguishes YouthBuild from a majority of workforce development programs for young adults. Together, this combination of services is intended to create a number of positive changes for participants, including helping them to gain educational credentials and work experience, and enhancing their employability. Increasingly, YouthBuild programs also focus on enrolling participants in postsecondary education. Less tangibly, YouthBuild aims to stimulate lasting attitudinal changes that will keep young people on a positive trajectory and increase their civic engagement. The emphasis on youth development — primarily through leadership and community services activities but also by employing an assets-based approach to working with young people overall — distinguishes YouthBuild from more traditional youth employment programs. This includes attention to leadership through participation in the Youth Policy Council or other leadership roles, community service and activism, and intensive, personalized support and counseling from the staff.

As participants near the end of the formal program, staff members provide follow-up services, including both formal scheduled meetings to discuss progress and informal activities in which young people "drop in" to the program and provide an update on their activities and challenges. These activities may continue for many months after a participant leaves the program, and are intended to help the young person enroll in further education, find employment, and otherwise remain on a path toward success.

The YouthBuild Evaluation

The YouthBuild evaluation has three major components, each of which seeks to answer specific research questions of interest. The first of these, the process study — the qualitative examination of YouthBuild programs' structure, implementation, and services — is the focus of this report. The evaluation also includes an impact study and a cost-effectiveness study, the results of which will be available in reports due to be published in 2017 and 2018.

The evaluation uses a random assignment design: eligible YouthBuild applicants were assigned at random to either a program group (that was eligible for the program) or a control group (that was ineligible to enroll in YouthBuild). Both groups could receive any other service in the community. In the majority of programs (82 percent), random assignment took place before Mental Toughness Orientation or within the first few days of Mental Toughness Orientation. The remaining programs opted to randomly assign participants after Mental Toughness Orientation. Programs aimed to conduct random assignment using a 60:40 ratio, with 60 percent of applicants assigned to the program group and 40 percent assigned to the control group. Some programs deviated from that target ratio if they did not have enough excess applicants. Because random assignment, when properly implemented, helps eliminate systematic differences between the program and control groups prior to the start of the program, any subsequent differences in outcomes — for example, in earnings or GED certificate attainment — can be attributed to the program with confidence. The analysis from this study will therefore determine whether the program group had better outcomes than it would have achieved without YouthBuild.

Programs were selected to participate in the evaluation in one of two ways. First, 60 programs were chosen randomly from the group of 71 programs that received grants from DOL in 2011. Two of the selected programs were subsequently dropped from the study; initial conversations with program staff members revealed that they would be unable to enroll any study-group participants during the evaluation period. Second, 17 programs were selected to participate that did not receive DOL funding in 2011 but that were receiving funding from

CNCS. Combined, these 75 participating programs enrolled 3,929 study group participants between August 2011 and January 2013, 2,700 in the program group and 1,229 in the control group. These 75 programs are the focus of this report.[9]

Despite the significant amount of screening YouthBuild programs engaged in, programs enrolled young people who were disadvantaged and at risk. While a majority of study participants did not have any children, 30 percent reported having at least one child. Although most study participants had completed at least two years of high school prior to random assignment, program staff members reported that participants typically had reading and math levels equivalent to middle school (sixth, seventh, and eighth grade) even if their highest grades completed were in high school. Furthermore, about 10 percent of study participants reported having a learning or physical disability. On average, study participants were approximately 20 years old and nearly two-thirds were male; the participants were also predominantly black.

The Implementation of YouthBuild

The process study was designed to address research questions that fall into three primary categories: 1) the design of the participating YouthBuild programs, the services they offer to young people, and the implementation of these services; 2) the contextual factors in the local communities that may affect services and outcomes for young people in both research groups; and 3) the characteristics of the young people who participate in the study and the experiences of program group members in YouthBuild.

Data for the process study were collected primarily through site visits to each of the 75 participating programs; these occurred in 2012 and 2013. Site visitors also completed a fidelity rating tool that assessed the degree to which a given program adhered to the core YouthBuild USA model.[10] All DOL and CNCS YouthBuild grantees awarded funding in 2011 were surveyed, not only those selected for this evaluation, and data on participant characteristics drawn from the programs' management information systems were analyzed.

The key factors affecting the implementation of YouthBuild by programs in this evaluation are:

- YouthBuild programs operated by larger organizations drew upon financial, administrative, and staffing support and other resources from those sponsoring organizations.

[9]A significant proportion of CNCS-funded programs subsequently received DOL funding in 2012.

[10]The standards that govern program implementation for the YouthBuild programs in this evaluation are those of DOL, which are generally similar to the YouthBuild USA standards.

- Stability in program leadership allowed for continuity in program implementation and operations. However, staff turnover was a persistent challenge in many programs.

- Programs relied on a number of strategies to engage young people. Overall, programs sought to provide a wide range of services to meet participants' many needs and to create a culture of respect, high expectations, and caring that kept participants engaged.

  – For academic services, these strategies included keeping class sizes small and the participant-to-instructor ratio low; providing adjustable, self-paced instruction; making connections between instruction and real-world issues; incorporating project-based activities; diversifying teaching strategies; and using continuing assessment to gauge participants' readiness for testing and to let participants know how close they were to reaching their goals.

  – For vocational training, these strategies included customizing training to make it more relevant and interesting for participants; providing frequent, hands-on training opportunities; offering fun and engaging activities; frequently changing tasks around; providing opportunities for leadership; helping participants find value in their work; and offering incentives.

- Some programs struggled to emphasize youth leadership and development opportunities. There was uneven implementation of this component among programs funded by both DOL and CNCS. Programs' focus on postsecondary education services was also less consistent, though this is a more recent emphasis of the model.

- Provision of construction training was significantly hampered by the downturn in the housing market. Many programs struggled to identify suitable work sites, sell existing homes, and locate employment opportunities for graduates.

- Partnerships played a key role in the delivery of services, allowing programs to use additional resources and draw on the expertise of outside agencies to provide direct educational and vocational instruction, postsecondary preparation and assistance, and materials and supplies. In some cases outside agencies helped manage construction work sites.

Conclusion

This report provides an overview of the YouthBuild programs in the national evaluation and of how they vary in organizational characteristics, services, and approaches to serving young people. It also provides valuable context for understanding the results of the impact and cost-effectiveness studies, which are scheduled to be published in 2017 and 2018. The findings detailed in this report indicate that this evaluation will allow for a thorough assessment of the impacts of YouthBuild. This report will inform the forthcoming impact analysis by documenting that the programs in the study had high fidelity to the YouthBuild model yet varied in important ways, and by identifying that there were differences between program and control group members in the accessibility and intensity of services they had available.

Chapter 1

Introduction

Approximately 3 million people in the United States between the ages of 16 and 24 are high school dropouts.[1] Although there is some debate about whether dropout rates have risen over time, what is clear is that the consequences of dropping out have increased dramatically, driven largely by changes in the labor market that require greater skills in the workplace. Furthermore, young people were disproportionately affected by the recent recession, which led to rising unemployment rates overall, but with the youth unemployment rate rising much more steeply than that of adults. The rate of unemployment among high school dropouts remains higher still, reflecting the difficult challenges these young people face in even finding employment, much less employment that pays them a living wage.[2]

Finding ways to reengage high school dropouts and help them make successful transitions to adulthood is thus one of our nation's central social policy challenges. However, the realities of today's labor market pose a particular challenge for out-of-school young people, who often are no longer connected to institutions designed to provide them with training and link them to good jobs. Thus, there is increasing need for programs that offer young people a "second chance" to reconnect with those institutions, thereby enabling them to receive their high school diplomas or equivalents and providing stepping stones to future success. YouthBuild is one such "second-chance" program. YouthBuild is a federally and privately funded program operated by nearly 300 organizations nationwide. Each organization provides construction-related or other vocational training, educational services, counseling, and leadership-development opportunities to low-income, out-of-school young people ages 16 to 24. For the vast majority of programs that provide construction training as their vocational instruction, participants work on renovating or constructing housing for low-income or homeless people. YouthBuild distinguishes itself from other programs serving a similar population through a culture that emphasizes youth development and leadership, capitalizing on participants' strengths, and empowering participants to take responsibility for their lives. Furthermore, participants are compensated for much of the time they spend in the program.

In 2010, the Department of Labor (DOL), with initial support from the Corporation for National and Community Service (CNCS), awarded a contract to MDRC and its partners Social

[1]U.S. Department of Education, Institute of Education Sciences, National Center for Education Statistics (2013).

[2]Mishel, Bivens, Gould, and Shierholz (2012).

Policy Research Associates and Mathematica Policy Research to conduct an impact evaluation of YouthBuild. The evaluation includes an impact study employing a random assignment design in a representative sample of YouthBuild programs across the country, a cost-effectiveness study, and a process study.

This is the first report in this evaluation. It relies on data collected during the process study, which included site visits to each of the programs involved. This report describes the general YouthBuild model and how this model was implemented at the specific programs included in this evaluation, the range of services these programs provided to participants, and the local contexts in which these programs operated and the alternative services available to young people in these communities. These findings provide an overview of how the YouthBuild programs in this study vary in organizational characteristics, services, and approaches to serving young people, and provide the background necessary to understand results from the impact and cost-effectiveness studies, which are to be completed in subsequent years. Along those lines this report identifies a number of ways in which the programs in this study vary, including in their fidelity to the YouthBuild model, which may help to explain any differences in impacts observed across programs.[3] Some of the key findings presented in this report include the following, which highlight how a principle-based model like YouthBuild can be implemented differently in different places while still remaining true to the model's essence:[4]

- **YouthBuild was implemented with reasonably high fidelity among the programs in this evaluation.** Broadly speaking, programs generally had good fidelity to the YouthBuild model: comprehensive, youth-centered, community service- and leadership-focused provision of vocational and educational training, leading to the attainment of General Educational Development (GED) credentials or high school diplomas and enhanced employment prospects. Yet this fidelity was not uniform across all components of the model. Fidelity was highest in vocational services and varied more across programs in leadership development (including community service) and postsecondary education.

[3]Fidelity to the YouthBuild model was assessed by site visitors using a tool derived from YouthBuild USA's Program Design and Performance Standards. Sixty-one items were rated as "meets standard," "partially meets standard," or "does not meet standard," representing 100, 50, and 0 points respectively. Points were tallied for each program and divided by the number of observations. The maximum score was 100 and the minimum was 0. Fidelity was rated for the following program components: general program operations, academic services, postsecondary preparation, vocational and construction training, supportive services, and leadership development. An overall score was also calculated. The majority of programs had fidelity scores of 80 or above. See Chapter 2 for more about the fidelity measure.

[4]A principle-based model is one based on broad guidelines rather than specific instructions.

- **Fidelity to the YouthBuild model was manifested in different ways across programs.** Because the model is not highly prescriptive and programs can achieve fidelity in varying ways, any two programs might operate very differently while still maintaining strong overall fidelity.

- **Programs embraced the YouthBuild "culture" and value system to different degrees**. One reason fidelity to the YouthBuild model varied somewhat was because programs embraced the culture of the program — which focuses on youth development and leadership — to varying degrees. While most programs instilled these values from the start with a Mental Toughness Orientation and reinforced them throughout the program, other programs embraced them to a lesser degree.

- **YouthBuild programs heavily screened applicants prior to enrollment, and used Mental Toughness Orientation both to prepare recruits for the program and to identify those recruits who demonstrated a readiness to change.** On average, programs recruited nearly four applicants for each available YouthBuild slot, because so many applicants were deemed ineligible or unsuitable, or dropped out during the screening process. The young people who did enroll were therefore more likely to be highly motivated to succeed than the general population eligible for YouthBuild.

- **In addition to educational and vocational training, which are intended to be the predominant program services, YouthBuild programs sought to address young people's barriers to employment and education by providing an array of other services.** Because participants faced multiple barriers, most programs emphasized life-skills training and workforce-preparation activities (for example, soft-skills training, career exploration, or job-search assistance) and provided case management. At times, these services tended to outweigh an emphasis on other services that might be expected to assist young people, such as job development and job placement.

- **Programs' ability to successfully implement the core components of YouthBuild varied.** Key dimensions of this variation included whether or not programs developed strong and meaningful partnerships that were integrated into the program rather than being stand-alone services, whether or not they maintained low participant-to-staff ratios to meet participants' varying needs, and whether or not they retained a commitment to the core values and principles of YouthBuild.

- **Although all the communities in which the programs in this evaluation operated had other organizations offering some of the same services as YouthBuild, these alternative services rarely matched the breadth and scope of those provided by YouthBuild.** Similarly, few alternative programs in the communities seemed to create cultures among their participants that rivaled those developed by most of the YouthBuild programs in this study. YouthBuild participants in this evaluation therefore probably received a wider array of services than those who were not allowed to enroll in YouthBuild.

The remainder of this chapter provides an overview of the issues YouthBuild seeks to address, a brief history of the YouthBuild program, a summary of the core YouthBuild model, and a discussion of prior research conducted on the YouthBuild program, which has been substantial but has never included a formal control group to assess the program's impacts. The chapter also describes the evaluation design. The final section of this chapter provides a brief summary of the remainder of the report.

Overview of the Issues YouthBuild Seeks to Address

As noted above, nearly 3 million people in the United States between the ages of 16 and 24 are high school dropouts. A disproportionate number of dropouts come from low-income and minority families. According to the National Center for Education Statistics, the share of 16- to 24-year-olds who are out of school and lack a diploma or GED credential is 2 percent in the highest-income quarter of the population and 12 percent in the lowest-income quarter of the population. Similarly, the dropout rate is 4 percent for white high school students, 8 percent for black students, and 13 percent for Hispanic students.[5] According to a recent study, reasons young people stop attending school are numerous and include boredom, lack of caring support, having to work to support family, and failing too many classes.[6] As this report describes, YouthBuild is designed to directly address many of these issues.

The consequences of dropping out have increased dramatically in recent years, given trends in the labor market in the recent and not-so-recent past. First, inflation-adjusted wages for less-educated workers have fallen over the past several decades.[7] On top of this, young people are finding it harder and harder to find jobs, reflecting what has been called a "collapse" in the

[5]U.S. Department of Education, Institute of Education Sciences, National Center for Education Statistics (2013).

[6]America's Promise Alliance (2014).

[7]Mishel, Bivens, Gould, and Shierholz (2012).

young-adult labor market. Between 2000 and 2008, for example, the share of all 16- to 24-year-olds with employment during the summer fell from 65 percent to 56 percent, and then to 49 percent during the recent recession.[8] Employment rates are especially low for young people without high school diplomas. Indeed, among young people who were not enrolled in school and did not have high school diplomas or GED certificates, approximately 40 percent were employed in October 2013.[9] High rates of youth unemployment are a concern given that early problems in the labor market can have lasting effects.[10]

Adding to the problems faced by these young people is that many of them do not return to complete their high school education or move on to further education. One study documented that among dropouts from low-income families, only half went on to earn either a high school diploma (16 percent) or a GED certificate (34 percent) within eight years after they were originally scheduled to graduate.[11] A GED credential by itself has generally not been found to have much worth in the labor market, although there is evidence that it may lead to earnings increases in the longer term for some groups.[12] A GED certificate can also be a route to post-secondary education, although a minority of GED credential recipients go on to enroll in college and even fewer complete degrees.[13]

A Brief History of YouthBuild

All YouthBuild programs in operation are modeled to some degree on the original YouthBuild program — the East Harlem Youth Action Program founded in the late 1970s in New York City — which was designed to address the complex needs of participants and their community with a culture of respect for young people that is still emphasized today. In the late 1980s and early 1990s, other programs modeled on the Youth Action Program were developed under the new name of YouthBuild. To support these replication efforts, staff members from the Youth Action Program incorporated YouthBuild USA in 1990 to provide technical assistance and training to new YouthBuild programs. In 1992, under the umbrella of YouthBuild USA, a number of local YouthBuild programs formed the YouthBuild USA Affiliated Network, and in doing so agreed to uphold certain standards for performance and program design and to support advocacy efforts on behalf of the program and low-income young people.

[8]Bureau of Labor Statistics (2010).
[9]Bureau of Labor Statistics (2013).
[10]Neumark (2002).
[11]Hurst, Kelly, and Princiotta (2004).
[12]Heckman, Humphries, and Mader (2010).
[13]Heckman, Humphries, and Mader (2010).

That same year, Congress passed legislation to support the program's national expansion. Part of the Housing and Community Development Act, this legislation allocated funds to be granted to YouthBuild programs through an annual, competitive process under the auspices of the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD). HUD continued to administer the federal YouthBuild program until 2007, after which Congress transferred responsibility for YouthBuild to DOL's Employment and Training Administration. Since that time, DOL has funded 301 separate YouthBuild programs nationwide.[14]

In addition to funding from DOL, about 70 YouthBuild programs nationwide receive annual funding from CNCS through its National Direct grant to YouthBuild USA.[15] These programs — YouthBuild AmeriCorps programs — place a strong emphasis on the community service component of the program and on postsecondary enrollment. A distinguishing feature of YouthBuild AmeriCorps programs is that participants are eligible for education awards upon completion of YouthBuild, ranging from about $1,175 to $5,500 depending on their hours of service and other activities. Many programs receive other sources of funding as well.[16]

YouthBuild programs are quite diverse in structure and size, and in their overall adherence to a general YouthBuild model. This is partly the result of a conscious decision to expand YouthBuild by allowing individual organizations to implement the program in response to the specific needs of their communities and young people, and partly the result of their varied sources of funding and measures of performance. Nonprofit organizations, public agencies, community colleges, and school districts all operate YouthBuild programs.

The YouthBuild Model

Eligibility for the YouthBuild program is limited primarily to young people ages 16 to 24 who have dropped out before completing high school and who satisfy at least one of the following criteria: They come from low-income families, they come from families of migrant farm

[14]A number of other YouthBuild programs have operated without funding from DOL.

[15]CNCS also funds several YouthBuild programs through grants to State Service Commissions. The majority of the CNCS-funded programs also received funding from DOL in 2012.

[16]Included in these sources are: state funds (for example, Massachusetts YouthBuild programs have a line item in the state budget that provides them funding each year); Average Daily Attendance money for those programs that are accredited schools; grants that fund preapprenticeship projects, "green building," and mentoring; grants for the National Schools Initiative (NSI), a Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation initiative designed to improve educational outcomes and build links to postsecondary education; and the YouthBuild Postsecondary Education Initiative, funded by several organizations including the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation, which aims to develop strategies to help YouthBuild participants enroll in college and persist there.

workers, they are currently or were formerly in foster care, they have disabilities, they have histories with the criminal justice system, or they are children of incarcerated parents. However, 25 percent of participants in programs funded by DOL can have high school diplomas or not be in one of the target groups, as long as they are deficient in basic skills or "have been referred by a local secondary school for participation ... leading to attainment of a secondary school diploma."[17] The eligibility requirements mean that the program serves quite a disadvantaged segment of the young population. According to data from DOL's management information systems, among YouthBuild programs that received DOL grants in 2009, 95 percent of participants lacked high school diplomas or GED certificates when they entered the program and 31 percent had criminal records. In addition, a majority of participants were ages 18 to 21; male; and black, Latino, or Native American.

The YouthBuild model is designed to address comprehensively the multifaceted needs of participants in the areas of educational and vocational training, youth-leadership development and community services, and other supportive services such as work-readiness and life-skills training. Figure 1.1 presents a conceptual framework.

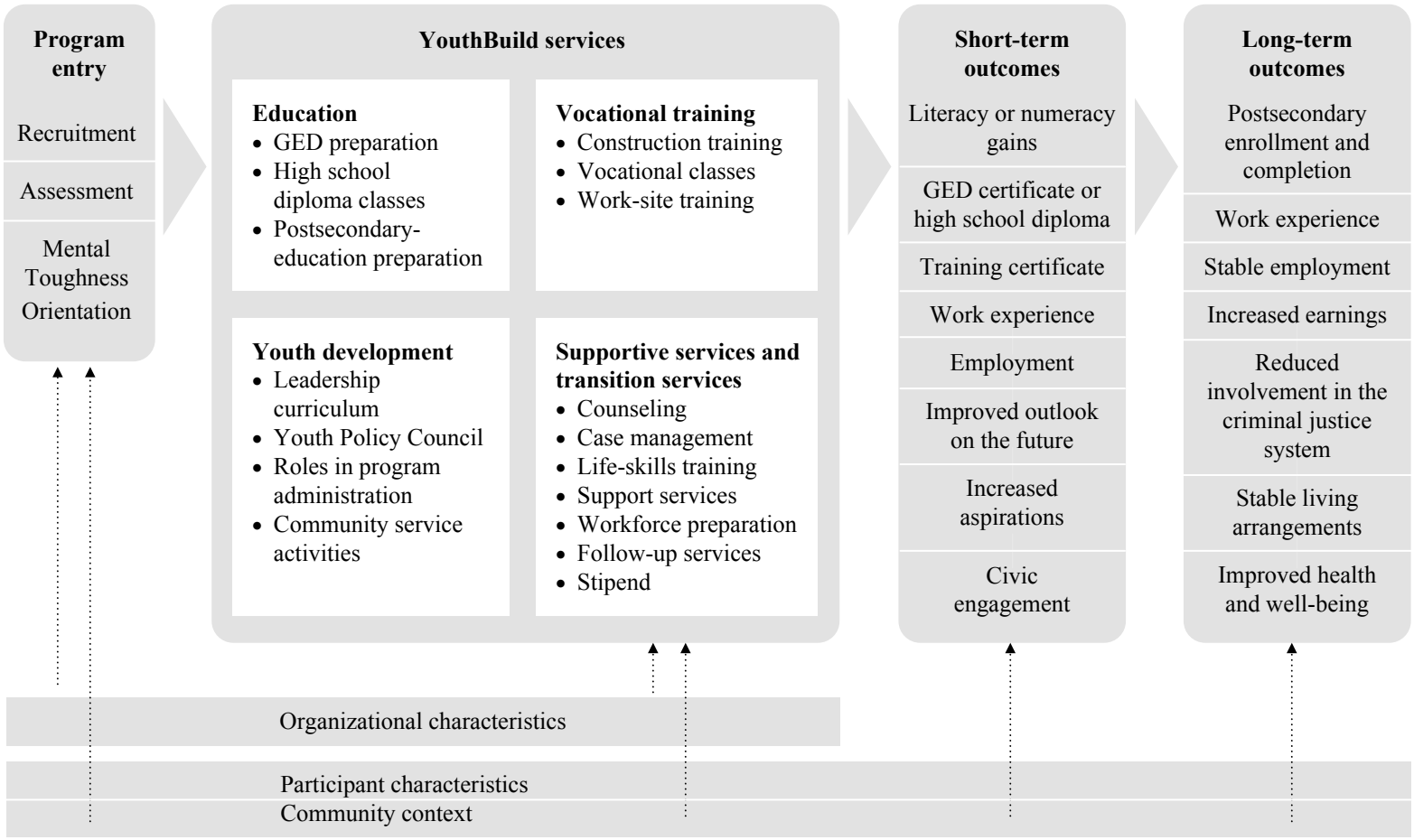
Starting on the left side of the figure, programs recruit or rely on word of mouth to identify interested applicants, who then go through assessments such as basic-skills tests and one-on-one interviews prior to enrollment. Most frequently, programs then implement a rigorous Mental Toughness Orientation, which can last from a single day to several weeks, and which is intended to help facilitate group bonding, help recruits to develop trust in the staff, emphasize setting goals and overcoming obstacles, and ready recruits for the program's activities. It also serves as a period when many young people are screened out by discontinuing their attendance or otherwise not following established rules. The variation in intensity and screening activities among programs means there is corresponding variation in the characteristics of the young people who enroll, which may affect the impacts observed in these programs. Furthermore, the variation influenced how random assignment was planned in each program, as will be described further below.

Most young people who make it through Mental Toughness Orientation enroll in YouthBuild and are offered a rich and unusual mix of services for 6 to 12 months, as depicted in the second box in the figure. New YouthBuild participants typically begin the program with at least six other new participants with whom they alternate between educational and vocational training. The components of the YouthBuild model are intended to be complementary and are

[17]U.S. Congress (2006).

Figure 1.1

Participant-Level YouthBuild Conceptual Framework



designed to be offered as a whole service model. This distinguishes YouthBuild from other youth programs that may only offer some of the services it provides. YouthBuild services include:

- **Education services** such as basic-skills instruction, remedial education, and alternative education leading to a high school diploma or GED credential, or (increasingly) postsecondary preparation.
- **Vocational training,** typically construction training in which participants rehabilitate or build housing for low-income people, less frequently training for other vocations such as Certified Nursing Assistant, commercial driver, or information technology professional.
- **Youth-development services,** including leadership training and community service. These are defining features of YouthBuild that are addressed in multiple ways and serve multiple purposes. The former is approached through formal curricula or formal and informal roles within the YouthBuild program on committees, in the classroom, on work sites, or in community activities and meetings. Community service both attends to community needs (by building homes for low-income people, for example) and provides opportunities for young people to practice leadership and other skills.
- **Supportive services and transition services** such as counseling, case management, life-skills training, support services, workforce preparation, follow-up services, and stipends for participation, all of which are designed to help young people address challenges that may prevent them from achieving success in the program or beyond.

More than just a set of services, YouthBuild also reflects a movement to empower young people, advocate for them, foster their civic engagement and activism, and encourage them to take on roles of responsibility and leadership in their personal lives and broader communities. This focus on youth development helps to distinguish YouthBuild from more traditional employment programs for young people.

Together, the combination of services is hypothesized to create a number of positive changes for participants; these are noted in the rightmost boxes in Figure 1.1 as short- and long-term outcomes. Outcomes include improving literacy or numeracy, earning educational credentials, accumulating work experience (even if participants are not interested in construction, the work-site experience builds generic job-readiness skills), attaining training certifications, and getting jobs. Less tangibly, YouthBuild aims to stimulate lasting changes in attitudes that will keep young people on a positive trajectory and increase their civic engagement. In the longer

term, YouthBuild aims to see its participants enroll in and complete postsecondary education, maintain stable employment, earn more money, and have less involvement than their peers in the criminal justice system.

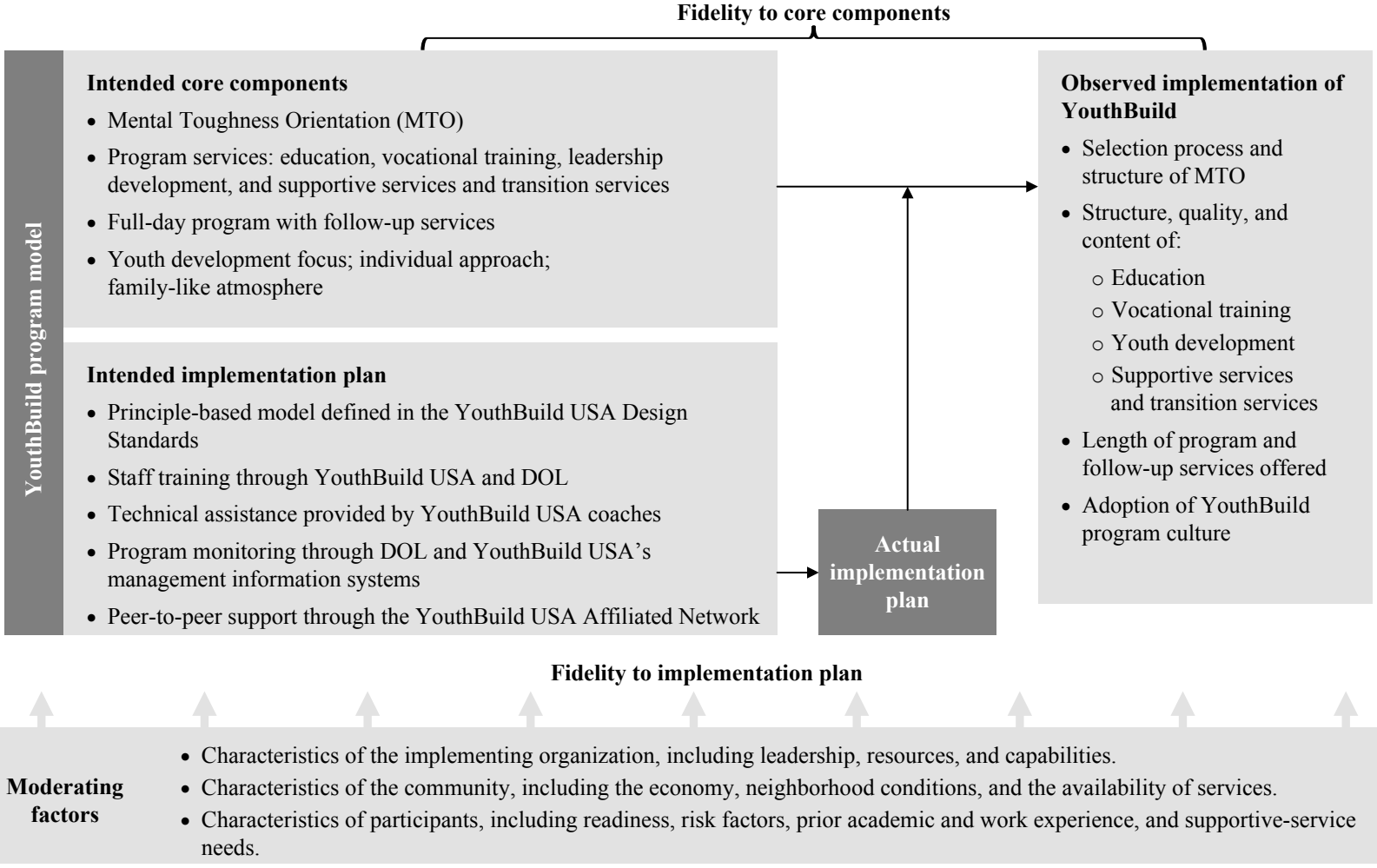
The bottom of Figure 1.1 shows that a variety of contextual factors influence a participant's experience in YouthBuild and subsequent outcomes. As will be described throughout this report, YouthBuild programs are influenced by various aspects of their local community contexts, such as the local economy and the number and range of other educational, vocational, and other service providers that serve as potential partners for the programs. The characteristics of participants themselves also influence the services available to them, their experiences, and the outcomes they may achieve. These variations in context may substantially affect the impacts observed across programs, because of differences in participants (if different young people are affected differently by the program), in the range of services available to them, or in the presence of viable alternative services within these communities.

Following the spirit of Weiss, Bloom, and Brock's paper on variation in program effects, Figure 1.2 illustrates the process by which individual programs implement the YouthBuild model.[18] As shown, the core components of YouthBuild encompass more than just the specific services discussed above. The intended implementation plan covers the support services and tools available to programs to facilitate their implementation of the core components. It includes the application of the YouthBuild USA design standards; training, technical assistance, and program monitoring from YouthBuild USA and DOL; and peer-to-peer support through the YouthBuild USA Affiliated Network.

The implementation plan may be adopted or adapted by a program to varying degrees based on the moderating factors listed in the bottom box of the figure: YouthBuild is operated by organizations with different management structures and resources, programs operate in different local contexts, and the characteristics of participants also vary to some extent. The variation in the support services and tools programs take advantage of — and the variation in how they use them — result in the actual implementation plan; the bracket connecting the intended and actual implementation plan boxes represents the fidelity a program has to the intended implementation plan. Taken together, the variation in how the YouthBuild model is implemented by individual programs (the rightmost box) is influenced directly by how individual programs enact the core components and indirectly by their actual implementation plans. Programs have different lengths, offer different amounts of follow-up services, and adopt the YouthBuild culture differently. Though it influences the overall implementation of YouthBuild,

[18] Weiss, Bloom, and Brock (2013).

Figure 1.2
Implementation Framework



the implementation plan is not the focus of this report. However, the variation in observed implementation as a direct result of how programs enact the core components of YouthBuild is a focus of this report, as is the fidelity a YouthBuild program has to the YouthBuild USA design standards.

YouthBuild programs also must respond to various program standards or measures established by the funders of the program. For example, YouthBuild programs funded by DOL are subject to the same measures of participant performance as are used by most DOL-funded youth programs, referred to as the Youth Common Measures. These include placement in employment or education, attainment of degrees or certificates, and literacy and numeracy gains.[19] The program's performance is assessed in these three key categories, and continued funding may be tied to strong assessment results. Programs therefore must be cognizant of their performance in these areas and have an incentive to select young people who seem likely to achieve positive outcomes in these areas. Additionally, YouthBuild USA's Affiliated Network developed specific program design and performance standards in 1992 that have been updated every few years. The current standards include benchmarks for attendance, retention, job placement, educational attainment, civic engagement, and literacy gains. These measures are not formal performance measures used by external funders of the program, but do represent key areas that YouthBuild USA views as important indicators of performance.[20]

Prior Studies of YouthBuild

Over the past twenty years, several studies have been conducted of YouthBuild. While many of these studies have sought to describe program services and document the outcomes of participants, there has never been a formal study of the *impacts* of the program on its participants, meaning the difference between the outcomes participants obtained and those they would have obtained had they not participated in YouthBuild. Despite this limitation, earlier studies of YouthBuild have generally suggested that program completers fared reasonably well, especially considering the barriers they had to overcome to find employment or advance their educational attainment. In addition, program fidelity and certain program features have at times been found to be associated with certain participant outcomes.

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[19]Though not among the Youth Common Measures, DOL also collects data from grantees on what it terms interim indicators: enrollment rate, participation in educational or training activities, workforce preparation, mentoring, community service or leadership activities, placement retention rate, and the rate at which former prisoners are reincarcerated.

[20]YouthBuild USA does use these formally to assess affiliation/accreditation levels, and a program's affiliation/accreditation level can affect its competitiveness for the funding passed through YouthBuild USA.

One of the first studies, conducted between 1991 and 1994, was a formative evaluation of the first five YouthBuild replication sites.[21] This study found that YouthBuild participants had been relatively successful compared to young people in other programs serving similar populations. For example, the study found that a higher percentage of YouthBuild participants achieved GED certificates (22 percent) than did participants in comparable programs. In addition, the study found that 69 percent of YouthBuild participants earned a positive termination from the program (among those who did not die and who were not forced to drop out for reasons such as illness). Of these positive terminations, 38 percent were for full-time or part-time employment, or enrollment in school or training. The evaluation also found that 66 percent of YouthBuild participants who were employed immediately after leaving YouthBuild had jobs in construction. However, while the YouthBuild program was generally successful in producing job-ready workers, it was not as successful in producing young people who were ready to enter apprenticeships in construction. This was an important finding because young people who complete apprenticeships are then eligible for high-wage union construction jobs.

Another study of a YouthBuild Welfare-to-Work program that operated from 1998 to 2001 also found relatively positive outcomes for YouthBuild participants.[22] For example, despite having served a higher percentage of Temporary Assistance for Needy Family (TANF) recipients than was typical for YouthBuild, YouthBuild Welfare-to-Work participants had higher placement rates and wages on their first jobs than other participants in programs taking part in the National Evaluation of Welfare-to-Work programs.[23]

A survey of YouthBuild graduates selected primarily from a subset of established YouthBuild sites similarly found that YouthBuild graduates fared relatively well after leaving the program.[24] This survey, conducted in 2002 and 2003, found that 75 percent of YouthBuild graduates were enrolled in postsecondary education or job training, or were working in jobs for an average wage of $10 per hour.[25] Ninety-two percent also expressed positive emotions, solid self-image, and optimism about the future; 76 percent reported not receiving food stamps, unemployment insurance, or TANF benefits; and only 9 percent reported being convicted of a felony after the program, compared with 27 percent prior to the program. These graduates also provided strongly positive overall evaluations of their YouthBuild experiences.

[21]Ferguson, Clay, Snipes, and Roaf (1996).

[22]Wright (2001).

[23]Perez-Johnson, Hershey, and Bellotti (2000).

[24]Hahn, Leavitt, Horvat, and Davis (2004).

[25]Young people were surveyed at a single time (in either fall 2002 or spring 2003), but had left the program at varying times (between 1988 and 2003).

In contrast, another study of YouthBuild as it operated under HUD found somewhat less positive results.[26] This study, which included visits to 20 programs across the country and an analysis of the outcomes of participants between 1996 and 1999, found that YouthBuild participants achieved somewhat limited employment outcomes. For example, only 36 percent of all *participants* (rather than graduates, as in the above study) obtained jobs when they left the program, and only 13 percent found jobs in construction. The study attributed the low number of former participants who worked in construction to several factors, including that many participants were not interested in construction as a career and that in many communities few entry-level construction jobs were available. In addition, the study also reported that approximately 50 percent of participants dropped out of the program, though this dropout rate varied somewhat by program and depended on programs' recruitment and enrollment policies. This study primarily attributed the dropout rate to young people's inability to meet YouthBuild's stringent attendance requirements.

A more recent study (released in 2009) was a process study of the YouthBuild Youth Offender programs, including 34 programs that had received special grants from DOL to serve these young people.[27] This evaluation documented broad variation across the programs in a number of program components, including the duration and purposes of Mental Toughness Orientation, the types of educational services offered, and the quality of vocational training participants received. Programs also varied substantially in the intensity of their case management, with some providing intensive and numerous interactions and others adopting a more laissez-faire approach. In terms of outcomes, more than 68 percent of young ex-offender participants completed the program either by graduating or through early job placement. While only 9 percent of young ex-offenders entered the program with their GED certificates or high school diplomas, more than a third obtained a credential after entering YouthBuild. Additionally, nearly two-thirds of all young ex-offenders were placed in unsubsidized employment, an educational activity, or occupational training. Finally, the majority of young ex-offender participants (74.6 percent) did not reoffend or have their probation or parole revoked during the follow-up period after they left YouthBuild.

Overall, then, the studies have provided somewhat mixed results, but generally have found that program *completers* have fared well. However, as noted earlier, a key limitation of these studies is the lack of a credible control group, which makes it difficult to determine how many participants would have achieved these outcomes even in the absence of the program. It is this limitation that the present evaluation is intended to address, by using a random assignment

[26]Mitchell et al. (2003).
[27]Abrazaldo et al. (2009).

design to create two equivalent groups — those who are eligible to enroll in YouthBuild and those who are not. A comparison between the outcomes for these two groups will provide an estimate of the impacts and cost-effectiveness of the program, providing policymakers and funders with rigorous evidence concerning how the program affects its participants.

Evaluation Overview

There are three major components of the national YouthBuild evaluation, each of which seeks to answer specific research questions of interest. Although the process study is the focus of this report, the evaluation also includes an impact study and a cost-effectiveness study, the results of which will be available in reports scheduled to be published in 2017 and 2018.

The programs selected for the evaluation include a mix of those receiving funding from DOL and from CNCS in 2011. To select programs for inclusion in the national evaluation, the study team attempted to balance the objectives of 1) maximizing the representativeness of the sample and the statistical power of the impact analysis and 2) ensuring high-quality implementation of program enrollment and random assignment procedures. Among the 74 programs that received DOL grants in 2011 to continue existing YouthBuild programs or to start new ones, initial screening by the study team revealed that 3 were not suited for the evaluation.[28] The team then randomly selected 60 of the remaining 71 programs for inclusion in the study.[29] Of these 60 programs, 2 were subsequently dropped.[30] For the CNCS-funded programs, 40 programs were identified that did not receive DOL funding in 2011 but that were receiving funding from CNCS. The study team, in conjunction with DOL and CNCS, targeted the 24 programs that received relatively large CNCS grants.[31] Of these, seven were deemed not suitable for the evaluation.[32] As a result, 17 CNCS-funded programs were included in the study. These programs will be referred to as CNCS-funded programs, although they may receive funding from

[28]Interviews with staff members at these three programs indicated that young people assigned to a control group would be likely to receive services that were very similar to YouthBuild services, which would provide a poor test of YouthBuild's effects.

[29]Programs were selected using probability-proportional-to-size sampling, in which larger programs representing more young people had a greater probability of selection. Selecting programs in this way meant that each program slot, or young person, had an equal chance of selection.

[30]Several discussions with program and DOL staff members revealed that random assignment was not feasible at these two programs because they would not be able to enroll study participants during the evaluation's intake period.

[31]DOL and CNCS chose to include the CNCS-funded programs in the evaluation in order to examine whether program impacts vary by funding source. Six CNCS-funded programs were not included because they were likely either to shut down in 2012 or not to enroll study participants during the evaluation's intake period.

[32]Four of the programs planned to shut down in the coming year, and three indicated that young people in the control group would be likely to receive services similar to YouthBuild services.

other, non-DOL sources.[33] In addition, it is important to keep in mind that many of the 58 programs receiving funding from DOL also received funding from CNCS. Ultimately, 75 programs were included in the evaluation. They are the focus of this report.[34]

See Appendix E for more information about program selection.

Impact Study

The evaluation used a random assignment design, in which eligible applicants to the program were assigned at random either to a program group (that had the opportunity to participate in the program in addition to any other services in the community) or control group (that was not able to enroll in YouthBuild, but could receive any other services in the community) after providing consent. The placement of random assignment, decided in partnership with each program, was flexible in relation to Mental Toughness Orientation and was designed to address two complementary challenges. On the one hand, one argument for placing random assignment before Mental Toughness Orientation was that many staff members considered that orientation to be an important part of the YouthBuild program. Conducting random assignment before the orientation would ensure that young people assigned to the control group did not receive a part of YouthBuild. On the other hand, an argument for placing random assignment after Mental Toughness Orientation was that many young people drop out of this orientation before going on to receive YouthBuild's core services. Conducting random assignment before the orientation would therefore also mean that many young people assigned to the program group would never receive YouthBuild services, which would hinder the study's ability to detect program impacts.

Ultimately, most programs opted to conduct random assignment before Mental Toughness Orientation or very early during this orientation. Young people were randomly assigned before Mental Toughness Orientation in 51 percent of programs and after the first few days of Mental Toughness Orientation in 31 percent of programs. The remainder of the programs (18 percent) conducted random assignment after Mental Toughness Orientation.[35]

In order to ensure an adequate number of young people for available slots, the study team set a target random assignment ratio of 60:40, in which 60 percent of eligible young people were to be assigned to the program group and 40 percent to the control group. Some

[33]Ten of the 17 CNCS-funded programs subsequently received funding from DOL as part of the 2012 funding cycle.

[34]A listing of these programs is in Appendix A.

[35]The implications for the impact analysis of the timing of random assignment will be discussed in a later report.

programs that did not have enough excess applicants deviated from that target ratio.[36] Because random assignment, when properly implemented, helps eliminate systematic differences between the program and control groups prior to the start of the program, any subsequent differences in outcomes — for example, in GED credential attainment or earnings — can be attributed to the program with confidence. The analysis from the impact study will therefore determine whether the program group had better outcomes than it would have achieved without YouthBuild.

Combined, the participating programs enrolled 3,929 study group participants between August 2011 and January 2013.[37] The impact study will examine the effects of the program across these 3,929 study group participants by comparing the outcomes of program group members (2,700 young people) with those of control group members (1,229 young people). The study will examine the program's effects on educational attainment, employment and earnings, involvement in the criminal justice system, social and emotional development, and living arrangements and family formation. These outcomes will be measured using three primary data sources: follow-up surveys of the study group conducted 12, 30, and 48 months after random assignment; data from the National Student Clearinghouse, which collects and distributes enrollment, degree, and certificate data from more than 3,000 colleges nationally; and data from the National Directory of New Hires, which includes quarterly wage records from across the United States.

Cost-Effectiveness Study

In addition to the impact study, the evaluation also includes a cost-effectiveness study. This analysis will estimate the costs of operating and running YouthBuild and compare these costs with any positive gains that are achieved. Costs include administrative costs, salaries, and materials, among others. The cost data will be combined with selected impact estimates derived from the impact study (for example the gain in GED certificate or high school diploma attainment) to assess how cost-effective YouthBuild services are in producing impacts of interest. The results from the cost-effectiveness study will be included in a future report in conjunction with the impact study results.

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[36]Three programs were never able to conduct random assignment due to low recruitment numbers. The study team allowed 37 programs that had difficulty reaching their recruitment targets to enroll young people without going through random assignment for at least one enrollment cycle, sometimes several.

[37]Although 3,988 young people were enrolled in the evaluation, the study will present and analyze data for only 3,929 of them. Many of the 59 young people excluded from the analysis failed to sign consent forms properly or to provide verbal consent when programs made contact with them subsequently. Three withdrew from the study. These individuals who were excluded from the impact analysis were still able to participate in YouthBuild.

Process Study

The final evaluation component is the process study of the 75 programs included in the national evaluation. This is the topic of this report. The process study was designed to answer several research questions. Broadly speaking, these questions fall into three categories: 1) the design of the participating YouthBuild programs, the services they offer to young people in the program group, and the implementation of these services; 2) the factors in program communities that may affect services and outcomes for young people in both research groups; and 3) the characteristics of the young people who participate in the study and the experiences of program group members in YouthBuild. The specific questions this report seeks to answer are:

Design and Implementation

- What is the organizational and leadership structure of the YouthBuild programs? How long have they been in operation and what is their size?
- What partners are involved with the program, and in what ways?
- What services are provided by the program, and in what sequence? For how long do these services last? What is the quality of key program services?
- To what extent is the program faithful to the YouthBuild model?

Contextual Factors

- To what extent are alternative services available in the community?
- How do these services compare with YouthBuild (and, if available, how much do they cost)?
- Does the program actively refer control group members to alternative services? Which ones?

Characteristics of Young People

- What are the characteristics of the young people in the research sample?
- How do these characteristics vary among programs?

Data Sources

The process study drew on data collected during site visits to each of the participating programs, a survey of all 2011 DOL and CNCS grantees, and information from the DOL management information system. Each of these data sources is described below.

Site Visits

Site visits were conducted to each of the programs, with nearly all visits being conducted while program group participants were enrolled.[38] The goal of each visit was to fully document the flow of participants through a program, the range of services it provided, and the methods the staff used to monitor participants' progress. These visits included a wide range of data-collection activities, with a strong emphasis on interviews with program staff members in each of the 75 programs. Interviews with staff members at a variety of partners were also conducted, including employer partners with 17 programs, education partners with 56 programs, construction partners with 47 programs, and supportive services partners or other partners with 57 programs. The evaluation team reviewed documents including grant applications, written training plans, and partnership agreements. The evaluation team also conducted interviews with 114 alternative service providers in 62 programs' communities.[39] Focus groups or interviews with individual participants were conducted at each program: 76 individual young people were interviewed and 35 focus groups of four to six program participants were conducted. In addition, site visitors conducted observations of academic instruction and vocational training. Generally, visitors were able to observe these activities for approximately 30 minutes. While these observations were highly beneficial for understanding how instruction was provided, because each of them represents only a single, brief span of time it cannot be said that they are fully representative of all instruction provided by the programs. These data are therefore treated as instructive but not definitive concerning any given program's practices.

Fidelity Rating Tool

Based on the data collected during the site visits, site visitors were asked to complete a rating tool that assessed the programs' fidelity to the core YouthBuild model. The tool was derived from YouthBuild USA's Program Design and Performance Standards and included ratings on 61 items in 13 areas identified by the study team as critical to an effective YouthBuild program and measurable during a brief site visit. It is described in more detail in Chapter 2. Subsequent reports will explore whether fidelity to the core YouthBuild model affects the impacts observed.

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[38]In a few cases, a visit could not be conducted until after program group participants had exited the program. Additionally, three programs included in the impact study were unable to contribute any study group members because they did not have more interested applicants than available slots in their programs. Process-study visits were conducted to these sites, but there were no program group members present.

[39]This total does not include any interviews conducted with other YouthBuild programs or Job Corps programs.

Grantee Survey

The grantee survey was administered in fall 2012 to all 110 YouthBuild programs funded by DOL or CNCS during the evaluation period, not just those in the evaluation. The survey asked administrators to provide information about programs' years in operation, funders, operating budgets, staff structures and staff experience levels, construction work site characteristics, recent recruitment and enrollment experiences, stipends, and program component characteristics. The survey served two purposes. First, it ensured uniform data collection concerning a variety of program characteristics, such as how educational and vocational services were structured and student-teacher ratios. Second, the data from the survey will help the research team place the impact analysis findings in context by revealing how the 75 programs that participated in the impact component of the evaluation compare with the other DOL-funded and CNCS-funded programs that did not participate. Chapter 3 presents an initial analysis of how well the programs in the evaluation represent this larger pool of YouthBuild programs.

Management Information System Data

DOL-funded programs are required to enter data on participants' characteristics, service receipt, and outcomes into the DOL YouthBuild management information system. For evaluation purposes these data provide information on the demographic characteristics of young people prior to random assignment (at baseline), as programs were required to enter these data for all young people entering the study. Similar demographic information was entered for CNCS-funded programs into a web-based system developed for the study.

Although the management information systems contain some data on the services provided to participants (educational, vocational, community, case-management, and supportive services), unfortunately these fields were not used consistently by all programs. Given this inconsistency it is not possible to rely on these data to identify meaningful differences in service frequency or dosage across programs. As a result, this report does not include these data.

Road Map to the Remainder of the Report

The remainder of this report provides findings from the process study. Chapter 2 provides a more detailed overview of the YouthBuild model and its specific components; it also describes the fidelity rating tool used and discusses the variation in fidelity scores. Chapter 3 describes characteristics of the programs participating in this evaluation. Chapter 4 summarizes the recruitment strategies, intake processes, and enrollment procedures employed by these programs, including how these factors may have been affected by the random assignment process.

The next four chapters detail the specific services provided by YouthBuild programs and variation in these services. They identify how these services were provided, the factors that affected their implementation, the challenges programs faced in providing them, and the strategies programs adopted to overcome these challenges. Specifically, Chapter 5 describes the youth-leadership and community service activities undertaken by the participating programs. Chapter 6 provides a summary of the educational and academic instruction provided by YouthBuild programs, detailing the instructional approaches used to assist participants in achieving their GED certificates or high school diplomas, or both, and providing an account of services intended to help participants apply for and enroll in postsecondary education. Chapter 7 describes vocational training, covering how programs provided this training, partnered with other agencies to provide meaningful training experiences, and sought to provide certifications and credentials to make participants more marketable. Chapter 8 summarizes other supportive services available through participating YouthBuild programs, including case management, counseling, supportive services, life-skills training, workforce preparation, and follow-up services.

The discussion shifts in Chapter 9, which summarizes the community contexts of the programs participating in the evaluation and provides an overview of the alternative services available in these neighborhoods, as these are the services most likely to be used by young people who do not participate in YouthBuild. Finally, Chapter 10 offers a synthesis of the findings from the report, and a summary of the challenges programs faced and promising practices programs implemented to overcome them. That final chapter also provides important background for the impact report by describing some of the variations that could help to explain differences in impacts that may be observed among programs.

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Chapter 2

The YouthBuild Model and Fidelity

YouthBuild is a comprehensive model designed to address simultaneously the complex needs of participants and their communities. The components of the YouthBuild model are intended to be complementary and are designed to be offered as a whole service model. This distinguishes YouthBuild from other youth programs, which may only offer some of the services it provides. This chapter begins by outlining the basic principles and components of YouthBuild as conceived by YouthBuild USA and the Department of Labor (DOL). The second part of the chapter describes how the study team assessed the fidelity of the programs in the evaluation to the YouthBuild USA model. Key findings presented in this chapter are:

- The program model codified by YouthBuild USA in its Program Design and Performance Standards is very similar to the model codified in the YouthBuild Transfer Act (the federal YouthBuild law), with a few minor variations.
- The YouthBuild model is designed to allow programs to adapt to their local contexts, which leads to variation in how program components are implemented. As a result, two programs may operate very differently yet still maintain high fidelity to the YouthBuild model.
- Fidelity to the overall model was generally high among programs in the evaluation; however, programs had higher fidelity to some components of the model than others. Fidelity was highest in vocational services and lowest in leadership development and postsecondary preparation.

Defining the YouthBuild Model

The YouthBuild model is codified in YouthBuild USA's Program Design and Performance Standards, which YouthBuild USA created 20 years ago in response to program directors' calls for a "clear summation" of the model. At that time, YouthBuild had been replicated at 15 sites and program directors were using a 250-page program manual to guide their implementation of the program.[1] Now in their sixth edition, the Program Design and Performance Standards codify what it means to be YouthBuild in 16 "essential program qualities" and 183 design standards.[2]

[1]YouthBuild USA Affiliated Network (2013).

[2]This discussion is based on the 2007 design standards: YouthBuild USA Affiliated Network (2007). YouthBuild USA released a revised version in January 2013, but due to the timing of evaluation activities, this version was not used in the analysis.

The standards are written as broad guidelines rather than narrow directives, which allows programs to adapt each standard to the local context. As a result, programs can vary substantially in their implementation of each standard, yet still maintain fidelity to the YouthBuild model.

The essential program qualities, presented in Box 2.1, are the 16 elements that "express the philosophical core and spirit of YouthBuild."[3] YouthBuild USA concedes that these qualities are difficult to measure, yet when implemented successfully, they are purported to produce the program climate that helps young people succeed. Together, the qualities envision programs that provide a family-like environment where young people are cared for, respected, and empowered by staff members who understand their experiences and serve as role models, all while providing meaningful work and educational opportunities. According to the program qualities, the program's culture should set high standards and expectations for its young people. Together the qualities create, in the words of YouthBuild's founder Dorothy Stoneman, "a dramatically different environment" than the young people are accustomed to experiencing.[4]

The design standards are the program elements that YouthBuild USA uses to evaluate its affiliates for fidelity to the YouthBuild model.[5] The standards are divided into 15 categories to cover the various components YouthBuild programs should have, from leadership development to record keeping. They are further ranked into three types of standards: mandatory, required, and recommended. Programs must meet all of the mandatory standards in order to become affiliates. Required standards are considered to be crucial to the model, and programs must meet 80 percent of them to become an accredited program. Recommended standards are considered desirable elements, but are not considered when making determinations of affiliate status.[6] The 2007 version of the design standards used for this evaluation contained 1 mandatory standard, 131 required standards, and 51 recommended standards. See Appendix B for a full listing of the mandatory and required standards.[7]

[3]YouthBuild USA Affiliated Network (2007).

[4]Interview with Dorothy Stoneman, February 21, 2012.

[5]YouthBuild USA affiliates are YouthBuild programs that have applied and been accepted into YouthBuild USA's Affiliated Network and have committed to meeting the design and performance standards. Eighty-four percent of the programs in the evaluation were in YouthBuild USA's Affiliated Network.

[6]YouthBuild USA Affiliated Network (2013).

[7]The revised version of the standards released in 2013 added an additional mandatory element, removed a few standards, and added some others. Several of the standards added reflected an increasing focus on incorporating green-building practices.

Box 2.1

YouthBuild USA's Essential Program Qualities

As defined by YouthBuild USA:

- Profound respect for the young people's intelligence
- Power for the young people over their immediate environment
- Protection for the participants, as much as possible, from disaster — or at least the support necessary to cope with it
- Meaningful and important work for both students and staff
- Real, patient caring for the young people's development
- Teaching of academic, employment, and social skills
- Consistently positive values
- A firm and loving challenge to stop self-destructive behavior and change negative attitudes
- Family-like support and appreciation from peers and adults
- High standards and expectations
- Staff members who have overcome similar obstacles who can serve as inspiring and caring role models
- An understanding of the proud and unique history of their own people, and respect for people of different cultural backgrounds
- Heightened awareness of the present-day world and young people's important place in it
- A clear and visible path to future opportunity
- Real concern and action to change the conditions that have affected the young people and the people they love
- Fun

SOURCE: YouthBuild USA Affiliated Network (2007).

The following six subsections provide a basic overview of the YouthBuild model as defined by the YouthBuild USA design standards. These six subsections roughly reflect the chapters of this report: recruitment, eligibility, enrollment, and program scheduling; youth leadership and community service; educational services; vocational training; supportive services; and program management and operations. Differences between the YouthBuild USA and DOL models are discussed later in this chapter.

Recruitment, Eligibility, Enrollment, and Program Scheduling

Low-income young people ages 16 to 24 are eligible to enroll in YouthBuild.[8] Within these broad eligibility guidelines, programs incorporate a number of steps and assessments prior

[8]There are further restrictions on who may enroll in YouthBuild programs funded by DOL and the Corporation for National and Community Service (CNCS). These are detailed in Chapter 4.

to enrollment to gauge if a young person is appropriate for YouthBuild, a quality often referred to as "readiness." The YouthBuild USA design standards are silent on any mechanisms programs might use to select young people for the program, but they do stipulate that programs should admit young people in cohorts of no fewer than seven to promote group bonding and integration into the program. Once enrolled, the design standards require that young people be in the program a minimum of nine months.[9]

The YouthBuild USA design standards call for programs to begin each cycle with a Mental Toughness Orientation. Mental Toughness Orientation, designed to help young people prepare for the rigors of YouthBuild, is typically a week or longer and consists of team-building activities and introductions to the program's components and culture. As first developed by YouthBuild Boston in the late 1980s, the purpose of Mental Toughness Orientation is to prepare young people for the program by breaking them out of self-destructive habits and engaging their latent energies and talents.[10] According to the design standards, Mental Toughness Orientation should emphasize "goal setting, overcoming obstacles, resisting pitfalls and traps, bonding within the group, understanding oppression and racism, building trust with staff, and preparing for the rigors of the YouthBuild program."[11]

The YouthBuild USA design standards do not stipulate how a program should schedule its service offerings once young people are enrolled. Participants generally alternate among the various components throughout the week, but how participants alternate among activities is left to the discretion of individual programs. A sample schedule that presents a common way that programs structure their services is provided in Table 2.1.

Youth Leadership and Community Service

Youth-leadership and community service activities are defining features of YouthBuild that serve multiple purposes. By serving as leaders in the program and community through YouthBuild, young people have the opportunity to engage in positive leadership roles, often for the first time in their lives. Putting young people in leadership roles communicates to them the high expectations the program has for them, and also supports the principle of respect for young people by offering them decision-making power. Through community service activities young people produce something of value to the community, which leads to opportunities for them to experience respect and appreciation from the community.

[9]DOL requires a six-month program of its YouthBuild grantees.
[10]Ferguson, Clay, Snipes, and Roaf (1996).
[11]YouthBuild USA Affiliated Network (2007).

YouthBuild Evaluation

Table 2.1

Sample Schedule

Week 1

	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday
8:00 AM	Morning meeting	Morning meeting	Morning meeting	Morning meeting	Morning meeting
9:00 AM					
10:00 AM	Academic services	Academic services	Academic services	Academic services	Leadership class
11:00 AM					
12:00 PM	Lunch	Lunch	Lunch	Lunch	Lunch
1:00 PM		Life-skills training		Life-skills training	
2:00 PM	Academic services		Academic services		Community service activity
3:00 PM		Academic services		Academic services	

Week 2

	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday
8:00 AM	Morning meeting	Morning meeting	Morning meeting	Morning meeting	Morning meeting
9:00 AM					
10:00 AM	Construction training: classroom	Construction training: classroom	Construction training: classroom	Construction training: classroom	Leadership class
11:00 AM					
12:00 PM	Lunch	Lunch	Lunch	Lunch	Lunch
1:00 PM					
2:00 PM	Work site	Work site	Work site	Work site	Work-readiness training
3:00 PM					

SOURCE: This table is based on schedules from multiple YouthBuild programs.

Youth leadership is developed and encouraged by YouthBuild through opportunities to participate in the implementation of the program in both formal and informal roles. The YouthBuild USA design standards require each YouthBuild program to have a policy committee, an elected body of participants who meet regularly and participate in "significant decision making" affecting the program.[12] A staff member, typically the program director, should participate in the meetings. In the 2007 standards, having a policy committee was the one mandatory standard that programs had to meet in order to join YouthBuild USA's Affiliated Network.[13] The size of the council, its process for electing members, and its precise responsibilities are not defined by YouthBuild USA.

The YouthBuild USA design standards also require YouthBuild programs to provide participants with leadership opportunities in other areas of program implementation, such as on the work site or in the classroom, or in administrative aspects of running the program, for example by running a student store or facilitating morning meetings. Additionally, the design standards call for programs to provide young people with external opportunities to participate in leadership roles, for example by fundraising or by advocating for YouthBuild at community meetings. The YouthBuild USA design standards also require each program to include leadership skills in its curriculum, either woven into the academic curriculum or as a stand-alone class.[14]

Beyond individual programs, YouthBuild USA promotes leadership development through a series of cross-program leadership initiatives that target both current students and alumni. Through its annual Conference of Young Leaders, YouthBuild USA brings together more than a hundred current students selected as delegates by their YouthBuild programs to attend a multiday conference intended to build leadership and connect young people to the national YouthBuild movement. YouthBuild USA also provides YouthBuild graduates with continued opportunities to engage in leadership and advocacy roles through a number of initiatives it organizes, including the Young Leaders Council, the National Alumni Council, and the 1000 Leaders Network.

Service to the community is also a required component of YouthBuild. Community service activities serve a dual role: they help address community needs while providing young people opportunities to practice leadership and other skills. The primary form community service takes is building or rehabilitating low-income housing or community facilities. In

[12]YouthBuild USA Affiliated Network (2007).

[13]YouthBuild USA Affiliated Network (2007).

[14]In 2013, YouthBuild USA introduced 23 leadership competencies to be taught, which cover individual, small-group, and community leadership. These competencies range from keeping a calendar to demonstrating cultural competence. YouthBuild USA is pilot testing these competencies at a few programs, along with an accompanying measure of program performance. They are not a focus of this evaluation.

programs that receive AmeriCorps funding, young people must spend a specified number of hours in community service activities to receive their education awards. As will be explained in Chapter 5, leadership and community service activities may be formally integrated into the curriculum or offered in a more ad hoc manner depending on the program.

Educational Services

The academic component of YouthBuild serves several purposes: to strengthen basic skills, to lead to a General Educational Development (GED) certificate or high school diploma, and, increasingly, to put students on a path to postsecondary education. The YouthBuild USA design standards require that participants spend at least 50 percent of their time in educational activities. Though the schedule for academic services is not stipulated, typical arrangements are for participants to alternate weeks between academic and vocational services, or to alternate mornings and afternoons.

The YouthBuild model is designed to engage young people who have fallen behind in their schooling by providing an individually tailored approach and curricula designed to differ from those of a traditional school. The program design standards call for the academic program to engage young people through project-based learning and individual learning plans. The standards also require programs to use regular assessments to track student progress.

YouthBuild academic services are designed to serve young people who enter the program with varying levels of skills. Some come to the program just a couple of credits short of their high school diplomas and are ready to take and pass the GED exam within a few months. Others enter the program in need of extensive basic-skills remediation. Students within a program will often span this spectrum. The design standards require programs to tailor their academic curricula to meet varying service needs, learning styles, and interests.

YouthBuild programs also focus on preparing young people to pursue postsecondary education options after YouthBuild. Building a culture of postsecondary education is a required YouthBuild USA design standard. The design standards require that programs build relationships with postsecondary institutions, help prepare students for placement tests, and provide assistance with college and financial aid applications.

Vocational and Construction Training

A foundational feature of YouthBuild, the vocational and construction training program serves the twin purposes of community service and skill building. The design standards require that participants serve their communities by building or rehabilitating community facilities or housing for low-income families. The standards stipulate that construction activities should be combined with vocational-skills training to prepare young people for careers. Vocational-skills

training is not confined to construction training — programs can offer training in other areas where there are known career opportunities.[15]

The construction program includes time both in the classroom and at a work site. While in class, the design standards require that students be taught safety skills and have the opportunity to earn industry-recognized credentials. The design standards require that students have the opportunity to learn in an environment "free from production constraints," such as a shop where they can practice skills and grow comfortable with tools before transitioning to a work site. It is also required by the design standards that the ratio during training be no higher than seven students per trainer.

Supportive Services

The YouthBuild model calls for supportive services to address any challenges participants face that could prevent them from succeeding in the program and beyond. These may include challenges at home, legal issues, or personal problems like drug abuse or mental health issues. Required supportive services include case management and counseling, life-skills and work-readiness training, and 12 months of follow-up services after participants have left the program.

Case management includes one-on-one meetings with case managers or other staff members. The design standards also call for young people to participate in counseling in individual and group settings. The design standards stipulate that one-on-one meetings with counselors should occur on a regular basis. Programs are also required to develop an individual life plan for each participant that encompasses personal, academic, and career goals. The design standards further require each program to have a network of partners to which it can refer young people if they need services that are not provided by the program, for example services to address housing or substance-abuse issues. The required maximum caseload for a case manager is 28 participants.

Beyond the individual support provided to participants, the YouthBuild USA design standards require life-skills and work-readiness classes. These classes are intended to build the "soft skills" that young people need to be successful outside of the program, such as personal budgeting, conflict resolution, and healthy relationship techniques. Life-skills and work-

[15]Until 2012, YouthBuild programs could spend federal funds only on vocational training in construction. In 2012, DOL authorized programs to expand their vocational training to other fields such as health care or information technology. Some programs were already providing other vocational-training options using other funding sources. Programs choosing to offer other vocational-training options must continue to offer construction-skills training. See U.S. Department of Labor, Employment and Training Administration (2012a, 2012b).

readiness training may be offered as a weekly or daily stand-alone course, or may be integrated into the academic or vocational curriculum.

A distinctive feature of YouthBuild is the stipend or wage offered to young people during their participation in the program. Though the design standards do not stipulate the precise pay structure, they do require that participants receive wages or stipends while at the work site and in academic services. Additionally, programs should offer bonuses or other rewards for good performance.

To assist young people after program graduation, the YouthBuild USA design standards require programs to provide them with transition services or follow-up. These services include assistance with job placement and retention, continuation of academic support, continued case management and referrals to supportive services, and alumni social activities. A participant describes how the full suite of services provided by YouthBuild is helping him in Box 2.2.

Program Management and Operations

Beyond the individual service components, the design standards define expectations for general program management and operations, including staffing, fiscal controls, and the relationship of YouthBuild with the sponsoring organization.

Appropriate staffing is essential to the YouthBuild model. The YouthBuild USA design standards require each program to have a full-time director or program manager. Since building trust between staff members and participants is critical, the standards call for the ethnic composition and socioeconomic and community backgrounds of the staff to reflect the backgrounds of the young people in the program. Additionally, the staff should have access to relevant professional development opportunities, including training in youth-development strategies.

The YouthBuild USA design standards also cover a number of administrative aspects of program implementation. These include standards intended to safeguard the program when a larger sponsoring organization implements it, to ensure that there are clear lines of control and support for the program within the broader agency. Other design standards spell out requirements for sustainability plans, insurance, staff evaluations, and personnel policies.

Federal Implementation of the YouthBuild USA Model

The YouthBuild model outlined in the YouthBuild Transfer Act and DOL Program Manual, which DOL hired YouthBuild USA to produce, largely corresponds with the YouthBuild USA model described in the Program Design and Performance Standards. The DOL

Box 2.2

Participant Vignette

A 20-year-old participant in a YouthBuild program in Iowa summed up the YouthBuild model neatly when he explained, "If you take advantage of the full program, you're killing three birds with one stone: GED, pick up a trade, and get started with college." Prior to YouthBuild, the participant was floundering in high school and feeling discouraged because he felt like the principal and other staff members had all but decided he shouldn't be in school. Since entering the program, the participant has received a wide range of services. In the academic classes, the participant learned "many things," often through activities, without realizing that they were helping him prepare for the GED until he "aced the test." In construction training, he has gained a variety of carpentry skills (building and insulating walls, installing siding, and first aid and cardiopulmonary resuscitation [CPR]) as well as soft skills like communication, patience, and the ability to take advantage of opportunities. Participating in the program has helped him "[get] out of the habit of being lazy." Though he does not intend to pursue a career in the construction industry in the short term, YouthBuild has helped prepare him for a job search by working with him on developing cover letters and résumés and honing interview techniques. In addition to classes and training, the participant is also involved in community service activities like building a ramp for an elderly woman's home. He appreciates that staff members provide different resources to help him. Currently, they are working with him to enter a license reinstatement program so that he can get his driver's license. "If you need anything, a job, a car, anything, they can help you," he said. "If you don't get ahead with YouthBuild, it's because you didn't want to get ahead."

SOURCE: YouthBuild site-visit interview data.

Program Manual presents a slightly adapted version of YouthBuild USA's 16 program qualities, and aspects of the YouthBuild USA design standards are interspersed throughout the manual.

There are a few differences, however, between the YouthBuild model outlined in the YouthBuild Transfer Act and that promulgated by YouthBuild USA. One difference is that DOL requires only a six-month program, compared with the nine-month program required in YouthBuild USA's standards. The federal YouthBuild program also does not require a Youth Policy Council, but simply recommends that programs have one. The big difference lies in explicitness: where the design standards require that programs have certain features, the YouthBuild Transfer Act and DOL Program Manual are more general and treat specific design components more as recommendations than as requirements.

In a few areas the DOL Program Manual makes recommendations that do not correspond with anything in the design standards. One of these areas is in the recruitment of participants. As noted earlier, the design standards include no recommendations or requirements about

how a program should select participants. In contrast, the DOL Program Manual dedicates an entire chapter to this topic, making recommendations about what programs should look for in applicants, and offering suggestions for recruitment strategies and how to use Mental Toughness Orientation. The interpretation of the purpose of Mental Toughness Orientation is another point of difference between the Program Manual and the design standards. While the YouthBuild USA design standards present Mental Toughness Orientation as an opportunity to prepare young people for the program, the DOL Program Manual explains how it can be used to screen out applicants, suggesting that programs invite twice as many young people to Mental Toughness Orientation as they ultimately want to enroll.[16]

The DOL Program Manual also emphasizes working with outside partners, and the design standards do not. Most YouthBuild programs do work with outside partners to deliver or supplement the services they offer, and DOL actively encourages that practice. Applicants for federal YouthBuild grants are given points during the application process based on their links to key partners and ability to attract in-kind resources from them.[17] The YouthBuild USA design standards, on the other hand, do not provide guidance to programs about how they should structure relationships with partners.

Both YouthBuild USA and DOL track program performance by measuring participants' outcomes in a variety of areas, presented in Box 2.3. Using YouthBuild USA's management information system, YouthBuild USA affiliates are required to report data on participants' outcomes in 10 areas, including academic achievement, placement at graduation, and registration to vote.[18] In comparison, DOL measures the success of grantees in three ways: literacy and numeracy gains, placement in employment or education, and attainment of degrees or certificates.[19] These are the DOL Youth Common Measures with which DOL's Employment and Training Administration evaluates all of its youth programs, and it is possible that they explain

[16]U.S. Department of Labor (2014c). Although DOL recommends that programs have Mental Toughness Orientation, programs cannot use DOL funds to pay its costs unless the participants are already officially enrolled in YouthBuild. As will be discussed in Chapter 4, in most cases Mental Toughness Orientation occurs before recruits are officially enrolled.

[17]U.S. Department of Labor, Employment and Training Administration (2010).

[18]YouthBuild programs that receive CNCS funding also have performance measures associated with their AmeriCorps grants on which they must report to YouthBuild USA and CNCS. These performance measures include attainment of education awards, academic achievement indicators, the number of houses built and the number of people benefiting from those houses, the number of volunteers engaged in the program, and the number of hours they contribute.

[19]Though not among the Youth Common Measures, DOL also collects data from grantees on what it terms interim indicators: enrollment rate, participation in education or training activities, workforce preparation, mentoring, community service or leadership activities, placement retention rate, and the rate at which former prisoners are reincarcerated.

Box 2.3

Comparison of Department of Labor and YouthBuild USA Outcome Measures

YouthBuild USA Affiliated Network Performance Standards Summary	Department of Labor Outcome Measures
• Literacy or numeracy advancement • Attainment of GED certificates or high school diplomas • Percentage of students who achieve at least one industry-recognized certification • Placement of enrollees in school or work • Retention in placement for two quarters • Wage at job placement • Percentage of graduates who return to jail or prison • Percentage of enrollees who complete the program • Average attendance for all enrolled participants • Percentage of eligible participants who are registered to vote	• Literacy and numeracy gains • Attainment rates of high school diplomas, GED certificates, and post-secondary degrees or certificates • Placement in employment, postsecondary education, occupational-skills training programs, or the military

SOURCES: YouthBuild USA Affiliated Network (2007) and U.S. Department of Labor, Employment and Training Administration (2010).

NOTE: DOL also collects data from grantees on what it terms interim indicators: enrollment rate, participation in education or training activities, workforce preparation, mentoring, community service or leadership activities, placement retention rate, and the rate at which former prisoners are reincarcerated.

some of the inconsistency in implementation fidelity that will be discussed later in this chapter and in subsequent chapters. DOL's outcome measures, which have implications for continued funding, only focus on the components of the YouthBuild model related to education, vocational training, and job placement. DOL sites are not evaluated on participant attendance, for example, or on their performance in providing leadership training.

Assessing Fidelity to the YouthBuild Model

The YouthBuild USA design standards discussed above and detailed in Appendix B are explicit about the required elements of YouthBuild, but not about how those elements should be implemented. As a result, as the subsequent chapters of this report will detail, there is considerable variation in how YouthBuild is implemented at each program site. Variation is present at all levels — from the types of organizations that house YouthBuild, to the academic and vocational training curricula provided, to how programs provide leadership training. This variation made it challenging to determine how faithful each individual program was to the YouthBuild model simply through staff interviews and program observations. Therefore, a separate examination of fidelity was needed to assess the degree to which programs in the evaluation were true to the YouthBuild model. Measuring fidelity also provided the opportunity to make comparisons across programs and assess where programs struggled in their implementation of the YouthBuild model.

Because the DOL YouthBuild model is so similar to the model codified in the design standards, and because the YouthBuild USA design standards provide a number of measurable components, the research team adapted YouthBuild USA's 2007 Program Design Standards to assess fidelity.[20] The evaluation team rated fidelity in 13 of the 15 categories provided in the design standards. The community leadership category was omitted because it only had one required standard; collaboration with YouthBuild USA was omitted because it was not relevant to the research questions. Additionally, the team modified the standards for use in the field. Many of the standards include descriptions of program qualities that would not be possible to evaluate based on a short site visit, such as "The process of becoming a positive role model in the community is taken seriously and its implications are discussed." Other standards were determined to be less critical aspects of the model or were similar to other standards and were also removed. For example, "Appropriate insurance is maintained" was removed for not being critical to youth outcomes. Some standards were removed because although the research team believed they were important, they could not be assessed adequately during the short site visits. These were standards related to teacher quality, the use of technology in the educational program, and the relationship of the YouthBuild program to the larger agency that housed it, if there was one. The fidelity scores do not assess programs in these areas. A full accounting of how standards were adapted appears in Appendix B.

The final fidelity rating tool used in the evaluation contains 61 of the 132 mandatory and required standards. Research staff members completed the fidelity rating tool after site visits, rating local programs on each standard as "meets standard," "partially meets standard," or

[20]The team used the 2007 version of the standards, as the 2013 version was released too late for the evaluation.

"does not meet standard." They could also choose "does not apply" or "unable to observe." Point values were assigned to each standard, with programs receiving 100 points for "meets standard," 50 points for "partially meets standard," and 0 points for "does not meet standard." To create the fidelity scores, the points were summed across all standards for which there were observations, and then divided by the number of observations. The maximum possible rating was 100, and the minimum was 0. Additionally, the program categories were broken into six components and fidelity scores were calculated for each component. These components were: general program operations (14 standards), academic services (7 standards), postsecondary education (5 standards), vocational and construction training (6 standards), supportive services (20 standards), and leadership and community service (9 standards).

The majority of programs (57 percent) had fidelity scores of 80 or above. Thirty-seven percent of programs had scores between 60 and 79. Only four programs (5 percent) had scores below 60.[21] To illustrate what a fidelity rating looks like in practice, the highest-ranked program was rated as "meets standard" on 59 of the 61 standards, "partially meets standard" on 1 standard, and 1 standard did not apply. The lowest-ranked program was rated as "meets standard" on 12 standards, "partially meets standard" on 21 standards, and "does not meet standard" on 20 standards, with 6 standards unobservable.

The distribution of scores indicates that there was not much variation in overall fidelity among the study sites. Most programs had high or moderate fidelity to the YouthBuild design standards, and few programs had low fidelity. As mentioned previously, this does not mean that programs were implementing the YouthBuild model in the same way, since the model allows for considerable variation in implementation while still maintaining fidelity.

However, when the scores for program components are examined separately, the data show some variation in fidelity among the different components (as shown in Table 2.2). For example, vocation and construction services had the highest fidelity score, at an average of 92 across programs. In contrast, leadership development and postsecondary preparation had the lowest fidelity scores when averaged across sites, at 65.

Fidelity scores were also compared for the DOL-funded and CNCS-funded programs, as presented in Appendix Table G.1. CNCS-funded programs averaged a slightly lower overall fidelity score. There were some differences in the comparison of program components as well: DOL-funded programs averaged higher scores particularly in vocational and construction training, supportive services, and postsecondary preparation. Meanwhile, CNCS-funded programs had a marginally higher average score for leadership development.

[21] A score of 80 or higher roughly aligns with YouthBuild USA's requirement that programs meet 80 percent or more of the design standards to be accepted as accredited programs.

YouthBuild Evaluation

Table 2.2

Fidelity Scores

Variable	Score
Overall fidelity score	
Maximum	99
Minimum	45
Average	79
Average fidelity score by program component	
Vocational and construction training	92
Academic services	86
Supportive services	82
General program operations	81
Leadership development	65
Postsecondary preparation	65
Sample size	75

NOTES: Point values were assigned to each standard, with programs receiving 100 points for "meets standard," 50 points for "partially meets standard," and 0 points for "does not meet standard." To create the fidelity scores, points were summed across all standards for which there were observations, and then divided by the number of observations. The maximum possible rating was 100 and the minimum was 0. Standards were further broken into program components and fidelity scores were calculated by component using the same method.

How fidelity varied by program characteristics will be discussed in Chapter 3. Fidelity scores by component will be discussed in detail in each service component chapter (Chapters 5 through 8), including how fidelity varied for that component and possible explanations for that variation.

Conclusion

The YouthBuild model is designed to address comprehensively the multifaceted needs of participants in the areas of academics, work readiness, life skills, and leadership development. While YouthBuild USA has codified the model in its design standards, the model is designed to allow for extensive customization by individual programs. As a result, there is considerable variation in implementation across programs, as will be described in the remainder of the report. Despite these allowances for customization, YouthBuild programs in this evaluation generally implemented programs that had high fidelity to the design standards.

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Chapter 3

Overview of Programs

This chapter provides an overview of the 75 YouthBuild programs in this evaluation and the organizations that operate them. As YouthBuild has grown from a single program in East Harlem to more than 270 programs throughout the United States, implementation of the YouthBuild model has been affected by many factors, from the philosophies of the organizations that operate YouthBuild to the stability of their funding to their local community contexts. These characteristics often affect program implementation and fidelity to the YouthBuild model and may therefore influence YouthBuild's impact on participants. The great diversity of the programs in the evaluation makes it challenging to describe a typical YouthBuild program.

The chapter begins with a summary of program characteristics, including the types of organizations that operate YouthBuild, their geography, and their history in their communities. The chapter then provides an overview of the administrative structure of YouthBuild programs and their partnerships, followed by discussions of their funding and budget and their leadership and staffing. Throughout the chapter, program characteristics related to fidelity to the YouthBuild model are highlighted. The chapter concludes by discussing how well the programs in the evaluation represent all YouthBuild programs funded in 2011 by the Department of Labor (DOL) and the Corporation for National and Community Service (CNCS). Key findings presented in this chapter include:

- The YouthBuild programs in the evaluation were very diverse. The programs varied considerably in location, longevity, funding, and staffing.
- The vast majority of YouthBuild programs were housed in larger organizations, drawing financial, administrative, and staffing support as well as other in-kind resources from their sponsoring organizations.
- YouthBuild programs relied considerably on DOL funding. For many programs, reapplying for DOL funding was the main — if not the only — component of their sustainability plans.
- While turnover in program leadership was not a challenge for most YouthBuild programs, staff turnover was an issue at almost half of the programs, particularly among vocational trainers and case managers.
- Programs in the evaluation reflected well the universe of programs that received DOL and CNCS funding in 2011 in program age, size, funding sources, and tenure of program directors.

- Independently operated programs, programs with larger annual budgets, programs with more staff members, and programs with less staff turnover tended to be most faithful to the model, particularly the youth-leadership component.

Program Characteristics

As described in Chapter 1, the 75 programs selected for the evaluation in 2011 included 58 DOL-funded programs and 17 CNCS-funded programs.[1] Most programs were operated by nonprofit organizations, followed by public agencies, community colleges, and school districts, as shown in Table 3.1. Of the nonprofit organizations, the vast majority were local or regional nonprofits, including community development corporations, community action agencies, and local American Job Centers.[2] The small number of national nonprofit organizations included branches of the YMCA, Goodwill, and the United Methodist Church. The differences among the organizations that operated YouthBuild programs influenced the services they could offer, as programs had access to different types of in-house resources. For instance, programs that were operated by local American Job Centers or workforce agencies had access to more job placement services, while those operated by local colleges had better connections to post-secondary training opportunities.

Geography has important implications for many aspects of YouthBuild programs, from recruitment and service delivery to the availability of jobs. The DOL- and CNCS-funded YouthBuild programs in the evaluation were spread across all six DOL regions, along a continuum from densely populated urban centers to rural areas. As shown in Figure 3.1, programs in the evaluation were located in 31 states, the U.S. Virgin Islands, and Washington, DC. Roughly 50 percent of YouthBuild programs were concentrated in or near major metropolitan areas with populations of 1 million or more (for example, New York City and Los Angeles) while about 20 percent were located in rural areas with populations of less than 50,000 (for example, Bemidji, Minnesota and Hammond, Louisiana). As described further in Chapter 9, the diversity of their geography means that YouthBuild programs in the evaluation differed in their local community contexts; however, most communities shared common experiences with crime and poor infrastructure, and were harmed by the economic downturn, particularly in their youth employment markets.

[1]Ten of the 17 programs selected as CNCS-funded programs at the beginning of the evaluation in 2011 received DOL funding in 2012, bringing the total number of grantees with DOL funding during the evaluation to 68 (91 percent). These programs continue to be described in this report as CNCS-funded programs.

[2]Conservation Corps are included in this category. In 2012, One-Stop Career Centers were rebranded and consolidated into the network of American Job Centers.

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Table 3.1

Summary of Programs

Program Response	Percentage of Programs
Type of organization	
Nonprofit	83
National nonprofit	12
Local/regional nonprofit	71
Other	17
Public agency	11
Community college	4
School district	3
Geography[a]	
Large metro, central	35
Large metro, fringe	17
Medium metro	19
Small metro	8
Rural	21
Years in community	
Less than 20 years	28
Between 20 and 50 years	56
More than 50 years	16
Years operating YouthBuild	
Less than 6 years	24
Between 6 and 10 years	36
More than 10 years	40
YouthBuild USA affiliation status	
No affiliation status	16
Provisional affiliate	20
Full affiliate	51
Accredited affiliate	13
Sample size	75

SOURCE: Calculations based on YouthBuild site-visit interview data, National Center for Health Statistics data, and affiliation information from YouthBuild USA.

NOTE: [a]Geography is based on the National Center for Health Statistics scheme, which categorizes counties under six codes: 1 (large metro, central), 2 (large metro, fringe), 3 (medium metro), 4 (small metro), 5 (micropolitan), and 6 (noncore). For this table, micropolitan and noncore were combined to create the rural category listed here. The U.S. Virgin Islands were assigned a code based on total population and population density information from the 2010 U.S. Census. Examples: Large metro, central: Atlanta, GA, and New York, NY; large metro, fringe: Gary, IN, and Tacoma, WA; medium metro: Spokane, WA, and Springfield, MA; small metro: Columbia, MO, and Jackson, MI; rural: Hammond, LA, and Traverse City, MI.

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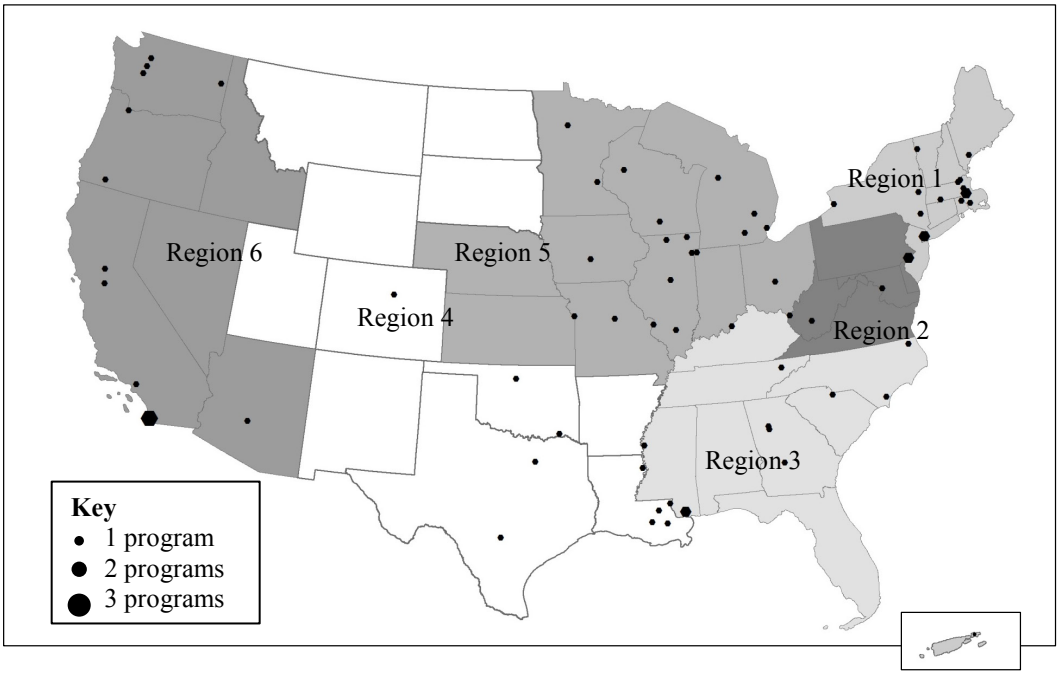
Figure 3.1

Department of Labor-Funded and Corporation for National and Community Service-Funded YouthBuild Evaluation Programs by Department of Labor Region



SOURCES: Department of Labor and YouthBuild USA.

NOTE: See Appendix A for a full list of the YouthBuild Evaluation programs, locations, and sponsoring organizations.

The ages of organizations operating YouthBuild varied, as did the ages of YouthBuild programs themselves. Organizations that operated YouthBuild programs were generally well established, and a large majority had served their communities for at least 20 years, as shown in Table 3.1. YouthBuild programs themselves ranged in age from 3 to 33 years, with an average of 10 years.[3] As shown in Appendix Table G.1, CNCS programs tended to be longer-running than their DOL-funded counterparts. While the evaluation included a number of well-established programs, almost a quarter had been in place for only between two and six

[3]Operation Fresh Start has been operating education and vocational training programs for at-risk young people for over 40 years but did not become a YouthBuild program until the late 1990s.

years.[4] The relative newness of some of these programs may have implications for the evaluation as a test of the YouthBuild model if the programs were not fully developed at the time of random assignment.[5]

Finally, some YouthBuild programs were affiliates of the YouthBuild USA Affiliated Network while others were not. Affiliate programs have access to additional funding and other types of program support, including AmeriCorps funding and technical assistance. The three levels of affiliation — provisional, full, and accredited — are intended to describe a range of YouthBuild programs, from "provisional" status for programs in the planning and development phase to "accredited" status for well-established programs that meet YouthBuild USA performance standards and have demonstrated fidelity to the YouthBuild model. As shown in Table 3.1, more than 80 percent of programs in the evaluation were part of the YouthBuild USA network, and almost 65 percent were full affiliates or better.[6] As Appendix Table G.1 shows, all CNCS-funded programs were either full or accredited affiliates. This is due to funding decisions made by YouthBuild USA, which determined which programs received this funding.[7]

In short, the ways that YouthBuild programs have developed and been funded over time have led to many differences in how the programs look and operate. While fidelity to the YouthBuild model did not vary by geography, it did by other characteristics.[8] Not surprisingly, higher levels of YouthBuild USA affiliation were associated with higher fidelity scores in most areas, with the exceptions of vocational services and supportive services. The following sections outline other factors influencing fidelity to the YouthBuild model and program implementation, including administrative structure, partnerships, budgets, resources, and staffing.

Administrative Structure

The administrative and management structure of YouthBuild programs has important implications for how YouthBuild is implemented and the resources and other services available to YouthBuild and its participants. A large majority (85 percent) of YouthBuild programs in the

[4]Experienced and long-standing programs in the evaluation included Youth Action YouthBuild (New York — the original YouthBuild program), YouthBuild Boston (the first replication of YouthBuild outside New York), and BiCAP YouthBuild (Minnesota — the oldest rural YouthBuild program).

[5]A number of programs were still relatively young and only in their second DOL funding cycle.

[6]It is important to note that some programs are prohibited from joining the YouthBuild USA network by their sponsoring organizations, for example, programs operated by government agencies that prohibit involvement in the system. Also, affiliation status is not reviewed on an annual basis, which means some programs may continue to hold affiliation status although they are no longer meeting the requirements for affiliation. All CNCS-funded programs were full or accredited affiliates.

[7]Interview with Sangeeta Tyagi and Sara St. Laurent, August 1, 2014.

[8]Fidelity scores by program characteristics are provided in Appendix C.

evaluation were operated by sponsoring organizations, and only 15 percent operated as independent, stand-alone entities. Sponsoring organizations were larger entities that provided fiscal and administrative support to YouthBuild as well as other programs. In contrast, independently operated YouthBuild programs served as their own fiscal and legal sponsors and did not receive support from a larger organization. Almost all independently operated YouthBuild programs were founded as YouthBuild programs. Among those programs housed in larger sponsoring organizations YouthBuild had varying levels of prominence; sometimes YouthBuild was the primary program an organization operated and sometimes it was only one of many programs, as illustrated in Box 3.1.

Being housed in larger sponsoring organizations offered YouthBuild programs access to additional resources, including administrative, staffing, financial, and other support. On the other hand, YouthBuild programs housed in larger sponsoring organizations had to adapt to fit into those organizations and align themselves with the focus of those organizations. In contrast, independently operated YouthBuild programs had greater autonomy in adopting and implementing the YouthBuild model and did not have to fit into any broader organizational missions. Independent YouthBuild programs had to diversify their funding sources, however, because they could not rely on larger organizations to provide support and insulation from funding uncertainties, such as gaps in DOL funding; some independent YouthBuild programs expanded their scopes by also operating other programs.

The vast majority of organizations operating YouthBuild programs were multiservice organizations, and many offered a range of programs and services in addition to YouthBuild.[9] As illustrated in Figure 3.2, organizations operating YouthBuild programs offered a wide range of other programs, from education and housing to vocational training and job placement. Although links between YouthBuild and other in-house programs varied by organization, YouthBuild programs in multiservice organizations generally had the opportunity to refer participants to other in-house programs for additional services. YouthBuild programs also benefited from other programs' knowledge about how to help young people gain access to services. At some YouthBuild programs, young people placed in the control group were referred to other programs operated by the larger organization.

The administrative structure of YouthBuild programs was related to their fidelity to some aspects of the YouthBuild model. Independently operated YouthBuild programs tended to be more faithful to the postsecondary-education and youth-leadership components, while YouthBuild programs in larger sponsoring organizations scored slightly higher for supportive-

[9]Some independently operated YouthBuild programs had expanded to provide other services, such as other vocational-training programs, prisoner-reentry programs, and residential housing.

Box 3.1

Administrative Structures of YouthBuild: Four Examples

YouthBuild Only. An independently operated YouthBuild program, YouthBuild Louisville (Kentucky) serves at-risk young adults in the 17 zip codes in the Louisville metropolitan area. Thanks to its strong reputation in the community, YouthBuild Louisville has been able to forge strong partnerships with local employers, contractors, community colleges, high schools, and American Job Centers. YouthBuild Louisville augments its services through the use of in-kind contributions, including child-care subsidies, bus passes, and vouchers for vocational training.

YouthBuild Program That Runs Other Youth Programs. An independently operated YouthBuild program, YouthBuild Newark (New Jersey) has expanded to offer three other major programs in addition to YouthBuild: 1) an independent-living program, 2) an alternative school, and 3) an intermediary initiative overseeing YouthBuild-like programs for disconnected young people in four other New Jersey communities. YouthBuild students have access to housing through the program's independent-living program, and the programs share administrative staffing.

YouthBuild as the Main Program of a Larger Sponsoring Organization. At the time of the study, the San Diego Imperial Counties Labor Council's Inner Cities YouthBuild (California) was that organization's only hands-on training program in operation, although in the past the Labor Council had operated other programs for at-risk and gang-affiliated young people and training programs for low-income adults. At the time of the study the Labor Council also offered an advocacy program for labor groups; a member-assistance program for food, utilities, and rent; and a Better San Diego program to promote businesses that strengthen the local economy.

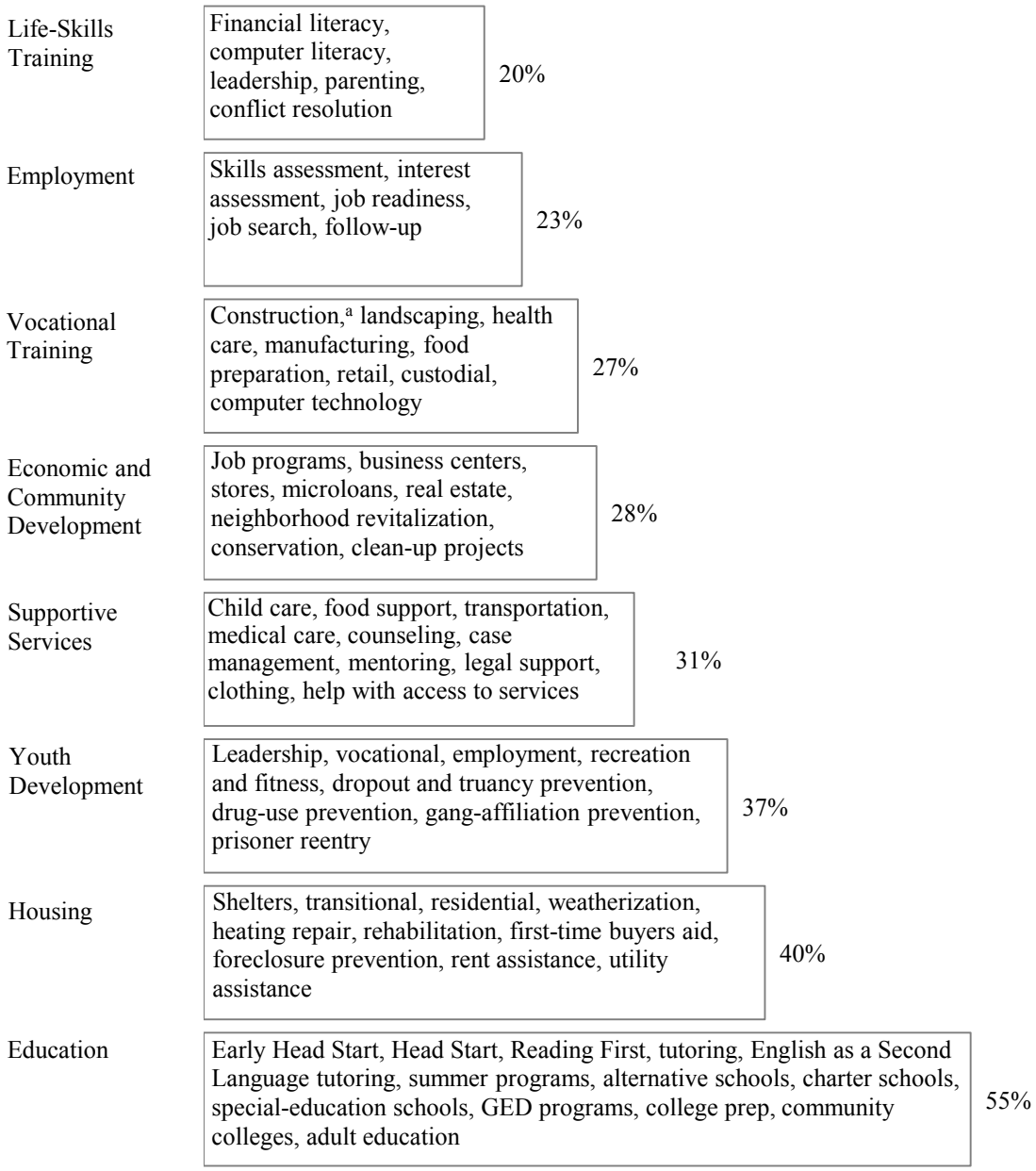
YouthBuild as One of Many Programs of a Sponsoring Organization, Community Teamwork, Inc. (CTI) offers a wide variety of services to the population of Lowell (Massachusetts) in addition to YouthBuild, ranging from housing support to workforce development to child and family services. Housing support includes shelters, home modifications, first-time buyer counseling, and housing vouchers. Workforce services include computer-literacy and job-readiness training. CTI also runs a Women, Infants, and Children program; a Head Start and Early Head Start center; and a child-care center. As one of many programs and services, CTI YouthBuild of Greater Lowell made up only 1 percent of CTI's annual operating budget. CTI provided the YouthBuild program with work sites, construction materials, and food, as well as access to the organization's other programs (child care, housing support, and supportive services).

SOURCE: YouthBuild site-visit interview data.

YouthBuild Evaluation

Figure 3.2

Other Programs Offered by Organizations Operating YouthBuild



SOURCE: Calculations based on YouthBuild site-visit interview data.

NOTES: Categories are not mutually exclusive.
[a]Includes subfields such as green construction, weatherization, forklift operation, plumbing and electrical work, scaffolding, and heavy highway construction.

service components. This suggests that being independently operated may allow programs to focus on postsecondary education and youth leadership more, while being in a larger sponsoring organization may provide access to support that enhances other aspects of the YouthBuild program.

Partnerships

While some programs used in-house staff members to deliver all of the core YouthBuild components, many programs developed partnerships with other entities and organizations to provide essential services. The arrangements and depth of these partnerships varied among YouthBuild programs, from formal subcontractors to in-kind services. The majority of partnerships were in-kind or "leveraged," such as agreements to share facilities or staff time.[10] For subcontracted partnerships, some YouthBuild programs paid partners in full for services while others drew on external funding sources to pay for services.

YouthBuild partners and the services they offered fell into several categories (described in more detail in later chapters):

- **Education** partners included local school districts; traditional, charter, and alternative schools; postsecondary institutions; and adult education programs. These partners provided General Educational Development (GED) and high school diploma instruction, tutoring, and support gaining access to and participating in postsecondary education.
- **Construction and vocational** partners included vocational-training programs, housing authorities and commissions, local Habitat for Humanity affiliates, construction companies, community development organizations, and home-owner associations. Services offered by these partners included construction and vocational training, work sites, materials and supplies, and funding for construction projects.
- **Case-management and supportive-services** partners included community organizations and public agencies (for example, social-services agencies and family-services agencies). These partners offered a broad range of services, including counseling and mentoring, child care, substance abuse counseling, housing, and food support.

[10]This report uses the terms *leveraged resources* and *in-kind* to refer to services, goods, and other forms of support programs received that they did not pay for. This is contrasted with *matched funds*, which refers to direct dollar amounts received by programs in the form of grants.

- **Employment** partners included American Job Centers, Workforce Investment Boards, local employers, and staffing agencies. These partners provided work-readiness training, career exploration, and job shadowing and employment opportunities.
- **Other** partners included law-enforcement organizations and juvenile-justice agencies. For example, partnerships with police departments, courts, correction centers, and probation agencies provided programs with referrals and assistance navigating the juvenile justice system.

Working with partners presented both opportunities and challenges for YouthBuild programs. More than 40 percent of program directors did not describe any major challenges with their program partners, although a number commented on the time and effort required to build strong relationships with them. Challenges described by program directors included coordinating schedules and service delivery, dealing with additional layers of bureaucracy, managing staff members who did not work for YouthBuild, and aligning goals and priorities with partners. As a promising practice, a few directors emphasized holding regular meetings to bring partners to agreement about shared goals, minimize misunderstandings, and coordinate services for participants.

Funding and Budget

A clear picture of funding and budget is critical to understanding organizations' ability to provide all components of the YouthBuild model and to sustain their programs. Because funders have different requirements and care about results in different areas, some programs may make a higher priority of certain components of the YouthBuild model than others, depending on their primary funding sources. As shown in Table 3.2, programs drew on diverse funding streams, but the vast majority relied on DOL as their primary funder. This has important implications for the evaluation because most programs were required to follow DOL guidelines — even most CNCS-funded programs — and were held accountable for outcomes in certain areas DOL tracked.

Programs received grants of varying sizes from DOL and CNCS. The 58 DOL-funded programs were awarded three-year grants in 2011 that averaged $1,017,550. These grants were designed to fund two years of program services and between 9 and 12 months of follow-up. In contrast, the 17 CNCS-funded programs received much smaller awards in 2011, averaging

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Table 3.2

Funding and Budget

Program Response	Percentage of Programs
Funders[a]	
DOL	93
CNCS	45
Private foundation	52
State or locality	57
Some other organization	15
Predominant funder	
DOL	88
CNCS	4
Private foundation	1
State or locality	5
Some other organization	1
Organization operating YouthBuild annual budget (Fiscal Year 2011/12)	
Less than $1 million	8
Between $1 and $5 million	45
Between $5 and $20 million	24
$20 million and above	23
YouthBuild annual budget (Fiscal Year 2011/12)	
Less than $500,000	34
Between $500,000 and $1 million	43
$1 million and above	23
Sample size	75

SOURCE: Calculations based on YouthBuild site-visit interview data and the YouthBuild grantee survey.

NOTES: Due to rounding, the percentages in some categories may not sum to 100.

Annual budget data for Fiscal Year 2011/12 were available for 74 of the 75 sites. For independently operated YouthBuild programs, YouthBuild budgets plus other program budgets (if applicable) were included in the analysis of the sponsoring organizations' budgets.

[a]Categories are not mutually exclusive.

$125,671 a year or about $377,013 over a three-year period.[11] All programs supplemented these grants with additional funding and leveraged resources. The range of their budgets, described

[11]CNCS grants were given in the same amount of each year of a three-year grant cycle. Amounts changed only if there were significant changes at the programs. DOL grants received by CNCS-funded programs in 2012 were similar in size to the 2011 DOL grants.

below, affected both the number of participants that programs could serve and the comprehensiveness of the services they could offer.

Budget

Both YouthBuild programs and the organizations that operated them varied considerably in size. Organizations operating YouthBuild had budgets that ranged in size from $325,000 to $500 million, with a median of $4.6 million (in Fiscal Year 2011/12). YouthBuild budgets also ranged considerably, from $145,000 to $4.4 million, with an average of $808,998 for Fiscal Year 2011/12. YouthBuild program budgets covered a range of costs, including salaries and fringe benefits for their staff members, stipends and incentives for participants, supplies and materials, overhead and administration, and outside services, including contracts with program partners. During Fiscal Year 2011/12, programs reported serving from 17 to 214 young people, with an average of 41.

YouthBuild programs can be divided into three budgetary categories: small (annual budgets below $500,000), medium (between $500,000 and $1 million), and large (more than $1 million). Of the large programs, almost half were independently operated YouthBuild programs, including those that operated as charter schools. On average, independently operated YouthBuild programs had annual budgets almost three times the size of YouthBuild programs run by sponsoring organizations. The presence of DOL funding also influenced the size of YouthBuild budgets. The five smallest programs in Fiscal Year 2011/12 did not receive 2011 DOL grants. Appendix Table G.1 provides a comparison of the yearly operating budgets of DOL-funded and CNCS-funded programs.

Program directors were divided over whether they felt their budgets were sufficient to meet participants' service needs. Directors who felt their budgets were adequate described diversified funding sources and the ability to attract in-kind donations and resources through strong partnerships with other programs. On the other hand, program directors who felt that they had insufficient budgets reported challenges to service delivery, such as staffing shortages and a lack of funds to meet participants' service needs. Budget shortages sometimes led YouthBuild programs to forgo program components such as building materials, youth stipends and incentives, and updated technology.

YouthBuild program budgets and the budgets of organizations operating YouthBuild were not clearly related to fidelity to the model, with the exception of the youth-leadership component. YouthBuild programs with the largest program budgets were most faithful in providing youth-leadership opportunities, and YouthBuild programs in the largest sponsoring organizations were least faithful. As discussed further in Chapter 5, this suggests program budget may influence the availability and quality of youth-leadership opportunities.

Box 3.2

Examples of "Leveraged and Matched" Funds

Coenrollment in Workforce Investment Act (WIA) Programs. Allowed YouthBuild programs access to funding for youth stipends and provided them with additional case management, job placement, and follow-up services. For example, YouthBuild Phoenix Partnership (Arizona) enrolled at least 75 percent of its students in WIA youth services that paid for training and work experience, food, and additional follow-up by WIA case managers.

Average Daily Attendance Funding. Enabled YouthBuild programs and their educational partners to receive state per-pupil funding for young people enrolled in alternative schools. For example, as a charter school, YouthBuild McLean County (Illinois) was able to attract $400,000 in state funding. Another program, Bi-CAP YouthBuild (Minnesota), arranged to receive an instructor and additional educational support from its partner charter school in exchange for its Average Daily Attendance funding for YouthBuild students who met the Minnesota requirements.

Facilities. Provided by either sponsoring organizations or program partners. For example, the sponsoring organization for Huntington YouthBuild Program 2 (West Virginia) provided a construction work site and office space, including an indoor construction lab. Another program, YouthBuild KCK (Kansas), received rent-free facilities and utilities through its partnership with the Kansas City, Kansas Housing Authority.

State and Local Direct Funding. Supplemented federal funding. For example, YouthBuild Boston received state funds from the Massachusetts Department of Education, lobbied for by the Massachusetts YouthBuild state coalition ($200,000), as well as funds from the city of Boston ($30,000).

Foundation Funding. Received directly or through AmeriCorps or YouthBuild USA. For example, Build with Pride (California) supplemented its DOL funding with a Wal-Mart grant ($64,680), a San Diego Gas and Electric grant ($20,000), and a National Football League grant ($2,000).

SOURCE: YouthBuild site-visit interview data.

Leveraged Resources and Matched Funds

Given the increasing scarcity of federal and state funding, the ability to attract leveraged resources and matched funds is essential to providing comprehensive services and sustaining programs. All programs in the YouthBuild evaluation reported that they have been able to obtain some combination of leveraged resources and matched funds, drawing support from other funders, their sponsoring organizations, and program partners, as illustrated in Box 3.2. As part of their grant requirements, DOL-funded programs were required to demonstrate they were

able to match 25 percent of DOL funds through new, nonfederal cash funds and leveraged resources. Most programs drew more on leveraged resources than direct dollar donations and other grant support to meet DOL's match funding requirements. Sources of matched funding included funds passed through YouthBuild USA to local programs from AmeriCorps, the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation, and other foundations. Programs also received grants directly from foundations, private donors, AmeriCorps, and cities and states, sometimes through organizations such as state YouthBuild coalitions.[12]

All YouthBuild programs housed in larger sponsoring organizations received a combination of in-kind and direct financial support from their parent agencies. Administrative support was the most common type of in-kind support, including support for payroll and accounting functions, information technology, and marketing. Other types of in-kind support included rent-free facilities, food, work sites, building supplies, tools, vans for transportation, and enrollment in other services offered by the sponsoring organization. Just under 40 percent of the programs housed in larger sponsoring organizations received direct financial support. At those programs that did receive direct financial support, program directors often reported using this funding to cover materials, supplies, and expenses not allowable under DOL funding (for example, food and additional incentives).

Programs reported a diverse range of in-kind donations from partners. Construction partners provided materials, supplies, tools, training facilities, construction projects, and work sites. Education partners offered staff support, courses at community colleges, access to computer labs, standardized testing options, and even school lunches. Supportive-service partners offered group and individual counseling, health services, drug tests, bus passes, and subsidies for child care. Workforce partners provided free work-readiness training, job-placement assistance, and presentations from career and industry speakers. Other partners offered rent-free buildings, software and computers, volunteers, food for participants, and workshops for participants. By drawing on in-kind support from partners, YouthBuild programs were able to offer participants more comprehensive services than they could provide with direct funding alone.

Sustainability Planning

DOL grants cover two years of program operations while other funders offer one-time or single-year grants that must be renewed on a regular basis. As a result, sustainability planning is an important part of the YouthBuild model and critical to building YouthBuild programs that

[12]State YouthBuild coalitions began forming in 1996, following the model of YouthBuild USA. According to YouthBuild USA, there are nine current state coalitions, six of which have obtained state-level funding in the past. For example, the Massachusetts coalition lobbies the state legislature to appropriate Department of Education funds.

can outlive these short funding cycles. However, most YouthBuild programs did not have concrete sustainability plans, and sustainability planning was one of the areas of lowest fidelity to the YouthBuild model. Only 35 percent of programs met the YouthBuild design standard of developing a sustainability plan that assessed public and private funding sources to sustain the program for at least two years.[13] Several programs openly acknowledged having no sustainability plan, citing reasons such as lack of staff time.

Waiting for and reapplying for the next round of DOL grants was the most common strategy reported by directors, reflecting programs' reliance on federal funding. Among programs with diversified funding plans, sustainability strategies varied. Programs in Massachusetts and Minnesota planned to continue to apply for support from their state YouthBuild coalitions. A number of programs were already generating revenue or exploring how to generate revenue from their buildings by renting renovated space or selling properties that participants had worked on. Other strategies included exploring charter school options, partnering with new agencies, reapplying for existing funding from sources outside of DOL, and seeking private or foundation support.

The lack of consistent and diversified sustainability planning across YouthBuild programs has important implications for the stability of programs, how programs are implemented, and the overall strength of programs. Some program directors said they would reduce program operations, staffing, and services if they did not receive continued DOL funding, while others said they would have to discontinue their YouthBuild programs.[14]

Leadership and Staffing

The experience and tenure of program staff members affects how YouthBuild is implemented and influences the quality of YouthBuild programs. Stable and dedicated program leadership and staffing is important for day-to-day operations and long-term program stability. Previous research and the YouthBuild model also recognize that successful YouthBuild programs hire staff members who have backgrounds similar to those of participants.[15] Staff members with backgrounds similar to those of participants have firsthand experience of where participants come from and what they face, which can help build trust and encourage participants to open up.

Sixty-five percent of programs met the YouthBuild standard of staff members reflecting the ethnic, socioeconomic, or community backgrounds of their participants. In interviews, a

[13]Of the 61 items used to assess fidelity to the YouthBuild model, this was the fourth-lowest scoring item.

[14]At least four programs in the evaluation stopped enrolling young people after they failed to receive DOL grants in 2013.

[15]Abrazaldo et al. (2009).

majority of program directors reflected on their own shared similarities with participants, including race or ethnicity, family backgrounds, life experiences, and shared communities. Many of these directors attributed their ability to connect with participants to their backgrounds, saying they had "been there, done that" and been through the "school of hard knocks." Another way programs reflected their participants' backgrounds was by hiring YouthBuild graduates as interns or full-time staff members. For example, one of the vocational instructors at YouthBuild Newark was a graduate of the program's first class and advanced to his current role after starting as a summer intern. The shared backgrounds of former and current participants helped build trust, and former participants served as role models, showing current participants what they could achieve through participation in YouthBuild.

At a majority of programs, participants described the staff and their relationships with staff members as one of the best aspects of the program. Participants praised staff members for their dedication and commitment to helping participants, including by attending court dates, providing rides, and calling participants when they did not show up for class. Many participants described staff members as caring and supportive, and described the YouthBuild program as a family. In contrast to their experiences outside YouthBuild, participants found that staff members were authentic and treated them with respect and as young adults, not as children. Finally, participants appreciated the cheerfulness and positivity staff members brought to the program as well as how easygoing and approachable they were. Reflecting on his experiences in the program, one participant said, "When they ask you why you are not coming to school, they actually mean it. They want to know what's going on. You can see it in their eyes.... They don't shut down your chances of succeeding ... they make it work for you." These reported experiences are examples of the YouthBuild USA program qualities described in Chapter 2 as the "core and spirit" of YouthBuild.

Program Leadership

The YouthBuild model calls for a full-time program director dedicated to the leadership of the program. Nearly 70 percent of programs met the standard of having a full-time director devoted to overseeing day-to-day operations, managing the program's staff, and coordinating with the sponsoring organization. At the remaining YouthBuild programs, directors spent between 15 percent and 80 percent of their time on YouthBuild, often splitting their time across programs within the larger sponsoring organization.

YouthBuild directors had worked at their programs for between a few months and 21 years, with an average tenure of 6 years. As shown in Appendix Table G.1, directors of CNCS-funded programs tended to have longer tenures than their DOL-funded-program counterparts. YouthBuild directors came to their current positions following different paths, including holding other positions in the YouthBuild program, transferring between programs at their

organization, and being hired externally or recruited from other organizations. Most directors had at least some experience working with at-risk young people or adults prior to YouthBuild, from volunteer work, providing direct services, or managing programs that provided services. Their prior experience included working in counseling, teaching in schools, and overseeing workforce-development training and housing programs.

According to interviews with program directors, leadership turnover had not been a challenge for most YouthBuild programs. A third of YouthBuild programs reported no turnover in the director position since their inception, and only a small number of programs had experienced high levels of turnover in the program director position (for example, three program directors in five years or less). The remaining programs described low or medium levels of turnover at the director level, with minimal shifts over the history of the program.[16]

Program Staffing

Programs varied in the number of staff members they had and in the percentage of their time staff members spent on YouthBuild. In general, programs with larger budgets and programs serving more participants had more people on staff. On average, programs operated with just under 10 staff members, including both in-house and contracted staff members. Less than a quarter of the programs provided full-time positions at YouthBuild for all of their staff members, while the remaining programs provided a combination of full-time and part-time positions, resulting in an average of eight full-time equivalents (FTEs) per program.[17] In small programs, staff members had to fill multiple roles to provide all of the YouthBuild components. For example, at the Choctaw County YouthBuild Program (Oklahoma), which had four full-time staff members, the director helped provide work-readiness training; the GED instructor delivered life-skills training, advised the Youth Policy Council, and supported the case manager; and the case manager coordinated community service activities and led work-readiness training.

Participant-to-staff ratio is as important as — if not more important than — the number of staff members working in a program. The participant-to-staff ratios ranged from 1:1 to 12:1, with an average of 5:1.[18] As shown in Table 3.3, nearly 77 percent of programs had between

[16]Three programs did not fall into any category for leadership turnover. At two of these programs, there was insufficient information to determine the level of turnover. (In one the current program director was too new to the job to say much about turnover, and the data provided about the other program were not specific enough to make any determinations.) The remaining program did not have a traditional leadership structure.

[17]FTEs indicate the number of full-time employees at an organization plus the number of part-time employees standardized to a full-time basis. For example, an organization with 4 full-time and 3 half-time employees would have 5.5 FTEs.

[18]Participant-to-staff ratios included all program staff members, including administrative staff members, and were calculated using total staff FTEs.

YouthBuild Evaluation

Table 3.3

Leadership and Staffing

Program Response	Percentage of Programs
Number of years program director has worked at YouthBuild	
Less than 1 year	11
1 to 3 years	29
4 to 6 years	25
7 to 10 years	19
More than 10 years	16
Staff size	
Less than 5 full-time equivalents (FTEs)	19
5 to 7.5 FTEs	41
7.5 to 10 FTEs	20
10 FTEs and above	20
Participant-to-staff ratio	
Between 1:1 and 2:1	4
Between 2:1 and 4:1	38
Between 4:1 and 6:1	34
Greater than 6:1	23
Sample size	75

SOURCE: Calculations based on YouthBuild site-visit interview data.

NOTES: Due to rounding, the percentages in some categories may not sum to 100.

Data on the tenures of program directors at YouthBuild were missing for two programs. Data on participant-to-staff ratios were missing for two others.

Full-time equivalent (FTE) is a unit indicating the number of full-time employees at an organization plus the number of part-time employees standardized to a full-time basis. An organization with 4 full-time employees and 3 half-time employees would have 5.5 FTEs.

one and six participants per staff member. As shown in Appendix Table G.1, CNCS-funded programs tended to have higher participant-to-staff ratios than DOL-funded programs, probably a result of their smaller operating budgets. The low participant-to-staff ratios — particularly among the DOL-funded programs — enabled program staff members to check in with participants frequently and provide one-on-one support to help them overcome barriers to participation in YouthBuild and progress toward their life goals.

Despite these low ratios, YouthBuild programs were often challenged by staff turnover, which along with downsizing can dramatically affect service delivery. Nearly half of the program directors reported problems with staff turnover, particularly among vocational instructors and case managers. The most common challenge to retaining staff members was programs' inability to compete with higher-paying jobs in the community, particularly in construction.

The number of staff members programs had, their participant-to-staff ratios, and their staffing stability were all related to their fidelity to the YouthBuild model. Programs where staff turnover was not a problem were more faithful to all aspects of the model, and programs with more staff members were more faithful to the overall model and to the components relating to youth leadership and program management and operations.

Representativeness of Programs

In the fall of 2012, all 110 YouthBuild programs that received funding from DOL or CNCS in 2011, including those participating in the evaluation, completed a survey that captured key program characteristics. For the process study, results from the survey were used to clarify the extent to which programs in the evaluation were representative of DOL- and CNCS-funded programs as a whole, as shown in Appendix Table D.1.

Programs selected for the evaluation were generally representative of YouthBuild programs in their ages, annual budgets, funding sources, and program director tenures.[19] Differences, where they existed, were minimal: Programs in the evaluation were slightly older than YouthBuild programs as a whole, with less representation of younger programs and more representation of older programs.[20] More programs in the evaluation reported receiving DOL or private foundation funding, while more programs in the broader sample reported receiving CNCS funding. Operating budgets in Fiscal Year 2011/12 and program director tenures were more or less identical. The report on program impacts will draw on the survey more fully.

Conclusion

As shown in this chapter, YouthBuild programs in the evaluation varied along many dimensions, from location and history in the community to budget and staffing. This variation is due to different factors, including the priorities of different funders and the types of organizations operating YouthBuild. While some of these characteristics were related to fidelity to the YouthBuild model (for example, being independently operated or having more staff members), other characteristics were not.

As will be described in the next several chapters, these factors and others have implications for service delivery. For example, a program's level of staffing can influence the quality of

[19]For a side-by-side comparison of the programs in the evaluation with all YouthBuild programs funded by DOL and CNCS in 2011, see Appendix D. The numbers for programs in Appendix D may differ slightly from tables in this chapter due to differences in data sources and the timing of data collection.

[20]This could be due in part to the criteria used to select programs for the evaluation. Only programs that had previously offered YouthBuild qualified for the evaluation.

its youth-leadership opportunities and its ability to organize community service activities. Partnerships play a critical role in all service areas, particularly in delivering academic services and vocational training, by enabling programs to benefit from the expertise of other organizations. Programs housed in larger sponsoring agencies can make use of supportive services available in those agencies that may not be available at independent YouthBuild programs. The next several chapters will explore the extent to which these factors and others influence service provision and the experiences of YouthBuild participants.

Chapter 4

Recruitment, Screening, and Enrollment

This chapter describes the process through which young people were recruited, screened, and enrolled in the YouthBuild programs in the evaluation. During this process, most programs conducted outreach to attract applicants and then used a variety of methods, including a Mental Toughness Orientation, to assess applicants' eligibility and suitability for the program. As there is no standard process for enrollment into YouthBuild, each program conducted it differently. During the study enrollment period, programs also had to modify their usual practices to accommodate the evaluation.

This chapter begins with a description of the recruitment, screening, and enrollment process, including a discussion of how programs modified their practices for the evaluation. The chapter ends with a discussion of the characteristics of young people who navigated this process during the evaluation period and were randomly assigned to the program group (who had the opportunity to participate in YouthBuild) or control group. Some of the major findings presented in this chapter are:

- Programs engaged in an extensive eligibility and suitability determination process, which included an application and screening phase, plus a Mental Toughness Orientation. The components of recruitment and enrollment were similar across programs but not standardized. Programs reported that they had to adjust recruitment and enrollment activities to accommodate the study.

- Most programs invested considerable staff effort in recruitment and screening. On average, programs recruited nearly four applicants for each available slot because it is common for many applicants to be deemed not eligible or suitable for the program, or to drop out during the screening process. Programs emphasized the educational and training aspects of the program in recruitment activities.

- Mental Toughness Orientation was often an extension of the screening process, as it gave program staff members an opportunity to observe young people's commitment to the program. Likewise, it provided potential participants with the opportunity to experience a small part of YouthBuild to determine if they were truly interested in and committed to the program.

- Notwithstanding the significant amount of screening YouthBuild programs engaged in, programs enrolled young people who were disadvantaged and

at risk. However, young people served by YouthBuild were probably a highly motivated segment of the "disconnected youth" population (young people both out of school and out of work) because of this extensive screening process.

Recruitment

Recruitment was a major activity, involving considerable staff effort, in part because YouthBuild programs typically recruited many more applicants than the number of open slots they had. Excess applicants were needed because some applicants were determined to be ineligible or unsuitable for the program during screening, and others dropped out during screening. Data collected during site visits showed that programs received nearly four applications for each young person ultimately enrolled in the program.[1]

To meet enrollment goals, 41 percent of YouthBuild programs reported that they recruited year-round. Over a third of sites recruited once per year and 15 percent of programs recruited two or more times per year. The remaining 7 percent of programs followed some other recruitment schedule or reported that they did not recruit at all. Programs that recruited year-round would typically collect applications continually and then reach out to applicants in advance of the next enrollment cycle; enrollment cycles could be between 3 and 12 months apart. Programs that recruited once or more per year had recruitment cycles that largely mirrored their enrollment cycles, with programs ramping up recruitment efforts in the months before an enrollment. Staff members at several programs noted that while they focused recruitment efforts on a few months of the year, they accepted applications year-round. Some staff members said that the frequency of their recruitment efforts was determined by their progress toward their enrollment targets: they recruited more often when they had slots to fill and scaled back recruitment efforts when they had sufficient applicants.[2]

Recruitment Strategies

To meet recruitment targets, programs used multiple strategies to attract applicants. The most popular strategies were word-of-mouth referrals, leafleting, and referrals from other youth programs and partners. More details about how programs used these methods are provided below.

[1]This number was calculated from data on cohorts that did not go through random assignment.

[2]Programs funded by the U.S. Department of Labor (DOL) and the Corporation for National and Community Service (CNCS) have contractual requirements that stipulate the number of young people they need to enroll; this number varies by program.

- **Word-of-mouth referrals.** Nearly all programs said that word-of-mouth referrals, especially from program alumni, constituted their most successful recruiting strategy. Indeed, most participants reported in interviews and focus groups that they learned about YouthBuild from friends or family members, often alumni of the program. Some programs encouraged current students to recruit their friends by providing them with incentives for bringing in applicants, or by hiring program alumni as part-time recruiters. Programs mentioned that alumni made effective recruiters because they knew who would be a good fit for the program and were able to give potential applicants firsthand testimonials about YouthBuild.

- **Leafleting and other publicity campaigns.** Programs also implemented more formal publicity campaigns to raise awareness of YouthBuild in the community. Most programs (93 percent) distributed flyers, often at community organizations, local businesses, public buildings, or at the local American Job Center. A majority (69 percent) used radio and print advertisements. Several programs had relationships with radio stations that broadcast public service announcements at no cost to the YouthBuild program. However, a minority of the young people interviewed reported learning about YouthBuild from one of these methods.

- **Working with referral partners.** Another way most programs (85 percent) got the word out about YouthBuild was by working with partner organizations in their communities. Examples of these partners included schools, local American Job Centers, probation or parole officers, courts, Job Corps centers, and other organizations serving young people. A few of the participants interviewed said they heard about YouthBuild through these connections.

Programs used a variety of additional methods to recruit young people. Programs said that street outreach — sending staff members and alumni to known youth hangouts — was an effective strategy because it allowed program staff members to talk with young people one-on-one and reach a segment of the target population that would otherwise not know about YouthBuild. A few programs found that Facebook was a useful recruiting tool.

Recruitment Messages

Programs used multiple messages simultaneously in their recruitment materials and activities. The most popular message, used by 80 percent of programs, was promoting the opportunity to get an academic credential (a General Educational Development [GED] certificate or high school diploma). Almost half of programs mentioned the vocational skill-building compo-

nents of the program or promoted the program as a way to help young people find jobs. Other recruitment messages included promoting the opportunity to participate in community service activities and leadership development, and the opportunity for young people to change their lives. Forty-three percent of programs also advertised the stipend, using language like "earn while you learn" to attract young people.

In interviews, the reasons participants gave for applying to the program aligned with the primary recruitment messages used by the programs. [3] The overwhelming majority of respondents cited academic reasons such as getting their GED certificates or high school diplomas. Other common reasons included being interested in the vocational training opportunities offered by YouthBuild, and its potential to help the participants find jobs. While about 15 percent of the participants interviewed mentioned the stipend as being an attractive program component, it did not seem to be a primary reason why they applied. A few noted that they were attracted to the smaller size of the program compared with their high schools, and the family-like atmosphere. One participant said, "This school is different from traditional school. Here people care about you; you are wanted here. At my other school, they don't care about you.... [YouthBuild] is a supporting and caring space."

Screening

In general, YouthBuild programs did a great deal of screening prior to enrolling young people. During this process the programs determined applicants' eligibility and suitability and educated them about the program's expectation and requirements. A typical enrollment flow is shown in Figure 4.1, although each program did screening differently. As noted in Chapter 2, the YouthBuild USA design standards do not provide guidance on whether or not programs should screen applicants, nor on how they should do so, though the DOL Program Manual dedicates a chapter to the topic. It is left to individual programs to decide how to assess suitability, and how much hand-holding to offer applicants during the process.

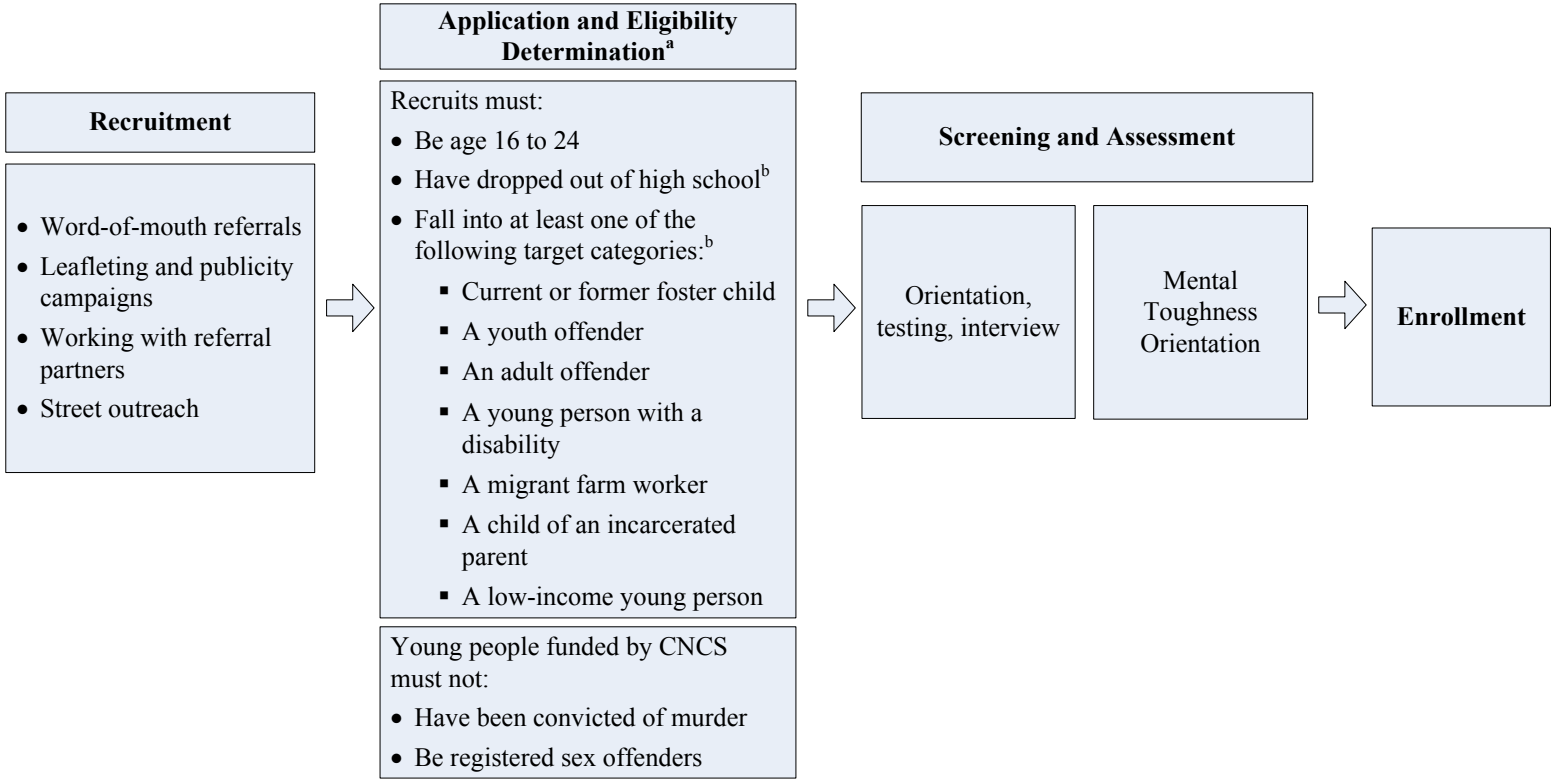
To illustrate how enrollment worked in practice during the evaluation's intake period, Figure 4.2 shows the actual recruitment and enrollment process of a selected program for one cohort. Each box in the figure represents a step in the process and includes the number of young people who completed that step; the boxes provide additional explanation about why drop-off occurred. As each program conducts this process differently and implements different requirements at each step, applicant drop-off varies among programs. Each program may also have more or fewer steps in the process, or order its steps differently.

[3] Seventy-six participants were interviewed. Interviews were conducted after participants were enrolled in the program.

YouthBuild Evaluation

Figure 4.1

Typical YouthBuild Selection Process



SOURCES: U.S. Department of Labor (2014c), YouthBuild USA (2014), and YouthBuild site-visit interview data.

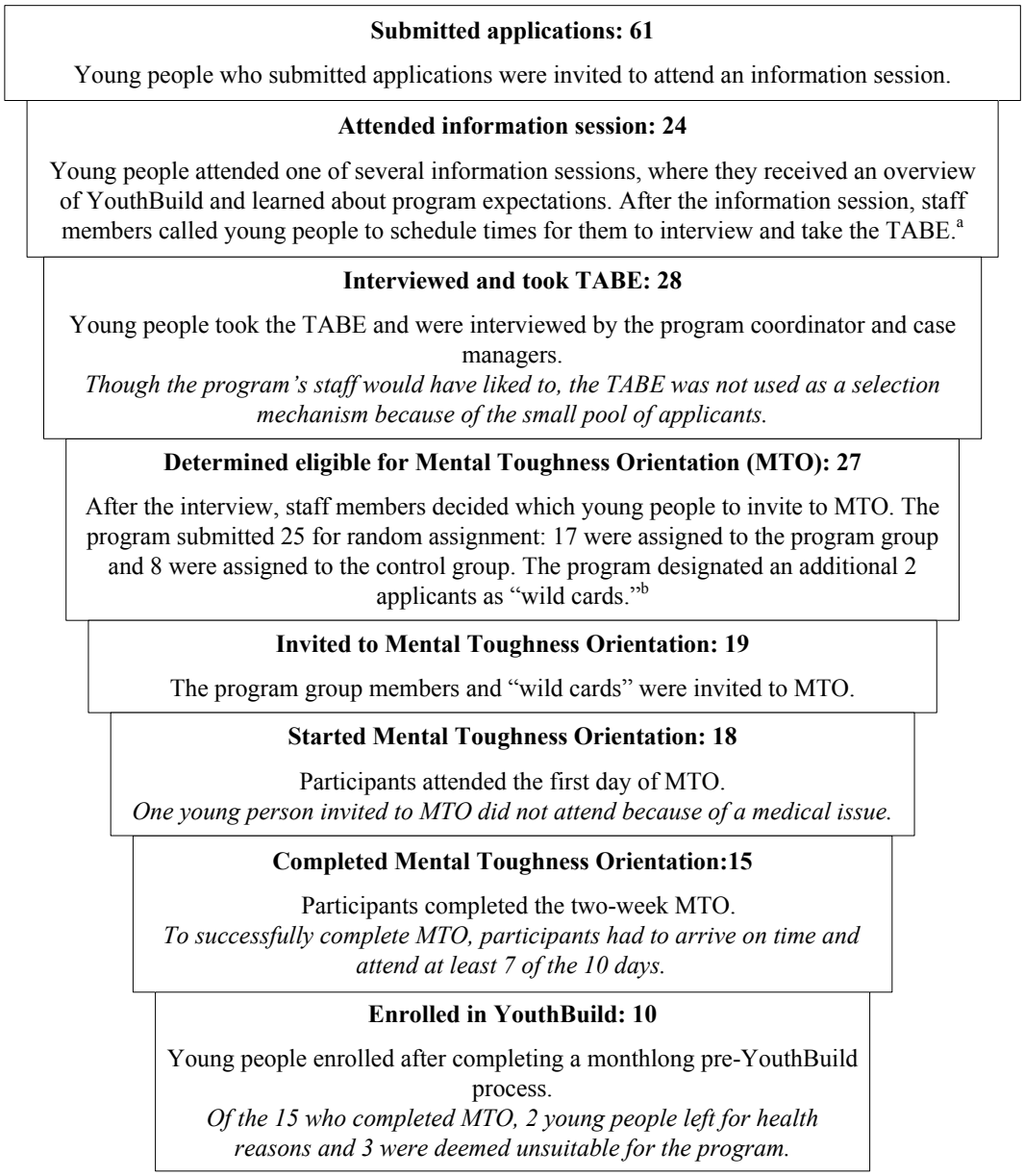
NOTES: [a]These are the eligibility criteria required by the funders. Programs may use additional criteria, as shown in Table 4.1.

[b]Although YouthBuild is a program aimed at high school dropouts, 25 percent of participants in programs funded by DOL can have high school diplomas or not be in one of the target populations, as long as they are deficient in basic skills or are referred to a high school diploma-granting YouthBuild program by another high school.

YouthBuild Evaluation

Figure 4.2

Sample Funnel: YouthBuild Program (Fall 2012)



SOURCE: YouthBuild site-visit interview data.

NOTES: [a]The Tests of Adult Basic Education (TABE) is a basic academic skills assessment.
[b]Each local program was given 5 percent of its program slots for "wild cards" that it could use to allow certain applicants it selected to bypass random assignment.

Eligibility and Suitability

The first step in the screening process was typically for programs to determine if a young person met the basic YouthBuild eligibility requirements, often by using an application. Programs followed eligibility criteria relevant to their funding sources; an example list of such funder criteria is included in Figure 4.1. Most programs had additional eligibility criteria, some of which are listed in Table 4.1. The most common additional criteria were completing a "Mental Toughness Orientation" (92 percent of programs), living within certain geographical boundaries (52 percent), and having minimum math and reading scores on basic-skills assessments (39 percent).

Though the YouthBuild model targets young people between the ages of 16 and 24, nearly 30 percent of programs chose to serve only individuals over the age of 18. Programs that limited services to the older age range said that young people over 18 were a better fit for the program because of their greater maturity. Some programs also noted that there were liability-insurance or labor-law issues associated with having minors on construction sites. Several programs served the full age range, but even in those programs staff members said they preferred to serve young people over 18 because they were more mature.

Beyond their formal eligibility criteria, most programs used additional suitability criteria to determine if a young person was appropriate for the program. Applicants who met these criteria were commonly described as having demonstrated "readiness." Programs looked for applicants who were motivated to make positive changes in their lives. They looked for applicants who were self-motivated to participate in YouthBuild, rather than applicants who were pushed to participate by family members or other people, such as members of the clergy or probation officers. Programs described this in similar ways, using phrases like "motivation," "serious," and "committed."

Programs also named other "suitability criteria" they looked for in applicants. The most common of these were: perceived ability to pass the GED exam during the program period (as measured through assessment tests), being respectful to the program's staff, having a positive attitude, not having substance abuse problems, not having felony convictions, and having an interest in the construction component.

Most programs (76 percent) conducted a general orientation to the program (distinct from Mental Toughness Orientation) at some point during the screening process. This meeting typically lasted a few hours and included a presentation from a YouthBuild staff member about the program. Attendees were given the opportunity to ask questions. Some programs built time into their orientation sessions for applicants to take basic-skills tests or drug tests. During the study enrollment period, programs often introduced the evaluation and had applicants complete

YouthBuild Evaluation

Table 4.1

Enrollment, Eligibility, and Screening

Program Response	Percentage of Programs
Eligibility criteria[a]	
Must complete Mental Toughness Orientation	92
Must be a high school dropout	57
Other criteria	56
Must live within a certain area	52
Must meet minimum reading and math scores on the TABE	39
Assessments conducted during the screening phase[a]	
Program application	93
Academic tests (for example, the TABE)	75
Observations	55
Other (interviews, reference check, risk assessment)	31
Drug test	29
Skills test (for example, construction, learning style)	11
Enrollment cycles	
Year-round	15
Once a year	39
Several cycles a year	40
Other schedule	7
Sample size	75

SOURCE: Calculations based on YouthBuild site-visit interview data.

NOTES: TABE = Tests of Adult Basic Education.
[a]Categories are not mutually exclusive.

the study paperwork during orientations. Program staff members saw attendance at an orientation as a signal of young people's interest and commitment to the program. Indeed, orientation was a point where many programs experienced significant drop-off (as shown in Figure 4.2), as young people often did not return for the orientation after submitting the initial application. Programs also implemented more formal assessments during the screening process, which are described in detail below.

Assessment

Programs implemented a number of informal and formal assessments during the screening process to evaluate a young person's suitability for the program. How these assessments

were implemented and used varied by program. Table 4.1 lists some of the assessments programs administered.

At some point during the screening process, the majority of programs (75 percent) administered an academic skills test, most commonly the TABE or the Comprehensive Adult Student Assessment Systems (CASAS). Programs were divided in how they used these tests, with roughly half using them to screen out applicants that did not meet minimum test-score requirements, and the rest using them for diagnostic reasons, to establish a baseline for each applicant's skills and to determine what academic services that applicant needed. Programs that required a minimum score required only a sixth-grade reading level on average, meaning that even when programs screened applicants by academic level, they were still serving young people with high academic needs.

Twenty-nine percent of programs administered drug tests during the screening period, though programs used these for different purposes. About half of these programs required young people to be drug free by enrollment, and tested during the screening period to give applicants the opportunity to get clean before Mental Toughness Orientation, when they were tested again. Other programs used drug tests to establish a baseline, so they could monitor the level of drugs in a participant's system over time. Some programs also used these baseline drug tests to connect young people to treatment resources.

Many programs conducted interviews as part of their screening processes. Different programs conducted these interviews at different points in their recruitment processes — in some programs it was the first step and in others it was the last step. Interviews were often used to gauge young people's motivations for joining the program and to determine their service needs. A participant describes her experience interviewing for YouthBuild in Box 4.1.

The assessment activities described above required applicants to visit the program multiple times over a period of several weeks or months. Programs said that setting up the screening process in this way gave applicants who lacked the motivation required to be successful in YouthBuild the opportunity to "select out" by not showing up for the next step in the screening process. For example, young people might complete an application but not return for the program orientation. Programs interpreted this to mean that those young people were not ready for the program, so they typically did not actively follow up with applicants who dropped out of the process. However, a few programs mentioned that they offered young people one-on-one support during the application process to keep them engaged while giving them a taste of what makes YouthBuild different from other programs.

Participants were asked about the screening process during interviews and focus groups with evaluation team members, but the intake process prior to Mental Toughness Orientation

Box 4.1

Participant Vignette

After finding school to be a difficult and uncaring experience, this 16-year-old participant dropped out during seventh grade. She tried home schooling, but did not find it to be effective for her. Finally, she realized she needed to return to a classroom setting and decided to try YouthBuild after her mother discovered the program from a flyer. Having always been shy, she was nervous when she learned she would need to interview as part of the enrollment process. She was also excited, however; as she explained, no one had ever wanted to interview her before or learn more about her as an individual. When she met with program staff members they asked her various questions, like what her favorite subject in school was, what she liked to do in her spare time, and whether she had a reliable method of getting to YouthBuild. When she received the letter informing her that she was invited to start Mental Toughness Orientation, she shared the news with her entire family because "it felt like an accomplishment."

SOURCE: YouthBuild site-visit interview data.

did not seem to be very memorable for most of them. When they did offer details, many described a screening process that differed from what program staff members described. Participants would describe attending screening activities in a different order than program staff members, or would skip steps in the enrollment process. For example, participants in several programs said that they met with staff members one-on-one to learn about the program instead of attending the group orientation that the program offered. Participants' perspectives on the screening process probably reflect how programs adapted and changed their processes from cycle to cycle and even from applicant to applicant.

The result of all this screening was that programs experienced considerable drop-off prior to Mental Toughness Orientation. Data collected about enrollment cycles showed that nearly half of the young people who turned in applications did not receive invitations to Mental Toughness Orientation, either because they dropped out during the screening process or because the program decided they were not suitable for YouthBuild. Applicants who were deemed unsuitable for YouthBuild were referred to other programs that might be a better fit, or told to reapply in subsequent cycles.

Programs experienced different degrees of drop-off during the screening phase, regardless of whether they were urban or rural. On the high end, the top third of programs — as measured by drop-off prior to Mental Toughness Orientation — lost an average of 80 percent of applicants. The bottom third of programs only lost 17 percent of applicants before Mental

Toughness Orientation.[4] The implication of all this screening is that those young people who received invitations to Mental Toughness Orientation reflect a subgroup of applicants with high motivation.

Mental Toughness Orientation

After the initial screening process young people were invited to Mental Toughness Orientation (MTO). Originally developed by YouthBuild Boston in the late 1980s, MTO is designed to expose participants to YouthBuild's unique model of high standards combined with respect, caring, and a family-like atmosphere.[5] The YouthBuild model calls for MTO to be a week or longer, and to consist of team-building activities and introductions to the program's components and culture.

Purpose

YouthBuild program staff members said that MTO fulfilled a variety of purposes. They generally described it as a means to determine young people's willingness to change, to gauge their interest and motivation, to establish YouthBuild culture and prepare young people for the rigors of the program, to build teamwork while getting to know one another, and to introduce to young people the specifics of the YouthBuild program. Participants described MTO in similar ways, for example, as an opportunity to "physically and mentally prepare participants" and to see if "you are mentally ready for the challenge to be in YouthBuild."

Although this was not YouthBuild USA's intent, the majority of YouthBuild programs used MTO as a screening tool. Eighty-three percent of programs said they used it to screen out young people. Screening occurred in two ways: staff members determined that a young person was not ready or a good fit for the program and asked that person to stop attending, or a young person stopped attending and therefore selected himself or herself out of participation. An average of one in four recruits who were invited to MTO did not complete it. The range in drop-off during MTO varied depending on how programs used it and how much screening they did

[4]These figures reflect data gathered on one enrollment cycle at each program. Given that programs reported that they would experience large variations in drop-off from cohort to cohort, it is not possible to draw conclusions about the characteristics of programs with high rather than low drop-off.

[5]Ferguson, Clay, Snipes, and Roaf (1996).

before it. On the high end, one program lost 80 percent of its recruits during MTO, but several programs reported that they lost none.[6]

Structure

Programs have a great deal of flexibility in designing the structure and content of their MTOs. During site visits, each YouthBuild program was asked to describe the general structure of its MTO. (Three programs followed a rolling-admissions model, rather than a cohort model, and had no specific group activities designed to promote group cohesion.[7] The remainder of this analysis focuses only on those programs that did offer MTOs that were distinct from regular program operations.)

On average programs hosted two MTOs each year, but it was most frequently offered only once a year. The duration and intensity of MTO varied quite a bit; on average it lasted for 10 days, and on average seven hours a day. The YouthBuild USA design standards call for MTO to last from one to two weeks, and most programs did conduct MTO for at least one week. Table 4.2 offers a sample schedule for a two-week MTO.

Content

Since MTO was used by YouthBuild programs to accomplish different goals, the content of MTO delivered by YouthBuild program staff members, partners, and motivational speakers included a great deal of variation. According to YouthBuild staff members, the top four activities conducted during MTO were team-building exercises, life-skills training, leadership development and community service, and academic work, all of which are also activities that young people participated in after officially enrolling in YouthBuild.

- Team-building activities were designed to help young people and staff members get to know each other through small- and large-group activities, as well as to begin developing the family-like atmosphere central to the YouthBuild model. As they became acquainted they built trust. Team-building activities also offered opportunities for staff members to test recruits' communication skills and willingness to participate. Many programs

[6]Programs enrolled multiple cohorts during the evaluation period, not all of which were subject to random assignment. The data used for this analysis were from cohorts enrolled during the study period for which random assignment was not conducted.

[7]Instead of group MTO activities, recruits to these programs participated in continuing YouthBuild activities such as academic classes and construction training during a probation period or a "trial work period."

YouthBuild Evaluation

Table 4.2

Sample Mental Toughness Orientation Schedule

Week 1

	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday
8:30 AM	Roll call, YouthBuild pledge	Roll call, pledge	Roll call, pledge	Roll call, pledge	Roll call, pledge
9:00 AM	Staff introductions	Label exercise	Tool description	Team building	Community service, paperwork
9:30 AM	Student introductions	Break			
10:00 AM	Break	Leadership	Break	Break	
10:30 AM	Team building		Nail relay	Team building	
11:00 AM	Videos		Tape measure	Blindfolded game	
11:30 AM	Lunch	Lunch	Lunch	Lunch	
12:00 PM	Expectations	Team building	Review of handbook	Learning styles	
12:30 PM	Classroom expectations	TABE			
1:00 PM	Construction expectations		100-word essay		
1:30 PM	Community service				
2:00 PM	Break	Break	Break	Break	
2:30 PM	Documentation	TABE	Activity	Learning styles (continued)	
3:00 PM	Open discussion	Clean-up	Clean-up	Clean-up	
3:30 PM					

(continued)

described a physical-exercise component to MTO that involved running and other calisthenics, to the point of being described as "boot camp" by some program participants interviewed.

- Life-skills training, which was provided by over 70 percent of programs, included discrete activities delivered at specific times during the day, and

Table 4.2 (continued)

Week 2

	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday
8:30 AM	Roll call, pledge	Roll call, pledge	Roll call, pledge	Roll call, pledge	Roll call, pledge
9:00 AM					
9:30 AM	First aid/CPR	Team building	Movie	Academics	
10:00 AM	Break	Break	Break		Movie: *The Blind Side*
10:30 AM		Blindfolded walk	Continue movie	Break	
11:00 AM	Training stations			Academics	Break
11:30 AM		Time sheets	Movie discussion essay		*The Blind Side* discussion
12:00 PM	Lunch	Pay structure	Lunch		
12:30 PM		Extended lunch		Extended lunch	
1:00 PM			Guest speakers		
1:30 PM	Construction team building	Scavenger hunt		Continue academics	
2:00 PM					
2:30 PM			Break	Break	
3:00 PM		Break Open discussion	Goal setting	Visualization	
3:30 PM	Clean-up	Clean-up	Clean-up	Clean-up	

SOURCE: This table is based on schedules from multiple YouthBuild programs.

NOTE: TABE = Tests of Adult Basic Education.

themes woven into other MTO activities. Life-skills topics addressed included substance abuse, social networking, self-esteem, communication, financial literacy, sexual health, and many others.

- **Leadership development and community service** were also introduced in two-thirds of programs. Leadership development was addressed through formal and deliberate mechanisms such as large- and small-group discus-

sions about specific leadership topics, for example the different opportunities to exercise leadership on the construction site or on behalf of the program. Leadership was also promoted in more nuanced ways through life-skills-related conversations about topics such as personal responsibility.

- **Academic work** was described as a combination of testing and getting reacquainted with the classroom; some program staff members described MTO as a refresher period for academics. Staff members used MTO to gauge the academic levels of recruits — typically emphasizing math and language arts — through formal testing tools such as practice GED exams or the TABE, or through fun learning activities. Instructors also taught minilessons in specific subjects, such as geometry, to gauge students' comprehension. In some YouthBuild programs, MTO participants visited the academic classes underway for full participants to get a sense of what they could expect when they enrolled. Writing activities were also integrated into MTO as another academic activity, sometimes to assess recruits' capabilities but also to provide them with the opportunity for self-reflection through writing biographies, considering current events, or describing their participation in community service activities.

Box 4.2 provides additional examples of the types of activities MTO included.

YouthBuild program staff members also described other activities occurring during MTO, for example job-readiness training, which might include workshops on interview skills, appropriate dress, workplace etiquette, résumé writing, or job-search techniques. Around half of the programs used MTO to begin occupational-safety training such as training to use construction tools or Occupational Safety and Health Administration (OSHA) certification.[8]

Young people interviewed generally felt that MTO prepared them for the program in various ways, including getting them used to rising early each morning, teaching them to work together, giving them an understanding of YouthBuild's expectations, and helping them realize what they could accomplish. When asked whether MTO prepared them for YouthBuild, one participant said, "Absolutely! If you can't make it through, you can't make it through the

[8]Respondents to the YouthBuild grantee survey gave similar descriptions of MTO (though the questions on the grantee survey were somewhat different from those the research team asked during site visits). All respondents to this question indicated that MTO was an orientation to the program; most also indicated it involved team-building activities, academic preparation, goal-setting exercises, workforce preparation, and physical-fitness activities.

Box 4.2

Examples of Common Mental Toughness Orientation Activities

Team building:

- Group sports (like dodgeball) and games (for example, name games, trivia, or water balloon toss)
- Hiking and exercises such as running laps, push-ups, jumping jacks, and other calisthenics
- Solving problems as a team (for example, navigating an obstacle course or ropes course, "group skis," or the human knot), trust exercises (for example, one participant helps his blindfolded partner through a course, or doing trust falls), or scavenger hunts

Life-skills training in:

- Setting goals
- Health and wellness (including topics such as sex education, abuse, and anger management)
- Living responsibly, stereotyping and labeling, parenting, and conflict resolution
- Time management, effective communication, and financial literacy

Leadership development and community service:

- Conversations about how to improve participants' communities or about different types of leadership styles, mock debates, and leadership-skills exercises (for example, taking turns leading the morning pledge or developing a group community service project)
- One day of community or civic service (for example, raking leaves, cleaning up garbage, working at a food bank or soup kitchen, cleaning up graffiti, or doing some light construction work)

Academics:

- Literacy and numeracy tests such as GED practice tests, the CASAS, and the TABE
- Basic academic lessons
- Writing assignments (autobiographies or journaling)

SOURCE: YouthBuild site-visit interview data.

program. You have to show that you really want to be here to make it through. It's a challenge." In Box 4.3, another participant describes how MTO helped him open up and prepared him for the program.

Assessment During MTO

The majority of programs also used MTO as an opportunity to conduct additional assessments. These assessments took a variety of forms, ranging from very informal methods like staff observations to more formal ones like tests of basic skills. Participants received feedback

Box 4.3

Participant Vignette

MTO was effective in preparing participants for YouthBuild, according to this 20-year-old participant who was told about the program by Fulton County Pretrial Services when he was released from jail for armed robbery. Although the young man initially did not want to enroll in YouthBuild, he decided to apply for the program because of his probation requirements and correctional fees. After visiting the program he was called by the program staff and invited to begin the three-week MTO. During this period, participants played a lot of games, did other team-building activities, and worked on developing a community service project. On Mondays, Wednesdays, and Fridays, participants engaged in physical activities like push-ups and jumping jacks. There were also a lot of academic activities. The participant reported doing practice tests in math, reading, and science, and writing several essays. Though he was initially antisocial, the activities helped him open up. Over the three-week period, he learned that the YouthBuild staff members and participants were "real" and "sincere," which helped him feel more comfortable, and he gained a good understanding of what the next 10 months of the program would be like.

SOURCE: YouthBuild site-visit interview data.

on their progress in MTO in the majority of programs, though the delivery and frequency of that feedback varied. Most feedback tended to be offered when a recruit was not meeting expectations or had done something to jeopardize his or her continued participation in MTO and YouthBuild. Feedback was typically provided individually.

For the most part, the basic-skills assessments conducted during MTO were not used for screening purposes but as a means to gather additional information about the participants to inform program operations. This is probably because eligibility screening had already been done prior to the invitation to MTO. Basic-skills assessments conducted during MTO included academic-type tests such as the CASAS, the TABE, and GED practice tests, allowing programs to assess recruits' education levels and reading, math, and writing skills. These assessments primarily helped YouthBuild staff members determine how best to split up the cohort in academic and construction classes. Some programs instituted other small assessments to help staff members understand recruits' personality types and learning styles.

Most programs also conducted informal observations to assess recruits' investment in and appropriateness for YouthBuild, looking for such qualities as motivation, professionalism, participation in activities, and ability to follow instructions and comply with program policies. Some programs used more formal means, such as observational rating sheets, to keep track of punctuality, attitude, attendance, teamwork, and ability or willingness to follow directions. One

program used a rubric to assess each recruit's performance in four areas (reliability, teamwork, professionalism, and participation). Another program used a scorecard to document daily observations and performance on academic tests.

Completion of MTO

YouthBuild programs had similar requirements for what recruits had to do to complete MTO successfully, including: arriving on time (90 percent), following directions (86 percent), and working in teams (81 percent). YouthBuild programs also had zero tolerance for violence (88 percent). More than 80 percent of programs established a minimum number of days that recruits had to attend MTO to qualify for program enrollment.

As recommended by the YouthBuild USA design standards and the DOL YouthBuild Program Manual, programs were encouraged to mark participants' successes with a celebration or ceremony. As noted by some program staff members, finishing MTO is a major accomplishment for the participants, who are typically not used to being praised for their dedication. Nearly 40 percent of programs provided some sort of incentive for completion. In programs that hosted a ceremony, young people received certificates for completion of MTO or other accomplishments, such as OSHA certifications. Some programs rewarded young people with their uniform shirts and work boots at this time.

Challenges of Recruitment and Screening

Many programs struggled to recruit sufficient young people to fill their slots. While most programs received many more applications than they had slots to fill, many applicants either dropped out during the process or were deemed not suitable by the program. Therefore, while programs received many applications for each available slot, some still struggled to fill their rosters. Programs described the challenges associated with this reality as stemming from factors associated both with their communities and with the applicants themselves.

Most commonly, programs cited young people's lack of ability to follow through with the application process as the reason they struggled with recruitment. Programs gave a few reasons for why young people dropped out. Some believed that applicants were not really ready to change their lives and so were not motivated to complete the application process; some said that applicants were not really interested in the program because they were looking for something less intensive. Programs also struggled with out-of-date contact information for applicants, which made it difficult to follow up with young people and invite them to the next step in the screening process. This problem became more acute if there was a considerable delay between the time a young person submitted an application and the time the program began enrollment. In

cases where programs recruited year-round but had only one enrollment per year, this could be a period of several months.

Programs also mentioned that young people struggled to collect the documents they needed to enroll in the program, such as birth certificates and Social Security cards. Young people often lacked the funds required to replace the missing documents, or had difficulties doing the bureaucratic navigation needed to obtain them. To mitigate this challenge, some programs offered direct assistance to young people in acquiring their documents. During interviews, many participants recalled having to bring in "a bunch of paperwork" to complete their applications and some mentioned receiving support from the program in obtaining that paperwork.

Staff members listed other obstacles to reaching enough applicants that went beyond the challenges of engaging those young people who did apply. Programs said that "getting the word out" about YouthBuild could be difficult because the programs lacked the staff or financial resources necessary to do it, so many eligible young people did not know about the program. Even if they knew about YouthBuild, several programs said that young people had difficulty attending because they lacked transportation. As a result, the program ended up being limited to those who had reliable transportation or who lived close by.

Geography played a role in the types of recruiting challenges programs faced. Programs located in urban areas were most likely to cite competition with other programs as a challenge in recruitment. They were also most likely to report that challenges in young people's lives interfered with recruitment (for example, drugs, gangs, or problems at home). Programs in urban area and rural areas were nearly equally likely to say that transportation was an issue.

Close to 10 percent of programs, more than half of which were located in rural areas, said that they faced no challenges in recruitment. These rural programs said that although they were located in small communities, they did not struggle with recruitment because they were established programs that were well known within those communities. One of these rural programs also said that it did not struggle with recruitment because there were no alternative programs.

Furthermore, programs identified a range of challenges associated with operating MTO. Staffing was an issue, particularly for programs that ran MTO at the same time as their regular YouthBuild activities. When recruitment did not yield sufficient numbers of applicants, the scheduled start of MTO could be delayed. Furthermore, it was a challenge for programs to determine how many recruits they needed, since they could never be sure how many would drop out during MTO. Programs noted struggles with getting recruits to understand YouthBuild's culture and expectations, and noted that it was also challenging for them to engage young people who had not participated in formal activities (like those of a YouthBuild program)

in some time. Some programs noted the challenges of not being able to use DOL funding to provide food or drinks during MTO. In fact, because young people are not yet enrolled in YouthBuild much of the content of MTO (for example, the costs of rope courses, travel, and speaker fees) cannot be supported with DOL funds. However, DOL does cover testing fees (drug, academic, or otherwise), assessment fees, or other costs associated with eligibility determination.

Young people also identified challenges associated with participating in MTO. Many mentioned that they had to adjust to participating in a structured program, and said it was an adjustment to arrive on time and participate consistently in activities. Young people mentioned that the physical demands of MTO were often a challenge. Some mentioned that not knowing if they would be selected for YouthBuild made MTO stressful.

Enrollment and Program Duration

After young people completed MTO, most YouthBuild programs proceeded to enroll them, although if more young people completed MTO than there were program slots, a program would select a subset of MTO completers to join YouthBuild, sometimes through a lottery.[9] As shown in Table 4.1, the majority of programs enrolled either once per year or several times per year. Programs typically enrolled students using a cohort approach, as required by the Youth-Build USA design standard that programs should enroll young people in cohorts of no fewer than seven.[10] Most programs met this requirement, though 20 percent of programs enrolled smaller cohorts. Data collected during site visits show that programs enrolled an average of 24 young people in their most recent cohorts.

A quarter of programs had an additional probationary period after MTO, during which young people had to meet certain expectations before they could be officially enrolled in YouthBuild. Typically young people were required to have no unexcused absences, be drug free, and exhibit a positive attitude during this probationary period, which was most commonly about a month long.

[9]This lottery process was used in some programs before their involvement in the national evaluation.

[10]"Enrollment" here means that young people are accepted into the program and start receiving the regular YouthBuild services it offers. Programs with DOL funding are required to enter into the DOL management information system an enrollment date for those students who are supported by DOL funds. It should be noted that some DOL-funded programs have supplemental funding that they use to support additional young people. These programs do not enter all the young people they serve into the DOL management information system, instead selecting to enter a subset of those young people into the system to report on their outcomes.

Once young people were enrolled, the length of the program offered varied. DOL requires a six-month program, but the YouthBuild USA design standards require a nine-month program. Three-quarters of sites fully met the standard for providing a nine-month program. A small number of programs said that their programs lasted a year or longer.

Effect of the Evaluation on Recruitment and Enrollment

During site visits, programs were asked how the evaluation had affected their recruitment and enrollment practices. Though it was a requirement of their grants, programs were generally reluctant to participate in the evaluation and expressed their frustration about the evaluation. Their responses are summarized in Table 4.3. These findings should be taken in the context that programs already were modifying their recruitment practices from year to year as they responded to new funder requirements or changes at the local level, or to build on lessons learned from previous rounds of enrollment.

As noted in Chapter 1, YouthBuild programs selected to participate in the evaluation randomly assigned young people whom they deemed eligible for their programs; only those assigned to the program group could enroll in YouthBuild. The evaluation team was flexible about when random assignment was conducted in a program's recruitment process. Decisions about the timing of random assignment were made in partnership with the program, with the goal of conducting random assignment after the point where programs experienced the largest drop-off, so as to maximize the likelihood that young people in the program group would ultimately enroll in YouthBuild, as described in Chapter 1.[11] See Appendix E for additional information about how random assignment procedures were developed.

Data collected during site visits show that (adjusting for the young people randomly assigned to the control group) enrollment cycles that included random assignment experienced similar levels of drop-off during the application phase and MTO as enrollment cycles that did not include random assignment, suggesting that random assignment did not cause programs to be more or less selective than usual. The exception to this pattern was the programs that conducted random assignment after MTO, which had lower levels of drop-off during the application phase and higher levels during MTO compared with the other programs. However, programs that conducted random assignment after MTO were generally not representative of

[11]For example, if a program typically experienced a large drop-off during the first day of MTO, random assignment would be conducted no earlier than the second day of MTO. Since programs generally experienced their largest drop-offs during the application phase, random assignment was often conducted right before MTO.

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Table 4.3

Effects of the Study on Recruitment and Enrollment

Program Response	Percentage of Programs
Random assignment	
Program conducted random assignment	96
Program unable to conduct random assignment	4
Timing of random assignment	
Prior to MTO	*51*
During MTO	*31*
After MTO	*18*
Reported recruitment and enrollment changes[a]	
Changed eligibility requirements	23
Modified recruitment	63
Recruited more young people	71
Changed intake procedures	23
Reported changes to MTO[a]	41
Changes to the content of MTO	13
Changes to the duration of MTO	19
Changes to MTO structure	17
Other changes to MTO	20
Sample size	75

SOURCE: Calculations based on YouthBuild site-visit interview data.

NOTES: Entries in italics are calculations that include only the 72 programs that participated in random assignment.

[a]Categories are not mutually exclusive.

study programs as a whole, as they tended to do less screening before MTO than most programs, opting to use MTO as their primary screening tool instead.

Recruiting enough young people to conduct random assignment proved to be a challenge for many programs. The majority of programs (63 percent) said that as a result of the study they had to recruit with more intensity, add new methods of recruitment, or lengthen their recruitment periods. Indeed, many programs received technical assistance in recruitment from their study liaisons at MDRC or Social Policy Research Associates, or from their YouthBuild USA coaches. Nearly three-fourths of programs said they had to recruit more young people as a result of the study. Roughly half of these programs also said they believed that doing so resulted in them serving young people with higher needs than usual. Thirteen YouthBuild programs said that they had to make their eligibility criteria less selective in order to meet the recruitment targets for random assignment, for example by lowering test-score requirements. In contrast,

one program said it raised its standards to ensure that the young people who made it through random assignment were good candidates for the program.[12]

The majority of YouthBuild programs in the study did not make any changes to MTO on account of the study. Those that did make changes predominantly changed the duration and structure of MTO; there was relatively little change to its actual content. Some programs shortened MTO to keep prospective participants from becoming too attached to YouthBuild prior to random assignment. Other programs extended MTO. Some programs changed the structure of MTO by scheduling activities somewhat differently than they normally would. For example, one program shifted team-building activities to occur later in MTO, after random assignment occurred. There was no relationship between whether programs made changes to MTO and when they conducted random assignment.

Study Participant Characteristics

Despite the significant amount of screening YouthBuild programs engage in, programs enroll young people who are disadvantaged and at risk. This section provides an overview of the background characteristics of the study participants, which are summarized in Table 4.4.[13] It also presents information from interviews with YouthBuild staff members and participants about the challenges young people faced.

On average, study participants were nearly 20 years old at the time of random assignment and nearly two-thirds are male; the participants are also predominantly black. A majority of study participants did not have any children; 30 percent reported having at least one child. The majority of study participants had completed at least two years of high school, though many program staff members reported educational challenges, including the prevalence of social promotion; in general, YouthBuild participants lacked the basic skills typically learned in elementary and middle school. Program staff members reported that participants typically had reading and math levels equivalent to middle school (sixth, seventh, and eighth grades) even if their highest grades completed were in high school. Furthermore, about

[12]A comparison of the demographic data of 2009 DOL YouthBuild enrollees and the study sample shows that the study sample had a slightly lower percentage of high school graduates and a greater percentage of parents. Compared with the 2009 DOL YouthBuild enrollees, members of the study sample were less likely to be ex-offenders. It should be noted that directly comparing the 2009 DOL YouthBuild enrollees and the study sample is problematic because the data reflect different populations of YouthBuild students; for example, the 2009 DOL data do not include young people supported by CNCS funding.

[13]See Appendix Table F.1 for baseline characteristics by study group assignment. As shown in that table, there were few differences between program group and control group members.

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Table 4.4

Baseline Characteristics of the Youth Sample

Characteristic	Response
Average age (years)	19.7
Age (%)	
16-18 years old	33
19-21 years old	46
22 years old or older	21
Male (%)	64
Race/ethnicity (%)	
Latino	15
White, non-Latino	15
Black, non-Latino	63
Other[a]	6
Not specified	1
Has a child[b] (%)	30
Highest grade completed (%)	
7th	1
8th	7
9th	19
10th	26
11th	35
12th	10
Has a high school diploma or GED certificate (%)	9
Has a disability (learning or physical) (%)	11
Housing status (%)	
Living with family	61
Own/rent apartment, room, or house	15
Staying at someone's apartment, room, or house	16
Staying with foster guardian/in foster system	1
Halfway house/transitional house	1
Homeless	3
Locus of Control score[c]	3.4
Sample size	3,929

SOURCE: Calculations based on the YouthBuild Baseline Data Form.

NOTES: Due to rounding, the percentages in some categories may not sum to 100.
In some instances information was not available for all sample members.
[a]Other includes Hawaiian Native or other Pacific Islander, Asian, and American Indian or Alaskan.
[b]This information was unavailable for approximately 10 percent of the sample.
[c]This represents an average score of responses to questions that assess subjects' belief that they can control the events that affect them through their actions. Scores range from 1 to 4.

10 percent of study participants reported having a learning or physical disability. Most study participants lived with family and about 15 percent either rented or owned their own apartments, rooms, or houses.

According to YouthBuild staff members and participants, multiple challenges made participation in any formal institution (such as work or school) or program (such as YouthBuild) particularly challenging for the young people in the study. Common challenges described were: involvement in the criminal justice system, substance use, unstable housing or homelessness, lack of transportation, lack of family support, the difficulties of being a young parent, community gangs and violence, intergenerational poverty, difficulty with access to food, and lack of motivation.

One additional challenge described by staff members and young people was that relatively few participants came to YouthBuild with previous, legitimate work experience; if they had work experience it often was from under-the-table jobs or illegal enterprise. Participants therefore lacked the soft skills that would make them successful in the workforce. Common work experiences when participants did have them were in the fast food industry, manual labor or landscaping, child care, or retail. In addition, the challenges mentioned above (such as lack of transportation or parenting responsibilities) tended to influence a young person's ability to secure or maintain employment.

Conclusion

YouthBuild programs engaged in extensive screening prior to enrollment. While the screening process was implemented differently at each program, at minimum it included a number of steps, including a Mental Toughness Orientation, which young people had to complete to be eligible for the program. The multistep process was designed to assess applicants' readiness for the rigors of YouthBuild, as only the most motivated young people persevered through the screening process to enroll in the program. As a result of all this screening, YouthBuild programs needed about four applicants for each slot they filled. Though the young people served by the program still represent a high-need segment of the young population — as shown by the characteristics of the young people enrolled in the evaluation — they are likely to be a highly motivated subsegment of the high-need young population because of this extensive screening process.

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Chapter 5

Youth Leadership and Community Service

Youth leadership and community service are defining features of the YouthBuild model and culture that clearly distinguish it from other job-training programs. According to Dorothy Stoneman, founder of YouthBuild, leadership development "has always been core to the identity and the philosophy that flows out of [YouthBuild's] profound respect for the intelligence and the potential role of low-income young people in their communities."[1] Leadership development is an intrinsic component of the YouthBuild program and a driving force of the program's culture of respect, high expectations, future success, and caring. It can also contribute to young people's success in the labor market, and to community improvement as young people apply their leadership skills to advocate for themselves and their communities.[2]

The YouthBuild model promotes the constant message to young people that "good leadership is taking responsibility to make things go right" in their own lives, in their families, and in their communities.[3] Consistent with this message, the YouthBuild USA design standards encourage all programs to provide leadership opportunities in the program, in the classroom, on the work site, and in the community. In addition, YouthBuild USA mandates that each program must have a working policy council in order to be a member of YouthBuild USA's Affiliated Network, although this not a Department of Labor (DOL) requirement. Most programs sought to meet these requirements by offering a range of leadership-development and community service activities, but they implemented them differently depending on their organizational capabilities and local contexts. Furthermore, concepts of personal responsibility and personal leadership development were emphasized differently in different programs.

At the same time, civic education is an important element of youth leadership as it provides "a vision of how [young people] can play an important role in the neighborhood and society by changing the conditions that have harmed themselves and the people they love."[4] Community service activities function as a form of civic activism, as they teach young people to organize in order "to take charge, help govern the organizations they are in, and create new

[1]MDRC interview with Dorothy Stoneman, Sangeeta Tyagi, Helen Whitcher, Erin Rodriguez, and Joel Miranda of YouthBuild USA. October 17, 2013.

[2]Center for Information and Research on Civic Learning and Engagement (2012).

[3]YouthBuild USA Affiliated Network (2007).

[4]Stoneman (2009).

organizations and community improvement projects of their own design."[5] Community service also provides young people with "self-respect and pride in making a difference for others."[6]

This chapter summarizes the various approaches implemented by YouthBuild programs to promote leadership development, as well as the structures they used to support the quality of youth leadership. The chapter also describes community service activities and how they were integrated into YouthBuild programs. It concludes with an overview of the factors that affected the implementation of youth leadership and community service, including fidelity to the YouthBuild USA design standards, and challenges and promising practices. Major findings presented this chapter are:

- Programs varied significantly in the degree to which they were faithful to the leadership-development standards and implemented community service in the YouthBuild model. Programs with greater fidelity to the leadership-development components of the model tended to be older, accredited programs that had larger budgets. Corporation for National and Community Service (CNCS)-funded programs tended to have about the same fidelity as DOL-funded programs. In addition, independent programs and programs housed in small sponsoring organizations had higher fidelity than programs in large sponsoring agencies, perhaps because they had more autonomy to implement the model.

- Most of the YouthBuild programs sought to develop youth leadership but did so in different ways, reflecting the priorities of the programs and the skills and backgrounds of young people. As a result, there was wide variation in the depth and quality of leadership opportunities.

- Successful strategies for promoting youth leadership included giving young people a real voice in decisions; offering them diverse leadership opportunities at different stages in their leadership development; and integrating leadership development with other program activities and in the daily operations of the program.

- Though the YouthBuild USA design standards require affiliated programs to have working policy councils, DOL does not; only about three-fourths of programs reported having one at the time of the site visit.[7] Even among those

[5]Stoneman (2002).

[6]YouthBuild USA, Inc. (n.d.).

[7]Programs without youth policy councils at the time of their site visits included programs both within and outside the YouthBuild USA affiliated network.

programs that had these councils, there was wide variation in how frequently they met and in their ability to influence program policies.

- All study programs provided community service activities, with the vast majority requiring community service. All CNCS-funded programs had this requirement.

Overview of Youth Leadership

A key aspect of the YouthBuild program culture is respect for young people. According to the DOL YouthBuild Manual, this respect manifests itself most prominently through leadership development. The manual suggests that when programs elicit young people's ideas for how to improve the program or community, those programs demonstrate respect for their ideas and input. Most program staff members reported that they sought to support and develop youth leadership opportunities, but programs varied significantly in their approaches. For some programs, youth leadership was embedded in the program culture, through a clear message of respect and value for young people's voices communicated from the start of Mental Toughness Orientation. For others, youth leadership appeared to be perfunctory. It was acknowledged in program activities, but leadership opportunities were provided in a fragmented manner and were not well integrated with other program activities. YouthBuild programs used three structures to support youth leaders: (1) Youth Policy Councils (YPCs), (2) leadership roles in classroom or work-site settings, and (3) leadership classes.

Youth Policy Councils

Youth Policy Councils are a vehicle for young people to participate in organizational leadership. According to the 2007 YouthBuild USA design standards, a YouthBuild program must "have a working policy committee or comparable process by which students receive experience in program governance and participate in significant decision making that affects the program." The YPC was the only mandatory standard that programs had to meet in order to become members of YouthBuild USA's Affiliated Network.[8] However, it is not an element DOL requires.

The YPC enables young leaders to share power with adults by providing meaningful input on a variety of topics. The YPC has the potential to engage young people in shared decision making at different levels of the organization, including:

[8]YouthBuild USA Affiliated Network (2007).

- **Organizational policies and procedures** such as the dress code; disciplinary policies; or the smoking, drug, and attendance policies
- **Program-level decisions** such as the types of community service activities to plan, guest speakers to invite for life-skills classes, and staff hiring
- **Social and community-building** events such as holiday parties, program celebrations, and field trips
- **Public speaking opportunities** to describe the YouthBuild program to public officials and other stakeholders

Although each program is required to have a YPC, not every program had one in place at the time of the study team's site visits. As shown in Table 5.1, nearly three-fourths of programs had YPCs and these committees had, on average, six members. YPC members were generally elected by their peers or nominated by staff members based on good attendance and behavior. The exceptions were two YouthBuild programs in which all young people could serve on the YPC if they wanted to do so.

Every YPC had an adult adviser to guide and support the council's members and their work. The adviser was typically a case manager, program manager, or program director. Some YPC advisers were community coordinators, academic instructors, or volunteers. Although the YouthBuild USA design standards encourage program directors or managers to serve as YPCs' advisers, this was true of about half of YPCs.

The adult adviser roles ranged from serving as a quiet supervisor, only stepping in when necessary, to fully facilitating the YPC meetings and setting the agendas. An adviser often served as a link between the YPC and the program's staff, helped council members identify issues that they wanted to take on, trained them in meeting facilitation, and provided guidance on public speaking. In many cases, the adult adviser also coordinated the YPC's activities by scheduling meetings among the council members and helping them set priorities for their work.

Table 5.1 shows that there was great variability in the roles of the YPCs and their decision-making power within their programs. When asked about the role of their YPCs, staff members at most programs reported that the councils were responsible for communicating with program managers about student issues such as concerns about program rules and staffing. More than half of the programs with YPCs reported that the councils helped establish program policies and procedures by, for example, changing dress codes, modifying attendance policies, establishing transportation assistance for participants, or defining disciplinary procedures. In these programs, participants reported that staff members listened to their advice and even adopted some of their recommendations. In Box 5.1, a participant describes his experience as a member of the YPC. As one participant reported,

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Table 5.1

Youth Policy Council (YPC) Attributes

Program Response	Percentage of Programs
Programs with a YPC	72
YPCs with adult/staff advisers	*100*
Role of YPCs [a]	
Bring student issues and concerns to the program's staff and management	*87*
Influence program policies and procedures	*57*
Plan special events	*30*
Plan community service activities	*13*
Play a role in interventions for participants facing disciplinary action	*9*
Participate in hiring activities	*9*
Represent the program to outside entities	*13*
Review, edit, or write the student manual	*7*
Frequency of YPC meetings	
More than once per week	*6*
Weekly	*52*
Twice per month	*20*
Monthly	*13*
Quarterly	*4*
No set schedule	*6*
Sample size	75
Average number of members per YPC	*6*

SOURCE: Calculations based on YouthBuild site-visit interview data.

NOTES: Due to rounding, the percentages in some categories may not sum to 100.
Entries in italics are responses among the subset of 54 programs that did have a YPC.
[a]Categories are not mutually exclusive.

> We have more youth voice and we have a say here, compared to a traditional school, where you are not part of policies that are made. There, the rules are made without your say. Here, we're part of the interview process [for hiring staff members]. When rules are being made, we are part of the conversations.

On the other hand, in fewer than a quarter of programs with YPCs the councils played a very limited role in influencing program policies. In these programs, YPCs were mainly responsible for organizing and planning community service activities and social events such as holiday parties and other celebrations. In a few programs where the YPC purportedly brought participant concerns to the staff the council seemed to play a token role, where young people

Box 5.1

Participant Vignette

Despite being enrolled in honors classes, this 21-year-old YouthBuild participant was expelled from his high school when he was 16 for frequent truancy and "goofing around." School had not been a challenge, but he found it difficult to focus, especially in a large classroom where teachers would struggle to control students. He enrolled in a program offered at a local community college that helped him work towards his General Educational Development (GED) certificate and earn college credits, but he left for personal reasons. Still needing his GED certificate, he decided to join YouthBuild after seeing the program's sign advertising that it offered GED training. In YouthBuild, he is a member of the Youth Policy Council, where he and the council's other members speak to the staff on behalf of the other participants and discuss how to improve the program. They are currently discussing which field trips to plan for the year and organizing a spirit week. They are also encouraging the staff to allow participants to wear hats once a week. He also builds leadership skills by taking the initiative to volunteer during academic classes to help his peers with concepts that he has already mastered. "The program takes you and forms you into an adult because it doesn't just focus on education or construction," he said. "It's more about bettering yourself as a person. It's all about the maturation process."

SOURCE: YouthBuild site-visit interview data.

provided feedback about the program but staff members rarely implemented it. Box 5.2 provides more examples of YPC roles and activities.

The YPCs met with different levels of frequency. Although the YouthBuild USA design standards encourage programs to have YPCs that meet at least weekly, fewer than 60 percent of the YPCs did meet weekly or more often, as shown in Table 5.1. Others met twice per month or monthly. A small percentage of programs did not have set schedules for their councils because they convened their YPCs on an ad hoc basis, for example, when a decision needed to be made about a program policy.

As noted above, although YPCs are a required component of YouthBuild programs in the affiliated network, they are not a requirement of DOL; more than a quarter of programs did not have a functioning YPC at the time of the study team's site visit. About half of the programs without YPCs reported that they were planning to instate them in the near future. Some had had functioning YPCs in the past but had disbanded them or had put them on hold due to staff turnover or a lack of participant interest or readiness for formal leadership roles. Other programs had never implemented a YPC before, but were in the process of developing one and defining its role within the YouthBuild program.

Box 5.2

Examples of Youth Policy Council Activities

Organizational Policies and Procedures. The YouthBuild Delta (Louisiana) YPC discussed its frustration with the dress code, which prohibited participants from wearing shorts or any clothing that was too tight or revealing. Because the summers in Tallulah, LA were sweltering, the young people wanted to be able to wear Capri pants or other types of pants that would be more weather-appropriate. The adviser, who sat in during this meeting, encouraged the young people to present their recommendations to the program director to see if the dress code policy could be amended.

Program-Level Decisions. The YouthBuild Gulf Coast (Mississippi) YPC selected and planned community service projects for the program. At the time of the site visit, the members were deciding whether or not to help the tornado-stricken area around Hattiesburg, MS and were discussing a potential community service trip to the region.

Social and Community Events. Members of the YouthBuild Mississippi Delta (Mississippi) YPC planned prom and other events for the program. For example, the YPC organized a housewarming party for a family that recently purchased one of the residential units the participants had built. The young people collected donations from other participants to pay for food and small house gifts for the family.

Representing YouthBuild. In addition to representing their peers to program staff members, YPC members at some programs had opportunities to serve as the face of YouthBuild to public officials. For example, members of the YouthBuild McLean County (Illinois) YPC met with a member of the Illinois House of Representatives to represent their program.

SOURCE: YouthBuild site-visit interview data.

Staff members from programs that were not planning to instate YPCs in the future cited other reasons for not having the councils. Some programs lacked sufficient staff support to effectively support and guide a YPC's work. Some programs found their participant cohorts were too small to have a meaningful YPC, and some preferred to seek participant feedback on program policies and practices informally. For example, at ReSOURCE YouthBuild's Barre campus (Vermont), the program manager explained that there was not a council because the program was so small that nearly everyone would be on the council. Instead, he tried to involve the full cohort in "sitting down and hashing out issues."

Taken together, these variations from the YouthBuild design standards meant that while nearly three-fourths of programs reported having a YPC during the site visits, just over a half of all programs fully met the YouthBuild USA standard for having a council. Twenty percent of programs only partially met the standard because council members did not significantly

influence organizational decision making or program policy. In addition, almost one-third of programs did not meet the standard for convening the YPC regularly with the program director or manager in attendance. The implementation of the YouthBuild vision for the YPC was notably weak when it came to the standard requiring that policies regarding the docking of pay be vetted with the YPC; only a quarter of programs fully met this standard.

A few factors appear to influence whether programs had YPCs that fulfilled the role envisioned by the YouthBuild USA design standards. First, programs with YPCs were more likely to have been in operation for at least five years than those that did not have councils. Interestingly, programs with directors that had less than one year of experience at YouthBuild were more likely to have YPCs than programs whose directors had longer tenures. This finding suggests that new program leaders were perhaps more mindful of meeting YouthBuild USA's requirements for establishing a YPC. Further, programs that had been in existence for at least five years and that were operated by smaller sponsoring agencies appeared to offer more opportunities for young people to influence program policies.

Classroom and Construction Leadership Opportunities

In addition to the YPC, many programs offered opportunities for participants to practice their leadership skills in the classroom and at the work site. As shown in Table 5.2, more than 90 percent of programs relied on young leaders to serve in this capacity. Participants designated as leaders in the classroom, in both academic and construction classes, served as tutors to other students, led class discussions and activities, and facilitated class meetings. At some programs, participants who demonstrated academic ability or who had already passed their GED exams served as classroom assistants or tutors, while other programs assigned young people to lead classroom activities or help their peers on an ad hoc basis.[9]

Many programs designated participants as a "crew leaders" who were responsible for assisting the work-site supervisor with the on-site training and mentoring of participants. Programs generally had informal procedures for identifying crew leaders, and sought to rotate crew leaders each week so that as many young people as possible could serve in this role. In order to serve as crew leaders, participants needed to demonstrate competence in construction work, leadership ability, and maturity. Other leadership roles at the work site included serving as a tool maintenance leader, someone who was in charge of distributing tools, or a safety supervisor; young leaders could also help staff members implement safety procedures such as wearing hardhats and gloves.

[9]The programs with YPCs were not more likely than those without them to offer leadership opportunities in the classroom and at the work site.

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Table 5.2

Leadership Opportunities

Program Response	Percentage of Programs
Young leaders in the classroom or at the work site	91
Classroom tutor	56
Class activity leader	32
Meeting facilitator	29
Crew leader	71
Tool maintenance leader	29
Safety supervisor	29
Peer mentor	20
Task or project leader	9
Other leadership opportunities	73
Speak at public events to advocate for YouthBuild	56
Attend public meetings, conferences, and committees	53
Sample size	75

SOURCE: Calculations based on YouthBuild site-visit interview data.

NOTE: Categories are not mutually exclusive.

Participants took classroom and construction leadership roles seriously. As one participant reported, young people "really have to prove [themselves] and really be a team player" to serve as leaders. That participant explained that the young people in charge are respected by their peers, and that it often seemed easier to learn from them than from the instructors. Many participants reported that young leaders ensured that their peers were "on task and doing their job right." Slightly more than a third of the programs provided extra incentives, such as extra pay, bonuses, or special privileges, to reward leaders for their extra work and time. At eight programs, leaders serving in this capacity got an increase in their hourly wages, ranging from an additional 10 cents to a dollar an hour. More examples of classroom and construction leadership positions are described in Box 5.3.

Programs that did not systematically rely on young leaders in the classroom, in construction training, or at the work site cited a lack of readiness among participants to assume leadership positions, a lack of organizational systems in place to support crew leaders, and limitations on the ability of the staff at the work site to oversee crew leaders' work.

Leadership Classes

The YouthBuild USA design standards state that programs should teach leadership competencies, which may include training in such topics as peaceful conflict resolution,

Box 5.3

Examples of Classroom and Construction Leadership Positions

Crew Leaders. Build with Pride (California) crew leaders, who wear yellow hard hats instead of the white hard hats worn by other participants, were responsible for leading their peers to complete construction supervisors' orders and looking out for their safety. Young people were selected to serve as crew leaders by construction supervisors based on their attendance, on-site behavior, willingness to take on additional responsibilities, and construction skills. Crew leaders typically served two-week terms, but often served more than one term during the cohort cycle and might even serve consecutive terms. There was usually one crew leader for every five participants, so there was often more than one crew leader within a cohort.

Classroom Leaders. YouthBuild Mississippi Delta (Mississippi) participants became academic tutors through a peer-to-peer program after they passed the GED test. The program assigned tutors to facilitate 20-minute study sessions on particular GED subjects (math, science, reading, writing, and social studies). For two hours every Friday, participants rotated through the different peer-to-peer sessions.

Other Leadership Roles. YouthBuild New Bedford (Massachusetts) assigned one young person to serve as tool leader at the work site and one to serve as safety leader. The tool leader made sure that all the necessary tools were at the site, while the safety leader monitored participants for safety violations. To ensure that all participants had an opportunity to serve in each role, young people served in those positions for two days before rotating.

SOURCE: YouthBuild site-visit interview data.

community problem solving, peer tutoring, good parenting, and public speaking. Programs received mixed ratings for their fidelity in this area. About two-thirds of programs fully met the standard for teaching leadership competencies. However, nearly half of all programs did not fully meet the standard for providing a curriculum focused on leadership; at these programs, the teaching of leadership was informal and was not structured.

As Table 5.3 demonstrates, more than half of the programs offered classes that focused on leadership attitudes and skills, typically once a week.[10] These classes on leadership competencies were offered either as stand-alone classes or in combination with training that also focused on general life skills, such as financial literacy and character building. The major advantage of combining the leadership and life-skills classes was to make the most of staff time

[10]As shown in Appendix Table G.1, DOL-funded programs were slightly more likely than CNCS-funded programs to offer classes that focused on leadership topics.

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Table 5.3

Leadership Classes

Program Response	Percentage of Programs
Programs that offered leadership classes	56
In combination with life-skills training	33
As stand-alone classes	23
Leadership class topics [a]	
Conflict resolution	*74*
Parenting	*52*
Public speaking	*60*
Work ethic	*62*
Frequency of leadership class	
Four or five times per week	*10*
Once per week	*64*
Twice per week	*8*
Once or twice per month	*13*
As needed/no set schedule	*5*
Sample size	75

SOURCE: Calculations based on YouthBuild site-visit interview data.

NOTES: Entries in italics are calculations that include only the 42 programs that offered leadership classes.

[a]Categories are not mutually exclusive.

and resources by covering multiple topics in one class. The major disadvantage was that this approach sometimes diluted the content and importance of leadership training.

Many participants interviewed enjoyed leadership classes because they allowed them to understand the qualities of a strong leader, to learn what it meant to be a leader in the program and in the community, and to explore their leadership potential in a safe and supportive environment. For instance, at YouthBuild Portland (Maine) one participant reported that the group learned how to identify different leadership styles, the difference between being aggressive and assertive, how to communicate better, and how to take control of a situation. One young person remarked, "I am learning how to conduct myself as a man. I am getting life skills, leadership skills, [and learning] how to work with people."

Other Leadership Opportunities

Three-fourths of YouthBuild programs facilitated other types of leadership opportunities outside of the program. However, since these opportunities were often limited or offered

inconsistently, only 46 percent of programs fully met the YouthBuild USA design standard of providing opportunities for young people to participate in fundraising, public relations, and advocacy. Examples of other leadership activities included:

- **Participating in youth conferences, training events, and policy meetings.** Specifically, young people attended leadership-training events, joined conferences on civic engagement, and spoke with policymakers to advocate for their communities and the YouthBuild program. For example, at YouthBuild New Bedford (Massachusetts), four young people attended a nine-week seminar on civic engagement and leadership at the University of Massachusetts-Dartmouth, where they participated in discussion groups and gave presentations. The program also sent some young people to attend the "Boys to Men" conference, where they participated in discussions about the challenges young men face when they transition to adulthood.

- **Assisting with recruitment and outreach.** This included passing out flyers, speaking to media outlets, and giving presentations at other community-based organizations to solicit interest in YouthBuild. One participant explained how he enjoys telling others about his experience with the program. He added that he was quiet when he began the program, but has begun to feel encouraged to take on additional leadership roles like this.

- **Serving on committees in the community.** For example, some participants in the YouthBuild Mississippi Delta (Mississippi) program were members of the Tobacco Free Coalition, where they participated in meetings, attended conferences, and gave presentations focused on tobacco-use prevention.

Personal Leadership Development

The YouthBuild model does not limit its definition of leadership to formal roles within the program. The model encourages young people to focus first on personal leadership development, described as "taking responsibility for making one's life work well."[11] About half of the programs explicitly emphasized personal leadership development. These programs promoted personal leadership in three forms: 1) taking the initiative to help one's peers, 2) serving as a positive role model within and outside the program, and 3) adopting "prosocial" activities and accepting responsibility for one's life.[12] Participants at these programs reiterated this under-

[11]U.S. Department of Labor (2014b).

[12]"Prosocial" activities are the antithesis of antisocial behaviors such as criminal behavior. Prosocial activities include church participation, civic engagement (for example, through a political organization or by being registered to vote), volunteer participation, and involvement in social clubs or team sports.

standing of personal leadership, demonstrating how it was reinforced throughout the program. For example, participants in Build with Pride (California) interpreted leadership as the act of being independent and responsible while also providing and seeking support from others when needed. One participant reported, "I think everybody's a leader. Everybody knows what they're doing. And you help someone out, they help you out. We just communicate with each other."

While all programs encouraged young people to adopt prosocial activities through their life-skills classes, only some programs explicitly tied these lessons to leadership development. Staff members at YouthBuild Newark (New Jersey) viewed leadership as a nuanced concept, believing that leadership would take a different form for different participants. One explained that encouraging quieter students to adopt more prosocial activities might be the form their leadership development took, adding, "Someone has to be in the cabinet and be the vice-president. Not everyone can be the president." Similarly, staff members at Huntington Youth-Build (West Virginia) taught participants to be "leaders in their own life," emphasizing personal leadership principles such as completing homework and managing personal conflict. One participant reported that YouthBuild taught her that she was responsible for taking advantage of opportunities in her life because "no one else would do it for [her]."

Staff members from about half of the programs reported that they encouraged young people to practice personal leadership and contribute to the program by helping their peers in the classroom and at the construction site. Staff members often paired young people and asked them to help each other, but they also encouraged them to help each other without being asked to do so. In the words of one participant, "Leadership means taking charge, helping a classmate out, trying to help out someone. That is the best way to describe it."

Some programs also encouraged participants to uphold the program culture by serving as strong role models and holding their peers to high standards. As one participant explained, participants practiced good leadership by motivating people, not complaining, ameliorating tensions within the group, and being role models. Another noted that if he stayed on track and made an effort to do things right, it provided a positive example for his peers.

Participants in these programs valued these personal leadership opportunities as much as formal leadership roles, as they reinforced the idea that young people have the power to enhance the program. A YouthBuild Lawrence AmeriCorps (Massachusetts) participant reflected that leadership opportunities come up "anywhere where we're at. It doesn't matter. Suppose everybody is just sitting down [at the construction site]. Somebody will come and say, 'Let's get this done.' He's being a leader right there because he's stepping up." These leadership opportunities also provided meaningful opportunities to young people who did not have, or may not have been ready for, formal leadership roles such as serving on the YPC or as a crew leader.

Participants in one program described how one of their peers served as a leader by doing small things that they said had a lot of impact.

Community Service

Community service is also an integral component of the YouthBuild model, one largely put into action through their construction training, as participants build affordable housing for homeless and low-income people.[13] Furthermore, it is understood to accomplish more than just service to the community. It is also meant to serve as a catalyst for civic activism by allowing young people to design and implement their own community-improvement projects and by showing them that they can play important roles in their communities. Program staff members explained during site visits that community service could deepen young people's connection to their communities and their place in them. As a staff member from LA CAUSA YouthBuild (California) explained:

> The community service projects give them sense of value and they see themselves as successful, from planning a project and seeing it come to life. They had a part of that and they had success. So we're training them to be successful, putting them in a position to be successful and recognizing their success. It's easy to do this through the minor community service projects like community cleanups.

Programs with strong youth leadership typically encouraged young people to take ownership over planning and executing community service projects. Other programs provided service opportunities but did not integrate them with leadership development.

The Structure of Community Service

Aside from the community service activities associated with vocational training, the structure and mix of additional community service activities varied widely depending on whether or not the programs received AmeriCorps funding from CNCS,[14] and on the level of staff support available to carry out these activities.[15] As shown in Table 5.4, the vast majority of programs required young people to participate in some form of community service. Not surprisingly, nearly all programs with AmeriCorps funding required young people to participate

[13]YouthBuild programs are increasingly providing other vocational training tracks in addition to construction. These are detailed in Chapter 7. Each vocational track has a built-in service component that mirrors the service provided by construction trainees.

[14]This AmeriCorps funding from CNCS is different from the CNCS funding that has been discussed throughout the rest of this report.

[15]The community service activities discussed in this section only include activities that occurred outside of construction training. Activities related to the construction of affordable housing are addressed in Chapter 7.

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Table 5.4

Community Service Activities, by Type of Funding and Size of Budget

Program Response (%)	All Programs	Programs by Funding Type: AmeriCorps	Programs by Funding Type: Non-AmeriCorps	Programs by Budget Size: <$500K	Programs by Budget Size: $500K-$1M	Programs by Budget Size: >$1M
Young people participate in community service	100	100	100	100	100	100
Programs require community service	89	98	75	92	84	94
Specific staff member is designated to organize service activities	73	77	68	64	63	88
Frequency of community service activities[a]						
Weekly	25	29	18	28	17	33
Two to three times per month	20	22	18	20	17	27
Monthly	22	20	25	16	31	13
Less often than monthly[b]	23	22	25	24	24	20
Varies	10	7	14	12	10	7
Sample size	75	47	28	25	32	17

SOURCE: Calculations based on YouthBuild site-visit interview data and the YouthBuild grantee survey.

NOTES: Annual budget data were available for 74 of the 75 programs.

[a]This only includes community service activities that occurred outside of construction training, only among those programs for which a clear frequency of service activities was indicated in site-visit data (sample size = 69).

[b]This also includes programs where community service activities were planned as needed.

in community service (98 percent). In contrast, among programs without AmeriCorps funding a smaller percentage required young people to participate in community service (75 percent). All CNCS-funded programs required community service participation, whereas 86 percent of DOL-funded programs required it.

Participants in the AmeriCorps-funded programs usually had to fulfill concrete requirements for community service — such as a minimum number of hours — in order to receive their individual education awards. Participants achieved these service hours by completing construction activities at the work site, participating in service projects during program hours, or engaging in eligible service activities outside of program hours.

Programs' ability to provide and coordinate community service activities in addition to those associated with vocational training depended on the presence of a staff member devoted to organizing these activities. Because program staff members often had many responsibilities, this person might be a case manager, an instructor, an administrative staff member, or another member of the program staff. About three-fourths of programs did identify a staff member to coordinate these activities. The coordinators typically identified community service sites, planned and scheduled the activities, and documented participants' service hours. Some programs did not believe that participants needed a coordinator to organize community service and encouraged young people to take ownership of their community service activities. For example, Metro Atlanta YouthBuild (Georgia) participants worked in teams to develop community service projects and completed monthly community service hours at charity organizations of their choice outside of YouthBuild program hours.

The types of additional community service activities ranged widely. They included: beautification projects, such as building planter boxes at local parks; after-school homework mentoring; leading conversations about staying in school with middle school students; community activism such as participating in National Service Day; and assisting community organizations such as food banks.

As illustrated in Table 5.4, programs also varied in how frequently community service activities occurred. Programs with AmeriCorps funding generally held community service activities more often than those without it. The frequency of community service activities also varied based on the size of a program's budget. Programs with annual budgets over $1 million offered community service more frequently — that is, weekly or two to three times per month — than programs with annual budgets of less than $500,000.

Participants' Perspectives on Community Service

Participants reported a range of experiences with and attitudes toward community service. Most enjoyed community service activities, reporting that giving back to the community felt good, that they enjoyed the break from the classroom and the work site, and that they enjoyed meeting people in the community. Participants also viewed community service as a benefit for the program because it drew attention to the positive impact of YouthBuild on the community. The participants also believed that community service provided a personal benefit in the following ways:

- **Contributing to their personal development.** Participants reported that service opportunities enhanced their empathy for others, self-discipline, and sense of responsibility. A participant at YouthBuild Rockford (Illinois) who mentored younger people in the community reported that he liked sharing his story with them. He felt like he showed them how to avoid backtracking,

adding that helping them helped him as well. Box 5.4 provides a look at how community service affected one participant's views on helping others.

- **Supporting their future careers.** Participants appreciated that the service projects helped them enrich their résumés, practice their construction skills, develop interpersonal skills, and prepare them for work.

- **Keeping them out of trouble.** A couple of participants reported that community service gave them positive activities that kept them and their peers off the streets, even if they could not see its long-term effects. One said, "Planting flowers does not seem to impact the crime rate. When you're afraid for your life, you don't notice flowers, but at least it keeps us off the streets for a while."

Other Team-Building Activities

In addition to the group activities available in leadership development and community service, programs offered a number of other group activities designed to promote team building, group bonding, and a sense of family and community. These activities included morning meetings and rituals like reciting the YouthBuild pledge and giving "appreciations" (in which participants shared something they appreciated, usually another person affiliated with the program), often built into the daily schedule. Most of the team-building activities started during Mental Toughness Orientation, when the program sought to send a strong

Box 5.4

Participant Vignette

After spending the bulk of his time "just sitting at a friend's house doing nothing," this 19-year-old participant described how good it feels to be spending time building houses for community service, which he does in addition to the paid time he spends on the construction work site. "I feel like I'm really being helpful for them," he said. Participants in the program have also done some community service work with the local fire department. The participant, who is a member of the program's Youth Policy Council, is working with other participants to brainstorm other ideas to "better the community." These include picking up trash on bike trails and at the riverfront, organizing a food drive, and holding a car wash. "I was raised in 'don't ask for help from others,' so I didn't ask for help that often. I didn't like asking for help," he said. But now, "I just love helping people."

SOURCE: YouthBuild site-visit interview data.

message about the importance of teamwork. Other activities that allowed participants to bond with peers and staff members included outings or field trips and program-wide events such as holiday celebrations and award ceremonies. Some programs also used social media to build an online community of YouthBuild participants. These activities and practices were further reinforced by staff members, who frequently reminded participants about the importance of teamwork, especially at the construction work site, and the need to look out for each other the way one would look out for one's family.

These team-building activities promoted a strong sense of physical and emotional safety that led many participants to refer to YouthBuild as a tight-knit community and a family. As noted in Chapter 2, these are examples of essential program qualities espoused by YouthBuild USA. For example, at LAYC YouthBuild (Washington, DC), participants reported that they felt secure in the program because of its family-like atmosphere, even though people came from different places and backgrounds.

Factors Affecting Implementation

The quality of youth-leadership and community service opportunities varied widely across programs. Several factors affected programs' ability to implement these components and their fidelity to the YouthBuild model (see Appendix C for fidelity scores by various program characteristics). These included:

- **Programs with larger budgets had higher fidelity to the youth-leadership standards than those with smaller budgets.** Programs with more resources were able to dedicate more staff time to activities such as coordinating opportunities for young people to participate in fundraising and advocacy, allowing them to serve in administrative positions such as crew leader, and building group cohesion through cultural and community activities. Similarly, programs with large staffs were more likely to have YPCs that met regularly, and were more likely to provide external leadership opportunities. Having more staff resources enabled programs to dedicate more time to supporting their YPCs and to developing and identifying additional opportunities for leadership development.

- **Programs that had been operating YouthBuild for six years or more had higher fidelity to the leadership and community service components of the model in many ways.** Programs with more experience with the YouthBuild model did better at developing program components such as the YPC (and convening their YPCs more regularly), assigning administrative respon-

sibilities to participants to build their leadership skills, and regularly offering cultural and community activities to build group cohesion.

- **Programs that were "affiliates" with YouthBuild USA had higher fidelity to the youth-leadership standards than those that were not.** This finding is not surprising, given that having a YPC is a required element of the YouthBuild model. However, it is also true that affiliated programs had additional funding and other forms of support (such as AmeriCorps funding and technical assistance) that may have helped them strengthen their leadership-development components. Not surprisingly, accredited affiliates (the highest level of affiliation) had the highest fidelity in this area.

- **Independent programs scored higher than programs housed in sponsoring organizations,** suggesting that autonomy may be associated with programs' ability to implement the leadership components of the YouthBuild model.

- **Programs housed in small sponsoring organizations (those with budgets of less than $1 million) were more faithful to the leadership standards than programs in large sponsoring agencies.** Specifically, these programs were more likely to have active YPCs that could influence program policy, to convene their YPCs regularly with their directors or program managers in attendance, and to offer leadership opportunities in fundraising, public relations, and advocacy.

- **Programs with AmeriCorps funding were more likely to require community service than those that did not receive this funding.** Furthermore, CNCS-funded programs were also more likely to require community service. Because young people had to participate in community service to be eligible for their education awards, these programs made community service a priority. At the same time, AmeriCorps funding often supported additional staff time to coordinate activities, allowing these programs to offer more opportunities for community service.

Challenges and Promising Practices

Conversations with program staff members during site visits revealed several challenges related to promoting youth leadership. First, programs struggled to help young people see themselves as leaders and recognize their power to instigate change. Staff members noted that this was because many young people have been discouraged all their lives. In addition, program staff

members reported that they had difficulty teaching young people about personal leadership, which was viewed as an abstract concept. Young people tended to associate leadership with participation in the YPC or community events. Further, some programs had difficulty engaging young people in the YPC, and as a result attendance was low at some meetings. Lastly, staff members identified some organizational-level challenges, such as the limited staff time available to plan leadership activities and help carry them out.

Staff members also identified challenges to implementing community service projects. First, programs struggled to get young people to participate in service activities outside of the program schedule. Program participants were often not interested in attending events on the weekends unless they received incentives to do so. Relatedly, staff members noted that many young people could not see the value of community service, so they were not interested in participating in it unless it was required. Some programs also identified some logistical challenges, including a lack of transportation to service activities, and difficulty in finding community organizations that were able to host large groups of YouthBuild participants for service projects.

Variations in fidelity to the YouthBuild model for youth leadership suggest that programs that demonstrated strong leadership development also had the following characteristics:

- **Young people on their YPCs influenced program policies and had a real voice in decisions.** This included influence on smoking policies, drug policies, dress codes, attendance policies, and disciplinary policies. Program leaders listened to YPC recommendations and did their best to implement them.

- **Leadership opportunities were diverse and available to young people with different leadership capabilities.** Programs with strong leadership development tailored their leadership opportunities to young people's skills and readiness for leadership. They did this by building young people's leadership qualities incrementally: they provided opportunities for them to develop personal leadership before moving on to increasingly challenging roles as crew leaders or in leadership roles outside of the program.

- **Programs maximized leadership opportunities by combining leadership development with day-to-day operations.** For example, some programs assigned administrative tasks to participants; asked them to identify and plan community service activities; allowed them to operate student stores; or encouraged them to plan and organize YouthBuild events such as graduation, prom, and extracurricular activities. Not only did this practice maximize

opportunities for participants, it reinforced that the staff valued their role in enhancing the program.

- **There was strong staff and program support for leadership development.** Staff members throughout the organization valued young people's voices and sought their opinions on a variety of program decisions. They acknowledged and celebrated participants for demonstrating leadership in both formal and informal roles.

In contrast, programs that appeared to have underdeveloped youth-leadership components shared several characteristics. First, the leadership opportunities they did have were fragmented and not well integrated into the program culture. At many programs, leadership activities were confined to discrete activities within the program schedule, occurring once a week or once a month. These programs usually devoted one day a week, often called Leadership Fridays, to leadership activities such as planning social events or learning leadership skills. Second, some staff members in these programs thought that participants lacked the maturity or readiness necessary to be leaders. As a result, these programs did not offer deep, challenging leadership opportunities, limiting leadership opportunities to small tasks, such as taking out the garbage and watering plants. For example, one program director reported that his program emphasized basic leadership principles such as completing homework because, he said, participants were not at a point of readiness to engage in more challenging leadership opportunities. Third, staff members in these programs did not consistently solicit young people's opinions on organizational policies, or if they did, they did not implement their suggestions. Lastly, staff members at a handful of programs conveyed a lack of respect for young people and their ability to enhance the program. Staff members at these sites frequently referred to participants as "children" and appeared to have low expectations for them, withholding meaningful leadership opportunities because participants were seen as immature. This small group of programs did not appear to be training their staff members to promote and value leadership.

Conclusion

Leadership and community service are defining features of the YouthBuild model. Programs with high fidelity to the youth-leadership standards integrated leadership-development concepts into all aspects of the program. Participants experienced an increasing sense of power over their lives and in their communities as they progressed from Mental Toughness Orientation to graduation. The program's emphasis on providing a diverse range of youth-leadership opportunities contributed to a culture of respect and high expectations, in which participants were asked to "step up" and take control over their futures.

Most programs were successful at promoting youth leadership and empowerment to some degree, although some faced substantial challenges to integrating meaningful leadership roles for participants into the program. The variation in the fidelity of YouthBuild programs to the youth-leadership standards has implications for the implementation of the entire model. Youth leadership is an essential part of many other YouthBuild program services, so although programs may meet other parts of the standards for academic or vocational services, for example, they cannot be fully implementing the YouthBuild vision for those services without the integration of youth leadership.

Chapter 6

Educational Services

Most participants came to YouthBuild having had negative experiences with traditional school and with very poor academic skills. Roughly speaking, a quarter of YouthBuild participants had completed no more than the ninth grade, a quarter had completed tenth grade, and a little over a third had completed eleventh grade. This does not tell the whole story, however, because participants were often farther behind on their academic credits than those grade levels suggest. Many participants were promoted from grade to grade without having mastered the skills one might expect of those grade levels, and many had been out of school for some time before attending YouthBuild.

Participants came to YouthBuild, in part, because it represented a critical second chance for them to develop academic skills and earn educational credentials. In fact, the majority of YouthBuild participants said that earning a General Educational Development (GED) certificate or high school diploma was their primary motivation for applying to the program. Due to the programs' extensive screening process many participants shared a willingness to change, which instructors felt was essential to their academic success. As one instructor said, participants are "here because they want to be: they have already failed in those other schools and they make it in here because they are ready to change their behavior." Participants also reported that their experiences in YouthBuild had helped them to gain focus and have a clearer vision of what they hoped to achieve. One participant said, "Honestly, [YouthBuild] changed me.... I don't have time to be playing games like I did in high school. It taught me it was time to grow up." Another young man's experience is described in Box 6.1.

YouthBuild programs approached academic services from different perspectives, depending on their funding sources, their organizational contexts, their educational partnerships, and the state educational standards and requirements to which they were subject. These influences led to myriad differences in the content and format of academic classes, the instructional approaches programs used, and the length of time that participants spent in academic services. Despite these variations, most YouthBuild programs shared some academic features, such as a focus on individually tailored instruction and academic support.

Reflecting the model designers' belief that a GED credential or high school diploma is essential to participants' futures, the YouthBuild model and the Department of Labor (DOL) require that academic services account for 50 percent to 60 percent of participants' time in the program. Most programs fully met that standard, providing many types of academic support, including assessments and services designed to lead to a GED credential, high school diploma,

Box 6.1

Participant Vignette

Born and raised in Kansas, this 21-year-old participant had already been in another GED program for out-of-school young people prior to joining YouthBuild. At that program, he worked independently on academic packets on a computer. That type of self-directed learning was not effective for him, so he decided to apply for YouthBuild after hearing about it from a friend. The academic services at YouthBuild have proved to be a very different experience for him. "If [the teachers] see you struggling, they are going to ask someone to help you or they are going to come and help you," he said. He appreciates that teachers will "show [him] and break it down to [him] so [he] can hear and see how it's actually done, instead of trying to figure it out [himself]." At YouthBuild, he has enjoyed classroom discussions about history on significant days such as Martin Luther King, Jr. Day and International Women's Day and likes the mix of reading and math work he does. He is now interested in going to college, which he only realized after joining YouthBuild. As a first step toward that goal he visited the local community college with the program's GED instructor.

SOURCE: YouthBuild site-visit interview data.

or entry into postsecondary education. This chapter provides an overview of these services and also addresses the quality of programs' educational staffing, before discussing factors that influenced implementation, challenges, and promising practices. Core findings include the following:

- All YouthBuild programs offered educational services to help participants prepare for GED tests or complete their high school diplomas. Programs were less consistently likely to focus on postsecondary preparation and advanced technical training.
- There was broad variation in the format of educational services at YouthBuild. Some programs were very interactive and classroom based, while others operated like independent-study programs. The types of educational partners programs had and the on-site educational services they had available strongly influenced the academic services they offered.
- Though the content and the format of classes varied among YouthBuild programs, most shared the goal of providing participants individually tailored instruction and academic support. Small class sizes helped to support positive relationships between instructors and participants.

- On average, fidelity to the academic components of the YouthBuild model was associated with having three or more educational partners, more than five staff members, and academic instructors who were well integrated into the program. Programs that were charter schools had slightly better fidelity to YouthBuild's academic standards, while programs that received designated postsecondary funding had slightly better fidelity to YouthBuild's postsecondary standards. Further, DOL-funded programs had higher fidelity to postsecondary standards than Corporation for National and Community Service (CNCS)-funded programs.

- Successful strategies for engaging participants in academic services included keeping class sizes small and the participant-to-instructor ratio low; providing adjustable, self-paced instruction; and making connections between instruction and real-world issues.

The Structure of Academic Services

The balance between academic and vocational activities is a key part of the YouthBuild model. YouthBuild stakeholders frequently said that participants benefit from the opportunity to alternate between classroom work and the hands-on work that they do in the construction or vocational program. With the exception of one program, which had participants in academics full time until they earned their academic certificates, YouthBuild participants alternated between academic and vocational services at regular intervals. As shown in Table 6.1, it was most common for programs to alternate academic and vocational services weekly. Approximately a third of programs offered daily academic instruction, where the participants split their days between academic and vocational instruction, and more than a fifth of programs had participants alternate a full day of academic study with a full day of vocational instruction. A few programs alternated at some other interval. For instance, YouthBuild Philadelphia Charter School (Pennsylvania) had participants alternate between six weeks of academic training and six weeks of vocational training.

A defining feature of YouthBuild classes was that they tended to be small, a quality that allowed instructors to provide individual academic support to participants. The YouthBuild model indicates that the minimum teacher-to-student ratio should be 1 to 28 students total for the cohort, which assumes no more than 14 students in the classroom with 1 teacher at any given time. At the time of the site visits, the smallest class size was 5 and the largest was 30, with an average class size of between 12 and 13. The instructor-to-participant ratios ranged from 1:24 to 2:5, with an average of 1:9. These small numbers of participants per instructor made it possible for instructors to tailor instruction in a way that would be difficult to manage if class sizes were larger.

Table 6.1

Sequencing of Academic Classes

Program Response	Percentage of Programs
Daily (for some portion of the day)	33
Alternating days within a 1-week period	24
1 week on/1 week off	35
Other time allocation	
2 weeks on/2 weeks off	4
5 to 6 weeks on/5 to 6 weeks off	3
15 weeks on/15 weeks off	1
Sample size	75

SOURCES: Calculations based on YouthBuild site-visit interview data and the YouthBuild grantee survey.

Overview of Educational Services

All YouthBuild programs offered educational services that led to a GED certificate or high school diploma. When they entered their programs participants took educational assessments that helped determine the specific academic services they received. The majority of participants went into either a GED track or a high school diploma track, depending on the range of services available at the program and the individual participants' educational backgrounds. Most programs also offered postsecondary education services, though these services varied significantly from program to program. Table 6.2 provides an overview of the educational services offered by YouthBuild programs; these are discussed in more detail in the following sections.

Academic Assessments

All YouthBuild programs administered a range of academic assessments to assess participants' skills, place them into academic groups, and measure their progress toward key numeracy and literacy goals. As discussed in Chapter 4, the first round of assessments occurred either during Mental Toughness Orientation or shortly after program entry and included a basic test of participants' math and reading levels, most commonly the Tests of Adult Basic Education (TABE) or the Comprehensive Adult Student Assessment Systems (CASAS). Often, programs used essays to assess participants' skills when they entered the program and administered other diagnostic tests, including GED baseline tests. In addition to these initial assessments, most programs had a staff member meet with each participant to develop an individual development plan. That meeting usually included a participant self-assessment, a review of

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Table 6.2

Overview of Educational Services

Program Response	Percentage of Programs
Preenrollment and assessment information	
Basic education test (TABE, CASAS)	100
Portfolio assessments	37
Core education offerings	
GED prep and testing	96
High school diploma classes	41
GED and high school diploma classes	37
Programs that offer support for basic skills	93
Postsecondary educational offerings	
Workshops on applications and financial aid	92
College classes at universities	43
College visits	91
College counseling	63
Direct financial aid for college	35
Dual enrollment	31
SAT, ACT, or other college-entry exams	24
Opportunity to earn college credit	15
Sample size	75

SOURCE: Calculations based on YouthBuild site-visit interview data.

NOTES: TABE = Tests of Adult Basic Education; CASAS = Comprehensive Adult Student Assessment System.
Categories are not mutually exclusive.

academic transcripts (if available), and an identification of academic goals. Individual development plans set out academic goals for the future that might include improvements in test taking or help building foundational skills in English and math. For programs that offered a high school diploma as an option, staff members determined whether the participant had enough credits to succeed at earning a diploma over the course of the program.

In about half of the programs in the evaluation, participants were placed into academic levels or in academic groups based on their test scores.[1] For example, in one YouthBuild

[1]As will be discussed later in the chapter, almost all other programs either grouped students randomly or used other criteria, such as age, to group students.

program participants who scored between the sixth-grade and the ninth-grade academic level on the TABE were put into one group, while those who scored from a tenth- to twelfth-grade academic level were put in another. In a different program, TABE scores determined whether participants were placed on the basic-skills, high school diploma, or college-preparatory track. Program staff members believed that grouping participants in this way helped instructors to tailor instruction to students' individual needs. Larger programs often had a remedial-education or "pre-GED" track, a GED/high school diploma track, and a postsecondary track for those who had already earned their high school diplomas or GED certificates.

In addition to the intake assessments, YouthBuild programs used assessments to monitor student performance continually. Classroom observations, class work, and practice tests were used by programs to assess student progress. GED programs administered GED practice tests at regular intervals to gauge students' readiness to take different parts of the GED exam. Programs also administered the TABE or CASAS at regular intervals to monitor grade-level shifts in reading or math. Approximately one-third of programs also used portfolio assessments to monitor student progress, though programs that offered high school diplomas were more likely to use this strategy than other programs.[2]

GED Services

Ninety-six percent of YouthBuild programs offered GED preparation and 75 percent offered GED preparation as their primary educational program. There was little difference in GED preparation offerings between DOL- and CNCS-funded programs. GED instruction was a high priority for YouthBuild programs because many participants were missing so many high school credits that it would be difficult for them to earn all of the credits they needed to graduate during the program. Though GED programs all focused on the practical applications of learning and agreed on the importance of relating academic learning to real life, they placed different levels of emphasis on "skills" as opposed to "content."

The vast majority of GED programs focused primarily on teaching the skills needed to pass the GED exam, rather than encouraging students to memorize content. For example, one instructor said, "We do not necessarily have to teach [participants] knowledge, we just have to teach them skills." These programs focused on reading comprehension, vocabulary, how to write a five-paragraph essay, fractions, geometry, and solving word problems. Programs worked to improve participants' test-taking skills, including their ability to interpret graphs and

[2]A student portfolio is a collection of student work and related material that depicts a student's activities, accomplishments, and achievements in one or more school subjects.

Box 6.2

Different Approaches to GED Education

Skills-Based. YouthBuild New Bedford (Massachusetts) educational instructors designed that program's educational services with the goal of helping participants pass the GED exam. The program has reading, writing, and math classes. Social studies and science content were covered during the reading class, because instructors viewed reading skills as pivotal to passing those portions of the GED exam. The program had a low student-to-instructor ratio, which allowed instructors to provide "very individualized" support to participants. Participants worked at their own pace and on key content areas they needed to master, which kept them from getting bored. The students took a practice GED test during Mental Toughness Orientation, after which they determined when they were ready to take GED pretests.

Content-Based. In the Latin American Youth Center (LAYC) YouthBuild Public Charter School (Washington, DC), participants worked towards their GED certificates by attending structured classes in reading, writing, math, science, and social studies. The school offered pre-GED and GED classes in English and Spanish and also offered an English as a Second Language class. Students received report cards three times a year. Teachers engaged students in cross-curricular projects, integrating construction and educational activities. For instance, if the construction program focused on "green" building techniques, participants' science class would focus on environmental issues and their social studies class would focus on environmental policies and laws.

SOURCE: YouthBuild site-visit interview data.

charts. For the most part, participants in skills-based GED programs attended classes just long enough to earn their GED certificates, which took from a month to over a year. They moved through material at their own pace and when they were ready, they took the GED exam. After completing their GED exams, they either focused full time on vocational training or began to concentrate on postsecondary education.

A few GED programs were based more on content, in that participants took structured courses in math, English, science, and history. In three of these cases, the GED programs had relationships with charter high schools. These GED programs resembled certain kinds of high school diploma programs in the ways they organized their classes and structured their time. Box 6.2 highlights different approaches that YouthBuild programs took to providing GED educational services.

Approximately a third of GED programs had a partner provide educational services. In most cases, a local community college paid the salary of a GED instructor who came to the

program to deliver GED educational services.[3] Interestingly, programs where partners provided GED services had higher fidelity to the academic dimensions of the YouthBuild model than YouthBuild programs where GED instruction was provided directly by the YouthBuild staff. This may have been in part due to the specialized expertise of those partners in delivering GED services.

High School Diploma Services

Twenty YouthBuild programs in the evaluation had substantial high school diploma tracks, meaning that at least a quarter of participants were pursuing their high school diplomas.[4] As shown in Appendix Table G.1, a higher percentage of CNCS-funded programs offered high school diploma services than did DOL-funded programs. Most high school diploma programs had to meet state content and curricular requirements and participants earned credits for completing required course work. In some cases, programs used a competency-based model of assessment, in which participants worked on one skill or subject at a time and only moved on once they had mastered that skill. Like GED programs, YouthBuild high school diploma programs prided themselves on their low student-to-teacher ratios and the individual support and attention they provided to participants.

YouthBuild programs that had significant high school diploma tracks either were charter schools (15 percent) or had strong educational partners that provided academic services (85 percent). Of those programs that were not charter schools, most collaborated closely with charter or alternative schools, though a few had school district partners that allowed the programs to operate as alternative schools. Perhaps due to these partnerships, high school-degree-granting programs had more diversified funding streams than GED programs, which relied more on DOL funding.

A little under half of the high school programs were "structured," in that participants moved among organized classes in English, math, history, science, and social studies. Of all programs these had the highest average fidelity to the YouthBuild academic standards, because they were the most likely to incorporate project-based and experiential learning. Participants in these programs read full novels, conducted research projects, and received regular progress reports. The class sizes were generally small and teachers tried to limit lecture time or direct instruction, choosing instead to engage students in projects, and there was a strong effort to make the content relevant to students' experiences. For instance, participants of Portland

[3]Four programs had participants attend off-site adult-education programs.

[4]Just over 40 percent of programs offered some kind of high school diploma track, but in some of these programs the vast majority of participants were in the GED track, with very few participants pursuing their high school diplomas.

YouthBuilders (Oregon) took an interdisciplinary contemporary issues class, which introduced them to research regarding the root causes of crime and explored its effect on individual and community behavior. Participants then analyzed crime in Portland neighborhoods and created a PowerPoint presentation to communicate their understanding of the issues studied in class and some potential solutions to those problems.

Half of the high school programs operated like supported independent-study programs, where participants earned high school credits by working independently on workbooks, getting individual tutoring support from instructors when needed. The periods of independent study were interspersed with discussions about current events and short lessons related to content that groups of participants were working on at the same time. These high school diploma programs had a similar structure to the skills-based GED programs in that they had very small classes composed of participants at various skill levels: participants worked at their own pace while receiving personalized support. As might be expected, then, fidelity to the academic design standards for supported independent-study programs was similar to that of GED programs. Box 6.3 highlights the two most common types of high school diploma programs.

Two high school diploma programs relied on software to provide instruction for students to earn high school credits. Although participants received most of their core instruction on the computer, instructors circulated to provide support. At one program, for example, participants received an initial introduction to the lesson from the instructor, and then completed lessons on the computer while an instructor circulated. Participants took online quizzes throughout a lesson and a test at the end: if they did not pass the test, they reviewed notes and retested when they were ready. Due to the rarity of project-based or experiential learning, computer-based high school diploma programs had the lowest fidelity to YouthBuild's academic design standards of any programs.

As a group, high school diploma and GED programs were similar in some ways, but different in others. Each type of educational track included some programs that were structured and interactive and some programs that were more like "supported" independent-study programs, in which participants worked mostly independently and at their own pace. High school diploma programs included some of the largest and most established YouthBuild programs with the most diversified funding streams, such as YouthBuild Philadelphia Charter School, YouthBuild McLean County (Illinois), and Operation Fresh Start YouthBuild (Wisconsin). They also included some of the smallest programs, such as YouthBuild Gary (Indiana) and Jackson YouthBuild (Michigan).

Postsecondary Services

As the job market has become more competitive, the YouthBuild model has focused increasingly on postsecondary preparation as a way to ensure the long-term success of program

Box 6.3

Different Models for High School Diploma Programs

Structured High School Diploma Programs. Los Angeles Community Advocating for Social Justice and Action (LA CAUSA) YouthBuild is one of three YouthBuild programs in the study that offered only a high school diploma. LA CAUSA is a charter-school affiliate of YouthBuild Charter School of California. All charter-school participants attended YouthBuild. YouthBuild Charter School of California paid for all of the teacher's salaries, materials and supplies, and rent for the classroom space. Participants attended classes in history, English, math, science, and electives such as media, art, and film. Participants took course work aligned with California state educational standards and prepared to take the state graduation exam.

The YouthBuild Philadelphia Charter School Project (Pennsylvania) is a competency-based charter school. Participants were grouped by academic level, and completed courses that ranged in difficulty from a remedial level through college level. The school offered a class called "Creative and Complex Reading and Writing," which was designed to be a college-level course. In one social studies class, participants completed an independent research project. Teachers used direct instruction or lecture methods but tried to do so sparingly. Teachers issued progress reports halfway through each session. At the end of each six-week academic session, participants received report cards that tracked their progress on academic competencies; recorded their TABE scores before and after the session along with their grades, service hours, and attendance; and noted any certifications earned.

Independent-Study Program. Bi-CAP YouthBuild in Bemidji, Minnesota partnered with Voyageurs Charter School, which provided the program with a full-time academic counselor and a part-time special-education adviser. The academic counselor spent all of his time on the YouthBuild campus, while the special-education adviser was at YouthBuild for two hours, two times a week. Staff members used individual education plans to track student progress toward the 25 credits needed for graduation. The academic counselor connected participants with resources and assignments; most of the learning was self-directed and completed individually or in small groups with other participants who were working toward earning the same credits.

SOURCE: YouthBuild site-visit interview data.

graduates. Postsecondary services were designed to prepare participants academically for college and to facilitate their access to and transition into college. YouthBuild programs tended to make a priority of movement to community and technical colleges, because as one staff member described, "Really few participants ... can leave [YouthBuild] and go into a four-year [school]." YouthBuild focuses on postsecondary education in order to give graduates as many choices in the job market as possible, and recognizes that many graduates need to work and attend college at the same time. Although most programs provided some type of postsecondary support for students who were interested, programs' focus on postsecondary preparation and

advanced technical training was far less consistent than their focus on GED or high school diploma preparation.

Programs with strong postsecondary preparation components integrated these services into the entire program, whereas those that were weaker viewed postsecondary services as something interested young people could engage in as they prepared to leave the program. Some YouthBuild programs with strong postsecondary components, like LA CAUSA Youth-Build (California), focused on promoting college readiness by helping participants develop critical-thinking and presentation skills. Participants took classes such as "media art and film," where they completed research projects and made presentations on selected topics. Other programs, like Mile High Youth Corps YouthBuild (Colorado), had comprehensive curricula and schedules for participants to engage in postsecondary exploration from the time they entered the program. Mile High Youth Corps participants attended multiple college-readiness workshops, toured multiple colleges, applied for financial aid and scholarships, and applied to the Community College of Denver.

Across all programs, postsecondary access services ranged from "light-touch" services — designed to improve participants' awareness of local colleges, college-to-career pathways, and college financing — to more intensive services, for example, enrolling all participants in community college classes and structured programs that facilitated their transition into college. As illustrated in Table 6.2, while almost all programs offered college tours and assistance to participants in filing college and financial-aid applications, less than half of programs offered intensive services such as providing direct financial aid, access to college classes, dual enrollment, or other opportunities to earn college credit.

There was considerable variation in postsecondary education offerings between DOL- and CNCS-funded programs, as presented in Appendix Table G.1. DOL-funded programs were more likely to provide intensive services such as college classes, dual enrollment, opportunities to earn college credits, direct financial aid for college, or support in preparing for college-entry exams. In contrast, CNCS-funded programs tended to have a higher percentage of programs offering the light-touch services such as workshops on applications for financial aid, college visits, or college counseling.

One standard of the YouthBuild model is that programs should dedicate a significant percentage of one or several staff members' time to assisting students in preparing for college and careers. Just under 70 percent of programs that fully met this standard generally had either (1) a designated postsecondary staff member, (2) a staff member who focused on postsecondary and career placement (often called a Placement Coordinator), or (3) an academic instructor who also provided postsecondary support to students. These different models reflected different approaches to providing postsecondary support: some programs saw postsecondary services as

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Table 6.3

Postsecondary Education Partnerships

Program Response	Percentage of Programs
Partnerships[a]	53
Four-year college	7
Community/technical college	48
Local board of education	1
Nonprofit	4
Religious organization	1
School district	3
Services offered	
"Light-touch" college readiness/access	27
Intensive college readiness	7
Transition services	16
Data sharing or case conferencing	5
Tuition/fee assistance	7
College dual enrollment	31
College credit for YouthBuild classes	15
Sample size	75

SOURCE: Calculations based on YouthBuild site-visit interview data.

NOTES: Categories are not mutually exclusive.
[a]This does not include partnerships with community colleges for GED services (unless GED students were dually enrolled as community college students.)

an independent area of focus, some understood it primarily as a placement opportunity for participants, and some perceived it as another form of skill development, and as such integrated it with other academic services. Programs that partially met or did not meet this standard were generally small programs with few staff members, though some relied on partners to provide college-access services.

The YouthBuild design standards also require programs to have postsecondary partners. Table 6.3 shows that a little over half of programs identified a postsecondary partner and that among these programs, community and technical colleges were by far the most common type of postsecondary partner. Though partnerships varied from formal relationships that existed primarily on paper to full-fledged collaborations, most were "light touch." Deeper collaborative relationships with community colleges, several of which are highlighted in Box 6.4, typically involved enrolling YouthBuild participants in college classes or arrangements that allowed YouthBuild participants to earn postsecondary credits for YouthBuild classes.

Box 6.4

Examples of Collaboration with Community Colleges

At YouthBuild of Central Iowa, participants could enroll in the local community college while they were studying to take the GED exam. In addition to paying for books and materials, YouthBuild paid tuition for all the community college classes participants took while in the program and for those taken during the first semester after participants graduated from the program. Participants also earned credits for YouthBuild classes where they learned about the college experience and the transition to college, became familiar with various study strategies, and explored careers. YouthBuild participants could also earn credit for math, English, and plumbing and electrical courses, which meant that they could graduate from YouthBuild with up to 12 college credits. Two participants earned associate degrees while enrolled in the YouthBuild program.

At YouthBuild Delta (Louisiana) all participants were enrolled in a local community college, the partner that provided all of YouthBuild Delta's academic services. The community college waived a portion of YouthBuild participants' tuition costs while they were enrolled in the program. YouthBuild participants had full access to community college programs and services, including GED instruction and testing, remedial education, high school equivalency classes, citizenship education, English language learning, parenting training, and work-readiness programs. All participants who attained their high school diplomas or GED certificates could take courses and enroll in degree programs at any community college campus. YouthBuild participants took courses in practical nursing, welding, diesel-powered equipment technology, automotive technology, communication technology, and business-office administration.

SOURCE: YouthBuild site-visit interview data.

Finally, the YouthBuild model says that programs should promote a "culture" of post-secondary enrollment that supports students in preparing for a range of options such as certification programs and two-year and four-year colleges. At the time of the site visits, more than half of the study programs fully met this standard, while the rest continued to focus primarily on job skills and entry into the labor market. While all of the high school programs that offered structured classes fully met this standard, most independent-study high school programs did not. Staff members at programs that did not promote a postsecondary culture often said that participants were not interested in attending college and thus they focused their efforts on placing participants into jobs.

Staffing and Instruction

Participants frequently mentioned the YouthBuild instructors as one of their favorite aspects of the program. A common theme in participant interviews and focus groups was that YouthBuild instructors were "caring" and that they provided "one-on-one support." Students said things like "Mostly YouthBuild is better because the teachers care. They are the best teachers you will ever find," and "Here they pay more attention to you if you don't understand something, and they really help you understand what you need to do in order to get your GED." The low participant-to-instructor ratio supported instructors' efforts to get to know their students' strengths and weaknesses, as well as to understand the influences in their lives that could interfere with academic engagement.[5] Classroom observations by site visitors confirmed that, in most cases, instructors and students appeared to have a very good rapport.

YouthBuild instructors varied in their training and experience. Across the programs, over half of the academic instructors had bachelor's degrees and nearly half had master's degrees. When it came to teaching experience, almost a quarter of teachers had less than one year of experience, while nearly the same proportion had more than seven years of teaching experience. Many had previous experience in special education, secondary school, or adult basic education. With few exceptions, instructors enjoyed working in the small-school setting and with YouthBuild participants in particular. Although most teachers did not share the ethnic or socioeconomic backgrounds of participants, they showed interest in working with at-risk young people. Most instructors said that they saw their jobs as involving more than teaching academic skills: they saw a role for themselves in helping to build participants' academic self-confidence, communication skills, work ethic, and task persistence. Thus, most instructors at YouthBuild had a holistic vision of their role that included aspects of coaching and counseling.

In keeping with the instructor interviews, participants' descriptions of YouthBuild academic services were generally positive. In the few programs where one or more participants had a negative view of academic services, it was because the academic experience was perceived as too similar to their high school experience, "boring," or "too easy," or because they did not feel that instructors treated them with respect. Participants' most common complaint was about the behavior of other participants, who fooled around in class or did not take class seriously. The vast majority of participants, however, praised their teachers and the quality of instruction. In part, participants' positive assessment of YouthBuild teachers was due to the highly negative

[5]The participant-to-instructor ratio was the number of participants and teachers in each classroom (as opposed to across a program) as reported to site visitors by a YouthBuild program's staff. A substantial minority of programs (37 percent) reported having only one instructor. This uninterrupted time with the same instructor could be seen as an additional way students felt cared for and supported.

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Table 6.4

Methods of Instruction

Program Response	Percentage of Programs
Independent work	92
Large-group discussions	85
Peer teaching	83
Project-based learning	63
Computer-based instruction	76
Small-group discussions	69
Worksheets	93
Role playing	36
Team teaching	1
Sample size	75

SOURCES: Calculations based on YouthBuild site-visit interview data and the YouthBuild grantee survey.

NOTE: Categories are not mutually exclusive.

experiences they had in regular high school. For instance, one student said, "High school is built like a prison. You could never ask [a question] without the teacher embarrassing you. Here, we are treated like we are supposed to be treated. We are treated like adults. I don't have to be afraid to ask for help."

As highlighted in Table 6.4, YouthBuild instructors used a variety of strategies to engage participants, the mix of which varied considerably across programs. Instructors reported that they used lecture and large-group instruction sparingly because they found it difficult to keep students focused for long periods. Almost all programs provided time for participants to do individual work, during which participants completed worksheets taken from GED materials or materials designed for students earning high school credits. When participants were engaged in individual work, the academic instructors circulated among participants or were available at their desks to answer questions. For the most part, participants appreciated this approach, feeling that it made it possible for them to focus on what they needed to learn to graduate, rather than being bound to a set curriculum. Further, many participants said that they appreciated the one-on-one support that YouthBuild instructors provided. One participant said,

> In high school, you have to raise your hand to ask for help. Here, they see you struggling and they come up to you and help you out…. Here, [the teacher] just walks around all the time and if he sees we are not doing so good, he will come help out.

Box 6.5

Participant Vignette

This 19-year-old was one of those less common YouthBuild participants who already had a high school diploma. Despite being a "class clown" in high school, he was able to graduate on time. Still, he felt like he needed more positivity in his life. "I needed to get my life together," he said. At YouthBuild, he felt more engaged in his academic work. Because of his interest in art and music, the academic instructor encouraged him to write a paper on the Harlem Renaissance, which he found challenging. He also appreciated how the academic instructor adapted to his learning style by teaching through games and hands-on activities. YouthBuild assisted him in completing the application and identifying financial aid sources, and the participant planned to enroll at a local community college the following fall.

SOURCE: YouthBuild site-visit interview data.

One area where there is broad variation across YouthBuild programs is in the use of interactive and constructivist teaching methods.[6] One standard of the YouthBuild model is that instruction be "learner-centered" and "project-based," incorporating methods such as collaborative learning and peer-to-peer teaching to address specific student needs, learning styles, strengths, and interests. See Box 6.5 for one participant's opinion of this type of instruction. Only half of programs fully met this standard. Many independent-study-type programs, as well as those primarily using computer-based software to help students earn high school credits, partially met this standard or did not meet it at all because either they did not incorporate collaborative or project-based learning or they did so infrequently or on an ad hoc basis. Similarly, these programs were also less likely to use project-based or experiential learning.

The approximately one-quarter of programs that were charter schools or content-based GED programs were the most likely to meet the standard for being learner-centered and project-based. In many cases, these programs incorporated projects focused on construction-related content, such as measuring a space or calculating the materials required for a building. Projects also often related to community service or social issues, such as preparing a PowerPoint presentation on how to prevent sexually transmitted infections or crime in the local community.

[6]"Constructivist" teaching aims to make students active participants in the process of knowledge construction rather than seeing students as merely passive recipients of information.

Factors Affecting Implementation

Although YouthBuild academic programs shared certain features, such as their focus on individually tailored support and self-paced learning, there was considerable variation in how services were implemented and in the degree to which academic services showed fidelity to the YouthBuild model. The following contextual factors influenced implementation and fidelity to YouthBuild's academic and postsecondary standards.

- **Programs with more academic partners were more faithful to the YouthBuild model for both academic and postsecondary services than those with fewer partners.** Academic partnerships appeared to increase the ability of YouthBuild programs to provide a full range of academic services. On average, programs with three or more partners were more faithful to the academic standards in the model than programs with fewer partners. This trend was strongest for the postsecondary standards, which is not surprising given that two of those postsecondary standards relate directly to partnerships. It also held true, however, for the other academic standards. The GED programs that had partners deliver services had higher fidelity to the academic design standards than the GED programs where staff members delivered academic services, largely because programs where partners delivered services were more likely to include project-based learning.

- **Programs with few staff members (two to five) were less likely to meet the academic and postsecondary standards outlined in the YouthBuild model than those with more people on staff.** Although there was not a relationship between program or agency budget and academic or postsecondary fidelity, it did appear that programs with few staff members had more difficulty providing a full range of academic services. This was particularly true of postsecondary academic services, because small programs had to make choices about where to spend their energies, and tended to make a higher priority of GED or high school diploma services.

- **Programs with designated postsecondary funding were more likely to be faithful to the postsecondary standards in the YouthBuild model than those without it.** Thirteen programs in the evaluation received grants through YouthBuild USA from the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation, the Open Society Foundation, and New Profit, Inc.'s Social Innovation Fund to participate in the Postsecondary Education Initiative, intended to align student learning outcomes with the expectations of postsecondary institutions. Six of these were CNCS-funded programs. Many of the same programs, plus seven others in this evaluation, also participated in an earlier National

School Initiative intended to develop stronger postsecondary programs. The programs that received supplemental funding through the National School Initiative were almost identical to those that did not in their fidelity to the academic components of the YouthBuild model, while programs receiving Postsecondary Education Initiative funding had higher fidelity to the same components. Programs receiving funding through either initiative were more likely to meet the model's postsecondary standards than programs without this dedicated funding.

- **The level of integration of academic instructors into the program influenced implementation.** Programs differed in how well academic services were integrated with youth-leadership or vocational training. In some cases, particularly where academic services were offered off-site, YouthBuild culture was only minimally integrated into academic services. In general, the more integrated academic instructors were into the YouthBuild program, the better they were able to make connections between academic subjects and what participants were learning in other aspects of the program.

Challenges and Promising Practices

Academic instructors and program staff members identified a number of challenges in delivering academic services. Chief among these were challenges related to engaging young people who had previously struggled educationally, who lacked foundational reading and math skills, and who had little academic self-confidence. The low skill levels of participants and their low levels of academic credit sometimes made it difficult for them to earn their GED certificates or high school diplomas within the time frame of the program. Furthermore, participants struggled with aspects of their lives — such as unstable housing — that interfered with their ability to learn. Site visitors observed high rates of absenteeism at some programs, something also mentioned by staff members at partner organizations that provided academic services.

Programs also faced organizational challenges. For example, a few instructors said that they had too many responsibilities and too little planning time to develop lessons or class materials. At a minimum of two programs, construction deadlines sometimes interfered with academic services, leading to some young people being pulled from their academic classes in order to meet those deadlines. Staff supervision and integration of services was challenging for those programs that had partners provide services off-site. Finally, site visitors observed that a few programs had staff turnover problems or facilities challenges (such as lack of access to space or computers) that interfered with their ability to provide quality academic services. One program that had just moved, for instance, was using a transitional space for academic services that was too small and that lacked a usable bathroom.

Though the quality of the implementation of academic services varied, participants and academic instructors in the majority of YouthBuild programs reported that the following practices helped programs engage participants and keep them moving toward their academic goals:

- **Small class sizes and low participant-to-instructor ratios were key structural elements that supported participant learning.** At one program, teachers described the academic experience as a "one-room schoolhouse," and the small class size was perceived as essential to building respectful relationships and providing individually tailored academic support. Participants consistently spoke about how small classes helped them learn.

- **The pairing of independent work and individual tutoring was seen as the best way to provide participants with one-on-one support.** This individual attention was perceived as vital by many participants. One participant described, "I think that is what a lot of people need, the one-on-one." Another said, "[The instructors here] coach you through it, they stick with you. It's one-on-one here and they cater to your needs."

- **The structure of YouthBuild classrooms allowed participants to learn at their own pace and focus only on the content that they needed to learn.** The pace of learning in a typical YouthBuild classroom could be slow or fast, depending on the academic skills and motivation of the individual participant. Because participants worked at their own pace and were focused on what they needed to learn, they felt less like they were just "putting in their time." Participants said, "We are taking one subject at a time, so it is a little bit easier. Instead of studying a lot of different things you are focused on one thing," and, "You can kind of work at your own pace and that is what is good about it."

- **Instructors placed an emphasis on building strong, respectful relationships with participants.** As described in the section on instruction, many participants reported that YouthBuild's academic program is distinguished by the degree of personal understanding, connection, and trust that instructors build with participants. An instructor said, "A lot of students are frustrated that they are just a number, and here we know their stories so we can engage them. This helps with bonding, which is part of the solution to help create an intimate classroom setting." In most cases, YouthBuild participants particularly appreciated that instructors treated them like adults by talking to them respectfully, providing them with freedom to move freely around the classroom, and allowing them to work independently.

Conclusion

Academic services are one of the cornerstones of the YouthBuild model, distinguished not so much by a common approach to instruction or a common curriculum, but by a common philosophy of how to support young people. Most programs focused on building trusting relationships and providing individual-level support to participants, believing that trust is essential for learning and for personal change. Although the relationships between students and staff members were strong in most YouthBuild programs, the more structured academic programs offered academic services closer to the YouthBuild model than those that focused primarily on individual-level work.

Quality academic services at YouthBuild also depended on the other services that YouthBuild provides. Holistic case management and supportive services (transportation, some meals, and stipends) helped participants address the challenges in their lives that might interfere with their ability to focus on their education. The vocational-instruction and work-readiness services helped to make academics more relevant, and gave participants an impression of what awaited them in the world of work. The leadership and community service aspects of YouthBuild helped to develop participants' confidence to speak up in the classroom and also raised topics that participants could discuss in their classes. Thus, the quality of YouthBuild academic services depended on the implementation of many other aspects of the YouthBuild model.

Chapter 7

Vocational-Training Services

In addition to lacking a high school diploma or General Educational Development (GED) certificate, most participants come to YouthBuild with few, if any, job skills and have little, if any, work experience. YouthBuild addresses these needs by providing vocational-training services — primarily construction-skills training but also sometimes training in other vocational fields. On average, participants spend nearly half their total program time engaging in these training services, where they build marketable job skills and have the opportunity to gain real work experience. Together these benefits have the potential to substantially improve their future earnings and job stability. Participants engage in this training while advancing their education and earning a stipend. Indeed, next to their education, the opportunity to get job training and work experience was one of the primary reasons participants said they decided to enroll.

Throughout YouthBuild's history, training in and experience doing construction, specifically on properties in low-income communities, have been integral to its identity. The provision of construction skills and work site experience — which also plays a fundamental community service role — formed much of the core identity of early YouthBuild programs and is a prominent feature that the Department of Labor (DOL) is authorized to fund under the YouthBuild Transfer Act.[1] The program's name, "YouthBuild," plays on the fact that it builds and develops participants' lives by providing them with skills and training, while improving the larger community through construction activities. In fact, it is through construction, which is a very visible activity, that YouthBuild programs can alter the public perception of their population. By changing the community for the better, YouthBuild helps the larger public come to see these young people as an asset rather than a liability, while helping participants change their views of themselves and what they can accomplish.

That said, in recent years, to adapt to a downturn in the housing market and based on changing guidance from DOL, some programs have expanded their offerings to include training in nonconstruction fields such as health care, computer technology, land management, and the culinary arts. Programs offer these types of training in addition to construction training, in a variety of configurations. By offering nonconstruction training, programs have been able to provide opportunities to young people that might have been turned off by the construction

[1]U.S. Department of Labor, Employment and Training Administration (2011).

component of the program. Nonconstruction skills might also prove even more marketable in the areas where YouthBuild programs operate.[2]

To examine the implementation of the vocational-training component of YouthBuild programs, this chapter starts with an overview of the construction and nonconstruction training services provided to participants in the 75 YouthBuild programs that participated in the evaluation.[3] It then discusses the curricula, staffing, and partnerships that programs used to deliver vocational training. The chapter then turns to factors that affected implementation and the strategies staff members used to overcome challenges in delivering training services. The chapter presents the following key findings.

- Construction training included training in workplace safety and other skills like painting, carpentry, electrical work, and plumbing, which programs delivered in classroom, workshop, and work-site settings. One Corporation for National and Community Service (CNCS)-funded program did not offer construction training while three did not offer work-site experiences.
- About a fifth of YouthBuild programs offered training in fields such as health care, culinary arts, computer technology, and land management in addition to construction training.
- Although programs varied in how they planned and sequenced vocational training in relation to other services, participants spent just under half their total program time, on average, in vocational training. A few programs struggled, providing too much or too little training in relation to other services, given the YouthBuild model.
- Training staffs were sometimes stretched thin; individual training staff members had multiple responsibilities, and staffing overall proved challenging due to fluctuating numbers of participants. Maintaining a high enough staff-member-to-participant ratio was the one standard of the YouthBuild model that more than a few programs had difficulty meeting.
- Consistent with the YouthBuild model, programs used nationally recognized curricula and offered widely recognized certifications.

[2]Construction training may experience renewed interest as media reports in early 2014 suggested a coming nationwide shortfall of construction workers, particularly skilled workers. See Hudson (2014).

[3]"Vocational training" refers to construction and nonconstruction training.

- Partners played key roles in the delivery of vocational training: managing construction work sites, providing training, providing supplies, and providing general construction support.
- Overall, programs implemented vocational-training services with a high degree of fidelity to the YouthBuild model — higher than any other category of services prescribed by the YouthBuild model.
- The economic downturn significantly affected programs' ability to implement construction-related vocational training. It affected their ability to provide quality construction experiences to participants and limited the marketability of the job skills they taught. Programs grappled with ways to diversify their operations through new partnerships and to provide new training opportunities for participants.
- Successful strategies for engaging young people in vocational-training services included customizing training opportunities, providing hands-on experience, making training fun, providing opportunities for leadership, helping participants find value in their work, and offering incentives. All of these strategies were intended to build participants' trust and maintain their interest.

Overview of Vocational-Training Services

Each of the 75 YouthBuild programs in the evaluation provided participants with vocational-training services designed to improve their marketable skills and, ideally, to provide them with practical work experience. It was not surprising to find that 74 of the 75 programs in the evaluation offered construction training to program participants.[4] YouthBuild's history is strongly associated with the provision of construction training and, as discussed in Chapter 2, until 2012, DOL required that programs use their federal vocational-training funding only for construction. In 2012 DOL began allowing programs to use some funding for nonconstruction training, although they were still required to offer construction training. While this change has opened up new possibilities for many YouthBuild programs, some programs have provided nonconstruction training for some time using other funding sources. The research team found that 17 programs offered such training in vocations ranging from health care to landscaping to

[4]The one program that did not offer construction training did offer nonconstruction training; it was a CNCS-funded program. Due to various budget cuts, staff members at this program were considering no longer providing the program or downsizing it considerably, and thus were not offering construction training.

computers; 6 of these were CNCS-funded programs. The following sections provide detail about both the methods of instruction and the skills taught by programs in their construction and nonconstruction training.

Construction Training: Service Delivery

Process-study site visitors found that the 74 YouthBuild programs that provided construction training delivered it through three different methods of instruction: classroom training, workshop training, and experience on construction work sites. This work-site experience primarily includes building or renovating affordable housing for low-income people; 15 percent of funding can be used for other projects, for example community-beautification projects.[5]

Each of the YouthBuild programs that provided construction training did so, in part, through some form of classroom-based training, in which participants learned from an instructor through computer- or book-guided lessons, or both. As discussed in Chapter 6, some programs wove portions of their construction training into the academic curriculum (such as construction math or measurement skills). At most programs, however, participants also engaged in classroom training that specifically emphasized construction skills and that was not part of the regular academic training. Examples of training topics included: workplace and construction safety; basic principles of construction, such as measuring, reading electrical charts, and understanding blueprints; and more traditional academic skills, such as algebra and geometry, that prepared young people to pass construction certification exams.

Each of the YouthBuild programs that provided construction training used workshops to give participants hands-on experience in a controlled environment, applying classroom-taught skills before progressing to actual work sites. Workshops ranged in size, equipment, and overall functionality. The spaces often consisted of converted warehouses or large open spaces that included things like work tables; power tools; samples of ductwork, plumbing, or wiring; and lockers in which participants stored construction clothing, books, hats, and tools. In the YouthBuild KCK (Kansas) workshop, for instance, participants were able to practice installing toilets, build tool sheds, view sample plumbing structures, and practice with tools like a table saw with very high-end safety features. Another advantage to workshops was that they gave participants something productive to do when work sites were not available due to scheduling issues or when inclement weather prevented participants from working there.

[5]The rest of this section refers only to the 74 programs that provided construction training.

YouthBuild Evaluation

Table 7.1

Construction Training at YouthBuild Programs

Program Response	Percentage of Programs
Types of construction training work sites	
New home construction only	12
Renovate existing homes or offices only	31
New home construction and renovations	53
No work site	4
Types of construction training skills provided[a]	
Workplace safety	100
Painting	95
Carpentry	95
Hazardous materials	57
Plumbing	49
Electrical work	45
Roofing	22
Bricklaying	24
Weatherization and insulation	20
Landscaping	18
Sample size	74

SOURCE: Calculations based on YouthBuild site-visit interview data.

NOTE: One program did not offer construction training due to budget constraints but did provide nonconstruction training for its participants.

[a]Categories are not mutually exclusive.

Nearly all YouthBuild programs also trained participants in construction skills by providing them with work experience on actual work sites, typically benefiting low-income communities through the construction or renovation of housing or other public facilities.[6] Table 7.1 shows that just over half the YouthBuild programs in the evaluation had participants placed both at work sites where they built new homes and at sites where they renovated existing homes or offices. Nearly a third of programs only renovated properties and 12 percent only built new

[6]A higher percentage of CNCS-funded programs lacked a construction-training work site than DOL-funded programs, as shown in Appendix Table G.1. YouthBuild participants were typically paid a stipend for their participation in the program. However, because this stipend was generally tied to overall participation and not specifically work conducted on work sites — with the exception of bonus pay for leadership positions held on work sites — stipends are discussed in Chapter 8.

Box 7.1

New Construction Compared with Renovation Projects

Staff members at several programs suggested that they preferred new construction to renovation work because it allowed for a wider variety of construction activities and offered participants a greater range of construction experience. Interviews with program staff members suggested that the types of projects available for YouthBuild participation depended in part on both the construction projects available in the area and the nature of the partner agencies that supplied work sites. For example, YouthBuild programs that worked with Habitat for Humanity frequently built new homes rather than renovating them, whereas programs that worked with public housing agencies more frequently renovated existing properties. In fact, YouthBuild programs in urban areas were slightly more likely to engage in only renovation projects than programs in more rural areas. Staff members at some programs also suggested that the economy was a factor in the types of sites available. In one area where home sales were particularly slow, the YouthBuild program was involved in mostly renovation projects, even though it had previously built and sold many homes.

SOURCE: YouthBuild site-visit interview data.

homes; as shown in Appendix Table G.1, a higher percentage of DOL-funded programs worked on new home construction than did CNCS-funded programs. In addition to renovation and new construction projects, staff members at some programs indicated that they engaged in other types of neighborhood beautification projects. At YouthBuild Brockton (Massachusetts), for example, participants constructed fences, benches, and planters and conducted other similar small projects for the city, the Veteran's Affairs Center, and local schools. Box 7.1 further discusses the differences between renovation and new construction projects.

These three construction-training delivery methods — in classrooms, in workshops, and at work sites — closely align with the YouthBuild model, which posits that: 1) construction training should be complemented by classes designed to teach terminology and reinforce skills in an environment free of production constraints; and 2) programs should serve their neighborhoods by building or rehabilitating affordable housing or community facilities. Overall, programs implemented these standards of the model with a high degree of fidelity, as was the case for most standards in the YouthBuild model pertaining to vocational training; DOL-funded programs had higher average scores than CNCS-funded programs. Only a small number of programs — often those without work sites — were unable to meet these standards.[7]

[7]See Appendix B for a full account of fidelity scores.

As is indicated in Table 7.1, 4 percent of programs (that is, three programs, not including the one program that did not offer construction training at all) were without work sites at the time of the process-study site visits. Staff members at these programs offered various explanations as to why they did not have work sites, but were not able to suggest they would have work-site opportunities for participants in the near future. Instead, participants in these programs focused on classroom and workshop training only, sometimes building structures in their programs' workshops, like small barns or sheds that could be sold to the community, to gain some experience in construction work. While these programs managed without work sites, their absence led to frustration and a loss of trust on the part of some participants. As a participant from one of these programs noted, "We haven't had any construction training. We are not getting what was promised." It was the opportunity to gain real, paid work experience that attracted many participants to the program in the first place.

Another small way some programs struggled to meet the YouthBuild model's standards for construction training had to do with the total time participants spent in that training. Participants spent, on average, a little less than half their total program time in construction training. However, participants of some YouthBuild programs spent as little as 20 percent or as much as 80 percent of their total program time in construction training. Programs at the top end of this range tended to emphasize an on-the-job training approach and considered on-the-job time paramount for youth development and experience building. These programs ran the risk of being out of alignment with the YouthBuild model, which, as discussed in Chapter 6, states that participants need to spend at least 50 percent of their time in educational activities.

Construction Training: Skills Taught by YouthBuild Programs

Through classroom, workshop, and work-site training, YouthBuild programs taught participants workplace safety and a wide range of construction skills like carpentry and painting. Table 7.1 illustrates the construction skills taught by YouthBuild programs and the percentage of programs that taught each of them.

The provision of workplace-safety training is both an important standard of the YouthBuild model and a requirement for DOL-funded programs, so it was not surprising to find that every YouthBuild program taught participants about safe workplace practices. Safety training often included the 10-hour Occupational Health and Safety Administration (OSHA) Outreach Training Program for the Construction Industry, although at least one program offered the 30-hour version.[8] Several other programs taught workplace safety based on modules in their

[8]More information on the content of the OSHA 10- and 30-hour training programs can be found at: www.osha.gov/dte/outreach.

construction curricula. Programs also delivered cardiopulmonary resuscitation (CPR) and first aid training, mostly through their own staff members or with the aid of training partners such as the Red Cross. Most participants also earned some kind of certification for completing each type of safety training.

YouthBuild programs taught workplace safety in a manner consistent with the YouthBuild model, which posits that programs should teach safety skills at the outset and reinforce that training throughout the program. Many programs, for instance, not only delivered safety training early in the program cycle, for example during Mental Toughness Orientation, but also through regular reminders in the workshop and at the work site. At the Barre campus of ReSOURCE YouthBuild (Vermont), for example, participants held a safety meeting every day after lunch. As one participant put it, the program taught him "how to respect tools." Another approach employed by programs was to place participants in the role of safety monitor as a way of empowering them and providing extra supervision at the work site.

YouthBuild programs also taught participants a litany of other construction skills. Carpentry and painting were the most common, taught by nearly all of the programs with construction training. The few programs that did not teach these skills had mostly renovation work sites where they were responsible for facilities maintenance and not new construction or even substantial renovation work. YouthBuild programs taught other construction skills less frequently, but, as is illustrated in Table 7.1, even the least frequently taught skills, like landscaping or weatherization and insulation, were taught by approximately 20 percent of programs. Also notable was that most programs taught several different construction skills, with around 95 percent teaching three or more skills, even if they did not always teach these topics in depth. As one participant noted, in addition to OSHA training he was learning many different construction skills, including how to "mix cement, screw cut, use a nail gun, paint, frame doors, plaster walls, and use tools." He discussed with site visitors how he thought that these skills would be attractive to a contractor when he sought employment. Box 7.2 provides a further look at one participant's experience with construction training in YouthBuild.

Nonconstruction Vocational Training

Although construction was the predominant form of vocational training offered by YouthBuild programs, 17 programs sought to diversify their training programs by offering some or all of their participants the ability to pursue training in fields other than construction. As presented in Appendix Table G.1, a higher percentage of CNCS-funded programs offered nonconstruction vocational training than DOL-funded programs. As illustrated in Table 7.2, about half the programs offering nonconstruction training offered some form of health care training, while a considerable number also offered training in computer technology, gardening

Box 7.2

Participant Vignette

This 23-year-old participant and father of a 10-month-old son learned about YouthBuild while incarcerated, when the program's construction-site supervisor made a recruitment visit to the local jail. After gaining a work release, which allowed him to attend the program during weekdays and return to jail in the evenings, the participant entered the program with a special enthusiasm for the construction training. He already had construction experience and was considering work in the construction industry. YouthBuild helped him improve his construction skills, with particular attention toward electrical work and how construction varies for different rooms in a house, all while helping him earn a Home Builders Institute Pre-Apprenticeship Certificate Training (HBI PACT) certificate. Construction training has opened up other opportunities for him in the program as well: he plays a leadership role by helping the construction-site supervisor train other participants who are learning construction skills for the first time, and soon he will begin a job-shadow position at a local hardware store, arranged by the program's staff.

SOURCE: YouthBuild site-visit interview data.

Table 7.2

Types of Vocational Training Offered, Among Programs That Offered Nonconstruction Training

Program Response	Percentage of Programs
Type of training[a]	
Health care (including Certified Nursing Assistant training)	53
Computer-technology training	41
Gardening and land management	35
Food production and handling	24
Transportation-related training	24
Service-delivery model	
Alternative to construction training	41
Optional in addition to construction training	41
Required in addition to construction training	18
Sample size	17

SOURCE: Calculations based on YouthBuild site-visit interview data.

NOTE: [a]Categories are not mutually exclusive.

Box 7.3

Nonconstruction Training: Examples of Three Service-Delivery Models

Alternative Training. At Portland YouthBuilders (Oregon), participants could opt to pursue a media track in which they learned a variety of technology skills through team-based work for nonprofit organizations in the community. Skills included computer repair and refurbishing, web design, graphic design, and audio and video production.

Optional Training. In addition to construction training, participants at CTI YouthBuild of Greater Lowell (Massachusetts) had the option of pursuing the Comprehensive Outreach Education Certificate Program, sponsored by the Community Health Education Center, which trains young people to do community health outreach.

Required Training. In addition to construction training, all participants at YouthBuild Boston, Inc. engaged in a landscaping program with an emphasis on environmental stewardship, where they worked in community gardens and public parks under the direction of various conservation organizations, learning about sustainable landscaping practices and transforming neglected areas of the city.

SOURCE: YouthBuild site-visit interview data.

and land management, food production and handling, and transportation-related fields (including automotive repair and commercial driving). YouthBuild programs that offered training in these different types of skills tended to offer one or two of them. As is discussed below, nearly all programs that provided nonconstruction training to participants employed some sort of training provider rather than training participants themselves.

Also as presented in Table 7.2, the YouthBuild programs that provided nonconstruction training did so using one of three service-delivery models. Forty-one percent of these 17 programs offered training that a subset of participants could take as an *alternative* to construction.[9] Another 41 percent offered *optional* training to a subset of participants in addition to construction training. Programs typically offered this type of training to participants whom staff members characterized as "higher-achieving" or who had interests other than construction. The remaining 18 percent of programs *required* all participants to engage in nonconstruction training in addition to their construction training. Examples of nonconstruction training services that programs provided using each service-delivery model are provided in Box 7.3.

[9]Included in this group is the one program that did not offer construction training at all. All participants engaged in its nonconstruction training programs, since there was no construction training option.

Table 7.3

Construction Curricula Used by YouthBuild Programs

Program Response	Percentage of Programs
Home Builders Institute Pre-Apprenticeship Certificate Training (HBI PACT)	42
National Center for Construction Education and Research (NCCER)	28
NCCR and HBI PACT	20
Other curriculum	9
Sample size	74

SOURCE: Calculations based on YouthBuild site-visit interview data.

NOTES: Due to rounding, the percentages may not sum to 100.
One program did not offer construction training due to budget cuts. All participants engaged in its nonconstruction training programs instead.

The time that participants spent in nonconstruction training varied according to the service-delivery model. Participants in programs where nonconstruction training was offered as an alternative spent about half their total program time, on average, in these training services. In other words, those participants spent about the same amount of time in nonconstruction training as other participants spent in construction training.[10] Participants pursuing optional and required nonconstruction training spent less time in these training services since they were also required to complete construction training.

Vocational-Training Curricula

Another important element of the YouthBuild model is that industry-recognized credentials should be available to students. Overall, fidelity to this part of the model was quite high; over 90 percent of programs fully met this standard and no programs were unable to meet it. As is illustrated in Table 7.3, most YouthBuild programs taught construction skills using the Home

[10]Within a given program, however, the sequencing of this nonconstruction training was sometimes different than that of the construction training. At YouthBuild Rockford (Illinois), for example, participants in the organic gardening program, which was an alternative to the construction training program, alternated between gardening training and education services on a different schedule from the one used by participants in construction training.

Box 7.4

Construction Training Curricula Used by Most YouthBuild Programs

YouthBuild programs relied extensively on two nationally recognized curricula for construction training: the NCCER curriculum and the HBI PACT curriculum. Each curriculum offers modules spanning a wide range of construction topics, including skills such as carpentry; plumbing; masonry; green construction; electrical wiring; and heating, ventilation, and air conditioning. Both curricula also provide opportunities for certification. The credentials offered are independently recognized by the industries in which participants are trained, and the curricula are often reviewed by industry experts to ensure that skills are relevant to employers. More information on the curricula can be found at www.hbi.org and www.nccer.org.

SOURCE: YouthBuild site-visit interview data.

Builders Institute Pre-Apprenticeship Certificate (HBI PACT) curriculum, the National Center for Construction Education and Research (NCCER) curriculum, or some combination of the two. HBI PACT was the slight favorite, maybe because it was designed with young people and underserved populations in mind. As some program staff members noted, NCCER is more difficult for participants given the many barriers to learning they must overcome. Box 7.4 provides additional information on the two curricula used by most YouthBuild programs. The seven programs not using NCCER or HBI PACT employed other curricula for their construction training programs.[11]

Many programs also supplemented their construction curricula. For instance, YouthBuild New Bedford (Massachusetts) used HBI PACT, but supplemented it with materials from a curriculum developed at Oklahoma Technical College. YouthBuild Lawrence AmeriCorps (Massachusetts), which primarily used NCCER, supplemented its materials with the Environmental Protection Agency Lead-Safe Certification program for repair and painting. Other programs also supplemented their primary materials based on the need to prepare participants for the specific types of construction work they were doing or because they found some portion of another curriculum better than their primary one when teaching particular job skills. Pro-

[11]Three of these programs developed their own curricula based on NCCER or PACT that they felt better met the needs of their participants. All three curricula have received some kind of endorsement or approval from a third party, such as a local school board or state agency that oversees training programs. The other four programs used some other national construction curriculum: two programs used the Multi-Craft Core curriculum, the third used the Paxton-Paterson's Building Skills curriculum, and the fourth used the Construction Industry Training program.

grams also supplemented their primary curricula with various curricula on workplace safety, OSHA's being the most common.

The programs that offered construction training also provided participants the ability to acquire certifications. Most programs offered participants the opportunity to test for certificates in their HBI PACT or NCCER curriculum. Finally, a number of programs reported that participants pursued other certificates in fields including, but not limited to: lead removal, weatherization, forklift operation, flagging, Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design (LEED)-compliant construction, and retrofit installation. As one participant put it, construction training "was basically academics, too. You learn a lot of math, and how to measure, and we had to take lots of tests [for the NCCER and OSHA certifications]."

The curricula and certification processes for nonconstruction training varied by type of program and provider, but usually some kind of certification was included. That certification might be a commercial driver's license, the Computing Technology Industry Association A+ certification, or a Certified Nursing Assistant (CNA) certificate. At Guadalupe Alternative Programs-St. Paul (Minnesota), for example, participants in the computer training programs used the Internet and Computing Core Certification (IC3) certification process and participants pursuing health care careers received CNA instruction.

The Staffing of Vocational Training

The YouthBuild model states that programs should maintain a staff-to-student ratio of no less than one to seven in delivering vocational training. It turns out, however, that only 69 percent of programs fully achieved fidelity to this part of the model. Another 26 percent of programs partially achieved fidelity to this part of the model by maintaining staff-to-student ratios of between 1:8 and 1:14, and the remaining 6 percent did not achieve fidelity at all. Some programs were temporarily short of work-site staff during the visit and were attempting to fill vacant positions, while others anticipated participant numbers would decrease over time due to attrition, allowing them to achieve the standard but making it difficult to justify the extra staffing needed to always hit the desired staffing ratio.

One qualification to this finding is that it was not always easy to count the staff members involved in the different types of vocational training. Staffing numbers for construction training were more clearly defined than staffing numbers for nonconstruction training, since the latter was often delivered by contracted providers, often off-site. YouthBuild programs tended to have two positions responsible for training participants in classroom and workshop settings and two positions overseeing construction work sites. Still, these four positions were sometimes shared between just two staff members, these same staff members sometimes played other roles

in their organizations, and staff members in other roles in the program sometimes helped with the delivery of vocational training.

While they did not count officially as members of the staff, 75 percent of programs employed participant leaders to assist in the provision of their construction and nonconstruction vocational training. These participants were typically assigned to the staff member serving as construction supervisor as assistants or safety monitors. Such roles helped staff members devote more time to participants and tasks that needed their attention and provided participants with valuable leadership experience, the importance of which was described in Chapter 5.

Vocational-Training Partnerships

YouthBuild programs frequently turned to other public and private organizations to assist them in delivering vocational-training services. These partnerships were formalized through memoranda of understanding, contracts, or some other type of written agreement. Partners varied in number across YouthBuild programs and worked with the YouthBuild programs to varying degrees based on the nature of the goods or services they provided. Several factors seem to have been involved in the decision to rely so extensively on partners. Most significant was the cost of operating construction training, which often included managing construction work sites for which the logistics, supplies, and skilled-work demands could be considerable. Another was the availability of partners that possessed expertise in the delivery of particular skills. When such partners were available, it did not make sense for YouthBuild programs to try to recreate them. Third was the important fact that DOL places an emphasis on the inclusion of partnerships in its contract-awarding process, thus creating an incentive for programs to work with partners. YouthBuild programs relied on other organizations to serve as: 1) work-site partners, 2) training-provider partners, 3) providers of materials and supplies, and 4) subcontractor and employer partners. Box 7.5 offers examples of specific partnerships.

Work-Site Partners

As is indicated in Table 7.4, the type of partnership employed by more programs than any other — and used exclusively for construction training — was one in which a YouthBuild program worked with another organization that owned or managed construction work sites. Tacoma Goodwill YouthBuild (Washington), for example, worked with three work-site partners. Tacoma Goodwill rehabilitated low-income housing for a nonprofit organization that provides transitional shelter and support services to homeless families, completed home remodels and house repairs with a local nonprofit that repairs or rebuilds homes for low-income homeowners, and built houses from the ground up for a third nonprofit that builds and refurbishes affordable homes.

Box 7.5

Three Types of Training Partners

Provided Entire Training Program On-Site. A community-supported farm managed and operated the training course in organic gardening and food industry practices at YouthBuild Rockford Program (Illinois), a nonconstruction training alternative for participants of that program.

Provided Entire Training Program Off-Site. Participants at YouthBuild Snohomish County (Washington) attended classroom construction training at a nearby community college and then worked with a nonprofit housing agency for hands-on training at a work site. Participants at Franklin County YouthBuild (Ohio) interested in acquiring a commercial driver's license could attend a training program at a local truck-driving school.

Provided Discrete Training Components. Metro Atlanta YouthBuild (Georgia) enlisted a training center at a local university to provide workplace-safety training geared toward younger workers (ages 15 to 24). The training taught participants how to be safe in the workplace and how to speak up when worker safety was an issue. YouthBuild Louisville (Kentucky) partnered with a nonprofit organization that taught participants weatherization techniques.

SOURCE: YouthBuild site-visit interview data.

Work-site partnerships had one possible drawback, however. On the one hand, these partnerships often made work experiences for YouthBuild programs possible by defraying the significant costs associated with owning and managing (and eventually renting or selling) the properties that served as training work sites. On the other hand, when YouthBuild programs did not control the properties they worked on, they were less able to pace work appropriately, customize training schedules, and provide the variety of tasks needed for optimal participant learning. A 2009 evaluation of YouthBuild programs by Social Policy Research Associates, for example, found that roughly half of the 34 programs in that evaluation controlled their own work sites. These programs could customize training to participant needs better and were better able to ensure that participants gained experience on more varied types of construction activities.[12]

In this process study, just under half of the YouthBuild programs with construction training reported that they controlled their own work sites, and around 10 percent of the remaining programs indicated they controlled some but not all of their work sites. Partners owned and

[12] Abrazaldo et al. (2009).

Table 7.4

Types of Partnerships Used by YouthBuild Programs

Program Response	Percentage of Programs	
	Construction Training	Other Vocational Training
Work-site partners	92	0
Training partners	54	71
Partners providing materials and supplies	58	12
Subcontractor and employer partners	38	6
Sample size	74	17

SOURCE: Calculations based on YouthBuild site-visit interview data.

NOTE: Categories are not mutually exclusive.

managed work sites for the rest. It is unfortunate that more YouthBuild programs did not own and control their own work sites, but the reason is probably somewhat related to the economy. When the housing market imploded, several YouthBuild programs were left holding properties they could not sell except at a considerable loss. As a result, programs that previously owned work sites grew increasingly reliant on work-site partners (who themselves have often been struggling).

Still, interviews with program staff members suggest that there may be at least one way for YouthBuild programs to engage work-site partners and yet maintain a degree of control over construction work sites. At Operation Fresh Start YouthBuild (Wisconsin), for example, the staff worked closely with a nonprofit organization with nearly 30 years of experience providing affordable housing in that community. The two organizations implemented a partnership that would allow Operation Fresh Start to act as the general contractor for housing work sites that the nonprofit owned. This relationship gave the YouthBuild program the opportunity to control work-site activities while lessening its liability as a property-management company.

Training-Provider Partners

YouthBuild programs frequently formed partnerships to provide or aid in the provision of vocational training. Table 7.4 shows that 54 percent of YouthBuild programs employed at least one partner for the provision of construction training and 71 percent of programs employed at least one partner for the provision of nonconstruction training. Furthermore, many programs employed more than one such training-provider partner. As is described in Box 7.5, partner providers delivered training in one of three ways: 1) they were the primary providers of training, and that training was delivered at the YouthBuild program; 2) they were the primary providers

of training, and that training was delivered at their own facilities; or 3) they delivered discrete components of the training program, primarily at the YouthBuild program offices.

Partners Providing Materials and Supplies

YouthBuild programs also partnered with organizations to provide materials and supplies such as tools, uniforms, computers, and safety equipment for construction and nonconstruction training. As is illustrated in Table 7.4, 58 percent of programs relied on this type of partner in the delivery of construction training while 12 percent of programs relied on this type of partner in the delivery of nonconstruction training. In many cases, a work-site partner (like Habitat for Humanity or a public housing agency) played this role, providing both the work site and the construction materials needed to complete the work. Several programs also relied on commercial partnerships to provide supplies. Columbia Builds Youth (Missouri) and SALS YouthBuild (West Virginia), for example, worked with national home-improvement stores.

Subcontractor and Employer Partners

The final type of partnership employed by YouthBuild programs involved hiring organizations or individuals to conduct construction on work sites or to make presentations to participants on career opportunities. As is indicated in Table 7.4, 38 percent of programs with construction training employed this type of partner, as did 6 percent of programs with nonconstruction training.

This type of partner was typically an organization the YouthBuild program brought in to tackle specific work-site tasks. Common partners were unions (about 29 percent of programs reported having union partners), construction companies, or independent contractors who conducted skilled work like plumbing or wiring that participants or instructors were not certified to do. Having these individuals at the work site also provided programs with informal job-shadowing and training opportunities. Staff members at the Lancaster County YouthBuild Project (South Carolina), for instance, spoke about how participants working on the foundation of a house were able to observe a professional bricklayer do his work. Many of these partners also conducted presentations for participants on their trades or the construction industry, opened their doors for participants to come to union halls or construction sites to observe activities firsthand, and even hired participants or helped them get apprenticeship positions. One participant said that visiting an apprenticeship program "opened my eyes to all the construction trades out there."

Factors Affecting Implementation

Apart from the low staff-to-student ratios found at some, YouthBuild programs generally implemented their vocational training with a high degree of fidelity to the YouthBuild model. In fact, vocational training is one of the areas of implementation where programs tended to achieve the highest levels of fidelity to the YouthBuild model. This high level of achievement is probably due in part to the fact that so many of the vocation-related design standards in the YouthBuild model, like the provision of workplace safety and construction training, are also program elements heavily emphasized by DOL.

This high level of implementation success, however, obscures one significant challenge that has confronted YouthBuild programs in recent years: the downturn in the economy and the accompanying housing crash, which caused home sales to plummet and limited hiring in the construction industry. Interviews with YouthBuild vocational-training staff members and other program partners painted a grim picture of the construction industry over the few years prior to the process-study site visits (which occurred from early 2012 to early 2013). Many people were out of work and very little construction work happened, especially in many of the areas where YouthBuild programs are located. Youth unemployment rates in the counties where programs in the evaluation were located ranged from about 11 percent to 56 percent at the time of the process-study visits, and staff members in a few areas reported that unemployment rates in the construction industry had been as high as 35 percent to 40 percent during the years prior to the visit.[13] Interviewees suggested that, by the time of the process-study site visits, in some locations the economy may have been starting to "heat up" once again. Construction workers were starting to get back to work, sales at lumber yards were increasing, and more projects were becoming available. However, staff members from other programs spoke more cautiously about their local economies, noting that the economy was only slowly coming back and might still "take a few years to pick up," and that wages in the construction industry were often lower than they had been previously.

Besides limiting job prospects for participants, the economic downturn affected training services in a number of ways. First, it often made it more difficult for programs to find new construction projects rather than rehabilitation projects. New construction offered participants a wider variety of construction activities — and thus better training — than rehabilitation projects, and also left participants with a sense of accomplishment rather than a sense that they were merely maintaining existing housing. Second, programs often had to rely increasingly on work-site partners, which gave them less control of their work sites. This arrangement could work well as long as those partners allowed YouthBuild programs control of the projects, but often

[13] See Chapter 9, Table 9.1.

YouthBuild programs had to work on projects that involved more maintenance than construction, or had to stick to schedules that were not conducive to participant learning. Third, there was more competition among construction providers for projects, which meant that YouthBuild programs were able to secure fewer projects and program staff members had to spend more time identifying projects. One staff member noted that, as a result of this increased competition, the construction projects YouthBuild could secure were generally smaller than they had been previously and could accommodate fewer participants. A staff member from another program noted that he wished he could have spent less time putting together projects and more time working with participants.

Under these conditions, YouthBuild programs had to be creative, often seeking out new forms of work for program participants. As discussed above in the partnership section, programs sometimes had to seek out new types of work-site partnerships to lessen their liability while maintaining control over construction schedules and task types. A staff member at Metro Flint YouthBuild (Michigan) described how that program had adapted its practices, teaching deconstruction and demolition, and modifying abandoned homes to make them look occupied (a strategy used to deter squatters). Some staff members suggested that the increased use of nonconstruction training was also the result of the economic downturn (in addition to policy changes at DOL). However, while nonconstruction training does present a real opportunity to make participants more marketable in an economy where construction has severely slowed, less than a quarter of programs offered nonconstruction training at the time of their site visits.

Challenges and Promising Practices

Interviews with vocational-training staff members highlighted a number of challenges involved in providing training to YouthBuild participants. Chapter 4 described the many challenges YouthBuild participants faced in their lives. Vocational-training staff members spoke about similar problems that created challenges for them in delivering training, including family and child care issues, substance abuse, a lack of transportation, basic-skills deficiencies, health and mental health issues, short attention spans, a lack of trust in established authority, poor communication and coping skills, and a multitude of dislikes and fears. YouthBuild programs frequently addressed these issues by connecting participants with case managers, providing supportive services, and teaching life skills (as discussed in Chapter 8). However, because vocational-training staff members spent so much of their time with program participants, they often needed to develop their own strategies for overcoming the challenges. Several promising practices they mentioned follow.

- Staff members sought to **maximize participants' engagement by assigning them tasks they preferred or in which they already had skills or experience.** Having both construction and nonconstruction training programs gave

staff members more options to offer participants, but even when construction was the only option, staff members developed creative solutions to engage participants. One staff member, for instance, had a participant work in a Habitat for Humanity store when he did not feel comfortable engaging in construction activities. This assignment benefited the participant by allowing him to stay engaged and gain work experience while allowing the staff member to work more effectively with participants ready and able to work in the core training program.

- Staff members found that it was important to **provide hands-on tasks throughout the training program.** Program staff members discussed minimizing book time and providing participants with opportunities to practice what they were learning. Participants themselves noted the value of this approach. One participant said he liked working with his hands. Another said he enjoyed the hands-on work because he "can't sit still for too long." Also, having participants engage in a wide range of activities helped participants and staff members better assess what tasks participants liked and disliked, which could then guide future training decisions.

- Staff members and participants spoke about **providing a supportive yet realistic environment** to help participants learn skills without fear of reprisal while they were still adjusting to the realities of the work world. One way staff members enacted this approach was to have participants occasionally engage in tasks they might not enjoy. They also occasionally offered tough criticism in small doses while helping participants learn to hear that criticism constructively. Participants were more candid. One participant noted that an important feature of the program was that "you get to learn things and not get fired if you screw up." Another participant said, "They talk s— to you like at a real job site. Not in a mean way. Just fun and real."

- It was important to **plan fun and engaging activities.** One participant said she enjoyed the construction work because it was fun, while another mentioned that it was okay to play and joke. Making the work fun involved keeping the environment lighthearted, while setting up games and competitions between work crews. Staff members also scheduled activities, which might include field trips and tours of facilities used by professionals, or visits from professionals who made presentations about their own careers. These opportunities helped participants learn specific skills and develop professional goals. They were also sometimes offered as incentives for good behavior or hitting defined goals.

- **Providing opportunities for youth leadership** (discussed in Chapter 5) served as an incentive for performing well. Leadership opportunities also helped to differentiate instruction for participants as they advanced. Another way instructors engaged participants was to pair more experienced participants with those less experienced. Doing so helped participants learn and freed instructors to provide one-on-one time to more needy participants.

- An important tool was **helping participants understand the ways their work gave back to the community.** Staff members noted how doing boring and repetitive tasks became bearable for participants when they understood how they were improving and giving back to their neighborhoods. As participants put it, they felt "part of something important" or that they were "helping build something." Furthermore, participants spoke about the pride and sense of accomplishment they had when they were able to see the finished product and know they had built it.

Conclusion

Overall, YouthBuild programs delivered varied, rich, and substantial vocational training to program participants, in no small part due to numerous partnerships. Vocational training as a whole was one of the areas of implementation where programs tended to achieve the greatest levels of fidelity to the YouthBuild model, perhaps in part because these standards of the model also overlapped with standards promulgated by DOL. That said, a small number of programs fell short of the YouthBuild model, especially regarding the provision of construction training and work-site experience. Also, many programs could have had staff-to-student ratios more closely aligned with the YouthBuild model. The biggest strengths of programs as a whole were the multiple forms of construction training they provided — in classrooms, in workshops, and at work sites — and their less widely available but quite varied types of nonconstruction training. Furthermore, staff members strove to find ways to keep training engaging and interesting. The biggest challenge that programs faced was the impact of the economic downturn. The downturn made it harder to find varied and engaging work experiences for participants and opportunities for them to engage in meaningful community rebuilding efforts, a primary goal of YouthBuild. Such experiences came most easily from new construction projects that programs controlled, but it had become more difficult for programs to control new construction projects given the problems associated with owning and maintaining properties in a poor housing market. Still, some programs exhibited promising models for maintaining control of training opportunities through new kinds of construction partnerships and an expansion of nonconstruction training.

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Chapter 8

Supportive Services and Transition Services

As staff members and young people reported, many YouthBuild participants struggled with life challenges that could have affected their ability to succeed in the program and in the workplace. These challenges included unstable housing, substance abuse, the lack of child care, the lack of transportation, limited work experience, and other personal crises that might have interfered with their ability to engage fully in academic services and vocational training. To help mitigate these challenges, YouthBuild programs provided supportive services and transition services that were intended to promote program retention and help participants succeed after YouthBuild. These services — stipends, case management, counseling, and follow-up — were all meant to increase participants' engagement in the program, promote a sense of belonging, and help participants transition to the workplace. Further, programs focused on life skills such as financial literacy, parenting, and conflict management to help participants transition to healthy adulthood, and helped them develop "soft skills" to reduce their barriers to employment. These services were all meant to reinforce YouthBuild's program culture, one in which young people feel respected, cared for, safe, and successful.

This chapter provides an overview of these services, covering staffing, the level and types of services provided, and the factors affecting implementation. The chapter concludes with a discussion of the challenges that programs encountered in implementing these services and the strategies they used to overcome those challenges.

Key findings include the following:

- Programs paid young people stipends as a strategy to engage them and reduce the sources of financial stress that might hinder their participation in the program. Nearly all programs offered some type of payment; among those that offered payment, participants received about $467 on average every four weeks.
- Programs adopted flexible staffing arrangements to deliver supportive services and transition services. Staffing was somewhat fluid for case-management support, counseling services, life-skills training, and transition services, as programs needed to distribute these functions across multiple staff members.
- Programs varied in their ability to make use of on-site resources related to supportive services. Although programs overwhelmingly met the Youth-

Build standard for having referral partners available, programs that were operated by sponsoring organizations had access to more on-site supportive services than programs that operated as independent entities. Programs without on-site supportive services referred participants to these services, but participants may not have used them.

- Life-skills and work-readiness training was mostly conducted less formally than academic and vocational training. While most programs met the standard for *offering* life-skills training and work-readiness training, often programs combined them together in one class, diluting their intensity.

- While programs generally met the standard for supporting young people in initiating career paths, most did not have staff members dedicated to job development. About 40 percent of the programs reported having designated job developers to support participants with job search assistance and placement. Programs, especially small ones, felt constrained by limited funding and were unable to devote enough staff time to these duties.

Stipends

Participants identified their stipends as an important source of support. As shown in Table 8.1, nearly all of the YouthBuild programs provided modest stipends for young people's participation in the program.[1] Programs most frequently paid young people a flat monthly stipend (57 percent), but some did pay an hourly wage or a combination of both.[2] On average, participants received about $467 every four weeks in those programs paying stipends, with a minimum of $15 and a maximum of $1,073; more than half of the programs paid at least $300 every four weeks and only 5 percent paid more than $800 every four weeks.[3] Corporation for National and Community Service (CNCS)-funded programs had a lower stipend average ($412) than their DOL-funded counterparts ($480).

[1]The programs that did not offer stipends (4 percent) reported that they did not have sufficient funding.

[2]Some programs paid an hourly wage for hours spent in construction training or time on the work site only, while others paid an hourly wage for both construction and other activities.

[3]One CNCS-funded program offered two nonconstruction training options and no construction training. Participants could begin vocational training only after earning their General Educational Development (GED) credentials. All participants received $15 a month for their attendance in academic classes, but only those participants in one of the two nonconstruction training programs (forestry and stewardship) could earn an additional $35 a day for their time in training (or about $700 a month). At the time of the site visit about seven participants were in the forestry and stewardship program, and this earning option was excluded from the analysis.

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Table 8.1

Overview of Stipends

Program Response	Percentage of Programs
Offering stipends	96
Hourly wage	*17*
Flat monthly stipend	*60*
Combined hourly wage and flat stipend	*24*
Stipend payments (every 4-week period)	
Less than $100 [a]	*2*
$101 - $300	*15*
$301 - $500	*29*
$501 - $800	*21*
More than $800	*5*
Offering bonuses [b]	28
Academic performance	*65*
Attendance	*30*
Other [c]	*50*
Sample size	75

SOURCE: Calculations based on YouthBuild site-visit interview data.

NOTES: Due to rounding, the percentages in some categories may not sum to 100.

Entries in italics for the top two panels are calculations that include only the subset of programs that offered stipends. Entries in italics for the bottom panel are calculations that include only the subset of programs that offered bonuses.

Hourly wage means participants get paid a specific dollar amount per hour. Flat monthly stipend means participants receive a standard rate for a certain time period, for example $100 a month. In some programs the two are combined so participants receive an hourly wage for a portion of their time and a flat stipend for another portion.

Three programs did not offer any sort of stipend, though one of these did offer bonuses for reaching particular benchmarks.

[a]In one program, participants earned $100 a quarter. In the other program, all participants received $15 a month for their attendance of academic classes until they earned their GED afterwhich they transitioned to nonconstruction training. In this phase only a portion of participants earned an additional $35 a day for their time in training, which could amount to about $700 a month. This earning option is not included in this analysis.

[b]Categories are not mutually exclusive. Some programs offered bonuses in multiple categories.

[c]Examples of other types of bonuses include participation in community service, demonstrating leadership, and regularly scheduled pay increases.

While the stipend was not the main incentive for enrolling in YouthBuild, participants noted that it was an important motivator because it helped them pay for basic living expenses such as rent, utilities, food, and personal items. For example, one participant from River City YouthBuild (North Carolina) reported that he had been attending a community college to earn his GED credential prior to joining YouthBuild, but the transportation costs to the college made it too expensive for him to continue. He left college and joined YouthBuild because the stipend helped him pay for basic living expenses.

In more than a fourth of the programs paying stipends (28 percent), young people had the opportunity to receive additional funds — such as pay increases or bonuses — based on their attendance, academic performance, and program-related achievements (that is, getting a GED certificate or moving up a grade level on assessment tests). Bonuses or pay increases associated with academic performance were most common (65 percent). Some programs allowed participants to earn raises for good behavior and for achieving milestones. For example, Franklin County YouthBuild (Ohio) provided a $50 weekly bonus when young people participated in community service. Seven programs provided bonuses that ranged from $32.50 to $250 for completing Mental Toughness Orientation. Participants could also have their pay docked for being absent, being excessively late, behaving inappropriately, or not actively participating in the classroom or at the work site. Additional examples of earned raises and bonuses can be found in Box 8.1.

Case Management

YouthBuild programs provided case management designed to assist young people in setting goals and overcoming life challenges that might affect their ability to succeed in the program and in the workplace. These challenges — including unstable family situations, limited employment opportunities, and poor educational systems — required that YouthBuild offer holistic, comprehensive services. Most case managers served as mentors to young people and actively checked in on them. The YouthBuild model requires that programs provide personal counseling support to participants, which can include peer or group counseling sessions or other types of interpersonal support. The YouthBuild model also states that staff members should hold regular meetings with participants and help them with pending court cases. YouthBuild programs sought to meet these standards by providing counseling and case-management support from designated case managers and other staff members.

Case-Management Staffing and Caseload

Staffing for case-management support was handled formally and informally. About two-thirds of the programs formally assigned staff members as case managers — also known as

Box 8.1

Earned Raises and Bonuses

Earned Raises for Attendance. At Northwest Wisconsin Fresh Start/YouthBuild Project, participants earned raises for consistent attendance in the program. Young people who maintained 100 percent attendance for one quarter (three months) received a $0.25-an-hour raise, and those who maintained 95 percent attendance received a $0.10-an-hour raise. Participants were eligible for the raise at the end of each quarter.

Earned Raises Based on Skills. Columbia Builds Youth (Missouri) used stipends to encourage retention and reward young people as they gained new skills. In addition to their $7.35 hourly wage for working at the construction site, participants received a monthly stipend that increased as they earned new skills. Young people entered the program as preapprentices, earning $66.66 a month and working 7.5 hours per week during the first three months. After three months, they became apprentices, earning $83.33 a month and working 28 hours per week. The program promoted to the journeyman level young people who had spent at least six months in the program, demonstrated mastery of construction skills, and earned their GED certificates. Journeymen earned $100 a month, worked additional hours, and completed more demanding tasks at the construction site.

The construction instructor at Tomorrow's Builders' YouthBuild Program (Illinois) rewarded young people who demonstrated a strong work ethic and leadership skills with raises throughout the program. All young people entered the program with a $5-an-hour wage but had the potential to earn up to $10 an hour based on their performance in construction training. Behaviors that merited pay raises included working diligently to develop construction skills, assisting peers in the classroom and at the construction site, and serving as positive role models.

Bonuses. Southwest Georgia United Empowerment Pathways YouthBuild awarded a $10 bonus for each community service project that young people completed. The YouthBuild Northwest (Michigan) program awarded a $100 bonus when participants completed 100 hours of service.

SOURCE: YouthBuild site-visit interview data.

"counselors," "youth specialists," or "youth advocates" — to serve as a personal resource for participants. About a third of programs had at least three staff members providing case management services, as shown in Table 8.2. On average, each program had two designated case managers. Programs with formal case managers specified their expectations for how frequently case managers should meet with participants and the procedures they should follow to help participants gain access to on-site or off-site resources. An advantage to having formal case managers was that all participants had the opportunity to meet with case managers on a regular basis to review their progress and voice their concerns.

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Table 8.2

Overview of Case Management

Program Response	Percentage of Programs
Number of staff members responsible for case management	
0	1
1	36
2	29
3-4	24
5+	9
Case-management roles[a]	
Make referrals for supportive services	97
Assess basic life needs	96
Help set educational and career goals	89
Coordinate services with parole officers	80
Provide individual counseling	73
Monitor attendance	69
Provide group counseling	33
Other[b]	28
Frequency of case-management meetings[a]	
Daily	7
Twice a week	3
Weekly	16
Monthly	19
Only as needed	15
Other[c]	59
Duration of case-management meetings[a]	
Less than 15 minutes	12
15-30 minutes	43
30 minutes to 1 hour	28
More than 1 hour	3
Other[d]	37
Individual service plans	92
Sample size	75

SOURCE: Calculations based on YouthBuild site-visit interview data.

NOTES: Due to rounding, the percentages in some categories may not sum to 100.

[a]Categories are not mutually exclusive.

[b]The top responses in the "other" category include teaching classes such as life skills and leadership, advocating for young people, and administrative duties.

[c]"Other" responses suggest that sometimes the frequency of meetings varied a good deal depending on what was going on in a participant's life.

[d]"Other" responses suggest this was difficult information to provide as the duration of case-management meetings could vary widely depending on a number of factors, including what was going on in a participant's life.

About half of the programs (including some with formally assigned case managers) distributed case-management responsibilities informally among multiple staff members, such as academic teachers, construction trainers, staff members responsible for enrollment, and other administrative staff members. This strategy was necessary for some programs; it allowed them to make the best use of their limited staff resources. The major disadvantage to this approach is that staff members were spread too thin and were not always able to meet with participants regularly.

Whether a program took a formal or informal approach to its case-management staffing arrangements, it needed to make sure it had sufficient staff members to keep their caseloads low. Maintaining a low caseload ensured that staff members could meet regularly with participants to learn about their progress. On average, staff members had 22 young people in "active" status (participants currently enrolled in the program) and 31 in "follow-up" status (former participants who continued to stay in contact with the program in some way).[4] But caseloads ranged widely, from fewer than 10 active participants per staff member to more than 40, as shown in Figure 8.1; this includes any staff member with case-management responsibilities. Staff members at CNCS-funded programs tended to have larger caseloads, as shown in Appendix Table G.1. The YouthBuild USA design standards state that the counselor-to-student ratio should be about 1 to 18, and that "the programs that choose, or can only afford, to have one counselor for every 25 to 28 students will require careful planning for ensuring that youth get sufficient levels of support."[5] Approximately half of the programs had at least 1 counselor for every 18 students, and about a quarter had more than 28 students per counselor.

Case Managers' Roles

Case managers have many roles in a YouthBuild program. They are expected to be caring staff members who communicate the program's expectations, enforce program rules, and reinforce the program's culture of respect and care. While case managers' specific roles varied by program, they generally included mentoring young people to help them overcome their obstacles to success, listening to their needs, helping them to set educational and career goals, and counseling them individually and in groups. Case managers also met with parole officers and connected young people to community resources in housing, health care, substance-abuse counseling, and public assistance. Many case managers were also responsible for keeping

[4]Four programs were excluded from the follow-up analysis because insufficient data were available to calculate their caseloads. Follow-up services were not necessarily provided by case managers; in some cases staff members with other titles had this responsibility, and they are included in this analysis.

[5]U.S. Department of Labor (2014a).

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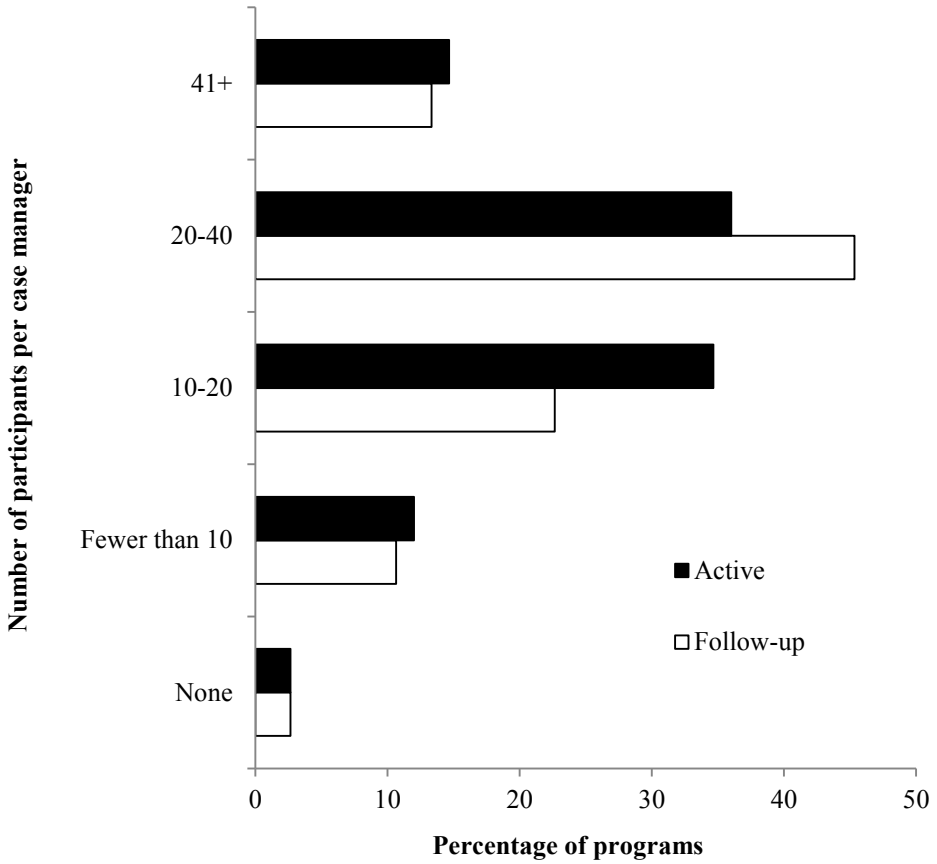
Figure 8.1

Average Caseload



SOURCE: Calculations based on YouthBuild site-visit interview data.

NOTES: The analysis of active participants excludes one program that was described as using a group case-management model that could not be captured here. The analysis of follow-up participants excludes four programs because of insufficient data.

Follow-up services were not necessarily provided by case managers; in some cases staff members with other titles had this responsibility, and they are included in this analysis.

records and monitoring young people's progress by updating case files, recording attendance, and entering data into management information systems.

The YouthBuild model expects case managers to meet with young people regularly in order to learn about their progress in the program and address their barriers to employment and education. The fidelity analysis found that nearly three-quarters of programs fully met this standard by meeting with young people at least once per month. However, as shown in Table 8.2, case managers met with young people with varying levels of frequency and for varying lengths of time. The majority of case managers reported that the frequency with which they met with young people varied a good deal depending on what was going on in a participant's life. These meetings usually lasted from 15 to 30 minutes and focused on a variety of personal and logistical topics, such as family situations, supportive-service requests or needs, and attendance issues. One case manager noted that young people often just wanted to meet with her to talk about life. She went on to say that many young people in her program did not have someone at home with whom they could share things, so when they figured out that they could trust a YouthBuild staff member, they readily shared their stories.

Many case managers went beyond the call of duty to support their students. Some young people reported that their case managers provided them rides to court appointments or to job interviews. Some case managers gave out their cell-phone numbers so that young people could call them anytime. One young man said that his case manager came to his court hearing to provide a character reference, which resulted in him being released on probation instead of being sentenced to jail. Another young woman said that her case manager provided extensive support to help her regain custody of her daughter. For this reason, she said, "YouthBuild love is real."

Case managers brought a diverse range of experiences to the YouthBuild program. Many case managers had experience working with vulnerable young people and had similar backgrounds to the YouthBuild participants. Some were former YouthBuild participants themselves, and reported having a strong understanding of the participants' life experiences. Others were born and raised in the local community and drew on this experience to form deep connections with participants. Participants noted that having staff members who understood their experiences helped build trust, which some of them said contributed to the caring relationships they developed with case managers. These positive adult relationships made some participants feel like the YouthBuild program was a family. One participant in a focus group said, "We're family here. You need to support your family and support each other. The more support you have, the more you will succeed."

Case managers are also frequently involved in enforcing YouthBuild program policies, such as those related to substance use. Drug testing was common among YouthBuild programs.

While some programs neither tested nor had strict rules requiring participants to be drug-free, the majority of programs tested participants after enrollment at least once.[6] Rather than routine testing, most programs tested at random or occasionally throughout the program period; some only tested if they suspected drug use. The consequences for testing positive varied. Referrals to drug counseling were the most common result. Program staff members also described docking participants' pay, altering their work assignments (especially assignments related to construction),[7] and terminating their enrollment in YouthBuild, especially participants who tested positive for drugs multiple times.

Individual Development Plans

Case managers worked with each young person to create an Individual Development Plan, or "life plan," that described that participant's goals in the areas of education, career, work, and personal growth.[8] The creation of Individual Development Plans was part of a comprehensive service-planning process that involved case managers meeting with participants, reviewing their assessment results, and interviewing them to learn about their strengths and difficulties. To inform the Individual Development Plans participants also filled out additional forms that detailed their living situations, education histories, work experiences, and criminal-offense histories. Nearly all programs reported having Individual Development Plans for participants. Consistent with this finding, the vast majority of programs fully met the YouthBuild standard for maintaining counseling records and demonstrating commitment to documenting young people's life-planning process.

The Individual Development Plan served as a useful tool for "case conferencing," or regular meetings among staff members about participants. It provided staff members with a common understanding of each participant's challenges and accomplishments. Once the plan was created, it was meant to serve as a "living document" that would be updated regularly.[9] There was no clear pattern regarding how often case managers updated the plans. Some programs updated them regularly as important events occurred in the participants' lives, such as when a probation office made contact with the program, when participants took the GED test, or when participants were referred for supportive services. Other programs revisited the plans infrequently. In those cases staff members cited limited time (due to other responsibilities in the program) and a lack of guidance from program leaders as key reasons. Some

[6]As described in Chapter 4, programs also tested potential participants during the application phase or Mental Toughness Orientation.

[7]Work-site safety and insurance policy requirements were the primary reasons program staff members gave for changing work-site assignments when participants tested positive for substance use.

[8]Some programs call these plans "Individual Service Strategies" or "Individual Service Plans."

[9]U.S. Department of Labor (2014a).

programs had formal procedures for updating the plans. At Bi-CAP YouthBuild (Minnesota), for example, participants reviewed their goal sheets every 90 days to determine whether they had met their stated goals, and revised them as necessary. Staff members reviewed these goal sheets at their monthly staff meetings and discussed gaps in services and how best to support participants.

Programs were fairly consistent in involving young people in the service-planning process, making sure that they understood what was expected of them and the steps they needed to take to achieve their goals. Several case managers noted that when young people were actively involved in the Individual Development Plan process, they were more likely to take ownership of the plans and make positive changes.

Connecting Young People to Supportive Services

The YouthBuild model requires that programs provide supportive services. Many programs offer supportive services either directly or through referrals. Almost all of them (96 percent) met the standard for providing referrals to outside resources such as housing support and child care. Transportation support — in the form of bus passes or rides from program staff members to get to the program or to job interviews — was the most common supportive service that programs provided. Housing support, such as rental assistance or referrals to low-income housing, was another frequent request that case managers actively tried to address, though with mixed success due to very tight limits on the affordable housing options available.[10] Programs also assisted young people in getting their driver's licenses. One young man, for example, appreciated the extra support he received from case managers. He said, "The different resources allow me to get things in line in my life. The only thing I have left to do is get my license, and they're helping me get in the license reinstatement program."

Programs differed in how they connected young people with supportive services. As noted in Chapter 3, most of the sponsoring organizations that housed YouthBuild offered other services, such as child care, substance-abuse counseling, and workforce services. Programs housed in large sponsoring organizations were generally able to make use of these services on-site or through a network of providers connected to that larger sponsoring agency. At one program, the case managers referred young people to a variety of supportive services available at the sponsoring agency, such as housing support and child care. The program director said, "The youth don't have to leave here [the program] and retell their stories over and over in order

[10]Supportive-service needs were similar in rural and urban areas, with the exception of mental health needs, which programs in rural areas identified more often than programs in urban areas.

Box 8.2

Strategies for Delivering Supportive Services

Housing Support. At Bi-CAP YouthBuild (Minnesota), housing support was available on-site and through a local partner. On-site, the program provided rental assistance (short-term and long-term), homelessness prevention (transitional housing, permanent supportive housing, and emergency shelter), and foreclosure prevention and mitigation. YouthBuild participants were also referred to a partner for housing support. This agency provided emergency assistance and transitional and permanent housing for young people. Young people had to meet certain requirements to receive assistance and housing. For most housing support, young people had to be homeless, at risk of homelessness, lacking a regular place to stay, living without water or electricity, living in overcrowded spaces, or fleeing violence.

Mental Health. Youth advocates at Choctaw County YouthBuild Program (Oklahoma) met monthly with all YouthBuild participants for individual counseling sessions where young people could discuss any issues arising in their lives. One program staff member estimated that about 20 percent of participants demonstrated a need for additional services. The program had a contract with a licensed professional to offer intensive mental health assistance, including services for depression or substance abuse.

Substance Abuse. The social service counselor at OAI Chicago Southland YouthBuild (Illinois) estimated that 50 percent of participants struggled with substance-abuse issues. Certified in drug and alcohol counseling, the counselor provided counseling services as needed on site. She referred participants who seemed to require additional support to a local treatment center that provided affordable chemical-dependency treatment and rehabilitation. The YouthBuild program required participants who failed their drug tests three times to receive services at the treatment center before returning to the program.

Transportation. Because St. James Parish did not have a local public transportation system and few participants could provide their own transportation, St. James Parish YouthBuild (Louisiana) provided transportation to and from the program for all participants in vans owned by the St. James Parish Department of Human Resources, the program's umbrella agency.

SOURCE: YouthBuild site-visit interview data.

to access supportive services." When programs were not able to provide supportive services on-site, they made use of community resources or issued contracts for supportive services. For this reason, programs generally met the standard for having referral partners to handle young people with serious emotional, drug, or other problems, with just three programs not offering this as an option. See Box 8.2 for examples of how programs connected young people to supportive services.

Life-Skills Training

The YouthBuild model calls for programs to offer life-skills training designed to address issues that may prevent participants from succeeding in the program, in their jobs, and in their lives more generally. Life-skills training is intended to create a positive program culture by providing the space and structure for participants to support one another in a relaxed and safe environment. YouthBuild USA believes that life-skills training can promote a strong sense of family and a commitment to common goals, and can build trust among young people and staff members. In the life-skills classes, participants typically work together to address community and personal challenges, get advice from peers and staff members about their careers and goals, and develop soft skills to prepare for the world of work.

Another important service available was counseling, available through group sessions, and offered in safe and supportive environments. During these sessions, which were often part of the life-skills classes, participants came together to talk about what was going on their lives and get advice from one another. According to one case manager interviewed, group counseling provided an opportunity for young people to speak freely in front of each other and to know that their peers were in similar situations. This case manager described these sessions as more like "testimonials" than "group counseling" sessions. However, fewer than 40 percent of programs fully met the standard of providing young people with peer-group counseling.

All programs reported providing some form of life-skills training, which, as shown in Table 8.3, included training in financial literacy, budgeting, conflict resolution, anger management, time management, and parenting. The structure of the life-skills training varied considerably. Just under half of the programs offered life-skills classes once per week either alone or in combination with leadership classes. The remaining programs did not offer formal life-skills training, but instead integrated life-skills topics into academic classes and construction training, or offered them through impromptu group sessions or informal one-on-one sessions between case managers and participants.

Although all programs provided life-skills training in some form, a small number of programs did not meet YouthBuild USA's standards because they did not consistently provide training in personal finance management, as required in the YouthBuild model. Furthermore, a few programs only partially met the standard because the life-skills training they offered was minimal, informal, or only provided on an ad hoc basis.

Transition Services

Transition services are directly tied to one of the values of the YouthBuild program culture: promoting a successful future. These services — also referred to as career development

Table 8.3

Topics Covered in Life-Skills Training

Program Response	Percentage of Programs
Financial literacy	83
Budgeting	77
Postsecondary preparation	77
Sexual health	67
Violence prevention/conflict resolution	67
Anger management	65
Time management	59
Drug counseling	56
Parenting skills	56
Mental health/counseling	45
Other[a]	48
Sample size	75

SOURCE: Calculations based on YouthBuild site-visit interview data.

NOTE: Categories are not mutually exclusive.
[a]Examples of "other" life-skills training include: communication, nutrition and fitness, personal hygiene, and leadership topics.

services — are designed to support young people's transition to adulthood, mainly through postsecondary education and employment.[11] This is consistent with the requirements of the YouthBuild Transfer Act, which requires that YouthBuild programs place an emphasis on postsecondary transitions and strong links with American Job Centers, community colleges, and apprenticeship programs.[12] In addition to these requirements, the Department of Labor (DOL) has several performance standards that YouthBuild programs are expected to achieve, including, most prominently, placement in employment or education, attainment of degrees or certificates, literacy and numeracy gains, and retention in employment or education. To promote successful transitions, programs provided a mix of workforce-preparation services and follow-up services.

[11]See Chapter 6 for a discussion of transitions to postsecondary education.

[12]The One-Stop Career Center System is now called the American Job Center Network. Local One-Stop Centers are now called American Job Centers.

Workforce-Preparation Services

Workforce-preparation services in YouthBuild included work-readiness training, internships, and job-search and job-placement assistance.

Work-Readiness Training

In addition to earning industry-recognized credentials as part of the vocational training discussed in Chapter 7, additional work-readiness training was designed to provide young people with the soft skills needed for work. Nearly all of the YouthBuild programs offered work-readiness training as part of their life-skills training curricula. About half of the programs offered work-readiness training weekly, with classes lasting between one and two hours.

Work-readiness training typically covered the following topics:

- **Positive work behaviors.** YouthBuild programs strongly valued positive work attitudes and behaviors, which included punctuality, time management, the use of professional language, collegiality, problem solving, and a strong work ethic.
- **Résumé development.** Almost all programs provided participants with assistance in developing résumés, providing them with résumé templates as a basis for building their own résumés and working with them individually to help them frame their prior experiences.
- **Interview training.** Specific interview skills covered included giving firm handshakes, maintaining eye contact, smiling, showing confidence, and — when applicable — speaking clearly, confidently, and truthfully about any criminal history. Some programs recorded mock interviews on video so that participants could review them and identify areas for improvement.
- **Dressing for success.** Almost all of the programs incorporated some training on how to dress for interviews and for the work environment. Many programs provided dress clothes or industry-appropriate attire for participants to wear to job interviews.

Over three-fourths of programs reported having staff members dedicated to providing workforce-readiness and life-skills instruction. The remainder of the programs relied on academic instructors, vocational instructors, or case managers to provide this training. Programs often worked with partners to deliver work-readiness training on topics such as budget management and using online resources to search for jobs. The most frequently cited partners were local American Job Centers and large nonprofit organizations such as the United Way, Boys and Girls Clubs of America, and Goodwill Industries. For example, Goodwill Industries sent

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Table 8.4

Internships, Job Search Assistance, and Job Placement

Program Response	Percentage of Programs
Programs that offer internships	51
Methods for helping participants find jobs[a]	
Personal connections and word of mouth	81
American Job Center listings	76
Job fairs	75
Temp agencies	57
Cold calls and visits	52
Online listings	43
Traditional newspaper ads	43
Relationships with employers and unions	7
Developing resumes, cover letters, applications, and networking skills	5
Methods identified as "most successful"[a]	
Word of mouth/personal connections/networking	33
Relationships with employers	31
Soft-skills coaching/encouragement for participants	11
Sample size	75

SOURCE: Calculations based on YouthBuild site-visit interview data.

NOTE: [a]Categories are not mutually exclusive.

representatives to YouthBuild of Central Iowa to teach résumé development and give presentations on the importance of dressing professionally for job interviews. Goodwill also loaned business attire to participants for meetings with employers.

Internships

Internships were an opportunity for participants to gain hands-on work experience and exposure to careers. As shown in Table 8.4, just over half of YouthBuild programs reported providing young people with internship opportunities, 21 percent of which were on-site and the remainder of which were off-site. A slightly lower percentage of DOL-funded programs offered internships than CNCS-funded programs, as shown in Appendix Table G.1. On-site internships gave participants the opportunity to support program operations through administrative functions, the coordination of community service, and event planning. Off-site internships included placements at construction companies, warehouses, restaurants, medical centers, and senior-care facilities. While most of these internships were unpaid, young people at a few programs were paid for their internships in addition to their usual YouthBuild stipends. Box 8.3 provides examples of internships offered through YouthBuild programs.

Box 8.3

Examples of Paid Internships

In 2013, three participants from YouthBuild Delta (Louisiana) participated in a summer apprenticeship program at a multinational aluminum manufacturing company. During these apprenticeships, participants handled packing and wrapping products and prepared finished products for shipping. The company paid YouthBuild participants roughly $10 an hour, and has offered full-time positions to those who successfully completed the internship.

River City YouthBuild (North Carolina) had a contract with a local granite and marble countertop installation company to provide three-month internships to select participants. During the first 30 days of the internship, participants received payment exclusively from their YouthBuild stipends. YouthBuild and the company split participants' total wages for the next 30 days, and the company assumed sole responsibility for participant wages for the final month.

SOURCE: YouthBuild site-visit interview data.

Overall, even though just over half of the programs reported providing internships, these opportunities occurred infrequently. Most programs did not make a high priority of internship opportunities for participants because, as staff members noted, participants were already engaged in full-time academic and vocational training at YouthBuild. When internship opportunities arose, program staff members were reluctant to place participants in them unless they were very confident that the participants would succeed, for fear of either setting them up for failure or jeopardizing a relationship with a partner. Programs also did not want to risk participants dropping out of the program to pursue jobs.

Job Search and Placement Assistance

Toward the end of the program, staff members placed an increased emphasis on job search, job development, and job placement. Due to the challenging job market and the participants' numerous barriers to employment, programs had to be flexible and creative in seeking job opportunities. As shown in Table 8.4, the vast majority of programs reported using American Job Center listings, personal connections or word of mouth, and job fairs to help participants find jobs. For this reason, most programs (77 percent) met the YouthBuild standard for supporting young people with initiating a career path.

Programs varied considerably in how they structured job-search and job-placement assistance. About 40 percent of programs had a designated job developer, whose responsibility was to identify job leads, develop partnerships with businesses, and assist participants with their job searches. This proportion suggests that job development was not a primary focus for the

majority of the programs in the evaluation. When programs did have designated job developers, each one had an average caseload of about 35 participants. As with other staff members in YouthBuild programs, job developers often had other roles in the program, such as case manager, leadership coordinator, or construction trainer. Programs that did not have designated job developers relied on other members of their staffs to support job search and placement.

Given YouthBuild's focus on construction training, it is important to look in more detail at job placements in construction. Roughly 80 percent of programs reported placing some participants in construction jobs, and just over half of YouthBuild programs fully met the standard for identifying construction jobs for graduates. Within the construction industry, participants most frequently found entry-level jobs with general contractors, but also sometimes entered specialized fields such as solar-panel installation, masonry, carpentry, home weatherization, hazardous-materials cleanup, lead abatement and removal, painting, steamfitting, ironwork, welding, and lumber work. Though about 29 percent of programs identified having partnerships with unions (see Chapter 7), relatively few students received placements in the electrical or plumbing apprenticeships associated with trade unions, suggesting that union partners aid programs with construction-related tasks more than they do with job placement. Adding to the challenges of construction employment, during the evaluation period many communities continued to experience economic struggles, particularly in their local housing industries. Even experienced construction workers struggled to find work, making it even more challenging for YouthBuild graduates. Furthermore, of the 76 young people who were interviewed individually for this process study, only about half reported that they were interested in construction-related jobs (58 percent); a third of them indicated that they were not interested in construction-related jobs.

For young people not interested in construction-related jobs, more than three-fourths of YouthBuild programs met the standard for identifying nonconstruction jobs. According to staff members, the most common permanent work opportunities were in retail, grocery stores, food service (primarily large fast-food chains), maintenance and custodial service, warehouse work, and security. A small percentage of the young people interviewed reported that although they did not want jobs in the construction industry, having construction-related skills was a good backup in case they needed those skills to fix up or make repairs on their own homes (11 percent).

Although program staff members wanted graduating participants to enter jobs that could lead to longer-term careers, more than half of the programs (60 percent) reported exploring seasonal or temporary work for participants, including placements in temporary employment agencies, landscaping, amusement parks, and local stadiums. Temporary and seasonal placements were important for participants who needed immediate money (for transportation, supporting their families, gifts at the holidays, and so on). Still, programs described temporary

placements as strategic, in that they targeted organizations that would be likely to hire participants permanently once they proved themselves.

Partners

Programs also relied on partners such as American Job Centers, employers, and staffing agencies to support their job-search assistance and placement efforts. As shown in Table 8.4, three-fourths of programs reported using job listings provided by local American Job Centers. YouthBuild programs made use of the job centers in other ways:

- Programs often reported sending their participants to American Job Centers to use the computers and search through job listings.
- YouthBuild participants attended job fairs sponsored by local workforce investment boards.
- A few programs established direct partnerships with local American Job Centers to provide career coaching, work-readiness training, and job-development services.
- A small number of programs (three) enrolled participants in Workforce Investment Act job-development services.

Although programs reported making use of the resources available at the American Job Centers, the majority of them noted that they did not have close working relationships with them partly because they did not believe that the local American Job Centers were able to provide the kind of intensive, one-on-one support that YouthBuild participants needed.

Some programs relied on employer partners to support their job-placement efforts. Among the programs where the evaluation team conducted interviews with employers (23 percent of programs), half of the employers offered some form of work-experience opportunity through internships or on-the-job training. Over three-quarters of these employers had hired YouthBuild participants in the past. Among the employers that had, most of them reported that they felt that the young people they had hired had sufficient skills to perform their job duties. When asked about their barriers to employment, about two-thirds of them reported that those young people lacked work readiness or soft skills.

Several programs identified staffing agencies as partners that placed participants in temporary or seasonal jobs. Staff members said that these partners were helpful because they identified employers that were willing to hire participants with criminal records.

Follow-Up Services

YouthBuild USA and DOL require that programs provide follow-up services for a year following graduation in order to track participants' progress and provide additional support as needed. Follow-up services were important for participants, as some of them continued to need assistance such as transportation support or child-care referrals to help them transition to employment. Most programs (about 80 percent) met the YouthBuild standard and DOL requirement of providing follow-up services, and about three-quarters reported tracking graduates' placements; 100 percent of DOL-funded programs provided follow-up services, while only 82 percent of CNCS-funded programs did so. As shown in Table 8.5, YouthBuild staff members kept in touch with participants in multiple ways: phone calls, social media, in-office meetings, and occasionally home visits. During these contacts — which could be initiated by staff members or alumni — staff members determined whether participants might need additional supportive services or job-search assistance; the contacts were also used to verify employment status.

Academic support and job-search assistance were the most common direct services that programs offered former participants during follow-up. Several programs allowed alumni to come on-site for GED or diploma preparation assistance, including attending academic classes or making use of select study resources (for example, computers, test booklets, or worksheets). Alumni also returned to their YouthBuild programs to receive job-search support, including the use of computers to search and apply for jobs, résumé-development assistance, preparation for interviews, and job-placement leads.

Program staff members said it was sometimes challenging to follow up with former participants because their living situations and contact information changed frequently. Other challenges to follow-up included lack of staff time and difficulty getting alumni to come to YouthBuild offices. Although the phone was the primary way staff members connected with former participants, programs also developed strategies to attract alumni to come on-site, such as social events (like barbecues and holiday parties) and job fairs. A handful of programs established alumni mentor and support groups to keep former participants engaged. Some programs offered incentives to encourage young people to stay in contact, such as gift cards and payments for employment verification. Furthermore, some program staff members reported that it was common for some alumni to return to YouthBuild for assistance years after graduation. Staff members indicated a commitment to following up with and offering services to these former participants, citing the adage, "Once in YouthBuild, always in YouthBuild."

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Table 8.5

Follow-Up Services Methods and Challenges

Program Response	Percentage of Programs
Programs that follow up with participants who have completed/exited the program	96
What does follow-up consist of?	
Employment verification	80
Referrals to supportive services	77
Direct service provision through YouthBuild	73
Other	39
Methods used to maintain contact with participants	
Phone calls	95
Home/community visits	43
In-office meetings with participants	80
Internet (e-mail, Facebook, MySpace, etc.)	84
YouthBuild alumni clubs and social opportunities	35
Contact with employers	51
No follow-up contact	0
Other	44
Key challenges to providing follow-up services	
Outdated contact information	84
Getting participants to come to YouthBuild offices	33
Lack of staff time	36
Other	33
Difficult to get hold of/no interest	8
Lack of transportation for employment	4
Sample size	75

SOURCE: Calculations based on YouthBuild site-visit interview data.

NOTE: Categories are not mutually exclusive.

Factors Affecting Implementation

Although programs structured some of these services in similar ways — including designating staff members for essential roles, offering opportunities for group bonding through life-skills and work-readiness classes, and augmenting work experience with internships — there was variation in how these services were implemented. Key factors that affected the programs' implementation and fidelity to the YouthBuild model for these services included the following.

- **The size of the program budget influenced the staff resources available for case management and job development and the intensity with which programs delivered them.** Programs with large budgets and staff sizes of 10 or more full-time equivalents (FTEs) had more case managers and job developers than smaller programs.[13] Case managers from organizations with 10 or more FTEs met with participants daily, for example, while those from programs with fewer FTEs met with them less frequently. Similarly, programs without dedicated job developers were more likely to report limited staff time and availability as challenges to job search and job placement.

- **Programs' administrative structures appeared to influence young people's access to supportive services.** Programs operated by larger sponsoring organizations reported having access to on-site supportive services. Staff members noted that the presence of on-site supportive services increased participants' chances of receiving them, but that they still needed to seek community resources to address gaps in services. Independent organizations needed to rely almost exclusively on referrals to community agencies for supportive services.

- **Programs with large annual budgets and experience operating YouthBuild were more likely to offer internships than those with smaller budgets and less experience.** These programs were able to identify existing community and business partners to host the internships and had the staff available to coordinate them.

- **Newer programs were less likely to have standard curricula for life-skills and work-readiness training than well-established programs.** This finding is not surprising, since well-established programs were able to draw on existing program resources to deliver life-skills training.

- **Programs with smaller staff sizes (less than five FTEs) were less likely to meet the YouthBuild standards for career development and personal counseling than those with larger staff sizes.** Consistent with the findings throughout this chapter, programs with fewer staff members devoted to these activities struggled to offer consistent counseling support and provide the full

[13]FTEs indicate the number of full-time employees at an organization plus the number of part-time employees standardized to a full-time basis. For example, an organization with 4 full-time and 3 half-time employees would have 5.5 FTEs.

range of supportive services that young people needed to find employment. Similarly, programs that reported challenges with staff turnover were less likely to meet the YouthBuild standards for these activities.

- **DOL grantees were more faithful to the YouthBuild model for career development and personal counseling than CNCS-funded programs.** Programs funded by DOL appeared to show higher fidelity to the parts of the YouthBuild model relating to services intended to help young people find construction and nonconstruction jobs and careers, support to help them initiate career paths, and systems to track their progress after they left the program.

Challenges and Promising Practices

The services discussed in this chapter — case management, counseling, supportive services, life-skills training, and transition support — were intended to promote program retention and success, and to support young people's transition out of the program and into adulthood. These services also served to promote and reinforce YouthBuild's culture of caring staff members, creating a supportive environment that resembles a family, and promoting a successful future.

While most programs fully met the YouthBuild design standards for supportive services, many cited a number of important challenges. Chief among them was programs' inability to provide the comprehensive services needed by the participants. Several factors are to blame. Many case managers found it difficult to provide intensive, individually tailored support in part because they were responsible for other tasks in the program. They had to balance their case-management duties with other roles such as intake, assessment, and life-skills training and therefore did not have the time to provide the level of support that they felt participants needed. Case managers also noted that limited funding made it difficult to provide things like housing support, food resources, and substance-abuse treatment. In some cases programs lacked the staff expertise to address participants' needs. Furthermore, the scarcity of community resources, such as housing assistance and substance-abuse treatment programs, meant that participants might not have gotten the support they needed when they needed it.

The challenges related to transition services and follow-up are threefold. First, programs struggled to identify meaningful employment opportunities for young people due to the downturn in the economy, which hit the construction industry especially hard. The challenging economy and participants' limited work experience made it difficult for them to connect participants with jobs successfully. In addition, staff members repeatedly noted that they did not have sufficient time to devote to job development and job placement. Lastly, program staff

members struggled to reach young people after they graduated, making it difficult to track their progress and offer support to help them retain their jobs or to meet other needs they might have.

While these challenges were difficult to address, many programs addressed some of them in the following ways:

- **Case managers made an effort to build rapport and trust with participants.** Staff members noted that building trust was an important first step to addressing participants' life challenges. Programs reported different approaches to building rapport, including emphasizing confidentiality and privacy and being respectful, genuine, and authentic with young people. Staff members noted other frequent practices, such as being available, listening, and asking questions; using a positive approach based on participants' strengths; and providing consistent and clear expectations. Additionally, program staff members overwhelmingly expressed a commitment to making themselves available to former participants in need of assistance. For these reasons, many young people referred to case managers and other members of the staff as members of their family.

- **Case managers made use of their networks of community partners to refer participants for supportive services.** Many case managers connected participants to their networks of community providers, especially when the supportive services participants needed were not available in-house. In some cases, this gave participants greater access to resources, thereby increasing their chances of addressing their many barriers to employment and giving them additional knowledge about how to obtain support.

- **Programs relied on multiple approaches to identify employment opportunities for participants.** Staff members built on relationships with existing employer partners, partnered with staffing agencies, connected participants with American Job Centers, and provided intensive, one-on-one job-search assistance.

- **Programs provided incentives to encourage young people to stay connected to YouthBuild.** Some programs provided incentives, such as cash and gift cards — to encourage young people to stay in touch. In many ways, the opportunity to receive additional services (or referrals to supportive services) also provided an incentive for young people to check in with their case managers.

Conclusion

YouthBuild's comprehensive support systems — available through the youth stipends, case managers, supportive services, life-skills training, and workforce-preparation services — are intended to increase participants' chances of succeeding in the program, in postsecondary education, at work, and in life after YouthBuild. Programs varied greatly in how they implemented these services, depending on their organizational structures, sizes, and community contexts.

Despite their best efforts, limited staff resources meant that programs often struggled to fully address participants' challenges. Perhaps the most critical challenge was having sufficient staff resources to devote to job development, a task that was not consistently emphasized across programs. Even those programs that devoted staff resources to job development struggled to find employment opportunities due to a challenging labor market. The next chapter describes the local economic and community contexts that may have influenced programs' ability to identify employment opportunities for participants.

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Chapter 9

Community Context

The previous chapters provided detailed descriptions of how YouthBuild programs were structured, how they operated, and what services they offered. Now the discussion turns to consider the context in which the programs operated. YouthBuild programs in the evaluation operated in 31 states, the U.S. Virgin Islands, and Washington, DC. This diversity in geography means that YouthBuild programs in the evaluation differed tremendously in their local community contexts, though most communities shared common experiences with crime and poor infrastructure, and most were harmed by the economic downturn, particularly in the youth employment market. Despite the challenges just described, these communities typically had other providers in addition to YouthBuild that offered education, case management, vocational training, or other services to young people. However, very few alternative providers seemed to provide the same set of services as a YouthBuild program in the same comprehensive manner. This chapter describes the variation in community and economic contexts in which YouthBuild programs operated and considers what influence these could have on the outcomes of study members. The chapter also begins to set the stage for the impact analysis of treatment contrast by analyzing what services were available to the control group and how they differed from the services YouthBuild programs offered to program participants.[1]

Key findings about community context presented in this chapter include:

- YouthBuild programs operated in a variety of communities, both urban and rural, all of which experienced poverty, crime, and poor infrastructure. Young people everywhere faced similar challenges, but those in rural counties seemed particularly affected by high unemployment rates, poverty, and educational shortfalls.

- Other programs for young people in the same communities as YouthBuild programs rarely offered the same breadth and scope of services as YouthBuild.

[1] "Treatment contrast" is the difference between the average treatment received by study subjects who did have access to a program, YouthBuild in this case, and the treatment received by study subjects who did not. See Weiss, Bloom, and Brock (2013). It is possible that some young people assigned to the program group could drop out of YouthBuild and make use of other services in the community. Analysis of the follow-up surveys will reveal what services were used by both the treatment and control groups.

- According to YouthBuild program staff members and staff members of other programs in the same communities, young people experienced challenges gaining access to the services offered in their communities, including long waiting lists, restrictive eligibility requirements, lack of transportation, or lack of program responsiveness to their needs.

YouthBuild Neighborhoods

Demographic, economic, educational, and other community characteristics of counties in which YouthBuild evaluation programs operated are presented in Table 9.1. Roughly 50 percent of the 75 programs in this evaluation, and over 50 percent of study participants, were concentrated in or near major metropolitan areas such as New York, Los Angeles, Phoenix, or Boston; just over 20 percent of programs and just under 20 percent of study participants were located in rural areas with populations of less than 50,000, such as Bemidji, Minnesota or Hammond, Louisiana. Despite this variation in geographic context, many underlying community characteristics were similar. Based on descriptions from program staff members, YouthBuild programs participating in the evaluation tended to be located in high-poverty and high-crime areas. YouthBuild participants and staff members described their neighborhoods as having dilapidated housing, little public transportation or other infrastructure, few job opportunities, and poor schools. Even when there was some semblance of public transportation available the systems were often challenging. One YouthBuild program staff member described that what would take fifteen minutes in a car might take a young person two hours by bus because of transfers and waiting times. Other community issues mentioned by program staff members included widespread reliance on government-assistance programs, violent crime and gang activity, and limited access to affordable housing. One YouthBuild executive director noted that a lot of the young people were "engaged in negative activities that will either land them in jail, or dead, or in programs like this [YouthBuild]." The neighborhoods were also described by YouthBuild program staff members as having a lot of transient residents, with the majority renting apartments or houses or residing in public housing.

Some of the biggest differences among the YouthBuild geographic locations were in racial composition, as shown in Table 9.1. Although residents were overwhelmingly Caucasian in all geographies, the percentage of minority populations was typically highest in or near metropolitan areas. One exception was the Latino population, which had a noticeable concentration in rural areas.

Data suggest that young people living in rural counties may have had more challenges than their peers in more urban locations. The employment, economic, and educational data presented in Table 9.1 show that rural residents were often worse off than residents in more

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Table 9.1

Characteristics of Counties Where YouthBuild Programs Are Located

	Averages by County Geography[a]				
	Large Metro, Central	Large Metro, Fringe	Medium Metro	Small Metro	Rural
Sample distribution (%)					
Study participants	44	12	24	2	17
Programs	35	16	19	9	21
Racial composition (%)					
White, non-Latino	65	74	82	91	70
Black, non-Latino	21	11	9	5	3
Other race, non-Latino	18	11	9	6	6
Latino	21	18	12	6	26
Employment (%)					
Unemployment rate	9	8	8	7	9
Youth unemployment rate[b]	19	18	17	17	25
Economic characteristics					
Median household income ($)	54,012	59,134	51,577	49,825	38,225
Population below the poverty threshold (%)	17	13	15	15	22
Educational characteristics[c] (%)					
High school graduate or higher	85	86	88	89	81
Bachelor's degree or higher	35	28	29	32	17
Other characteristics					
Building permits per 1,000 people[d]	1	1	3	2	2
Housing permits per 1,000 people[d]	3	2	4	3	2
Commute to work on public transit (%)	14	4	2	1	1

SOURCES: 2011 American Community Survey, U.S. Department of Labor, U.S. Census Bureau, and the National Center for Health Statistics.

NOTES: [a]Geography is based on the National Center for Health Statistics scheme, which categorizes counties under six codes: 1 (large metro, central), 2 (large metro, fringe), 3 (medium metro), 4 (small metro), 5 (micropolitan), and 6 (noncore). For this table, micropolitan and noncore were combined to create the rural category listed here. The U.S. Virgin Islands were assigned a code based on total population and population density information from the 2010 U.S. Census.

[b]Ages 16-24.

[c]For persons over 25 years of age.

[d]The numbers represent new permits for privately owned residential buildings (estimates with imputation) in 2012 and new unit permits in 2012.

urban areas. Though the overall unemployment rate does not vary substantially across the different geographies, the youth unemployment rate in rural areas was much higher than that in the other locations; it was also higher than the national average of youth unemployment (not shown).[2] Furthermore, the percentage of people living below the poverty threshold was highest in rural areas, though large, central metropolitan areas were not far behind. Additionally, residents in rural counties also tended to be less educated than their counterparts in other geographies, with fewer completing high school or earning bachelor's degrees. One final challenge highlighted in the data — the percentage of residents using public transportation to commute to work — was also emphasized by YouthBuild participants and staff members interviewed. They noted — and the data suggest — that transportation was a significant challenge, especially in more rural locations.

The one characteristic in which more urban areas may have been at a disadvantage was the building industry. An analysis of new, privately owned residential building and unit permits for 2012 (as shown in Table 9.1) shows that medium-sized metropolitan areas, such as Springfield, Massachusetts; Rockford, Illinois; and Spokane, Washington, had stronger building markets than other locations. This suggests that YouthBuild programs had greater opportunities to partner on new construction projects in these areas and that there were more construction jobs available for YouthBuild graduates.

The Economy

The national economic downturn of 2008 — also known as the Great Recession — was well documented by economists and the media. Many YouthBuild program staff members noted the influence of deteriorating economic conditions on their communities and job markets. YouthBuild program staff members also reported that construction stopped, major industries or factories and other businesses closed, and workers were laid off. There was increased competition for the remaining — often entry-level — jobs, with young people getting the least opportunity and competing with older, better-educated, and more experienced applicants. The descriptions of economic conditions did not vary significantly by geographic location. Staff members and young people interviewed (largely in late 2012 and early 2013) did not indicate overwhelming improvements in economic conditions. Some communities were described as being depressed well before the national economic downturn (for example, Gary, Indiana;

[2]During process-study site visits, YouthBuild young people and staff members from rural areas were no more likely to report that jobs were unavailable than individuals in other geographies. Regardless of location, however, YouthBuild staff members and participants noted that relatively few participants started YouthBuild with any previous, legitimate work experience; any work experience was often from under-the-table jobs or illegal enterprise.

Bemidji, Minnesota; or Huntington, West Virginia) so they did not report the same effects as other communities. In contrast, YouthBuild staff members in Boston, Massachusetts; Columbia, Missouri; and Des Moines, Iowa, reported that the economic downturn had little to no negative effect on their areas, in part due to the stability in the area of diverse employers such as universities and hospitals.

The national economic crisis aside, several YouthBuild programs in the evaluation were located in communities affected by Hurricane Katrina in 2005. YouthBuild program staff members in the region described a construction boom after the hurricane that had since tapered off, along with the accompanying job opportunities. Furthermore, the same region also experienced effects from the BP (formerly British Petroleum) oil spill in the Gulf of Mexico in 2010. YouthBuild program staff members described businesses — mainly seafood and tourism — being harmed by the oil spill and young people losing some employment opportunities as a result.

Most YouthBuild program staff members and participants reported at least one major employer in their area; frequently mentioned were hospitals, state government offices, and colleges or universities. Other employers, such as casinos, oil fields, military installations, and various manufacturing outfits were localized to certain areas of the country. Some program staff members and participants reported food service and retail as being the primary employers in the area. Though there was often a major employer or industry, young people reported in general that there were few jobs in their communities. Participants interviewed at most YouthBuild programs noted that most available jobs were in the service industry, for example, in fast food or in retail stores. Staff members and participants also reported competition for existing jobs. Participants said that employers often hired people whom they knew (or whom existing employees knew). Furthermore, employers tended to favor older workers with more experience or training; staff members and participants said that these workers were also perceived as more reliable. There was little mention of employment challenges due to involvement in the criminal justice system.[3]

Young people's challenges in finding employment have been well documented elsewhere, especially the "collapse" of the young-adult labor market, which was especially pronounced in the years leading up to the YouthBuild evaluation. Between 2000 and 2008, for example, the share of all 16- to 24-year-olds with employment during the summer fell from 65 percent to 56 percent, and continued falling to 49 percent during the recession.[4] Employment

[3]The 12-, 30-, and 48-month surveys will ask participants about their involvement in the criminal justice system. Therefore, future reports will address this topic more.

[4]Bureau of Labor Statistics (2010).

rates were especially low for young people without high school diplomas. Indeed, among young men who were not enrolled in school and did not have high school diplomas or General Educational Development (GED) credentials, only one in two was employed in 2013.[5] As Table 9.1 presents, the youth unemployment rates continued to be dramatically higher than the overall unemployment rates in the counties in which YouthBuild evaluation programs operated. Furthermore, unemployment rates are even worse for young men of color, a primary demographic of YouthBuild programs.[6] Though youth unemployment rates have shown improvement since the Great Recession,[7] concerns remain about how young people's early difficulties in joining the labor market could have lasting effects.[8] It is not clear, however, how the youth unemployment rate could influence the effects of YouthBuild on employment, since YouthBuild programs engage some of the hardest-to-employ young people in their communities. With youth unemployment hovering around 50 percent, the program might not have an effect because there are too few job openings. On the other hand, close relationships with employers could give programs access to job openings not typically available to young people.[9]

Alternative Services

YouthBuild programs typically were not alone in providing services to young adults in the communities where they operated.[10] Understanding what service options were available to the study group, particularly members of the control group, and how they differed from the services YouthBuild participants received is critical to understanding the treatment contrast that could have existed between the two sample groups. If the control group participated in services similar in content and intensity to YouthBuild, then the chance of finding a significant treatment contrast between the program and control groups is lessened.[11] Estimating the degree to which similar services were available to the program and control groups is the first step of this analysis; a thorough analysis of the treatment contrast will be included in the next report, due out in 2016. The analysis of treatment contrast in that report will be based on survey responses from treatment and control group sample members.

[5]Bureau of Labor Statistics (2013).

[6]Sum, Khatiwada, McLaughlin, and Palma (2011).

[7]Bureau of Labor Statistics (2012).

[8]Neumark (2002).

[9]Weiss, Bloom, and Brock (2013).

[10]The term "communities" is used very generally here. Depending on the location, a "community" could be a neighborhood, a small town, a city, a county, or some other area. It is difficult to be more specific when YouthBuild geographies are so wide-ranging.

[11]Weiss, Bloom, and Brock (2013).

Given that there are so many YouthBuild programs throughout the country, it is not surprising that some cities are home to more than one YouthBuild program. Fourteen cities in this evaluation are home to multiple YouthBuild programs, including Los Angeles, New York City, Detroit, and Philadelphia. Box 9.1 lists all of the cities with multiple programs. In addition, there are several instances of multiple YouthBuild programs being located in the same county. Having multiple YouthBuild programs in the same city (or county) increases the likelihood of members of the control group gaining access to other YouthBuild programs.[12] Although young people enrolled in the study and assigned to the control group were prohibited from enrolling in any YouthBuild program during the embargo period, there was no way to control this at YouthBuild sites not involved in the evaluation.[13]

Alternatives to YouthBuild

Other providers also operated in the same communities as YouthBuild programs, providing education or training services and many other options to young people. YouthBuild staff members and participants frequently stated, however, that no other programs in their communities offered the same level of support as YouthBuild or the same combination of education, construction training, and employment opportunities. Nevertheless, as part of the evaluation the research team collected information about other providers and the services they offered.

This data-collection effort was not designed to be a full scan of all resources in each community, so this discussion can only begin to postulate about the resources available in the communities that YouthBuild served. Providers interviewed were typically recommended by YouthBuild program administrators, mentioned by young people during interviews or focus groups, or drawn from the YouthBuild program's list of alternative service providers, given to young people who were not enrolled in the program (in many cases this existed prior to the evaluation requiring one).[14] As a result, most of the alternative providers interviewed had relationships with YouthBuild programs, primarily because YouthBuild programs referred potential participants to them or received referrals from them. Research team members also

[12]The 12- and 30-month surveys will collect information on the services that members of the control group use, including their participation, if any, in other YouthBuild programs. It is also possible that members of the program group could drop out of their original YouthBuild programs and then later join different ones; the surveys will investigate that possibility as well.

[13]Young people assigned to the control group were not allowed to enroll in YouthBuild for two years after random assignment. They were referred to other services in the community.

[14]One program's staff did not recommend any alternative providers to the research team.

Box 9.1

Cities with Multiple YouthBuild Programs

City, State	Program Name
Los Angeles, California	• LA CAUSA YouthBuild* • AYE of Catholic Charities of Los Angeles, Inc. • Boyle Heights YouthBuild • Home Sweet Home YouthBuild • Los Angeles Conservation Corps • South LA YouthBuild • WINTER YouthBuild • Youth Employment Solutions (YES YouthBuild)
San Diego, California	• Build with Pride (BwP)* • San Diego Imperial Counties Labor Council's Inner Cities YouthBuild* • BCA YouthBuild • Project CHANGE
Washington, DC	• LAYC YouthBuild Public Charter School* • Sasha Bruce YouthBuild
Atlanta, Georgia	• Metro Atlanta YouthBuild* • Fulton-Atlanta YouthBuild
Portland, Maine	• YouthBuild Portland* • YouthBuild Lewiston
Detroit, Michigan	• SER YouthBuild Construction Institute* • YouthBuild Detroit
St. Paul, Minnesota	• Guadalupe Alternative Programs - St. Paul* • City Academy
Gulfport, Mississippi	• IRD YouthBuild III* • YouthBuild Gulf Coast*
Buffalo, New York	• WNY YouthBuild: "Leaders under Construction II"* • Buffalo Urban League YouthBuild

(continued)

Box 9.1 (continued)

City, State	Program Name
New York, New York	• ADC YouthBuild* • Youth Action YouthBuild* • Northern Manhattan Improvement Corp. YouthBuild • D.R.E.A.M.S YouthBuild Adult Training Program
Columbus, Ohio	• Franklin County YouthBuild Program* • YouthBuild Columbus Community School
Philadelphia, Pennsylvania	• Project YES (Youth Empowered for Success) II* • YouthBuild Philadelphia Charter School Project*
Providence, Rhode Island	• YouthBuild Providence* • YouthBuild Urban League of Rhode Island
San Antonio, Texas	• SA Youth* • BCFS Health and Human Services • YouthBuild San Antonio

SOURCE: YouthBuild program listings provided by YouthBuild USA as of June 2013.

NOTE: Asterisks (*) denote programs that participated in the evaluation.

learned of some additional providers from the alternative providers they spoke to.[15] YouthBuild USA supplied information about communities with multiple YouthBuild programs in operation, while information about the presence or absence of Job Corps programs came from the Job Corps website.

The research team gathered information from 114 alternative programs in 62 different communities where YouthBuild programs operated.[16] Information was collected about organizational characteristics (size of staff, budget, and number of clients served annually), services

[15]The research team faced difficulties in securing interviews with alternative service providers since their participation was voluntary. Many times, the research team conducted these interviews over the phone after the site visit, and in a few instances relied on information gathered from the Internet. The research team was not able to reach any alternative providers in six locations and no interviews were attempted in two locations.

[16]This excludes interviews with other YouthBuild programs or Job Corps staff members, which are addressed separately.

offered, overlap or involvement with YouthBuild programs in the area, and experience serving at-risk young people or dropouts. The data collected did not allow for any comprehensive comparisons of program intensity, for example regarding numbers of hours of participation. In addition, the analysis was not designed to capture the general "esprit de corps" or culture of these alternative programs, a quality the YouthBuild model greatly esteems.

Alternative programs included in this analysis were of quite varied sizes. For example, the average number of staff members was 43, but the range was from 1 to 803 (a technical college). Programs served from 20 to over 90,000 clients annually (an American Job Center network), and operating budgets ranged from $75,000 (a small GED program) to $130 million (a college). Not surprisingly, given how the sample was created, the alternative providers interviewed overlapped a great deal with YouthBuild in the populations they served; age, income level, and school status were the most common areas where the populations served by alternative providers overlapped with the YouthBuild target population.

Communities with Programs Similar to YouthBuild

Program group participants generally described YouthBuild as being one of a kind, particularly since other programs did not pair work experience with education and did not offer stipends. The information gathered about alternative providers suggests that relatively few provided the full range of services YouthBuild did, largely confirming what staff members and participants said. Of the 62 communities where data were collected on alternative services, only 4 had alternative providers offering a range of services similar to that of YouthBuild programs: education and construction training, case management, employment services, and supportive services.[17] Further analysis indicated that not all offered the services in the same way as YouthBuild. Some of these programs were similar in that they started young people in cohorts, lasted for at least nine months, and combined academics with vocational training, work-readiness training, and other life-skills training. In addition, young people received case-management services and access to other supportive services. However, these programs generally did not boast of developing a sense of community that extended beyond program completion — like the YouthBuild alumni networks are designed to do — nor did they emphasize the importance of social and personal responsibility or leadership to the same degree. Box 9.2 provides descriptions of several programs that were similar to YouthBuild.

[17]Information was collected about the services each provider offered, including educational services, vocational training (including construction), case management, and supportive services. Descriptions of how the services were delivered and their content were also compiled. These data were analyzed to determine what providers offered each type of service (and combination of services, if multiple services were offered). The data were also analyzed to determine if the structure of those services was similar to YouthBuild (for example, if all services were offered to a cohort of young people in a systematic way).

Box 9.2

Examples of Alternative Providers Most Like YouthBuild

New Bedford, Massachusetts. Operated by a sponsoring agency, the program offered low-income young people between the ages of 16 and 21 a range of services to select from based on their needs. Entry into the program was open year-round. Out-of-school participants had two options for GED preparation: "Fast Track," where participants with fewer remediation needs came for two hours, four days a week, and "Core Classes," which participants attended three hours per day, four days a week while also receiving college-readiness, work-readiness, and life-skills training. Both out-of-school and in-school participants received case management from one case manager, who primarily provided referrals to other services and helped participants connect with other resources. Participants also had access to the sponsoring agency's paid work-experience opportunities, including a painting program where they received two weeks of training and then worked in a crew at job sites in the community, as well as summer work programs operated in partnership with the local Workforce Investment Board.

New York City. Started in late 2012, this program was run by an agency that operated multiple initiatives targeted at young people between the ages of 18 and 24 involved in the court system. It served 75 young people annually. In the first three months of the program, participants received comprehensive services that included GED preparation for those who needed it, work-readiness training, life-skills training, and case management. Postsecondary preparation or college classes for participants who already had GED certificates were provided by a partner agency. Participants also worked on a community service project (for example, renovating a community space), which gave them an opportunity to learn vocational skills. In the following three months, participants were placed in internships and were eligible for performance-based incentives. Throughout the six-month program, participants received a stipend. After the program ended, participants received six months of follow-up services as needed, which could include continued case management, performance-based incentives, and academic services.

San Diego, California. This agency was a certified Conservation Corps and charter school with a large staff. It operated multiple programs serving approximately 400 participants between the ages of 18 and 25 each year. One program emphasized vocational training: participants trained and worked for 32 hours over four days each week while earning wages. They attended diploma-granting academic classes at the charter school the remaining day each week, earning a stipend for education hours. On their school day, participants participated in one-hour workshops on work readiness, life skills, and job searching led by graduate students from the counseling department at a nearby university. Other programs also provided job training and educational opportunities in conjunction with paid work experiences. Ancillary services were also available, including counseling and case management, postsecondary enrollment, and job placement.

SOURCE: YouthBuild site-visit interview data.

Unlike those depicted in Box 9.2, one program in New York City and another in Spokane, Washington, offered all the same types of services as YouthBuild programs but provided them à la carte, meaning participants picked what they were interested in rather receiving all services automatically. Furthermore, participants did not have equal access to all services. For example, one program offered work-readiness training through a multiple-day workshop for anyone interested; the workshop covered job search, job applications, career interests, and interviewing skills. Separate workshops covered résumé development and financial literacy, and were also available to any interested party. However, only young people who met certain qualifications could receive one-on-one support in job search and access to training opportunities and other support services.

One program mentioned by many YouthBuild program staff members and participants was Job Corps, which has more than 120 programs ("centers") in the United States.[18] Job Corps offered the same range of services as YouthBuild, to a similar demographic, and in similar ways. According to a 2013 report, a Job Corps student is typically from an economically disadvantaged family and enters the program between the ages of 16 and 24 not having completed high school, reading slightly below the eighth-grade level, and never having had a full-time job.[19]

Like YouthBuild, Job Corps is designed to operate in three phases. Participants get acclimated to the program culture and expectations, undergo education and career-skills training, and finally transition into employment and follow-up after they leave the program. Job Corps participants also receive modest stipends for their training time. Each Job Corps center specializes in different technical careers such as automotive and machine repair, construction, finance and business, hospitality, information technology, or retail sales and service. Academic instruction to prepare for the GED exam or to obtain a high school diploma is coupled with career training and work-based learning, preferably at employer work sites.[20] While the average length of stay of Job Corps participants was about 8 months, as reported by DOL in 2009, graduates (students who completed a career technical training program or obtained a high school diploma or GED certificate) stayed an average of approximately 12 months.[21] Programs are supposed to make contact with former participants monthly for no more than 21 months after they leave to offer them job placement or retention assistance, assistance with career advancement, or transition-support services.[22]

[18]U.S. Department of Labor, Office of Job Corps (2013a).
[19]U.S. Department of Labor, Office of Job Corps (2009).
[20]U.S. Department of Labor, Office of Job Corps (2013c).
[21]U.S. Department of Labor, Office of Job Corps (2009).
[22]U.S. Department of Labor, Office of Job Corps. (2013c).

One major difference from YouthBuild was that Job Corps programs were largely residential, often requiring participants to relocate. According to a 1999 report of the National Job Corps program by Mathematica Policy Research, the average distance students traveled from home to attend Job Corps ranged from 105 to 323 miles. The distance varied by region, but more often than not fewer than 50 percent of students traveled less than 100 miles to attend the program.[23] Furthermore, there are Job Corps programs in each region and state where YouthBuild programs operate. There is even a great deal of overlap at the county level, as shown in Box 9.3, suggesting that young people assigned to the YouthBuild evaluation's control group could gain access to this alternative program as easily as their program group counterparts could gain access to YouthBuild. Several program group members interviewed during site visits mentioned having either previously attending Job Corps or looking into it. Reasons for choosing a YouthBuild program over Job Corps included the long distance to the Job Corps program and their inability to meet certain requirements. (For example, some YouthBuild participants scored lower on math tests than Job Corps required, or were not able to pay off probation fines to qualify for admission.) One young woman who had enrolled in Job Corps said it was too difficult for her so she dropped out.

Other Services in the Community

While YouthBuild's holistic service-delivery approach was not very common among the alternative providers interviewed, all communities had providers offering one or more of the services in the YouthBuild model, such as education, vocational training, or case management. They were usually not all available through the same provider, however. Theoretically, therefore, a young person could gain access to the same service components but would need to visit multiple providers to do so, and it seems unlikely that those providers would have coordinated their services.

All communities in which data were collected included at least one provider of education services. The ways these providers delivered education services varied widely, as did the intensity of their programs. Some providers reported diploma-granting or alternative high school arrangements, but most were GED programs that tended to be instructor-led classes or self-directed modules. It was difficult to determine how comprehensive the class instruction was based on the general nature of information collected from providers; some offered distinct classes for each subject while others tended to address all subjects together. Furthermore, the time in class varied substantially; some reported 25 hours of class a week while others reported as little as 4 hours a week. In some cases, GED programs were paired with additional resources

[23] Johnson et al. (1999).

Box 9.3

Job Corps Programs in the Same County as YouthBuild Evaluation Programs

County, State	YouthBuild Program	Job Corps in the Same County
Maricopa County, Arizona	• YouthBuild Phoenix Partnership	• Phoenix Job Corps Center
Los Angeles County, California	• LA CAUSA YouthBuild	• Long Beach Job Corps Center, Los Angeles Job Corps
Sacramento County, California	• Sacramento YouthBuild Team	• Sacramento Job Corps Center
San Diego County, California	• Build with Pride • The San Diego Imperial Counties Labor Council's Inner Cities YouthBuild • SE San Diego Youth-Build Project	• San Diego Job Corps Center
Washington, DC	• LAYC YouthBuild Public Charter School	• Potomac Job Corps Center
Fulton County, Georgia	• Metro Atlanta Youth-Build	• Atlanta Job Corps Center
Cook County, Illinois	• OAI Chicago Southland YouthBuild	• Paul Simon Chicago Job Corps Center
Wayne County, Michigan	• SER YouthBuild Construction Institute	• Detroit Job Corps Center
Genesee County, Michigan	• Metro Flint YouthBuild	• Flint-Genesee Job Corps Center
Ramsey County, Minnesota	• Guadalupe Alternative Programs - St. Paul	• Hubert H. Humphrey Job Corps Center

(continued)

Box 9.3 (continued)

County, State	YouthBuild Program	Job Corps in the Same County
Harrison County, Mississippi	• YouthBuild Gulf Coast • IRD YouthBuild III	• Gulfport Job Corps Center
Albany County, New York	• YouthBuild Albany	• Glenmont Job Corps Center
Multnomah County, Oregon	• Portland YouthBuilders	• Partners in Vocational Opportunity Training (PIVOT) Job Corps Center • Springdale Job Corps Center
Philadelphia County, Pennsylvania	• YouthBuild Philadelphia Charter School Project • Project YES (Youth Empowered for Success) II	• Philadelphia Job Corps Center

SOURCE: U.S. Department of Labor, Office of Job Corps (2013b).

similar to what was available in YouthBuild. For example, in one GED program students attended classes five days a week for 5 hours each day; each week students received about 18 hours of subject instruction and 7 hours of life-skills classes, parenting classes, and boys' and girls' groups. Meanwhile, GED preparation in other programs involved little more than working individually with a volunteer tutor, without formal instructors or supplemental support services.

Postsecondary access and preparation services were also somewhat common in evaluation communities, though as described in Chapter 6 for YouthBuild programs, the postsecondary services offered by alternative providers were not as robust as the support services offered for GED or high school completion. Often only minimal services were available, such as help to fill out the Free Application for Federal Student Aid or counseling to choose the right college. More extensive services were offered by some providers, including organized college tours, support in writing entrance essays, and help studying for entrance exams. Some alternative programs provided financial support for application fees, books and supplies, and tuition. Few providers offered the opportunity to enroll dually in GED preparation or diploma-granting programs and college credit courses, and few provided transition support to young people after they started their postsecondary careers.

The research team found workforce training in two-thirds of the communities where it interviewed providers. The majority of these programs offered training in careers such as Certified Nursing Assistant, computer hardware or software, retail, or culinary arts. Nearly a quarter of communities had providers offering construction training. Whatever the career path, many alternative programs did not provide the training themselves but referred clients to other agencies or local American Job Centers (not interviewed) for training.

Work-readiness services were reportedly offered in nearly 90 percent of the communities in which interviews occurred. As described by alternative providers, work-readiness services included skills assessments, mock interviews, and classes in résumé writing, interview skills, and work etiquette. Services were delivered individually or in groups, and through one-time offerings or reoccurring meetings. Job-search assistance and job placement were similarly varied in their conveyance — individually or in groups — and in their degrees of intensity, ranging from simple access to computers and the Internet to placement in apprenticeship programs. Other services included access to posted job listings, guidance in filling out job applications, job fairs, and career counseling. There was very little mention of direct employment placement services. Life-skills training — frequently involving topics such as financial literacy, time management, self-esteem, and professionalism — was available to a lesser degree.

Case management was reported in over two-thirds of communities in which interviews were conducted, but was available with varying levels of intensity. For example, one provider in Minnesota offered intense case management in which case managers were assigned 16 cases and were available to meet with clients once a week for an hour. In the majority of communities with case-management services, however, those services were described as much less comprehensive. The role of case managers also varied. Often case managers were described as being responsible for many employment-service functions, such as résumé development or job-search support. In other instances, case managers were responsible for helping young people to address personal needs, develop academic and employment goals, and monitor their progress toward goals.

Finally, alternative providers in nearly three-quarters of communities reported they had access to supportive services, including services for mental health and substance abuse, housing support, legal support, and child care. As was the case in many YouthBuild programs, young people were often referred to other providers rather than being provided supportive services by the organization interviewed. Transportation support was the most common supportive service offered by the providers interviewed, often through the provision of passes to ride public transportation. Some alternative programs reportedly offered gas subsidies or provided transportation directly.

Challenges to Using Alternative Services

Young people's personal and environmental experiences made participating in any program or activity difficult. Individuals in the control group probably lived in the same neighborhoods as those in the program group and probably experienced the same poorly performing school systems, substandard housing or living situations, poverty, and other life challenges. Regardless of the number of programs available in their communities, over 80 percent of YouthBuild program administrators reported the presence of several environmental challenges making it difficult for young people to use alternative services. Programs noted this hardship in all types of geographic areas, urban and rural alike, though a much higher percentage of rural programs reported difficulty than programs located in the center of large metropolitan areas.

Over half of YouthBuild programs reported that other providers did not offer a wide enough range of services, and also that the number of clients they could serve was limited by inadequate funding. As a result, many had long waiting lists. In urban and rural areas alike YouthBuild staff members also mentioned recent closings of alternative providers that had reduced the available services in the community. YouthBuild staff members in a third of the evaluation programs described other programs as having eligibility requirements that barred young adults toward the older end of YouthBuild's age range or those with history in the justice system, which limited access for many individuals qualified for YouthBuild programs. Staff members in a third of YouthBuild programs also reported access problems due to the location of other providers and young people's lack of transportation options. Finally, other providers were also described as not providing the kind of support participants needed to accommodate their challenging lives — child care services, for example, or income to contribute to their households.

Conclusion

Young people in the YouthBuild communities across the country contended with a myriad of challenges in everyday life, and YouthBuild programs were not the only ones offering their services to this population. This means that study participants assigned to the control group and even those in the program group often had other options from which to seek services. However, based on the information collected from alternative providers, YouthBuild remained unique in the comprehensive nature of the services it offered. This finding suggests one reason why the evaluation might find contrast between the services that program and control group members received during the study period. That contrast will be further explored in the impact report scheduled to be published in 2017.

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Chapter 10

Conclusion

The previous chapters in this report presented findings from the process study conducted during 2012 and 2013 of the 75 programs participating in the national evaluation of YouthBuild. This chapter summarizes the primary findings from the process study, provides an overview of some of the key factors that promote and hinder the implementation and operation of a YouthBuild program, and uses these findings to prepare the ground for the impact analysis, the results of which will be presented in reports expected to be published in 2017 and 2018.

The findings of the process study fall into three broad categories: fidelity to the YouthBuild model, services and organizational characteristics, and community context.

Fidelity to the YouthBuild Model

This report identified several key findings concerning programs' fidelity to the YouthBuild model.

The YouthBuild model is designed to allow adaptation as programs strive to fit local conditions; therefore, fidelity to the model is manifested in different ways in different programs. Programs generally had good fidelity to the general YouthBuild model. However, because programs adapt YouthBuild based on a number of factors — including the philosophy of the organization sponsoring the program, variability in program funding, competing funding priorities or performance measures, and community contexts — any two programs may operate very differently while still maintaining strong overall fidelity. Overall, fidelity was highest in vocational services — particularly among Department of Labor (DOL)-funded programs — with most programs implementing vocational training that fully met the YouthBuild USA design standards. A small number of programs fell short of these standards, mostly because they lacked sufficient work sites to enable participants to gain on-site training and experience.

Programs embraced the YouthBuild culture and value system to different degrees, which influenced model fidelity. YouthBuild culture emphasizes youth development and leadership, seeking to capitalize on the strengths young people bring to the program and empower them to take responsibility for their lives and choices. Overall fidelity to the YouthBuild model was lowest in leadership and community service, key facets of program culture. While most programs focused on these values and believed that they were central to YouthBuild, other programs embraced them to a lesser degree. For example, only about three-fourths of programs reported having working Youth Policy Councils, and among those programs that did, there was wide variation in how frequently the councils met and in their ability to influence

program policies. Programs with higher fidelity to the youth-leadership component of the YouthBuild model tended to be older, accredited programs with larger budgets that were independently operated or housed in small sponsoring organizations.

Corporation for National Community Service (CNCS)-funded programs differed from DOL-funded programs in several ways. CNCS-funded YouthBuild programs tended to have been in operation longer and have longer-tenured program directors, but they tended to have smaller operating budgets than DOL-funded programs. CNCS-funded programs had lower average overall fidelity to the YouthBuild USA design standards than DOL-funded programs, particularly in the areas of vocational and construction training, supportive services, and postsecondary preparation. However, these differences may not be due to the differences in funding sources per se. Although the two groups were identified at the onset of the evaluation as "DOL-funded" or "CNCS-funded," the differences in funding between them are not so distinct. Many of the DOL-funded programs also received some funding from CNCS for AmeriCorps programs, and most programs in the CNCS-funded group also received DOL funding during the data-collection period, which means that these programs had to follow the same DOL requirements as their DOL-funded counterparts.

Programs with more staff members had better model fidelity. Those programs may have been able to more easily meet the diverse requirements for fidelity. They also tended to have larger budgets, which may have contributed to their ability to implement the model more fully.

Fidelity to the academic component of the YouthBuild model was positively related to the number of partners and staff members at a program. Specifically, programs that had three or more educational partners, and those with more than five staff members, had greater fidelity to the academic component of the YouthBuild model. Further, programs whose academic instructors were well integrated into the program also had greater fidelity, as did those programs that were charter schools. Fidelity was less consistent for postsecondary education services, though programs that received separate funding for these services had greater fidelity in this area.[1]

[1]Thirteen programs in the evaluation received grants from the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation, the Open Society Foundation, and New Profit, Inc.'s Social Innovation Fund (through YouthBuild USA) to participate in the Postsecondary Education Initiative, intended to align student learning outcomes with the expectations of postsecondary institutions. Six of these programs are CNCS-funded programs. Many of the same programs plus seven others in this evaluation also participated in an earlier National Schools Initiative intended to develop stronger postsecondary programs.

Services and Organizational Characteristics

Several findings related to program services and organizational characteristics were identified throughout this report.

YouthBuild programs extensively screened applicants prior to enrollment, and used Mental Toughness Orientation both to prepare young people for the program and to identify those young people who demonstrated a readiness to change. On average, programs recruited nearly four applicants for each available YouthBuild slot, because so many applicants were deemed ineligible or unsuitable, or dropped out during the screening process. In many ways, then, the young people who did enroll were more likely to be highly motivated to succeed than the general population eligible for YouthBuild.

Programs focused on keeping participant-to-staff ratios low, but did so with varying degrees of success. Particularly for educational instruction, programs focused on providing individually tailored instruction and personalized academic support, often organizing classes into groups to keep class sizes small. This helped to support positive relationships between participants and instructors, which staff members believed was essential to program success. In contrast, vocational training staffs were often stretched thin, and many programs struggled to maintain target participant-to-staff ratios. Similarly, often there were too few case managers to provide participants with the in-depth support they generally required.

Relatively little attention was paid to job placement and there was very little job development among programs. In part due to resource constraints and the number of other services they had to provide, programs tended to place less emphasis on job placement. Although approximately 40 percent of the programs had a dedicated staff member to assist participants with job placement, there were few examples of job development — that is, few examples where staff members were working directly with employers to identify potential openings and train participants to fill them.

Programs in the evaluation were highly diverse, varying in their geography, longevity, funding, and staffing, but were very similar to the overall pool of YouthBuild programs operating during the period. The 75 programs in the evaluation were highly similar to the overall pool of programs receiving DOL and CNCS funding during the study period, suggesting that findings from the subsequent impact study will be representative of that broader pool of programs.

Local Context

Finally, a number of findings were detailed concerning the local contexts in which the programs operated.

All the communities in which the YouthBuild programs in this evaluation operated seemed to offer some form of alternative education or General Educational Development (GED) preparation. A large number of communities had programs offering varying forms of vocational training.

Other programs for young people in these communities rarely matched the breadth and scope of services provided by YouthBuild. Similarly, few alternative programs in the communities described developing a culture among their participants to rival that developed by most of the YouthBuild programs in this study. Thus, there will be a differential between the treatment received by study members who had access to YouthBuild (the program group) and the treatment received by study members who did not (the control group).

Participants and staff members reported that young people faced significant challenges in gaining access to alternative services in their communities. Although a number of alternative services were present, young people experienced challenges in using them. Among the more substantial challenges were extensive waiting lists, restrictive eligibility requirements, a lack of viable transportation options, and a general lack of flexibility on the part of programs to accommodate young people's many and varied needs.

Factors Affecting Implementation

A number of factors affecting how YouthBuild was implemented and operated by the programs in the evaluation were identified throughout this report. As with the more general findings noted above, these tended to vary depending on the specific components or services being implemented.

Most YouthBuild programs that were housed in larger organizations could draw on financial, administrative, and staffing support from those larger organizations, and had access to other resources from them as well. While this was generally viewed as an advantage, in some instances the organizational culture or philosophy of the larger organization may have made it more difficult to fully implement the YouthBuild model.

Stability in leadership allowed for continuity in program implementation and operations. Most programs had relatively stable leadership in the years leading up to and including the evaluation. This enabled consistency in approach, philosophy, and possibly funding. Those programs that had turnover in leadership sometimes struggled to provide consistent and stable services.

In many programs, staff turnover was a persistent challenge. Though the reasons given for this turnover varied widely, it presented challenges to preserving a low participant-to-

staff ratio, faithfully implementing the YouthBuild model, and delivering the full range of services programs sought to provide.

Programs relied on a number of strategies to engage young people. Most programs sought to provide a wide range of services to meet participants' many needs, and to create a culture of respect, high expectations, and caring that contributed to participants remaining engaged. In academic services, these strategies included keeping class sizes small and participant-to-instructor ratios low; providing adjustable, self-paced instruction; making connections between instruction and real-world issues; incorporating project-based activities; using continual assessment to gauge participants' readiness for testing and to let participants know how close they were to reaching their goals; and diversifying teaching strategies. In vocational instruction, engagement strategies included customizing training to make it more relevant and interesting for participants, providing frequent hands-on training opportunities, offering fun and engaging activities, changing tasks around frequently, providing opportunities for leadership, helping participants find value in their work, and offering incentives.

Partnerships played a key role in the delivery of services. Partnerships enabled programs to make use of additional resources and draw upon the expertise of outside agencies. Programs used partners to provide direct educational and vocational instruction, postsecondary preparation and assistance, and materials and supplies, and in some cases to manage construction work sites. Staff members generally viewed these partnerships favorably, especially if the partners were well integrated into the overall program.

The downturn in the housing market made it significantly harder to provide construction training. All programs but one provided construction training, and the downturn caused most of them to struggle to identify suitable work sites, sell existing homes, and locate employment opportunities for graduates. In part as a result, programs sought out new construction partnerships (to lessen their risk in the housing market) and about a fifth of them also offered training in fields other than construction, including health care, culinary arts, computer technology, and gardening and land management.

Finally, although the participants who enrolled in the program had been heavily screened, those enrolled still had many needs and challenges. Those many needs and challenges affected programs' ability to deliver all services as fully as possible. Among participants' key barriers to educational and vocational instruction were poor attendance, low reading and math skill levels at program entry, short attention spans and an inability to focus, and a general lack of trust in others.

Implications for the Impact Study

This report has attempted to describe YouthBuild, as implemented by the 75 programs in this evaluation, in a number of dimensions including organizational structure and delivery of program services. The findings in this report have critical implications for the impact analysis, which will seek to determine YouthBuild's effect on the young people who participated in it, estimated by comparing the outcomes of the program and control groups. These implications generally fall into four areas related to this evaluation's ability to: (1) accurately assess the impacts of YouthBuild, (2) examine how impacts might vary across programs, (3) determine whether local context affects the impacts observed, and (4) identify whether effects vary by the characteristics of the young people served. Each of these is discussed in turn below.

Assessing the Impacts of YouthBuild

Of critical concern for the impact analysis is the extent to which the evaluation provides a fair assessment of whether YouthBuild works. In one sense, what is necessary for such an assessment is to ensure that the sample of programs included in the study is representative of YouthBuild programs as a whole. This report documents that the 75 participating programs are highly similar to the overall pool of programs funded by DOL and CNCS during the study period. Given this, the findings from the impact analysis should be representative of the broader YouthBuild program during this period.

In another sense, however, to test whether the YouthBuild *model* is effective, the programs included in the evaluation must have done a reasonable job of implementing the program with fidelity, so that the impact analysis is actually assessing YouthBuild. This report details that this condition has generally been met, as most programs implemented YouthBuild with high fidelity. Although programs varied somewhat in their fidelity, more than half received fidelity scores of 80 or higher, which roughly corresponds with the benchmarks for fidelity set by YouthBuild USA. Very few programs received a score of less than 60. Thus the programs in this study implemented YouthBuild as intended, and the impact analysis will be able to address the effects of YouthBuild.

Examining How Impacts Vary Across Programs

Another area of interest for the impact analysis is variability in model implementation across programs. This report makes clear that there is substantial variation across programs, and the findings in this report identify many of the key ways in which the programs vary. For example, although most programs overall had high fidelity to the YouthBuild model, some had higher fidelity than others. The impact analysis will be able to assess whether this variation is associated with differential impacts.

Moreover, programs varied in their fidelity to specific components of the YouthBuild model or in the specific services they offered. While most programs were generally faithful to the model in the areas of vocational and educational training, they varied more substantially in their fidelity to the youth-leadership, community service, and postsecondary-preparation components. Similarly, some programs offered services specifically designed to increase access to and knowledge about postsecondary education, while other programs did this less consistently. These differing aspects of fidelity and service offerings, too, can be examined as part of the impact analysis, to assess whether they are related to differences in the impacts observed. Such findings would clarify what services and approaches are most effective in YouthBuild and would also help other programs that aim to serve similar young people.

One distinction introduced in this report is that between DOL-funded and CNCS-funded programs. Impacts will be examined across the two types of programs, although any differences will be difficult to attribute to funding source per se. In addition, as noted above, the funding distinction between the two groups is not very strict. Seventeen programs in the evaluation were identified as "CNCS-funded" because they received CNCS funding in 2011 instead of DOL funding. However, many DOL-funded programs simultaneously received AmeriCorps funding from CNCS, and by the end of the research period most of the CNCS-funded programs had received some DOL funding.

Determining Whether Local Context Affects Impacts

Local context can affect program impacts in two ways. First, as mentioned earlier, the downturn in the housing market affected the delivery of YouthBuild services, making it more difficult for programs to identify suitable work sites for training. More broadly, the state of the local labor market can have important implications for any program that aims to increase the employment and earnings of participants. The impact analysis will examine how impacts on these key outcomes vary with the states of local housing and labor markets.

Second, local context can affect the services available to young people in the control group and thus the "treatment contrast": the difference between the services received by the control group and the program group. Even if programs faithfully implemented YouthBuild and provided a wide array of services, the impact analysis would be affected if young people in the control group sought and received alternative services that were comparable to those received by the program group. As a result, it is important to document the extent to which alternative services were available to and used by the members of the control group. This report documents the availability of these other services. A future report, using data from a survey given to young

people in the evaluation, will document the extent to which members of the control group participated in these other services.[2]

Chapter 9 demonstrates that nearly all the communities in this evaluation had youth services other than those provided by YouthBuild. All of them offered some form of alternative education or GED preparation, and a large number offered varying forms of vocational training.

However, these other programs for young people rarely matched the breadth and scope of services provided by YouthBuild, and rarely described creating a culture among their participants that rivaled that developed by most of the YouthBuild programs in this evaluation. Thus, in most cases it is likely that the impact analysis will measure the effect on young people of receiving YouthBuild services, relative to the absence of services or relative to services that are not as comprehensive as YouthBuild's. The impact analysis will examine whether program effects vary across areas due to differences in the treatment contrast.

Identifying Whether Effects Vary by the Characteristics of the Young People Served

One of the findings in this report is that programs used a variety of screening mechanisms prior to enrollment that may have led to important variation in who enrolled in the program. This screening included early assessments, and relied heavily on Mental Toughness Orientation to identify young people who were highly motivated to make changes in their lives. While this probably meant that the young people who enrolled in YouthBuild were ready to capitalize on the program, and thus might ensure good outcomes among participants, it also meant that the young people in this evaluation are a highly motivated subset of the overall population eligible for YouthBuild in these communities. This selection process may have important ramifications for the impact analysis; if YouthBuild had greater effects on young people who were motivated to change their lives, one would expect to see substantial impacts. If, on the other hand, YouthBuild had more influence on young people who required external motivation to make a change, one might expect that the impact analysis would find little difference between the members of the program and control groups. By examining differences in the baseline characteristics of young people, including age and academic level, and relating these differences to the impacts observed, the impact analysis will be able to assess the extent to which variation in screening efforts affects the impacts observed.

Further, despite this screening, the young people who were invited to enroll in YouthBuild still arrived with many barriers to success. These barriers include low levels of basic

[2]It is also important to document other services used by the program group. These will be analyzed in future reports.

education, involvement in the criminal justice system, substance abuse, unstable housing, lack of family support, lack of transportation, and food insecurity. The impact study will explore the extent to which impacts vary based on these or other characteristics of young people.

Next Steps

The findings detailed in this report indicate that this evaluation will allow for a thorough assessment of the impacts of YouthBuild. It has documented that the programs in the evaluation had high fidelity to the YouthBuild model but varied in important ways, and has demonstrated that there were differences in the accessibility and intensity of services available to members of the program and control groups. The 30- and 48-month impact reports, projected to be published in 2017 and 2018, respectively, will examine YouthBuild's effect in many areas, including educational attainment, employment, earnings, and involvement in the criminal justice system.[3] Each of these analyses will focus on the impacts of YouthBuild overall, but will also rely on the findings in this report to examine whether key variations in the implementation of the program affect the impacts observed.

[3]The 30-month report will include analysis of the 12-month impacts in addition to those at 30 months.

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Appendix A

Location and Study Sample Size of YouthBuild Evaluation Programs

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YouthBuild Evaluation

Appendix Table A.1

Location and Study Sample Size of YouthBuild Evaluation Programs

Program Name	Sponsoring Organization	City	State	Total Sample
Department of Labor-funded programs				
ADC YouthBuild	Abyssinian Development Corporation	New York	NY	82
Bi-CAP YouthBuild	Bi-County Community Action Programs, Inc.	Bemidji	MN	39
Build with Pride	Able-Disabled Advocacy, Inc.	San Diego	CA	30
CDSA YouthBuild Program	Community Development Support Association, Inc.	Enid	OK	60
Choctaw County YouthBuild Program	Little Dixie Community Action Agency, Inc. (Choctaw County)	Hugo	OK	25
Clayton County YouthBuild Program	Prevention PLUS, Inc.	Forest Park	GA	28
Columbia Builds Youth	Job Point	Columbia	MO	51
Franklin County YouthBuild Program	Youth Over Us, Inc.	Columbus	OH	61
Huntington YouthBuild Program II	The Huntington West Virginia Housing Authority	Huntington	WV	30
IRD YouthBuild III	International Relief and Development US (Gulf Coast)	Gulfport	MS	107
Jackson YouthBuild	Community Action Agency	Jackson	MI	21
Lancaster County YouthBuild Project	Lancaster County School District	Lancaster	SC	53
LAYC YouthBuild Public Charter School	Latin American Youth Center Public Charter School Columbia Heights	Washington	DC	84
Metro Flint YouthBuild	Metro Community Development, Inc.	Flint	MI	155
Mile High Youth Corps YouthBuild Program	Year One doing business as Mile High Youth Corps	Denver	CO	64
Morristown-Hamblen YouthBuild Project	Douglas-Cherokee Economic Authority, Inc.	Morristown	TN	8
New Directions YouthBuild	Nubian Directions II, Inc.	Poughkeepsie	NY	25
Northwest Wisconsin Fresh Start/ YouthBuild Project	Indianhead Community Action Agency, Inc.	Ladysmith	WI	25
OAI Chicago Southland YouthBuild	OAI, Inc.	Chicago	IL	63
Portland YouthBuilders	Portland YouthBuilders	Portland	OR	30
Project YES (Youth Empowered for Success) II	Connection Training Services	Philadelphia	PA	74
Quad YouthBuild	Quad Area Community Action Agency, Inc.	Hammond	LA	73

(continued)

Appendix Table A.1 (continued)

Program Name	Sponsoring Organization	City	State	Total Sample
ReSOURCE YouthBuild	ReSOURCE: A Nonprofit Community Enterprise, Inc.	Burlington	VT	0
River City YouthBuild	River City Community Development Corporation	Elizabeth City	NC	22
Sacramento YouthBuild Team	Sacramento Local Conservation Corps	Sacramento	CA	185
SALS YouthBuild	Southern Appalachian Labor School	Kincaid	WV	19
SE San Diego YouthBuild Project	The Metropolitan Area Advisory Committee Project	Chula Vista	CA	43
SER YouthBuild Construction Institute	SER Metro-Detroit, Jobs for Progress, Inc.	Detroit	MI	46
St. James Parish YouthBuild	St. James Parish Government/ Department of Human Resources	Convent	LA	42
SW GA U Empowerment Pathways YouthBuild	Southwest Georgia United Empowerment Zone	Vienna	GA	122
Tacoma Goodwill YouthBuild	Tacoma Goodwill	Tacoma	WA	33
The San Diego Imperial Counties Labor Council's Inner Cities YouthBuild	The San Diego Imperial Counties Labor Council	San Diego	CA	26
Tomorrow's Builders YouthBuild Program	Emerson Park Development Corp.	East St. Louis	IL	25
WNY YouthBuild "Leaders under Construction II"	Western New York AmeriCorps Fund			
Youth Action YouthBuild	Youth Action Programs and Homes, Inc.	New York	NY	127
YouthBuild Bogalusa	Northshore Technical College - Sullivan Campus	Bogalusa	LA	48
YouthBuild Delta	Louisiana Delta Community College - Tallulah Campus	Tallulah	LA	40
YouthBuild Gulf Coast	YouthBuild Gulf Coast, Inc.	Biloxi	MS	108
YouthBuild KCK	United Way of Wyandotte County, Inc.	Kansas City	KS	29
YouthBuild Lake County	YouthBuild Lake County, Inc.	North	IL	38
YouthBuild Louisville	Young Adult Development in Action, Inc./YouthBuild Louisville	Louisville	KY	117
YouthBuild Mississippi Delta	Mississippi Action for Community Education, Inc.	Greenville	MS	71
YouthBuild Newark, Inc.	YouthBuild Newark, Inc.	Newark	NJ	179
YouthBuild Northwest	Northwest Michigan Council of Governments	Traverse City	MI	0
YouthBuild of Central Iowa	Des Moines Area Community College	Ankeny	IA	43
YouthBuild Philadelphia Charter School Project	Philadelphia Youth for Change Charter School	Philadelphia	PA	253
YouthBuild Phoenix Partnership	City of Phoenix	Phoenix	AZ	22
YouthBuild Portland	LearningWorks	Portland	ME	47

(continued)

Appendix Table A.1 (continued)

Program Name	Sponsoring Organization	City	State	Total Sample
YouthBuild Program of Jefferson and Marion Counties	United Methodist Children's Home	Mt. Vernon	IL	9
YouthBuild Providence	The Providence Plan	Providence	RI	24
YouthBuild Rockford Program	Comprehensive Community Solutions, Inc.	Rockford	IL	196
YouthBuild San Joaquin	San Joaquin County Office of Education	Stockton	CA	79
YouthBuild Snohomish County	Workforce Development Council Snohomish County	Everett	WA	80
YouthBuild Spokane	NorthEast Washington Educational Service District 101	Spokane	WA	57
YouthBuild U.S. Virgin Islands	Virgin Island Housing Authority	St. Thomas	VI	35
YouthBuild Wilmington	Housing Authority of the City of Wilmington, N.C.	Wilmington	NC	38
YouthCare's YouthBuild	YouthCare	Seattle	WA	19
YouthRebuild LA	The Hope Center, Inc.	Gretna	LA	64
Corporation for National and Community Service-funded programs				
CTI YouthBuild of Greater Lowell	Community Teamwork, Inc.	Lowell	MA	15
Guadalupe Alternative Programs - St. Paul	Guadalupe Alternative Programs	St. Paul	MN	11
LA CAUSA YouthBuild	LA CAUSA, Inc.	Los Angeles	CA	15
Metro Atlanta YouthBuild	Cobb Housing, Inc.	Atlanta	GA	41
Operation Fresh Start YouthBuild	Operation Fresh Start, Inc.	Madison	WI	33
Rogue Valley YouthBuild	The Job Council	Medford	OR	9
SA Youth YouthBuild	SA Youth	San Antonio	TX	17
Youthbuild Albany	City of Albany Dept. of Youth and Workforce Services	Albany	NY	19
YouthBuild Boston, Inc.	YouthBuild Boston, Inc.	Roxbury	MA	17
YouthBuild Brockton	Old Colony YMCA	Brockton	MA	42
YouthBuild Dallas	Alameda Heights Community Outreach Center	Dallas	TX	9
YouthBuild Fall River	Old Colony YMCA	Fall River	MA	49
YouthBuild Gary	A New Life Youth Development Corporation	Gary	IN	19
YouthBuild Lawrence AmeriCorps	Lawrence Family Development and Education Fund, Inc.	Lawrence	MA	21
YouthBuild McLean County	YouthBuild McLean County	Normal	IL	0
YouthBuild New Bedford	People Acting in Community Endeavors, Inc.	New Bedford	MA	28
YWCA YouthBuild Springfield	YWCA of Western Massachusetts	Springfield	MA	14
Total				3,833

(continued)

Appendix Table A.1 (continued)

SOURCES: U.S. Department of Labor, YouthBuild USA, and the MDRC random assignment system.

NOTE: A total of 2,700 individuals were randomly assigned into the program group and 1,229 into the control group.

Appendix B

Comparison of YouthBuild USA Design Standards and Evaluation Design Standards

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The left column of Table B.1 shows the mandatory and required 2007 YouthBuild USA Design Standards disseminated by YouthBuild USA, in their original wording. The mandatory standard is noted in the table. The right column shows how the design standards were adapted for use in the evaluation. YouthBuild USA Design Standards that do not have a corresponding Evaluation Design Standard were not used in the evaluation. Together, the standards in the Evaluation Design Standards formed the Fidelity Rating Tool used to rate each program's fidelity to the YouthBuild model.

Appendix Table B.1

Comparison of YouthBuild USA Design Standards and Evaluation Design Standards

YouthBuild USA Required Design Standard	Corresponding YouthBuild Evaluation Design Standard
1. Service to the Community	**Construction: Service to Community**
1 A Young people in low-income communities serve their neighborhoods by building or rehabilitating affordable housing for homeless or low-income people, or community facilities or commercial facilities that will enhance the social and/or economic viability of the local community.	1 Young people in low-income communities serve their neighborhoods by building or rehabilitating affordable housing for homeless or low-income people, or community facilities or commercial facilities that will enhance the social and/or economic viability of the local community.
1 B Opportunities are provided to reflect on the historical and current social and political implications of the particular community needs being addressed and the methods of addressing them. These issues are woven into the academic curriculum to provide relevance to students' learning and critical thinking skill development.	
1 C Energy-efficient and green-building principles are followed in construction programs.	
2. Skills Training	**Construction: Skills Training**
2 A The process of construction is coupled with skills training and close on-site supervision by experienced trainers in a staff-to-youth ratio of no less than one trainer to no more than seven students.	2 The process of construction is coupled with skills training and close on-site supervision by experienced trainers in a staff-to-youth ratio of no less than one trainer to no more than seven students.
2 B Safety skills and safe practices are taught at the outset and enforced throughout the program. Care is taken to provide the same training to students who join at a later date.	3 Safety skills and safe practices are taught at the outset and enforced throughout the program.

(continued)

Appendix Table B.1 (continued)

YouthBuild USA Required Design Standard		Corresponding YouthBuild Evaluation Design Standard	
2 C	The curriculum includes transferable career readiness skills that are broadly applicable as well as specific skills for known career opportunities. A set of locally agreed-upon or nationally certified skills and competencies are systematically taught and students' mastery is assessed individually on a regular, ongoing basis.	4	The curriculum includes transferable career readiness skills that are broadly applicable as well as specific skills for known career opportunities.
2 D	Site training is complemented by vocational education classes to reinforce skills training and teach construction terminology or terminology used in additional career tracks in an environment free of production constraints. The training exposes young people to cutting-edge concepts and technology to best prepare them for careers in an evolving field.	5	Site training is complemented by vocational education classes to reinforce skills training and teach construction terminology or terminology used in additional career tracks in an environment free of production constraints.
2 E	Planning is done in advance for substitute activities that can be provided in sometimes unavoidable downtime during the construction process.		
2 F	Opportunities to obtain driver's education are provided; students are encouraged to obtain driver's licenses to enhance employability.		
2 G	A plan is developed for nonconstruction work for individual students who become unable to perform construction work for health reasons.		

(continued)

Appendix Table B.1 (continued)

YouthBuild USA Required Design Standard		Corresponding YouthBuild Evaluation Design Standard	
2 H	Industry-recognized credentials are made available to students and staff. For example: NCCER for construction, Occupational Safety and Health Administration (OSHA), Home Builders Institute (HBI), First Aid, Cardiopulmonary Resuscitation (CPR), lead abatement, asbestos removal, Certified Nurse's Assistant (CNA) for Nursing, A+ for technology. As proficiency is achieved, or at graduation, certificates of skills mastery are awarded to students.	6	Industry-recognized credentials are made available to students and staff. For example: NCCER for construction, Occupational Safety and Health Administration (OSHA), Home Builders Institute (HBI), First Aid, CPR, lead abatement, asbestos removal, CNA for Nursing, A+ for technology. As proficiency is achieved, or at graduation, certificates of skills mastery are awarded to students.
3. Education		**Education**	
	Program Design		
3 A	The program offers an education program that strengthens basic skills (reading, writing, math, and computer) and leads to a General Educational Development (GED), a high school diploma, college, or advanced technical training. In combination with vocational education, leadership development, life-skills training, and counseling, this education program takes between 50 and 60 percent of the program's time, usually, but not necessarily, in the pattern of alternating one week on the construction site and one week in the classroom.	7	The program offers an education program that strengthens basic skills (reading, writing, math, and computer) and leads to a GED, a high school diploma, college, or advanced technical training. In combination with vocational education, leadership development, life-skills training, and counseling, this education program takes between 50 and 60 percent of the program's time.
3 B	The minimum teacher-to-student ratio is 1 to 28 students (note that this assumes 14 students on the construction site, and 14 students in the classroom at any given time). Different ratios will be appropriate for different students at various levels. Tutoring and teachers' assistants are available to supplement classroom instruction.	8	The minimum teacher-to-student ratio is 1 to 28 students total for the cohort (note that this assumes 14 students on the construction site, and 14 students in the classroom at any given time).

(continued)

Appendix Table B.1 (continued)

YouthBuild USA Required Design Standard		Corresponding YouthBuild Evaluation Design Standard	
3 C	Programs that enroll students under 18 create developmentally appropriate structures and supports to enable them to succeed in the program. Useful skill-building strategies for this age group include refresher reading, writing, and math courses, and learning-to-learn skills. Older youth who need these supports are able to access them as well.		
	Curriculum		**Education: Curriculum**
3 D	Emphasis is placed on direct instruction that enhances postsecondary and career-preparation skills. Students are exposed to and learn to analyze and synthesize information from a wide range of authors, thinkers, and bodies of knowledge in different disciplines.		
3 E	Instruction is learner-centered and project-based and uses methods such as collaborative learning and peer-to-peer teaching to address specific student needs, learning styles, strengths, and interests.	9	Instruction is learner-centered and project-based and uses methods such as collaborative learning and peer-to-peer teaching to address specific student needs, learning styles, strengths, and interests.
3 F	The curriculum includes life-skills training that addresses the issues that would prevent students from succeeding if the issues are not handled. These issues are determined locally, but usually include substance abuse, legal problems, AIDS, racism, sexual harassment, intimate relationships, violence, loss of family members, homelessness, gangs, and caring for children and parents. Learning blocks such as lack of concentration and fear of failure might also be included.	10	The curriculum includes life-skills training that addresses the issues that would prevent students from succeeding if the issues are not handled.
3 G	The curriculum includes leadership skills, concepts, and attitudes; and links to community service.	11	The curriculum includes leadership skills, concepts, and attitudes; and links to community service.

(continued)

Appendix Table B.1 (continued)

YouthBuild USA Required Design Standard		Corresponding YouthBuild Evaluation Design Standard	
	Assessment of student progress		**Education: Assessment of student progress**
3 H	The program's intake process incorporates various assessments, including the Test of Adult Basic Education (TABE), to provide literacy and numeracy levels, and baseline data on academic credit history, learning styles, future goals, and learning challenges (such as English Language Learners and students with special needs).	12	The program's intake process incorporates various assessments, (including) such as the TABE, to provide literacy and numeracy levels, and baseline data on academic credit history, learning styles, future goals, and learning challenges (such as English Language Learners and students with special needs).
3 I	The program's initial assessment is used to shape individualized learning plans for all students. The plans address each student's college and career readiness and broader postsecondary and career goals. Good plans are updated every quarter; include active input from the student, advisors, and teachers; and form the basis for instructional decisions made throughout the year.	13	The program's initial assessment is used to shape individualized learning plans for all students. The plans address each student's college and career readiness and broader postsecondary and career goals.
3 J	Teachers use appropriate tools, for example, evaluation rubrics, teacher-student conferences, standardized tests, self-assessment, observation, and peer-review, to assess student learning. Teachers collect, discuss, share, and use student assessment data consistently to inform and adjust instruction.	14	Teachers use tools, for example, evaluation rubrics, teacher-student conferences, standardized tests, self-assessment, observation, and peer-review, to assess student learning.
3 K	Students are trained on an array of appropriate assessment requirements and standardized tests to prepare them for state exit exams and college and career placement tests such as Accuplacer, SAT, and ACT.	15	Students are trained on an array of appropriate assessment requirements and standardized tests to prepare them for state exit exams and college and career placement tests such as Accuplacer, SAT, and ACT.

(continued)

Appendix Table B.1 (continued)

YouthBuild USA Required Design Standard		Corresponding YouthBuild Evaluation Design Standard
	Technology	
3 L	YouthBuild programs establish specific targeted instruction in computer literacy. For example, students learn the current computer applications and how to type, use the Web appropriately, conduct research, access college and career resources, build their résumés, submit school work online, and use e-mail accounts responsibly and effectively.	
3 M	The program ensures that every student has adequate access to a computer and works toward fully integrating technology into every aspect of a student's education. All faculty and staff are encouraged to become computer literate and use technology in their daily work — for curriculum development, for teaching and learning, and for assessing student progress.	
	Teacher quality, supervision, and assessment	**Education: Teacher quality, supervision, and assessment**
3 N	Teachers ensure that students master the material being studied.	
3 O	The entire program focuses on achievement and continuous improvement.	
3 P	All teachers are qualified to teach their subject. Supplemental teaching staff, including tutors, are also well qualified.	
3 Q	Teachers have regular time built into their schedule for designing cross-discipline curriculum development, lesson planning, assessment of individual student progress and challenges, and aligning classroom and work site-based expectations. Planning time includes individual and group meetings as part of the regular salaried work week.	

(continued)

Appendix Table B.1 (continued)

YouthBuild USA Required Design Standard		Corresponding YouthBuild Evaluation Design Standard	
3 R	The program seeks to constantly improve its instructional program through vigilant oversight and leveraging external and internal resources and expertise. Where possible, an instructional leader keeps up with and uses best teaching and curriculum practices to coach, supervise, and evaluate staff members involved in instruction.		
3 S	Teacher incentives and tenure are linked appropriately to student performance and outcomes as well as students' evaluation of teacher performance.		
4. Postsecondary Education		**Postsecondary Education**	
4 A	Building partnerships with postsecondary institutions is an executive function.		
4 B	Program staff make a concerted effort to ensure college and job placement and success. The program creates a culture that promotes postsecondary enrollment and supports students in preparing for a range of options such as certification programs and two-year and four-year colleges.	16	The program creates a culture that promotes postsecondary enrollment and supports students in preparing for a range of options such as certification programs and two-year and four-year colleges.
4 C	A significant percentage of one or several staff members is dedicated to assisting students in preparing for college and careers, or staff may involve and supervise graduates, community members, and other volunteers to support postsecondary and career preparation and success for all students as long as the overall responsibility sits with program staff.	17	A significant percentage of one or several staff members is dedicated to assisting students in preparing for college and careers, or staff may involve and supervise graduates, community members, and other volunteers to support postsecondary and career preparation and success for all students as long as the overall responsibility sits with program staff.

(continued)

Appendix Table B.1 (continued)

YouthBuild USA Required Design Standard		Corresponding YouthBuild Evaluation Design Standard	
4 D	Students are inspired to take college seriously as an option for themselves. A program-wide college-preparatory component begins during intake and Mental Toughness. This component forms an integral part of the daily and weekly life of the program and includes such activities as current college enrollees advising students, and in-depth and individualized assistance with the application and financial aid, scholarships, and loan processes and options. Sessions are provided, college visits are held, and students are prepared for college placement tests.		
4 E	Programs create rituals and celebrations related to college-oriented activities. For example, they celebrate a student's acceptance into college or provide a healthy breakfast for students who are taking an entrance or placement test.		
4 F	Programs research, identify, and partner with organizations that provide resources for the entire postsecondary preparation, application, acceptance, and completion process. Programs help students assess the risks and benefits, pros and cons of different kinds of postsecondary institutions and programs.	18	Programs partner with organizations that provide resources for the entire postsecondary preparation, application, acceptance, and completion process.
4 G	Programs include—in addition to meeting the academic requirements—the completion of postsecondary and career-related portfolios and completion of service hours to earn AmeriCorps Education awards (where available) as part of students' graduation requirements.		

(continued)

Appendix Table B.1 (continued)

YouthBuild USA Required Design Standard		Corresponding YouthBuild Evaluation Design Standard	
4 H	Programs also provide additional resources such as Individual Development Accounts (IDAs) and help students access appropriate grants, loans, and scholarships to maximize financial resources for graduates in postsecondary institutions. The terms and use of all financial aid options are explained clearly to students and graduates.		
4 I	Leading up to college entrance, students learn credit-building skills, and create multi-year budgets that help them balance their income and expenses. Instruction includes an assessment of how many hours a week they need to work in order to meet their tuition and living needs. Staff emphasize the benefits of grants over loans where available.		
4 J	The program builds institutional partnerships with postsecondary institutions. For example, staff build relationships with postsecondary education personnel including admissions and financial aid officers and student services personnel and faculty; they develop co-teaching and faculty-sharing agreements and strong articulation agreements, or agree on joint representation on boards and advisory committees.	19	The program builds institutional partnerships with postsecondary institutions. For example, staff build relationships with postsecondary education personnel including admissions and financial aid officers and student services personnel and faculty; they develop co-teaching and faculty-sharing agreements and strong articulation agreements, or agree on joint representation on boards and advisory committees.
5. Career Development		**Career Development**	
5 A	Career development is treated as an executive function. Directors and board members seek and define partnerships with relevant agencies such as unions, major contractors, and community institutions like universities and hospitals to maximize training opportunities and line up good job openings.		

(continued)

Appendix Table B.1 (continued)

YouthBuild USA Required Design Standard		Corresponding YouthBuild Evaluation Design Standard	
5 B	Program staff make a concentrated effort to find construction-related job placements and careers for all graduates who desire them and have performed well. Adequate staff time is dedicated to fulfilling this function.	20	Program staff make a concentrated effort to find construction-related job placements and careers for all graduates who desire them and have performed well.
5 C	Non-construction jobs are identified for graduates not interested in construction.	21	Non-construction jobs are identified for graduates not interested in construction.
5 D	All students gain a thorough understanding of how to build a career track, including the ways postsecondary education—4-year, 2-year, certification programs, apprenticeships, etc.—fits into their personal track. Students get support on initiating a career path during the program year and through the graduate resources program.	22	Students get support on initiating a career path during the program year and through the graduate resources program.
5 E	A series of workshops or retreats prior to graduation is focused on anticipating and preparing students for the obstacles, pitfalls, and complex problems they will face on the job and in general in life beyond YouthBuild.		
5 F	Follow-up counseling and help in job seeking is available for at least 12 months after graduation.	23	Follow-up job counseling and help in job seeking is available for at least 12 months after graduation.
5 G	Students' progress is tracked after placement, and support is provided for their continued success. Contact with employers is similarly maintained.	24	Progress is tracked after placement, and support is provided for their continued success.
5 H	The program builds a reputation for producing graduates who make good employees and for providing helpful information and support after placement.		
6. Personal Counseling and Development		**Personal Counseling and Development**	
6 A	High standards for personal responsibility and group participation are set, with input from staff and students.		

(continued)

Appendix Table B.1 (continued)

YouthBuild USA Required Design Standard		Corresponding YouthBuild Evaluation Design Standard	
6 B	The program makes clear from the beginning; in selection, orientation and thereafter; that it is not possible to straddle two worlds, that is, to live a "street life" and a "YouthBuild life" at the same time.		
6 C	An intensive student orientation, at least one week in length but often lasting two weeks or even more, builds what has been called "mental toughness," with emphasis on goal setting, overcoming obstacles, resisting pitfalls and traps, bonding within the group, understanding oppression and racism, building trust with staff, and preparing for the rigors of the YouthBuild program.	25	An intensive student orientation, at least one week in length but often lasting two weeks or even more, builds what has been called "mental toughness."
6 D	Personal counseling in a steady and ongoing fashion for everyday life issues, as well as for crises, is provided within the program. Each program has no less than one full-time counselor for every 28 youth. This counselor meets regularly with individual students.	26	Personal counseling in a steady and ongoing fashion for everyday life issues, as well as for crises, is provided within the program. This counselor meets regularly with individual students.
6 E	Staff ensure from the start that all students develop life plans that address postsecondary education, careers, leadership skills, and personal and family responsibility.	27	Staff ensure from the start that all students develop life plans that address postsecondary education, careers, leadership skills, and personal and family responsibility.
6 F	The individual's struggle to choose a positive lifestyle over self-destructive and irresponsible social behavior is actively supported in a variety of ways. Peer group counseling sessions, rap groups, or other modes of developing interpersonal support among the students are an ongoing part of the program, as is training in how to resist negative peer pressure.	28	Peer group counseling sessions, rap groups, or other modes of developing interpersonal support among the students are an ongoing part of the program.

(continued)

Appendix Table B.1 (continued)

YouthBuild USA Required Design Standard		Corresponding YouthBuild Evaluation Design Standard	
6 G	Referrals to outside resources are available for students with severe emotional problems, drug or alcohol addiction, or other issues, if good referrals are available in the community.	29	Referrals to outside resources are available for students with severe emotional problems, drug or alcohol addiction, or other issues.
6 H	Counselors pay particular attention to helping students solve pending court problems and complete probation requirements.	30	Counselors pay particular attention to helping students solve pending court problems and complete probation requirements.
6 I	Confidentiality guidelines are made clear, and all commitments of confidentiality made by staff are scrupulously kept.		
6 J	Random or routine drug testing is done as part of a proactive substance-abuse strategy. Students who test positive are provided counseling or treatment, which must be completed along with passing a follow-up drug test, as part of a clear plan for becoming drug-free prior to graduation.	31	Random or routine drug testing is done as part of a proactive substance-abuse strategy. Students who test positive are provided counseling or treatment, which must be completed along with passing a follow-up drug test, as part of a clear plan for becoming drug-free prior to graduation.
6 K	Training in personal finance management is provided. This training covers budgeting, managing bank accounts, understanding taxes, using credit, building assets, owning a home, filing income taxes, obtaining the earned income tax credit, and investing.	32	Training in personal finance management is provided. This training covers budgeting, managing bank accounts, understanding taxes, using credit, building assets, owning a home, filing income taxes, obtaining the earned income tax credit, and investing.
7. Leadership Development			
7 A	A YouthBuild program must have a working policy committee or comparable process by which students receive experience in program governance and participate in significant decision making that affects the program.[a]	33	A YouthBuild program must have a working policy committee or comparable process by which students receive experience in program governance and participate in significant decision making that affects the program.

(continued)

Appendix Table B.1 (continued)

YouthBuild USA Required Design Standard		Corresponding YouthBuild Evaluation Design Standard	
7 B	The education program includes a curriculum focused on leadership attitudes and skills.	34	The education program includes a curriculum focused on leadership attitudes and skills.
7 C	The program communicates the principle "Good leadership is taking responsibility to make sure things go right for your life, for your family, for the program, for the community," which unifies personal development with community leadership.		
7 D	Emphasis is placed on the fact that leadership starts with being a responsible group member who can keep one's own commitments and support the achievements of the group's goals and objectives through cooperative work and reliability.		
7 E	Group attention is focused on defining good leadership.		
7 F	YouthBuild graduates who are enrolled in postsecondary education or are successfully pursuing careers are recognized as leaders and are called upon to provide support and guidance to enrolled YouthBuild students.		
7 G	The process of becoming a positive role model in the community is taken seriously and its implications are discussed.		

(continued)

Appendix Table B.1 (continued)

YouthBuild USA Required Design Standard		Corresponding YouthBuild Evaluation Design Standard	
7 H	The elected policy committee, or a comparable ongoing body, should meet regularly, preferably weekly, with the director or program manager, whichever is designated to play that role on an ongoing basis, and at least one staff representative. The committee should participate in governance and decision making affecting the program, such as the selection and evaluation of staff, program, and program policies. The committee should receive training. The *Policy Committee Handbook* can be used as a guide in developing the committee. Standards for serving on the policy committee are set collectively, including attendance standards. The policy committee is fully informed about sources of funds, requirements and limitations of those funds, and the budget and expenditures of the YouthBuild program.	35	The elected policy committee, or a comparable ongoing body, should meet regularly, preferably weekly, with the director or program manager, whichever is designated to play that role on an ongoing basis, and at least one staff representative.
7 I	Young people taking leadership responsibility for the program are taught skills in facilitating group discussions and decision making, and resolving conflicts.		
7 J	Opportunities are maximized for young people to participate in fundraising, public relations, and advocacy.	36	There are opportunities for young people to participate in fundraising, public relations, and advocacy.
7 K	YouthBuild graduates serve on the board of directors of the sponsoring organization or on a committee of the board dedicated to the YouthBuild program. Training and preparation are provided.		
7 L	Programs involve local YouthBuild graduates in service-learning opportunities and mentoring relationships to enhance positive program culture.		

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Appendix Table B.1 (continued)

YouthBuild USA Required Design Standard		Corresponding YouthBuild Evaluation Design Standard	
7 M	Young people are assigned administrative responsibilities in the implementation of the program as opportunities arise to build leadership skills not only in governance but also in program implementation. There are leadership objectives, and students are able to take leadership, in every component of the program.	37	Young people are assigned administrative responsibilities in the implementation of the program to build leadership skills.
7 N	Leadership competencies are defined and taught, and a process of evaluation of mastery of these competencies, including self-evaluation, is carried out. These competencies may include training in peaceful conflict resolution, solving community problems, peer tutoring, good parenting, public speaking, and other leadership skills.	38	Leadership competencies are taught. These competencies may include training in peaceful conflict resolution, solving community problems, peer tutoring, good parenting, public speaking, and other leadership skills.
7 O	Students are given systematic attention to their own development, especially through an individualized leadership development plan connected to their personal life plans.		
7 P	Students register to vote and are encouraged to become informed citizens and to vote in local, state, and federal elections. Staff help those who have lost their voting rights work to restore them if possible under state law.		
8. Cultural and Recreational Activities		**Cultural and Recreational Activities**	
8 A	Cultural, recreational, and community activities that build group cohesion and morale are a regular component of the program cycle. These activities are organized, supervised, and well-coordinated. A planned program activity takes place on average at least once every month.	39	Cultural, recreational, and community activities that build group cohesion and morale are a regular component of the program cycle. A planned program activity takes place on average at least once every month.

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Appendix Table B.1 (continued)

YouthBuild USA Required Design Standard		Corresponding YouthBuild Evaluation Design Standard	
9. Wages, Stipends, and Incentives		**Wages, Stipends, and Incentives**	
9 A	Young people receive wages, stipends, or living allowances for their on-site training and service, and stipends to cover food and travel during their program time.	40	Young people receive wages, stipends, or living allowances for their on-site training and service.
9 B	A system of bonuses, raises, awards, and other recognition for good performance is systematically and consistently implemented. Effective incentives include making bonuses available every pay period for perfect attendance, and raises being given every two to four months for good performance in program and on site.	41	A system of bonuses, raises, awards, and other recognition for good performance is systematically and consistently implemented.
9 C	Students are fully informed of all financial circumstances dictated by various funding sources and program policies affecting their pay and they are warned in advance if there will be a delay for any reason. All policies regarding the docking of pay or the payment of fines are vetted with the policy committee and followed with fairness and consistency for all students.	42	All policies regarding the docking of pay or the payment of fines are vetted with the policy committee and followed with fairness and consistency for all students.
10. Length of Program		**Length of Program**	
10 A	Full-time program participation must be available for at least nine months, but 11 or 12 months is generally considered more desirable, and some programs engage students full time for 18 to 24 months in order to achieve their goals. The intention behind this is to have students graduate with the credentials and skills required to transition to postsecondary education, trade certifications, and meaningful career paths. Within these parameters, students' individual development plans should drive the length of engagement.	43	Full-time program participation must be available for at least nine months, but 11 or 12 months is generally considered more desirable.

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Appendix Table B.1 (continued)

YouthBuild USA Required Design Standard		Corresponding YouthBuild Evaluation Design Standard	
10 B	Programs begin the full-time program with a week- to monthlong Mental Toughness or equivalent orientation program. It is at this point that staff begin to prepare students for graduation, careers, college, and community leadership. This preparation continues throughout the entire program.	44	Programs begin the full-time program with a week- to month long Mental Toughness or equivalent orientation program.
10 C	Students must remain in the program a minimum of six months to be considered a completer or a graduate. Exceptions to this minimum participation requirement may be made if earlier placement is determined to be in the best interest of an individual student.	45	Students must remain in the program a minimum of six months to be considered a completer or a graduate. Exceptions to this minimum participation requirement may be made if earlier placement is determined to be in the best interest of an individual student.
10 D	A graduate program at least 12 months long provides job counseling, continued access to academic opportunities, personal counseling, leadership opportunities, and support groups for former YouthBuild program participants. This program is designed locally and may include outsourcing with partner organizations.	46	A graduate program at least 12 months long provides job counseling, continued access to academic opportunities, personal counseling, leadership opportunities, and support groups for former YouthBuild program participants.
11. Program Implementation and Culture		**Program Implementation and Culture**	
11 A	The program's curriculum and classroom experience intentionally integrate service and experiential learning. Deliberate links between the field and classroom are established to maximize student learning. Student time away from the classroom is carefully considered and integrated into academic goals.	47	The program's curriculum and classroom experience intentionally integrate experiential learning. Deliberate links between the field and classroom are established to maximize student learning.
11 B	The entire program is self-assessed by students, staff, or board at least annually to ensure it meets all the standards.		
11 C	Programs with rolling admissions admit students in groups of no less than seven to facilitate the integration process.	48	Programs with rolling admissions admit students in groups of no less than seven to facilitate the integration process.

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Appendix Table B.1 (continued)

YouthBuild USA Required Design Standard		Corresponding YouthBuild Evaluation Design Standard	
11 D	The tone of a YouthBuild program is one of cooperation, mutual assistance, respect, patience, high expectations, and students helping each other. Relationships are personalized: teachers know students' strengths, interests and needs; students are part of a mini-community and have a close and continuous relationship with one or more adults.		
11 E	Student-centered celebrations, rituals, and routines intentionally contribute to the creation of a strong positive program climate.	49	Student-centered celebrations, rituals, and routines intentionally contribute to the creation of a strong positive program climate.
11 F	Regular feedback systems are set up so all staff and students are aware at all times of their progress. Each stage is recognized, encouraged, and acknowledged in a systematic way throughout the program.	50	Regular feedback systems are set up so all students are aware at all times of their progress.
11 G	The program facility offers an environment that is physically healthy and promotes a positive program culture. Walls celebrate student work and communicate the program spirit and culture. Rooms are well lit; value-laden messages such as the YouthBuild pledge are clearly visible.	51	The program facility offers an environment that is physically healthy and promotes a positive program culture. For example, walls celebrate student work and communicate the program spirit and culture.
11 H	Students and staff together develop program policies that are consistently applied.		
11 I	The program embraces a systematic professional development plan for all staff that is results oriented, is embedded in the day-to-day work of the program, and provides coaching and effective learning strategies.		
11 J	All staff are well oriented prior to start-up and trained on positive youth development strategies and basic YouthBuild philosophy. The importance of continuity is reinforced as staff members are asked to make a commitment for at least a complete cycle.		

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Appendix Table B.1 (continued)

YouthBuild USA Required Design Standard		Corresponding YouthBuild Evaluation Design Standard	
11 K	A student handbook is provided. This handbook includes all the information about the program's expectations, practices, rules, and objectives, as well as information on graduation requirements, attendance policies, and program disciplinary policies. In addition, the handbook addresses the impact of wages, stipends, or living allowances on other government-funded benefits such as Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF), food stamps, Supplemental Security Income (SSI), Medicaid, Earned Income Tax Credit (EITC or EIC), and housing subsidies.	52	A student handbook is provided. This handbook includes all the information about the program's expectations, practices, rules, and objectives, as well as information on graduation requirements, attendance policies, and program disciplinary policies.
11 L	An agreement between the program and each student governs behavior, expectations, and consequences for violating these agreements, as well as a commitment by the program to the students regarding how they will be respected and engaged, and what opportunities will be available to them.	53	An agreement between the program and each student governs behavior, expectations, and consequences for violating these agreements, as well as a commitment by the program to the students regarding how they will be respected and engaged, and what opportunities will be available to them.
11 M	A process is defined for students and interns who are terminated or have a grievance, in case they want a hearing before an appropriate decision-making body.	54	A process is defined for students who are terminated or have a grievance, in case they want a hearing before an appropriate decision-making body.
11 N	Programs work toward making a computer available for every full-time staff person.		
11 O	Programs create strategies to thoughtfully invite the involvement of parents, guardians, and partners in students' education and life plans.		

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Appendix Table B.1 (continued)

YouthBuild USA Required Design Standard		Corresponding YouthBuild Evaluation Design Standard	
11 P	The program helps students obtain state-issued identification cards and other paperwork required to access financial aid, including birth certificates and personal and family tax documents. Programs encourage students to complete tax documents the year prior to applying for college.	55	The program helps students obtain state-issued identification cards and other paperwork required to access financial aid, including birth certificates and personal and family tax documents.
11 Q	As part of final enrollment, students have a fit-to-work physical.		
12. Management and Governance		**Management and Governance**	
12 A	A full-time YouthBuild director or program manager dedicates his or her time to the leadership of the program. In addition, trained staff are dedicated to the functions of education and construction management.	56	A full-time YouthBuild director or program manager dedicates his or her time to the leadership of the program. In addition, trained staff are dedicated to the functions of education and construction management.
12 B	The program's board of directors is fully informed about and committed to the YouthBuild philosophy and mission. If the sponsoring agency is not a free-standing YouthBuild organization, and it has other programs, the board forms a subcommittee focused on the well-being of the YouthBuild program. If the board does not include a significant number of members reflecting the ethnic background of the students, an advisory committee is formed that does.		
12 C	At least two YouthBuild graduates serve on the board of directors of the sponsoring organization, or on an advisory committee of the board dedicated to the YouthBuild program. Training and preparation are provided.		

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Appendix Table B.1 (continued)

YouthBuild USA Required Design Standard		Corresponding YouthBuild Evaluation Design Standard	
12 D	The executive director of a multi-service sponsoring agency provides full support to the YouthBuild program and delegates sufficient authority to the YouthBuild director so that he or she can manage the program. The executive director provides full financial reporting to the YouthBuild director.		
12 E	When YouthBuild is implemented by collaborating organizations, there is a clear locus of control, clear lines of accountability, and centralized records creating a cohesive program with a common philosophy and community of staff and students.		
12 F	The faculty and staff roughly reflect the ethnic, socioeconomic, or community background of the students.	57	The faculty and staff roughly reflect the ethnic, socioeconomic, or community background of the students.
12 G	Staff meetings of the entire YouthBuild staff and appropriate subgroups, including staff of collaborating agencies, are held as needed and on a regular basis.		
12 H	Financial management meets high standards of planning, accountability, and information for managers. • Monthly reports showing expenditures against budget, revenue projections, and cash flow projections are provided to management. • Fiscal controls are thorough, according to standard practices, preventing theft, mismanagement, or inappropriate use of funds. • All required corporate reports are filed, and taxes paid, to maintain charitable status and good standing with the IRS. • Financial obligations are paid on a timely basis. • An annual independent financial audit is performed according to legal requirements.		

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Appendix Table B.1 (continued)

YouthBuild USA Required Design Standard		Corresponding YouthBuild Evaluation Design Standard	
12 I	The organization sets a code of conduct for the staff and personnel policies are developed and implemented systematically. The policies include conflict-of-interest policies, sexual harassment policies, and drug-free workplace policies.		
12 J	The code of conduct includes the guideline that no staff or board member may obtain any personal profit or benefit through the labor of the students being carried out on personal property.		
12 K	To enable staff development and growth, staff training and development is systematically offered, provided, budgeted, and valued.	58	To enable staff development and growth, staff training and development is systematically provided, budgeted, and valued.
12 L	Annual written evaluations of staff and director are done and discussed. Comments from students are gathered during the completion of staff and director annual evaluations.		
12 M	Appropriate insurance is maintained.		
12 N	The program develops a written plan for sustainability that assesses a range of possible public and private funding sources that may be available to sustain the program for at least two years. The plan is supported by the sponsoring agency.	59	The program develops a plan for sustainability that assesses a range of possible public and private funding sources that may be available to sustain the program for at least two years.
12 O	Programs assess issues of sustainability and economies of scale to determine optimal program size.		

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Appendix Table B.1 (continued)

YouthBuild USA Required Design Standard	Corresponding YouthBuild Evaluation Design Standard
13. Record Keeping	**Record Keeping**
13 A YouthBuild USA affiliates participate in the Web-based Student Tracking Application (WebSTA) of the Affiliated Network, keeping and reporting data in a uniform way covering the following areas: • Recruitment • Basic demographic information, including income levels and educational levels of students • Contact information, including several relatives to facilitate future contact • Attendance • Retention (average length of stay and percent completing) • Reasons for termination • GED and HSD acquisition and educational gains data, including literacy and numeracy data according to Tests of Adult Basic Education (TABE) or comparable tests • Job placement, including wage levels and employer • Apprenticeships, certifications received • Postsecondary education placement: numbers of students taking placement tests; numbers of students accepted into college, numbers of students enrolled in college, numbers of students completing college • Voter registration	
13 B A data collection, monitoring, and assessment infrastructure is built and data review is an executive function. Real-time information on performance, attendance etc. is available for staff to review and the information continuously shapes program decisions.	

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Appendix Table B.1 (continued)

YouthBuild USA Required Design Standard		Corresponding YouthBuild Evaluation Design Standard	
13 C	Graduates' college and career placements are tracked for at least 12 months, optimally for 24 months and support provided as needed.	60	Graduates' college and career placements are tracked for at least 12 months, optimally for 24 months and support provided as needed.
13 D	Individual student academic progress folders and graduation portfolios are kept.		
13 E	Records are kept of all individual students' progress in mastering leadership skills and fulfilling leadership roles.		
13 F	Student evaluations of program components are done annually and are used as guides for program improvement.		
13 G	Simple records of counseling progress are kept. These reflect commitments made by the counselor and follow-up done, and reflect the life-planning process of the student.	61	Simple records of counseling progress are kept. These reflect commitments made by the counselor and follow-up done, and reflect the life-planning process of the student.
14. Community Leadership			
14 A	YouthBuild representatives participate actively in local coalitions designed to improve policies and access to resources.		
15. Collaboration with YouthBuild USA			
15 A	Each local program agrees to adhere to the basic philosophy and mission of YouthBuild, as reflected in the essential program qualities, the directors' mission statement, the *Leadership Development Handbook* , and the *YouthBuild Program Manual.*		
15 B	Each local program participates in further definition, refinement, and evaluation of aspects of the program, supporting the effort to get clarity about best practices and best resources for implementation of each program component and quality.		
15 C	Each local program participates in the leadership opportunities for youth provided by YouthBuild USA.		

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Appendix Table B.1 (continued)

YouthBuild USA Required Design Standard		Corresponding YouthBuild Evaluation Design Standard
15 D	Each local program participates in the activities of the national YouthBuild Coalition, which works to obtain adequate federal funding, enhance YouthBuild programs' visibility, support youth development, and build unity toward the elimination of poverty and discrimination.	
15 E	Each local program includes in its organizational documents the fact that it is affiliated with YouthBuild USA and uses the service marks and public relations materials according to the affiliation agreements.	
15 F	Experienced YouthBuild programs participate in providing various forms of training for new YouthBuild programs through on-site visits and workshops at seminars.	
15 G	Cooperative organizational planning to make full use of YouthBuild USA's resources is carefully done. The director and program advisor assess needs for technical assistance and training, develop an annual work plan, and measure progress on a regular basis. When staff training is provided by YouthBuild USA, local YouthBuild programs ensure that staff attend for the entire training, that schedules are not changed at the last minute, that time is devoted to joint planning for staff and youth training to ensure success, and that feedback designed to improve future training is provided.	
15 H	Programs take responsibility for self-assessment and constant improvement, sharing openly with their program advisor the issues with which they are grappling, and working with the program advisor to meet program and performance standards.	

(continued)

Appendix Table B.1 (continued)

YouthBuild USA Required Design Standard		Corresponding YouthBuild Evaluation Design Standard
15	I	Programs invite YouthBuild USA to implement the accreditation process as soon as they think they can qualify.

SOURCE: YouthBuild USA Affiliated Network (2007).

NOTE: [a]This standard is mandatory.

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Appendix C

Overview of Programs: Fidelity Scores

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YouthBuild Evaluation

Appendix Table C.1

Overview of Programs: Fidelity Scores

Characteristic	Number of Programs	Fidelity Scores						
		Overall	General Operations	Academic	PSE	Vocational	Supportive Services	Leadership
All programs	75	79	81	86	65	92	82	65
Type of organization								
Nonprofit	62	79	81	86	64	91	81	66
Other	13	79	80	86	68	92	83	60
Geography								
Large metro, central	26	76	79	82	61	92	77	61
Large metro, fringe	13	79	80	87	58	95	82	63
Medium metro	14	84	85	92	76	91	85	72
Small metro	6	79	80	92	57	82	85	63
Rural	16	81	82	86	69	93	84	68
Years in community								
Less than 20 years	21	82	84	86	73	93	82	72
Between 20 and 50 years	42	78	79	88	61	92	81	63
More than 50 years	12	77	80	80	63	88	81	60
Years operating YouthBuild								
Between 2 and 6 years	18	78	77	89	64	96	82	58
Between 6 and 10 years	27	79	82	85	67	88	80	67
More than 10 years	30	80	81	85	63	92	82	68
YouthBuild affiliation status								
No affiliation status	12	79	79	93	71	95	83	53
Provisional affiliate	15	77	80	82	56	92	84	55
Full affiliate	38	78	80	84	62	91	79	68
Accredited affiliate	10	86	87	93	80	88	85	85

(continued)

Appendix Table C.1 (continued)

Characteristic	Number of Programs	Fidelity Scores						
		Overall	General Operations	Academic	PSE	Vocational	Supportive Services	Leadership
Administrative structure								
Part of a larger sponsoring organization	64	79	80	86	64	92	82	64
Independent YouthBuild program	11	80	84	84	70	89	79	74
Organization operating YouthBuild annual budget (Fiscal Year 2011/12)[a]								
Less than $1 million	6	79	76	88	65	93	77	77
Between $1 and $5 million	33	80	83	88	63	92	83	65
Between $5 and $20 million	18	81	83	83	70	90	83	69
$20 million and above	17	76	77	84	60	91	80	56
YouthBuild annual budget (Fiscal Year 2011/12)[a]								
Less than $500,000	25	80	81	90	63	92	84	62
Between $500,000 and $1 million	32	78	79	82	64	91	82	62
$1 million and above	17	81	84	86	66	92	79	74
Type of funding								
Department of Labor	58	80	81	87	67	93	84	65
Corporation for National and Community Service	17	75	81	85	58	85	74	66
Number of years program director has worked at YouthBuild[b]								
Less than 1 year	8	79	79	82	61	91	80	75
1 to 3 years	21	81	78	87	72	95	85	64
4 to 6 years	18	76	82	83	58	90	76	58
7 to 10 years	14	83	86	89	68	88	87	72
More than 10 years	12	77	78	87	63	91	78	65
Staff size								
Less than 5 full-time equivalents (FTEs)	14	69	71	77	52	88	72	52
5 to 7.5 FTEs	31	79	81	87	61	92	83	62
7.5 to 10 FTEs	15	85	85	90	83	95	88	69
10 FTEs and above	15	83	86	88	67	91	82	79

(continued)

Appendix Table C.1 (continued)

Characteristic	Number of Programs	Fidelity Scores						
		Overall	General Operations	Academic	PSE	Vocational	Supportive Services	Leadership
Participant-to-staff ratio[c]								
Between 1:1 and 2:1	3	86	85	86	77	100	89	76
Between 2:1 and 4:1	28	76	76	86	60	92	79	56
Between 4:1 and 6:1	25	84	86	89	72	91	87	70
Greater than 6:1	17	77	82	82	59	90	75	69
Staff turnover								
Staff turnover is a challenge	34	75	77	81	64	87	78	62
Staff turnover is not a challenge	41	82	84	91	66	95	84	68

SOURCES: Calculations based on YouthBuild fidelity rating tool data, YouthBuild site-visit interview data, National Center for Health Statistics data, and affiliation information from YouthBuild USA.

NOTES: Fidelity scores were calculated by assigning point values to each standard, with programs receiving 100 points for "meets standard," 50 points for "partially meets standard," and 0 points for "does not meet standard." The points were summed across all standards that there were observations for, and then divided by the number of observations to create the fidelity scores. The maximum possible rating was 100, and the minimum was 0. Standards were further broken into program components and fidelity scores were calculated by component using the same method.

Geography is based on the National Center for Health Statistics scheme, which categorizes counties under six codes: 1 (large metro, central), 2 (large metro, fringe), 3 (medium metro), 4 (small metro), 5 (micropolitan), and 6 (noncore). For this table, micropolitan and noncore were combined to create the rural category listed here. The U.S. Virgin Islands were assigned a code based on total population and population density information from the 2010 U.S. Census.

General Operations relates to program operational characteristics such as program length, management and governance, and program implementation and culture.

PSE = postsecondary education.

Full-time equivalent (FTE) is a unit indicating the number of full-time employees at an organization plus the number of part-time employees standardized to a full-time basis. An organization with 4 full-time employees and 3 half-time employees would have 5.5 FTEs.

[a]Annual budget data for Fiscal Year 2011/12 were available for 74 of the 75 programs.

[b]Program director tenure was not available for two programs.

[c]Participant-to-staff ratio was not available for two programs.

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Appendix D

Representativeness of Study Programs

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YouthBuild Evaluation

Appendix Table D.1

Representativeness of Study Programs

Program Response	Percentage of Study Programs	Percentage of All Programs[a]
Years operating YouthBuild		
Less than 1 year	0	0
1 to 3 years	0	5
4 to 6 years	32	34
7 to 10 years	25	23
More than 10 years	43	39
Yearly operating budget[b]		
Missing	8	9
Less than $500,000	29	30
Between $500,000 and $1 million	39	38
$1 million and above	24	23
Funders[c]		
Department of Labor	93	90
Corporation for National and Community Service	45	53
Private foundation	52	47
State or locality	57	55
Some other organization	15	14
Predominant funder		
Department of Labor	88	85
Corporation for National and Community Service	4	5
Private foundation	1	1
State or locality	5	6
Some other organization	1	3
Number of years program director has worked at YouthBuild		
Less than 1 year	8	9
1 to 3 years	25	26
4 to 6 years	27	27
7 to 10 years	16	15
More than 10 years	24	22
Sample size	75	110

SOURCE: Calculations based on the YouthBuild grantee survey.

NOTES: Due to rounding, the percentages in some categories may not sum to 100 percent.

[a]All programs that received funding from the Department of Labor or the Corporation for National and Community Service in 2011.

[b]This represents the YouthBuild program's operating budget for the fiscal year when the 2011 YouthBuild grants were awarded. The awards were announced May 2011 and were received in the months that followed.

[c]Categories are not mutually exclusive.

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Appendix E

Site Recruitment and Random Assignment Design

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This appendix describes the process the study team used to select YouthBuild programs to participate in the evaluation and implement random assignment plans at each program. Also included is a discussion of the effect of random assignment on recruitment, eligibility, and enrollment.

Site Selection

Not all programs receiving Department of Labor (DOL) or Corporation for National and Community Service (CNCS) funding at the start of the evaluation could be included in the evaluation, either because they were unable to continue providing services during the period in which study-group members were to be enrolled, or because of other concerns about their suitability. Thus the first step in the evaluation was to select programs for inclusion. Deciding on the total number of programs to include in the impact component of the evaluation required a balance of two objectives: 1) maximizing the representativeness of the sample and the statistical power of the impact analysis and 2) ensuring high-quality implementation of program enrollment and random assignment procedures. Ultimately, 75 programs were included in the evaluation. Sixty of these were selected from the programs awarded grants by DOL in 2011, and 17 were selected from programs that did not receive DOL funding in 2011 but did receive funding from CNCS.[1] The latter programs are referred to here as CNCS-funded programs, although they might have received funding from other, non-DOL sources.[2]

Selecting DOL-Funded Programs

DOL awarded grants to 74 YouthBuild programs in May 2011.[3] Of these 74, 3 programs were deemed to be a poor fit for the evaluation because young people assigned to the control group were likely to receive substantially the same services as those in the program group. Among these programs were ones that operated in conjunction with the Conservation Corps, and ones embedded in charter schools where control-group members could remain in the charter school and also receive some type of vocational training. Including these programs in the evaluation would not have provided a true test of YouthBuild's effects, since the program and control groups would have received nearly identical services. The final sample frame for selection of DOL-funded programs thus included 71 programs.[4]

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[1]DOL and CNCS chose to include the CNCS-funded programs in the evaluation in order to examine whether program impacts vary by funding source.

[2]A number of these programs subsequently received funding from DOL as part of the 2012 funding cycle.

[3]An additional two programs received funding to supplement their March 2011 grants. These two programs were not considered part of the May grantee class.

[4]According to the programs' grant proposal documents, the three excluded programs planned to serve a total of 133 young people in a given program year. The other 71 programs planned to serve a total of 3,171 in a

(continued)

Sixty of these programs were selected to participate in the evaluation using probability-proportional-to-size sampling. Each program had a probability of selection that was proportional to its expected enrollment in a given program year. This method gave each YouthBuild slot (or young person served) an equal chance of being selected for the evaluation, meaning that the resulting sample of young people who enrolled in the study should be representative of the young people served by these programs. All of the 60 selected programs were required by DOL to participate in the evaluation. Of these, however, the study team determined during initial discussions with program staff members that two programs would be unable to enroll any study-group participants during the intake period. Thus, the final sample of DOL programs was 58.

Selecting CNCS-Funded Programs

CNCS funds programs through its National Direct grant to YouthBuild USA. Forty YouthBuild programs received CNCS grants but not DOL funding in 2011. After reviewing available information and conducting phone calls with each of the 40 programs, the evaluation team determined that many of these programs, particularly those receiving small CNCS grants, were likely to shut down in 2012 or not enroll young people during the study enrollment period. For this reason the study team, along with DOL's Employment and Training Administration and CNCS staff members, opted to select the 24 programs that received CNCS grants of at least $95,000 in 2010. Of these 24, 4 programs subsequently determined that they would shut down or otherwise be unable to enroll new participants during the intake period. An additional three programs were deemed to be unsuitable for the evaluation because they operated in areas where control-group members would be very likely to receive services similar or identical to those received by members of the program group. The resulting sample of CNCS programs was thus 17.

Developing and Implementing Random Assignment Procedures

Once YouthBuild programs were selected for participation in the random assignment study, the study team visited each program to meet with its leadership and program staff to further explain the study, answer questions, and begin developing plans for the random assignment processes.

The study team was flexible about when random assignment was conducted, relative to all the recruitment activities each program engaged in. Random assignment was conducted before, during, or after Mental Toughness Orientation. Decisions about the timing of random

given program year. Given that the excluded programs accounted for only 4.1 percent of the expected enrollment among DOL-funded programs, the study team's ability to extrapolate the study findings to all DOL-funded programs is not compromised.

assignment were made in partnership with the program, with the goal of conducting random assignment after the point in the recruitment process when a program experienced the largest drop-off, so as to maximize the possibility that young people in the program group would ultimately enroll in YouthBuild. It was also important, however, to ensure that random assignment was not placed so late in the process that the control group would have experienced a significant portion of the program. For example, the team avoided placing random assignment toward the end of a lengthy Mental Toughness Orientation.

Once the study team and a program developed a random assignment plan together, the study team customized a research procedures manual for that program's staff. These materials detailed the research design and the steps required of program staff members at each step from outreach through enrollment. Members of the study team usually conducted another site visit to train all staff members in these procedures, including the procedures for entering data into the MDRC random assignment system, which included basic identifying information about study participants, such as name and Social Security number.[5]

The study team was in communication with programs regularly to monitor their progress toward their outreach and recruitment goals, and to monitor the drop-off from application to enrollment. If a program was having challenges with recruitment, the study team worked with that program to brainstorm ways to improve its numbers. Often this involved doing more outreach, delaying the start of certain processes (like Mental Toughness Orientation), or engaging in multiple rounds of recruitment. The study team offered advice and support throughout; YouthBuild USA coaches and others were also helpful advisers when programs were experiencing challenges.

Seventy-two programs successfully completed random assignment at least once during the evaluation enrollment period of August 2011 to January 2013. The study team allowed 37 programs that had difficulty reaching their recruitment targets to enroll young people without going through random assignment for at least one enrollment cycle, sometimes several. This occurred when not enough applicants were present on the day of random assignment, when programs requested to bypass random assignment so they could focus on meeting their DOL or CNCS grant recruitment benchmarks, and when programs were experiencing significant delays in starting their program cycles because they could not recruit enough young people. Three programs were never able to do random assignment due to low recruitment numbers.

[5]Each local program was given a number of "wild cards" that it could use to allow certain applicants it selected to bypass random assignment and be allowed to participate. This option was used, for example, when a young person's situation was particularly compelling or when a family member was already a YouthBuild participant. Each program was allowed to use 5 percent of its program slots for wild cards. The minimum each program received was one wild card.

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Appendix F

Baseline Characteristics of the Youth Sample, by Research Group

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YouthBuild Evaluation

Appendix Table F.1

Baseline Characteristics of the Youth Sample, by Research Group

Characteristic	YouthBuild Group Response	Control Group Response	Total Response	
Average age (years)	19.6	19.8	19.7	***
Age (%)				*
16-18 years old	34	30	33	
19-21 years old	46	48	46	
22 years old or older	20	22	21	
Male (%)	64	65	64	
Race/ethnicity(%)				*
Latino	15	14	15	
White, non-Latino	16	15	15	
Black, non-Latino	63	63	63	
Other[a]	6	6	6	
Not specified	1	2	1	
Has a child (%)	29	32	30	**
Highest grade completed (%)				
7th	1	1	1	
8th	8	7	7	
9th	19	18	19	
10th	26	26	26	
11th	34	36	35	
12th	10	10	10	
Has a high school diploma or GED certificate (%)	9	10	9	
Has a disability (learning or physical) (%)	11	10	11	
Housing status (%)				
Living with family	62	59	61	
Own/rent apartment, room, or house	15	15	15	
Staying at someone's apartment, room, or house	15	17	16	
Staying with foster guardian/in foster system	1	0	1	
Halfway house/transitional house	1	1	1	
Homeless	3	3	3	
Locus of Control score[b]	3.4	3.4	3.4	
Sample size	2,700	1,229	3,929	

(continued)

Appendix Table F.1 (continued)

SOURCE: Calculations based on the YouthBuild Baseline Data Form.

NOTES: Due to rounding, the percentages in some categories may not sum to 100.

In some instances information was not available for all sample members.

Statistical significance levels are indicated as follows: *** = 1 percent; ** = 5 percent; * = 10 percent.

[a]Other includes Hawaiian Native or other Pacific Islander, Asian, and American Indian or Alaskan.

[b]This represents an average score of responses to questions that assess subjects' belief that they can control the events that affect them through their actions. Scores range from 1 to 4.

Appendix G

Department of Labor-Funded and Corporation for National and Community Service-Funded Program Comparisons

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The programs selected for the evaluation include a mix of those receiving funding in 2011 from the Department of Labor (DOL) and the Corporation for National and Community Service (CNCS). The 58 DOL-funded programs included are the study are those that received DOL grants in the 2011 funding cycle. The 17 CNCS-funded programs included in the study are referred to as "CNCS-funded programs" even though 10 of them received funding from DOL as part of the 2012 funding cycle. Therefore, most programs were required to follow DOL guidelines — even most CNCS-funded programs — and were held accountable for outcomes in certain areas DOL tracked during the study period. Furthermore, many of the 58 programs receiving funding from DOL also received funding from CNCS in 2011 or subsequent years. Consequently, differences between DOL-funded and CNCS-funded programs may not be due to differences in funding source per se.

YouthBuild Evaluation

Appendix Table G.1

DOL-Funded and CNCS-Funded Program Comparisons

Program Response	DOL-Funded Programs[a]	CNCS-Funded Programs[a]
Funders[b]		
DOL	100	71
CNCS	29	100
Private foundation	48	65
State or locality	48	88
Some other organization	14	18
Overall fidelity	80	75
Average fidelity score by program component[c]		
Vocational and construction training	93	85
Academic services	87	85
Supportive services	84	74
General program operations	81	81
Leadership development	65	66
Postsecondary preparation	67	58
YouthBuild USA affiliation status		
No affiliation status	21	0
Provisional affiliate	26	0
Full affiliate	45	71
Accredited affiliate	9	29
Years operating YouthBuild		
4 to 6 years	40	6
7 to 10 years	24	29
More than 10 years	36	65
Yearly operating budget[d]		
Missing	3	24
Less than $500,000	24	47
Between $500,000 and $1 million	47	12
$1 million and above	26	18
Number of years program director has worked at YouthBuild		
Less than 1 year	7	12
1 to 3 years	24	29
4 to 6 years	33	6
7 to 10 years	17	12
More than 10 years	19	41

(continued)

Appendix Table G.1 (continued)

Program Response	Percentage of DOL Programs[a]	Percentage of CNCS Programs[a]
Participant-to-staff ratio[e]		
Between 1:1 and 2:1	5	0
Between 2:1 and 4:1	39	38
Between 4:1 and 6:1	35	31
Greater than 6:1	21	31
Programs offering leadership classes	57	53
Programs require community services	86	100
Specific staff member designated to organize service activities	69	71
Core education offerings[b]		
GED prep and testing	97	94
High school diploma classes	38	53
GED and high school diploma classes	34	47
Programs that offer support for basic skills	91	100
Postsecondary education offerings[b]		
Workshops on applications and financial aid	90	100
College classes at universities	45	35
College visits	88	100
College counseling	59	76
Direct financial aid for college	41	12
Dual enrollment	33	24
SAT, ACT, or other college-entry exams	26	18
Opportunity to earn college credit	19	0
Types of construction training work sites		
New home construction only	14	6
Renovate existing homes or offices only	29	35
New home construction and renovations	53	47
No work site	3	12
Nonconstruction vocational training offered	19	35
Stipend payments (every 4-week period)[f]		
Less than $100	0	14
$101 - $300	22	14
$301 - $500	38	50
$501 - $800	33	14
More than $800	7	7

(continued)

Appendix Table G.1 (continued)

Program Response	Percentage of DOL Programs[a]	Percentage of CNCS Programs[a]
Average caseload per staff member		
None	0	6
Less than 10	14	6
10 to 20	36	29
20 to 40	36	35
More than 41	12	24
Internships offered	50	53
Follow up with participants who have completed/exited	100	82
Sample size	58	17

SOURCES: Calculations based on the YouthBuild grantee survey and YouthBuild site-visit interview data.

NOTES: Due to rounding, the percentages in some categories may not sum to 100.

[a]All programs that received funding from DOL or CNCS in 2011 in the evaluation.

[b]Categories are not mutually exclusive.

[c]Fidelity to the YouthBuild model was assessed by site visitors using a tool derived from YouthBuild USA's Program Design and Performance Standards. Sixty-one items were rated as "meets standard," "partially meets standard," or "does not meet standard," representing 100, 50, and 0 points respectively. Points were tallied for each program and divided by the number of observations. The maximum score was 100 and the minimum was 0.

[d]This represents the YouthBuild program's operating budget for the fiscal year when the 2011 YouthBuild grants were awarded. The awards were announced May 2011 and were received in the months that followed.

[e]Calculated based on full-time equivalent staff. Data only available for 57 DOL-funded and 16 CNCS-funded programs.

[f]Data only available for 14 CNCS-funded programs.

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