

Youth Offender Demonstration Project Evaluation

Contract No. AZ-13364-03-30

Final Report - Volume One

June 2006



McNeil Technologies

MATHEMATICA
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Employment and Training Administration
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Washington, D.C. 20210

**U.S. Department of Labor
Employment and Training Administration Occasional Paper 2006-06**

This report has been funded, either wholly or in part, with Federal funds from the U.S. Department of Labor, Employment and Training Administration under Contract Number AZ-13364-03-30. The contents of this publication do not necessarily reflect the views or policies of the Department of Labor, nor does mention of trade names, commercial products, or organizations imply endorsement of same by the U.S. Government.

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**YOUTH OFFENDER DEMONSTRATION PROJECT EVALUATION
FINAL REPORT: VOLUME ONE**

June 2006

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This publication was prepared by Research and Evaluation Associates, a wholly-owned subsidiary of McNeil Technologies, under Contract Number AZ-13364-03-30. The views expressed in this publication represent those of the authors and do not necessarily reflect the opinions of the U.S. Department of Labor.

ABSTRACT

The U.S. Department of Labor awarded grants to 52 communities between 1999 and 2003 to search for better ways to prepare youth offenders and other youth at risk of coming under court supervision for long-term employment at wage levels that would break the cycle of dependency on public support and of crime and delinquency. The Department wanted to identify strategies that assisted youth becoming work ready and capable of securing and keeping employment that would provide a future of economic stability.

The Youth Offender Demonstration Project Evaluation Final Report Volume One provides an overview of the Phase Three evaluation, emphasizing the findings from the three study components and the evaluation recommendations. The complete report of the Phase Three research questions, study approach, findings, discussion and recommendations can be found in Volume Two.

Volume Three contains the final reports of eight projects that participated in the Extended Project Model Studies. These studies are summarized in Volume One and the complete analysis is reported in Volume Two. Volume Four contains the final reports of the focused studies of special interest to DOL. These studies are also summarized in Volume One and analyzed in greater detail in Volume Two.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Many people contributed to the evaluation reported in Volumes One and Two. We are especially grateful to the project staff and youth engaged in the Youth Offender Demonstration Project evaluation:

- Baltimore City Public Health Department, especially Catherine Fine and Peter Beilenson;
- Brockton, MA, Brockton Private Industry Council, especially Robert Diehl and Kevin O'Rourke;
- The Bronx, NY, Wildcat Services Corporation, Inc., especially Tony Martinez and Ronald Tabano;
- Cincinnati, OH, especially Marva Duvall, Juanita Howard, and Tom Jackson;
- Cochise County Workforce Development, Inc, Sierra Vista, AZ, especially Heidi Goldsmith and Vada Phelps;
- The state of Colorado, especially David Bennett, Dani Crane, Katherine Jost, and Mike St. Clair;
- Des Moines, IA, especially John Bargman, Jerald Brantley, Cheryl Busby, and James Underwood;
- Erie, PA, especially Steve Brockwell, Jerry Infantino, and Andrea Wrona;
- Home Builders Institute, Nashville, TN, especially Donny Sloan and Dennis Torbett;
- HoustonWorks, Inc., Houston, TX, especially Johnny Bright and T.W. Hudson;
- Imperial County Regional Occupation Program, El Centro, CA, especially Anna Vizcaino and Mary N. Camacho;
- Pittsburgh, PA, especially Richard Garland and Art Terry;
- Workforce Solutions, St. Paul, MN, especially David Beimers, Nils Dybvig, Harriet Horwath, Cynthia Strand and Jan West;
- Seattle, WA, especially Daniel Fey, Marie Koole, and Marie Malyevac; Pittsburgh, PA, especially Richard Garland and Art Terry; and
- West Palm Beach, FL, especially Katherine Burns and Lois Gackenheimer.

We also appreciate the efforts of staff members who shared their time and data with us, even though their projects were not included in the final Outcomes Study analysis. These staff members represent projects that were in Bakersfield, CA; Chicago, IL; Hartford, CT; and New York, NY.

Furthermore, we appreciate those staff members who provided unemployment insurance wage data to be used for the analysis of youth's employment and earnings outcomes. We thank the:

- Colorado Department of Labor & Employment, especially Nan Boulton, Mike Cullen, Larry Lemmons, Laura Pack, and Jeffrey M. Wells;
- Florida Agency for Workforce Innovation, especially David Hagen, John Herndon, and Susan Pareigis; and the Florida Department of Education, especially Andre Smith and Duane Whitfield;
- Iowa Workforce Development, especially LeLoie Dutemple, Steven Hansen, and Lois Wickett;
- Minnesota Department of Employment and Economic Development, especially Mark Butala, Jack Weidenbach, and John W. Wiersma;
- Ohio Department of Job and Family Services, especially Fran Hersh and Patrick Power;
- Pennsylvania Department of Labor and Industry, especially Pete Cope and Karen J. Thomas; and
- Washington Employment Security Department, especially Annette Copeland, Daniel Fey, Robert Wagner, and Sharon T. Williams.

The special studies effort received continual support from officials of the U.S. Department of Labor, especially Kerri Vitalo, Lekesha Campbell, Dan Ryan, David Balducchi, Kimberly Vitelli and Tara Smith.

Significant contributions to the quality of this effort came from the evaluation team members at both McNeil Technologies and Mathematica Policy Research, Inc. The McNeil Technologies staff includes: John Dye, Rodney Hopson, Carlotta Cooke Joyner, Dan Kaczynski, Ed Miller, Jennifer Obidah, Corre Robinson, Mario Salinas, Joy Sotolongo, Robert Stone-El, Linda Strong, and Julia Tang Marchand. David Prickett and Patricia Perry provided the format and graphics. The Mathematica Policy Research, Inc., staff includes: John Burghardt, Jill Constantine, Barbara Harris, Licia Gaber, Verity Levitt, Ankur Sarin, and Patricia Seunarine. Cindy McClure and Walt Browder assisted in producing the Mathematica Policy Research, Inc., portion of the report.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Beginning in 1999, the U. S. Department of Labor (DOL) awarded 52 Youth Offender Demonstration Project (demonstration) grants over three competitive rounds to communities to assist youth at-risk of court or gang involvement, youth offenders, and gang members between the ages of 14 and 24 to find long-term employment at wage levels that would prevent future dependency and break the cycle of crime and juvenile delinquency.

The Youth Offender Demonstration Project Evaluation Final Report, contained in several volumes, reports cross-site analyses that assessed the demonstration's success in effectively providing reentry services and employability skills and employment for youth offenders, gang members, and youth at risk of gang or court involvement. Volume One of the report provides a précis of the overall report; it is divided into three parts: Introduction, Findings, and Recommendations.¹

A. Introduction

The overarching research question posed by DOL was:

What has been learned from the Youth Offender Demonstration Project about how to help youth offenders and youth at risk of court involvement prepare for and secure long-term employment at wage levels that will prevent future dependency on public support and break the cycle of crime and juvenile delinquency that contributes to recidivism and diminished public safety?

Evaluators approached this question by separating the investigation of the youth participation and outcomes from the project organization in providing services. Using both quantitative and qualitative data and analyses, the evaluators examined youth outcomes (Outcomes Study) and the features of project organization and project relationship within the workforce system and the larger community (Extended Project Model Studies). The Project Model Studies included several special studies of interest to DOL, and these are called Focused Project Model Studies. The three levels of investigation were stated as three sub-questions to the overarching evaluation question:

Question 1. To what extent are youth achieving educational goals, gaining pre-employment skills and attitudes, entering employment at adequate wage levels, and breaking out of the cycle of crime?

¹ Volume Two reports on the methodology, analysis and findings of each component of the evaluation. Volume Three contains the separate Final Reports for each of the Extended Model Study projects evaluated in Round Three of the demonstration, and Volume Four contains the Final Reports on Focused Project Model Studies.

Question 2. To what extent have grantees implemented a comprehensive program that effectively serves the target population?

Question 3. To what extent has the grantee strengthened relationships with employers and the workforce development system?

B. What We Learned

Findings are reported for each research question: youth, project and community relationships. For youth, findings focus on education, workforce and criminal justice system (CJS) outcomes. Project findings consider service delivery and project organization. Outreach relationship findings consider connections to employers and to One-Stop Centers.

1. What We Learned About Youth

Overall, relatively few youth achieved their educational goals, although there were some instances of greater success.

- Most youth, who had been in school when they enrolled in the demonstration, remained in school; yet few youth who had dropped out of the school system were re-engaged with it.
- Projects that used Academic Skills Grants to support youth to remain in school reported fewer dropouts.
- Relatively few youth in the Outcomes Study or the project model study, who entered the project without a high school diploma or a GED certificate, completed high school while they were enrolled in the demonstration.
- Projects that emphasized vocational training in a specific, high-demand industry were likely to have youth complete their training program.
- Several projects that enrolled older youth engaged them in vocational certification training without requiring them to complete high school first. One of these projects was part of the Outcomes Study, and the findings indicated that a high proportion of the youth eventually completed high school, and they had strong labor market outcomes in the eight follow-up quarters.

Both the outcomes and the project model studies showed that youth offenders and youth at risk of court involvement were able to find employment.

- The majority of youth found subsidized or unsubsidized employment.
- Ninety percent of those youth who were active or had completed their individual service plans achieved a placement in employment.

- Youth offenders were as likely to obtain employment as nonoffenders, but their wages were significantly less.
- African American youth were as likely to achieve employment as white youth, and female participants were as likely to achieve employment as males. Earnings, however, were lower for both female and African American participants.
- Older youth tended to find unsubsidized employment or both subsidized and unsubsidized employment while they were demonstration clients.
- Younger youth were more likely to find subsidized employment while they were enrolled in the demonstration. This was consistent with the finding that younger and nonoffender youth were more likely to remain in school.
- Youth receiving incentives and post-placement support were more likely to persist in employment. Staff reported that some youth became work ready on the job with intensive help from a retention specialist.
- Using Unemployment Insurance (UI) wage records evaluators learned that most youth who found employment held multiple jobs across the period, up to eight quarters, for which there were available employment and wage data. Between 30 and 40 percent of the youth had not held a job during the eight follow-up quarters.
- The quarterly earnings were very low — on average, between \$1,000 and \$3,000 per quarter for youth who worked. These averages include youth who held a fulltime job throughout the entire quarter, but they also included wages of youth who worked only one or a few days in the quarter.
- Youths' employment opportunities were significantly affected by the labor market conditions of their communities, that is, higher unemployment rates were significantly related to lower earnings.

While youth were engaged with the demonstration projects, few of them seem to have been arrested for crimes or parole or probation violations. After they left the project, however, the evidence about breaking the cycle of crime was less positive.

- In the quarterly data that projects reported to DOL, projects that were evaluated in Phase Three reported that convictions for a crime committed after enrollment ranged from three percent to eleven percent.
- The CJS administrative data collected for five projects in the Outcomes Study, however, showed substantial involvement with the law over time.
- For one project, two-thirds of the youth were arrested for crimes over the two years of the follow-up period, and about one-third were arrested in the first year. For other projects, the number of youth arrested during the follow-up period was much lower, ranging from 7 percent to 38 percent.

- Projects that enrolled more offenders and offenders involved with more serious violations had higher rates of arrests in the follow-up period than those that enrolled fewer offenders.
- Women participants were significantly less likely to be involved with the criminal justice system than men.

2. What We Learned About Projects

Most grantees did not conceptualize the grant effort to provide the full range of services and coordination at the start. Project staffs generally needed coaching to develop the range of services required in the Solicitation for Grants Applications (SGA) and to recognize the system-level coordination that the SGA was inviting. Some projects were still struggling to implement needed services and partnerships at the time of the final evaluation site visit.

- Most projects developed careful implementation plans, and they eventually implemented the main features of the demonstration project.
- They were less successful in collecting, analyzing and using data to manage and improve their projects and to identify lessons learned from the demonstration.

Projects typically provided a comprehensive set of services for the target population over time.

- Some projects used one or more assessments to design the youths' individual service plan. The assessments were generally standardized tools, such as the test of adult basic education (TABE). The Outcomes Study found that youth who received assessments had better labor market and criminal justice system (CJS) outcomes.
- Virtually all youth received case management (route counseling). The route counselor became the most important link to services for the youth.
- Typically, youth offenders had a probation officer and the demonstration case manager; in some venues, they were able to reinforce each other's goals for the youth.
- The reentry services were almost always offered through the justice system, and the case managers supported the efforts of the probation officers and the court.
- The main education effort by projects was facilitating youth to complete their high school education.
- The main workforce services projects offered were work readiness and job placement services. Fewer resources were devoted to the transition to work and to job retention.
- Work readiness and education interventions were typically self-designed. Few efforts were made to design evidenced-based service delivery modules.
- The lack of a thoughtful program of retention services seemed to defeat the efforts to help youth be work ready. Where projects provided retention efforts, youth were able

to retain employment and employers expressed satisfaction that someone was screening youth and helping them persist.

- The delivery of support services was the most difficult component for projects. Projects anticipated the need for some services, such as transportation, but struggled to meet youths' needs for other services, such as housing, anger management, substance abuse and mental health services.

Grantees found it difficult to establish strong partnerships.

- Where partnerships were developed, the effort to share leadership and information among partnering agencies developed ownership by these agencies for the demonstration project and youth clients. Partnerships seemed to be particularly crucial in rural areas.
- Building a network of community support led to a broader base of services for the youth and to a greater likelihood of sustaining the coordinated services to youth.
- More needs to be learned about feasible strategies for providing stable youth and youth offender employment services. Evaluators learned that without high level leadership projects may have provided short-term services to a few more youth than would have been served otherwise but a lasting infrastructure to serve youth and youth offender employment needs was not likely to be in place.

3. What We Learned About Outreach to Employers and One-Stop Career Centers

Projects differed in the extent to which they attempted to establish relationships with employers who would hire project youth and in their success at doing so.

- Some maintained on-going relationships with potential employers while others used personal networks to find open positions.
- Projects that were able to employ trained staff to focus specifically on job development and job retention were able to place youth in better matched and better paying jobs.

Employers appreciated the efforts to screen and support youth referred to them for employment.

- A few of the projects screened the youth for an appropriate skill match for position openings, and employers appreciated the effort to do so.
- Employers also appreciated the retention effort that meant that youth had help adjusting to work.

Grantees for six of the eight projects were a part of the workforce development systems, and one of the other two projects developed a strong partnership with the One-Stop Center operator.

- Projects often had limited connections with local One-Stop Centers and other workforce development agencies, particularly projects that enrolled a majority of youth under the age of 18.
- Projects frequently had the computer-based job listings at the project facility and did not need to visit the One Stop Center.
- Even though youth over age 18 were eligible for services there, the One Stop Centers were often seen as not “youth friendly.” One-Stop Center performance targets made them reluctant to engage youth who often were not work ready.
- Some project staff had limited experience with One Stop Centers, and did not attempt to build relationships with them.

C. Recommendations

Evaluators identified recommendations in three areas: project goals, the use of demonstrations as a policy development tool, and remaining gaps in knowledge that need to be closed. In addition, evaluation findings suggest a direction for specific future activities.

1. Project Goals

- Grantees generally did not conceptualize projects to provide the full range of services required in the SGA and to develop the system-level partnerships that would make the project design feasible. Future projects would benefit by planning to address the full range of needs youth offenders and other vulnerable youth are likely to present: housing, mental health, substance abuse, educational preparation, and transition to work support. Partnerships and collaborations would be needed to meet this range of needs in timely and effective ways.
- Persistence in the project activities was associated with high school completion and with finding employment. Projects need to monitor their enrollment and persistence patterns and implement proactive strategies to reconnect absent youth to assure that they are engaged long enough to achieve the outcomes planned for them.
- Grantees frequently relegated the operation of the demonstration to mid-level administrators while high-level leadership involvement is needed to negotiate effectively across services systems and between public and private organizations. Community leadership was a valuable resource that increased the services available to youth and provided some basis for sustainability. More needs to be learned about sustaining youth and youth offender employment programs.
- Projects were designed to emphasize education as part of work readiness; yet the attraction for youth was the chance to find employment. Projects need to be attentive to the youths’ priorities as well as the staff’s priorities. Most youth were not exaggerating when they said that they needed employment as a first priority. At the same time, the Outcomes Study findings demonstrated that staff is correct about the

need for better academic or vocational preparation to get and keep jobs that will pay a good wage. Projects need to be designed to accommodate both concerns.

- Grantees did not always plan for skill matching and retention in their transition to work services. They need to set aside funds for job development and job retention services and/or for engaging partners who have the experience and expertise to facilitate the transition to full time, well-paying employment.
- Employers appreciated efforts to match youth skills to job requirements and to support youth through the transition to work process. Grantees need to develop relationships with employers to learn their skill needs and to work with them in helping youth adjust to work.

2. Use of the Demonstration as a Policy Development Tool

The substantial investment in the youth offender demonstration was intended to provide policy direction about better ways to serve youth offenders and youth at risk of court involvement. The experience of these demonstrations identified issues to consider in planning and funding future such demonstrations. Communities that commit to being partners in developing model programs and public policy need to keep these issues in mind as they implement the demonstrations:

- Demonstrations need a strategy to assure that databases are designed with future research in mind and are maintained adequately. Over three rounds of the demonstration, despite careful and sustained efforts by stakeholders, the lack of usable data to evaluate key aspects of the demonstration thwarted the Outcomes Study. A demonstration project can inform policy decisions only if clear and consistent data are available about the characteristics of participants, services delivered, and outcomes attained.

Although future demonstrations may invite innovations in service delivery and coordination mechanisms, defining a minimum set of services that all projects will provide would make the demonstration as a whole more useful.

- Reviewing the services offered in relation to the services received in this evaluation showed that projects were able to deliver only a certain range of services. It would help to be clear about which are essential, and all projects would be required to provide them from the beginning of grant operations.

Demonstrations might be more useful if they defined a narrower target group than this demonstration did.

- No one would argue that youth who are experiencing a context of risk factors should be receiving special support, but a demonstration that attempts to address the needs of older youth who need unsubsidized employment as well as younger youth whose primary needs are education and subsidized employment is taking on a very broad task. Outcomes for youth offenders and youth at risk of court involvement were sufficiently different to recommend that a demonstration focus on either youth at risk of court involvement or youth offenders rather than both target groups.

3. Gaps in Knowledge

In spite of the useful information obtained in this demonstration, particular gaps remain in the knowledge of how best to assist youth in preparing for and securing long-term employment at wage levels that will prevent future dependency on public support and break the cycle of crime and juvenile delinquency that contributes to recidivism and diminished public safety. Future research and evaluation studies are needed to address the following issues.

- Information is still lacking about the impact of education and workforce preparation on employment and criminal justice outcomes. The design of this demonstration did not allow conclusions about impact to be drawn because no suitable control or comparison groups were available to show the difference in outcomes between those who were in the projects and those who were not.
- Specific workforce development strategies, activities, and curricula that could be replicated and tested in other projects have yet to be developed. In order to develop them, key workforce development components of a demonstration need to be designed in more research- and evidence-based ways.
- Grantees, preoccupied with implementing a complex strategy of cross-system services and cooperating partnerships, rarely planned for sustainability. Projects need to begin designing and piloting sustainability strategies early in the service delivery effort to avoid an interruption of services.
- Alternatives to the Unemployment Insurance wage records need to be identified for use in measuring the effectiveness of the workforce development activities of youth. The UI wage records provided only very coarse information on the patterns of participants' dynamic employment situations.
- More needs to be known about the advantages and limitations of incentives. The \$1,000 Employment Bonus seemed high enough to engage St. Paul and West Palm Beach youth in the effort to persist in employment, and project staff reported that the services the youth received to help them persist was equally or more important than the money incentive. The two pilot projects used different bonus strategies; there could be others. What are the best conditions for awarding incentives effectively, consistently and fairly? Would incentives yield such outcomes consistently without the job placement and job retention support services?

4. Future Directions

The evaluators recommend that a group of communities design and implement over a longer period of time a carefully composed set of service modules that will bring service providers into partnerships for the benefit of the youth clients. A period longer than 24-30 months would allow these communities to assess and improve the modules and track over time the outcomes of the client youth. These communities would commit to participate with researchers in the design of a database that the grantees can manage, that will meet their needs for on-going assessment and improvement and meet the needs of researchers. Communities would also commit to investigating sustainability strategies that would eliminate interruptions in service delivery to the target population. The larger framework of a strong intervention program has been developed

over the three rounds of the demonstration; the next generation of activities is needed to refine the major components of the intervention.

Communities should also be encouraged to develop projects to prepare youth offenders and youth at risk of court involvement even without further research. Enough has been learned to give communities a basis for designing local efforts that bring the resources of the justice, workforce, education, and human services systems into collaborating alignment to serve youth, especially youth offenders. The current research supported the findings of previous projects that served youth: Helping them continue their development toward maturity, recognizing their need for a range of services that are easy for youth to access, finding ways for youth to gain needed income and to continue their education, and providing them access to supportive services for their other needs. A community vision would be needed to assure that teens and young adults have a secure living environment as a foundation for all other services. A substantial commitment of community leaders would also be required to negotiate the cooperation among service agencies. As with the demonstration projects' stakeholders, leaders, route counselors, youth, and their families will learn as they gain experience.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

CHAPTER	PAGE
ABSTRACT	
AKNOWLEDGEMENTS	
EXECUTIVE SUMMARY	i
LIST OF TABLES	xiii
LIST OF FIGURES	xv
I. INTRODUCTION	1
A. Background of the Youth Offender Demonstration Project	1
1. Youth Development	1
2. Youth Offender Demonstration	3
3. The Youth Offender Demonstration Project Evaluation	5
B. Theoretical Approach	5
C. Research Question	6
D. Methodology	8
1. The Outcomes Study	8
2. Extended Model Studies	13
3. Focused Project Model Studies	15
II. EVALUATION FINDINGS: YOUTH	19
A. Youth	19
1. Youth Profiles in the Outcomes Study	19
2. Youth Profiles in the Extended Project Model Studies	22
B. Short Term Changes in Youth	30
C. Longer Term Changes in Youth	35
1. Descriptive Information on Client’s Postenrollment Outcomes	35
2. The Regression Findings	41
III. EVALUATION FINDINGS: PROJECTS	53
A. Outcomes Study	53
B. Extended Project Model Studies	57
1. Project Descriptions	57
2. Project Organization	58
3. Project Services	62
4. Sustainability Efforts and Status	69
C. Focused Project Model Studies	70
1. Academic Skills	71
2. Employment Bonus	74
3. Partnerships with AmeriCorps and Job Corps	77
4. Projects in Rural Settings	81
5. Los Angeles Project Approach to Substance Abuse Treatment	84

TABLE OF CONTENTS (Continued)

CHAPTER	PAGE
D. Summary of Project Findings	86
1. Research Question 2: Project Model Studies.....	86
2. Research Question 3: Project Model Studies.....	89
V. SUMMARY AND RECOMMENDATIONS.....	91
A. Summary	
1. What We Learned About Youth	92
2. What We Learned About Projects	94
3. What We Learned About Outreach to Employers and One-Stop Career Centers.....	95
B. Recommendations	96
1. Project Goals.....	96
2. Use of the Demonstration as a Policy Development Tool.....	97
3. Gaps in Knowledge.....	98
4. Future Directions	99
REFERENCES	101

LIST OF TABLES

I.1.	Projects Included in the Outcomes Study	9
I.2.	Focused Studies in the Phase Three Evaluation	16
II.1.	Demographic Characteristics of Participants When They Enrolled at a Youth Offender Demonstration Project	21
II.2.	Total Project Youth by Age, Offender Status and Gender	22
II.3.	Characteristics of Youth in Case File Summary Sample.....	23
II.4.	Educational Services Planned and Received by Sample Youth	26
II.5.	Workforce Services Planned and Received by Sample Youth	27
II.6.	Outcomes Reported for All Youth in the Eight Projects	31
II.7.	Education and Employment Outcomes for Total Younger At-Risk and Offender Youth.....	31
II.8.	Education and Employment Outcomes for Total Older At-Risk and Offender Youth.....	32
II.9.	Educational Outcomes Achieved by Younger Sample Youth.....	32
II.10.	Educational Outcomes Achieved by Older Sample Youth.....	32
II.11.	Employment Outcomes of Younger Youth by Offender Status	33
II.12.	Employment Outcomes of Older Youth by Offender Status	34
II.13.	Employment and Earnings Outcomes of Outcomes Study Participants.....	36
II.14.	Criminal Justice System Outcomes During the Follow-Up Period	39
II.15.	Clients' Education Outcomes After Their Enrollment at a Youth Offender Demonstration Project	42
II.16.	Post Enrollment Participant Labor Market and Criminal Justice System Outcomes	43
II.17.	Influence of Service and PMM Variables on Post Enrollment Labor Market Outcomes, Marginal Effects (T-Statistics)	45
II.18.	Unadjusted and Adjusted Relative Rankings of Projects	46
II.19.	Post Enrollment Participant Educational Outcomes Regression Coefficients/ Marginal Effects (t-statistics).....	47
III.1.	Receipt and Completion of Services at Outcomes Study Projects	54
III.2.	Contexts of Extended Project Model Studies in Large Areas.....	57
III.3.	Contexts of Extended Model Studies in Small and Mid-size Areas	59
III.4.	Assessments Required for All Youth.....	64
III.5.	Workforce Development Activities and Services That Projects Offered or Required For Some or All Youth	65
III.6.	Support Activities and Services That Projects Offered Directly or Through Referral	68
III.7.	Participants Qualifying for Bonuses as of June 30, 2005	73

LIST OF FIGURES

Figure		Page
I.2.	Logic Model.....	7
III.1.	Project-Level Pathway – A General Perspective	63

Chapter I

INTRODUCTION

Volume One of the Youth Offender Demonstration Project Evaluation Final Report provides a précis of the overall report and reflects on the experience of McNeil Research and Evaluation Associates (McNeil Research) over the course of evaluating three cohorts of Youth Offender Demonstration Project (demonstration) grantees, the third cohort with its team-member Mathematica Policy Research, Inc. (MPR). Chapter I reviews the background of the demonstration, the theoretical approaches to the evaluation, the primary research question and the methods used to address it. Chapter II reports findings about youth enrolled in the projects, and Chapter III reports on findings about the projects and their relationships with employers and workforce centers. Chapter IV concludes with a summary and recommendations.

A. Background of the Youth Offender Demonstration Project

From June 1999 through June 2005, the U.S. Department of Labor (DOL) supported three rounds of grantees to search for better ways to prepare youth offenders and other youth at risk of coming under court supervision for long term employment at wage levels that would break the cycle of dependency on public support and of crime and delinquency. The Department wanted to identify strategies that assisted youth becoming work ready and capable of securing and keeping employment that would provide a future of economic stability.

Working initially with the Department of Justice through the Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention, DOL subsequently added the Department of Health and Human Services to the sponsoring agencies for the youth offender employment initiative. Improving the employment outcomes of these target youth was assumed to protect public safety, secure financial stability for a vulnerable population, and unleash the talents of target youth on behalf of their future economic security and of the nation's economy.

DOL funded 52 projects: 14 in Round One, 9 in Round Two, and 29 in Round Three for a total of \$32.8 million.² In each round, funds were awarded within categories based on size, with larger communities receiving larger grants than smaller communities. The Department required grantees to build onto the existing collaborative relationships within the community and urged the development of other lasting partnerships that could sustain the effort to prepare the target youth for employment after DOL funds were depleted.

1. Youth Development

The solicitation for grant applications (SGAs) to which grantees responded reflected the literature on healthy youth development, risk and protective factors that affect youths' transition to adulthood, and factors that affect youth employment and recidivism.³

² See Volume Two, pages 2 and 3 for a list of all the grantees.

³ The literature summarized here is developed in Volume Two, Chapter I, pages 8-17. Complete references are found on page 255 of Volume Two.

Youth development is sometimes defined as characteristics of the individual and his/her environment and at other times as capabilities a youth develops during the transition from childhood to adulthood.⁴ Healthy human development includes the characteristics of belonging, self-awareness, self worth, safety and structure, independence and control, competence, and close bonds to at least one adult. Youth with such attributes are expected to establish good relationships with diverse persons, make good decisions about their current and future well being, have critical thinking skills, develop functional skills that lead to work and a career, and be resilient in both adverse and positive atmospheres.

Researchers described the environmental features that put healthy development at risk or which support it. Risk factors in community, school, peer or family groups include access to drugs and weapons, lack of commitment to school and early academic failure, poverty, homelessness, and family management problems.⁵ The counters to such risk factors were protective factors in these same domains: Support, empowerment, boundaries and expectations, constructive use of time, a commitment to learning, positive values, social competencies, and a positive identity. Youth who had a preponderance of such protective assets were found more likely to make the transition to healthy adulthood than those whose environment was characterized by more risk factors.⁶ Youth did not differ in their response to risk and protective factors on the basis of ethnicity, race, or urban-rural settings.⁷

Youth who lacked the developmental assets of a healthy youth development environment were described as disconnected: disconnected from family and social institutions such as school, church, or civic organizations like Scouts or sports teams.⁸ A major group of such young people is youth who are both out-of-school without completing high school and out-of-work as well. Youth who had been in out-of-home placements were often a part of this group. Youth aging out of foster care and youth who had been sentenced to secure confinement often lacked these developmental assets. Secure confinement placed additional burdens on youth because they were restrained from gaining healthy independence and positive peer relationships—both important steps in healthy maturation.⁹ They were often without a secure residence upon release as well, threatening their secure return to a community.

⁴ Walker, G. (1997). *A Generation of Challenge: Pathway to Success for Urban Youth*, Baltimore: Sar Levitan Center for Social Policy Studies, Institute for Policy Studies, The Johns Hopkins University and the DOL Youth Opportunity website.

⁵ Howell, J.C., Krisberg, B., and Jones, M. (1995), Trends in juvenile crime and youth violence. In J.C. Howell, B. Krisberg, et al. (Eds.), *Sourcebook on Serious, Violent and Chronic Juvenile Offenders* (pp.1-35). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications.

⁶ Benson, P.L., Galbraith, M.A., and Espelund, P. (1995), *What Kids Need to Succeed: Proven Ways to Raise Good Kids*. Minneapolis, MN: Search Institute and Free Spirit Press.

⁷ Osgood, D.W. and Chambers, J. (2003), *Community Correlates of Rural Youth Violence*. Washington, D.C.: Department of Justice, Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention. *Juvenile Justice Bulletin*, May.

⁸ Aron, L. and Zweig, J. (2003), *Educational Alternatives for Vulnerable Youth: Student Needs, Program Types, and Research Directions*. Washington, DC: The Urban Institute, November.

⁹ Smith, T. (2004), *Guides for the Journey: Supporting High-risk Youth with Paid Mentors and Counselors*. New York City, NY: Public/Private Ventures, June.

Youth have faced a difficult employment environment since the “jobless recovery” from the 2001 recession. While there were fewer fulltime jobs for which entry-level youth were qualified, the job market demanded more skills for fulltime work than a generation ago.¹⁰ Evaluators were aware, however, that many youth offenders had left school without completing high school and were not successful while they were in school—both factors that made finding employment particularly difficult. Youth whose families lacked the resources to support them while they acquired additional skills or who could not help them financially while in school were disadvantaged in the current economy. It might also take several years of working to qualify for fulltime employment that included benefits.¹¹ Yet the single most important factor in keeping a family above the poverty level was to have at least one person in the household having a fulltime, full year job.¹²

Programs to support youth employment, especially youth offender employment have not generally been evaluated as effective.¹³ Researchers reported that the interventions may not have been long or intense enough; they may not have addressed the personal needs of youth in addition to offering workforce development skills; they may have been evaluated too soon after implementation.¹⁴ Where evaluators found successful programs, the programs met the individual support needs of the clients, and they supported the development of at least one long-term relationship with a caring and responsible adult while they prepared the client for work and assisted him/her in job retention.¹⁵

2. Youth Offender Demonstration

As DOL learned more about the range of needs of enrolled youth participants during the multiple rounds of the demonstration, the SGAs became more explicit about the services grantees were expected to have available for youth who needed them: workforce development services, reentry services, and support services.

¹⁰ Sum, A., Khatiwada, I., et al. (2004), *Still Young, Restless, and Jobless: The Growing Employment Malaise among U.S. Teens and Young Adults*. Alexandria, VA: Jobs for America’s Graduates, January.

¹¹ Furstenberg, F., Kennedy, S., McLoyd, V., et al. (2004), *Growing Up Is Harder To Do*. Contexts, Vol.3, Number 3, Summer.

¹² Bell, S.A. and Wray, L. R.(2004), *The War on Poverty After 40 Years: A Minskyan Assessment*, Public Policy Brief No. 78. Blithewood, NY: The Levy Economics Institute of Bard College.

¹³ Public/Private Ventures (2002), *Serving High-risk Youth: Lessons From Research and Programming*, New York, September.

¹⁴ Howell, J.C., Krisberg, B., and Jones, M. (1995), *Trends in Juvenile Crime and Youth Violence*. In J.C. Howell, B. Krisberg, et al. (Eds.), *Sourcebook on Serious, Violent and Chronic Juvenile Offenders* (pp.1-35). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications.

¹⁵ Proscio, T. and Elliot, M. (1999), *Getting In, Staying On, Moving Up: A Practitioner’s Approach to Employment Retention*, New York City: Public/Private Ventures.

Workforce Development Services included:

- Work/Job Readiness – Teaching workplace skills in classes, vocational certification classes, leadership classes, and job shadowing;
- Job Placement – Activities to assist youth in learning about and exploring work opportunities, making appointments for interviews, and making the transition to a job; and
- Job Retention – Follow-up activities with the employed youth and his/her employer to work through concerns that threatened the youth's persistence in the job.

Reentry Services, as the term is used in the justice literature, categorized the services and activities used to assist youth returning to a community from detention or incarceration. In the context of the demonstration, some reentry services were offered to youth who had not been convicted or adjudicated. The reentry services included:

- Anti-gang Activity – Both direct efforts to reduce violence in a neighborhood and indirect efforts to provide wholesome activities to engage the youth as a substitute for gang activity;
- Alternative Sentencing – Community activities and special restrictions (such as curfew) assigned to a youth convicted of a crime in lieu of assignment to residential confinement; and
- Aftercare – Activities and services assigned to a youth in an environment of graduated sanctions, both positive and negative, which were designed to have the youth accept greater responsibility for her/his behavior as her/his behavior improved.

Support Services consisted of:

- Assessments – Screenings or careful analyses of youth attitudes, knowledge and behaviors, especially educational achievement, substance abuse, anger, and mental health conditions, that were used to tailor program components to a youth's individual needs.
- Academic Education – Basic literacy, pre-GED, GED, high school, or college classes that were part of the individualized work readiness or aftercare plans for a youth.
- Vocational Education – Specific preparation for an occupation or industry, including practical experience, which could be part of the individualized work readiness or after care plans for a youth.
- Route Counseling/Case Management – Assistance in realizing one's individualized service plan through the workforce development and/or the justice systems. Youth offenders typically had both a parole officer and a workforce development specialist supporting them in their plans.

- Other Supports – Transportation, mental health and substance abuse services, work clothing, child care, state-issued identity cards, Social Security Number, driver education, recreation, etc. that met youth’s developmental needs and prepared him or her for employment.

3. The Youth Offender Demonstration Project Evaluation

In separate competitions, DOL awarded the evaluation of the three rounds of the Youth Offender Demonstration Project (demonstration) to McNeil Research. Mathematica Policy Research, Inc. (MPR) became part of the evaluation team for the evaluation under the third contract as a subcontractor. For Rounds One and Two, the evaluation documented the implementation process, noting the achievements and challenges as project staffs attempted to deliver coordinated services to targeted youth. The Department of Labor anticipated that the demonstration evaluation would surface mechanisms other communities could replicate to serve youth more effectively and in a sustainable way.

The *Phase Three* evaluation assessed the demonstration projects’ success in effectively implementing reentry, workforce development and additional needed services to youth offenders, gang members, and other youth at risk of court supervision. Further, it assessed the two-year employment, justice and educational outcomes of youth who had received demonstration services from a sample of projects in all three rounds of the demonstration.

The assessment of the service delivery portion of the evaluation consisted of a study of the implementation process and both qualitative and quantitative analysis of services offered to and received by youth in a sample of projects from Round Three. In addition, DOL requested an evaluation of a set of supplemental grants awarded after a competition limited to grantees in Rounds Two and Three: Academic Skills and Workforce Preparation grants, Employment Bonus grants, and a single grant to study youth offender access to AmeriCorps and Job Corps programs. Eight projects were selected for Extended Project Model Studies, and ten were selected for Focused Project Model Studies of the supplemental grants and of topics of special interest to DOL.¹⁶

The Outcomes Study component of the Phase Three evaluation consisted of a quantitative analysis of employment, justice and educational outcomes for individual youth who received services through a sample of demonstration projects from all three rounds of the demonstration that maintained reasonably strong data records of youth characteristics and some service delivery data.¹⁷

B. Theoretical Approach

Toward the end of the evaluation of Round One of the demonstration, DOL asked the demonstration technical assistance and evaluation teams if there were any patterns they observed

¹⁶ The selection of projects for this component of the evaluation and the methods used for it are described in detail in Volume Two, Chapter II, pages 42-55.

¹⁷ The selection of projects for the Outcomes Study and the methods used for it are described in detail in Volume Two, Chapter II, pages 27-42.

in projects that were successfully implementing the demonstration compared to those that were having difficulty. The teams surfaced features of the projects that were progressing, and DOL staff combined them into an approach to observing, describing and assessing implementation success. Building on the work of **Richard Nathan (1988)**,¹⁸ the Public Management Model (PMM) theorizes that if demonstration stakeholders focus on the systems that need to be aligned to serve target youth, services to youth will become more effective as the stakeholders develop their project based on good data analysis and a continuous improvement process.¹⁹

Based on previous research and using the PMM, the evaluation team developed a logic model that provided a framework for the evaluation. (See Figure I.1 for the logic model.)

C. Research Question

The logic model was designed to address the fundamental research question DOL posed for the evaluation:

What has been learned from the Youth Offender Demonstration Project about how to help youth offenders and youth at risk of court involvement prepare for and secure long-term employment at wage levels that will prevent future dependency on public support and break the cycle of crime and juvenile delinquency that contributes to recidivism and diminished public safety?

The evaluation team broke the research question into three sub-questions. Question 1 deals with enrolled youth and their outcomes. Question 2 examines the project organization, services, and coordination. Question 3 inquires about the projects' relationships with the workforce system and the larger community. While closely related, the three sub-questions could be addressed separately, and they were amenable to different research approaches:

¹⁸ Nathan, R. P. *Social Science in Government*. New York: Basic Books.

¹⁹ The features of the PMM are described in Volume Two, Chapter I pages 19-20. The application of the PMM to the projects studied is found in Volume Two, Chapter IV, pages 137-151.

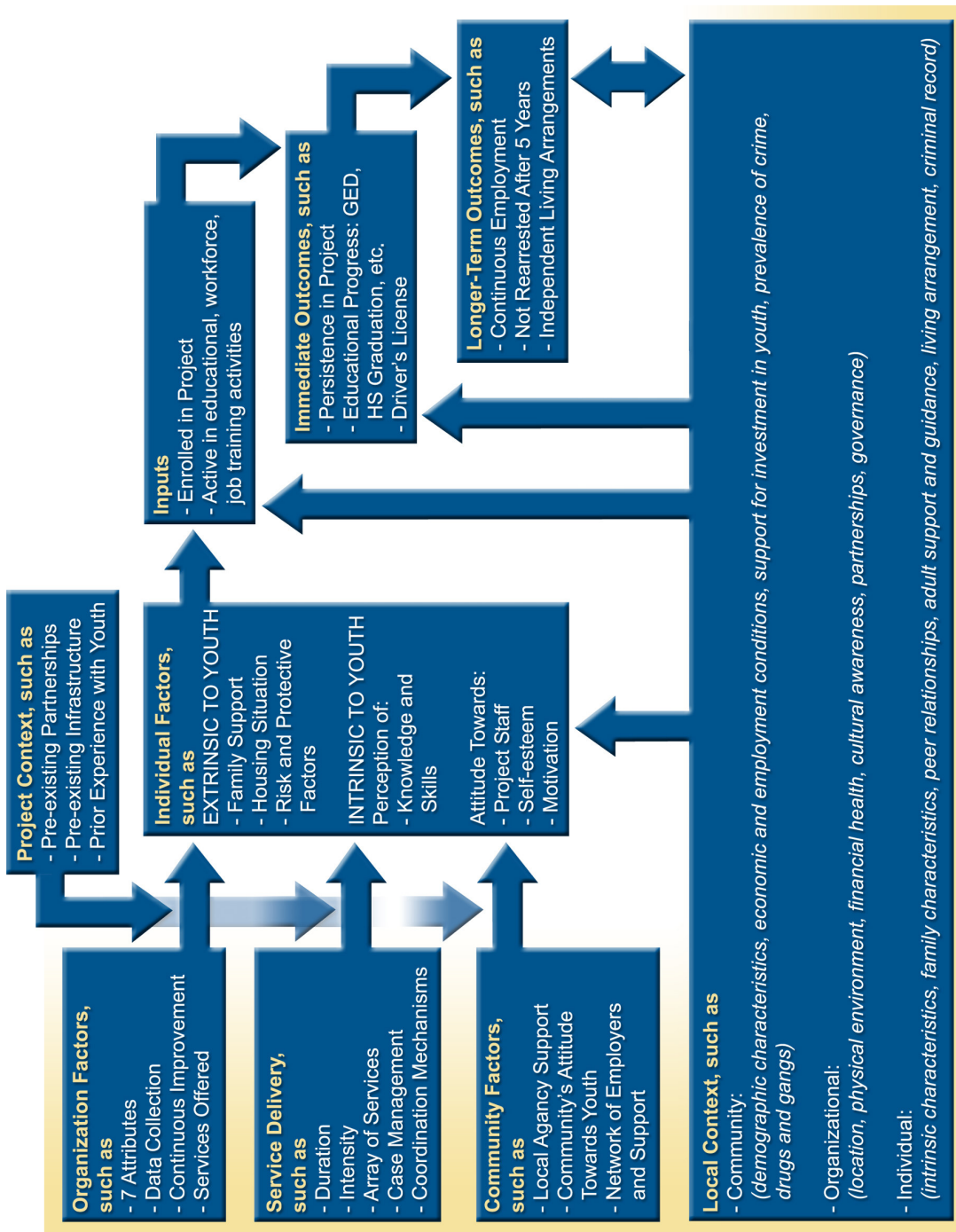


Figure I.2. Logic Model

Question 1. To what extent are youth achieving educational goals, gaining pre-employment skills and attitudes, entering employment at adequate wage levels, and breaking out of the cycle of crime?

Question 2. To what extent have grantees implemented a comprehensive program that effectively serves the target population?

Question 3. To what extent has the grantee strengthened relationships with employers and the workforce development system?

Evaluators also developed research questions to guide the data collection and analysis activities for the evaluation of the supplemental grants.²⁰

The approach to addressing the research questions varied:

- Research Question 1 - The Outcomes Study examined quantitative outcomes for youth in a sample of projects from Rounds One, Two, and Three. The Extended Project Model Studies examined individual case file records for a sample of youth in eight Round Three projects, and analyzed interviews administered to youth in each of these eight projects.
- Research Question 2 – The Extended Project Model Studies examined the organization of the eight projects, their services and coordination mechanisms. These studies were augmented by findings from the studies of the supplementary grants and of projects selected for specific features of interest to DOL, referred to as the Focused Project Model Studies and findings from the Outcomes Study.
- Research Question 3 – The Extended Project Model Studies examined the projects’ success in developing networks and partnerships within their communities that gave access to employment information and opportunities for target youth.

The methods used to investigate the research questions are described in the next section.

D. Methodology

The methodology differed markedly from one aspect of the evaluation to another. This section describes the data and methods for the Outcomes Study first, followed by the data and methods for the extended and focused studies.

1. The Outcomes Study

The Outcomes Study focused on the employment, justice and education outcomes of individual youth in a select number of projects in Rounds One, Two, and Three. It addressed the heart of Research Question 1: “To what extent are youth achieving educational goals, gaining pre-employment skills and attitudes, entering employment at adequate wage levels, and breaking out

²⁰ See the additional research questions in Volume Two, Chapter V.

of the cycle of crime?” It also provided insights to address Research Question 2, on the services that youths received.

As one component of the Phase Three evaluation of the Youth Offender Demonstration Projects, the Outcomes Study measured the labor market and criminal justice system (CJS) outcomes through the use of administrative record data covering a period of up to two years after client enrollment in a demonstration project. The Outcomes Study examined the educational outcomes as they were reported by the projects, but without corroboration from an outside source. This strategy was chosen because no central repository of administrative data on education outcomes exists for clients who were likely to be at K-12 schools or vocational education sites.

Evaluators selected a group of projects from the 52 projects DOL funded so that measures of clients’ characteristics and their labor market and CJS outcomes could be as accurate and complete as possible. Table I.1 reports the projects selected for the Outcomes Study.²¹ These nine projects included all three rounds of the demonstration.

Table I.1 Projects Included in the Outcomes Study

Project	Grant Round	MIS Baseline Data	MIS Services Data	Wage Data	CJS Data
Cincinnati, Ohio	Two	Yes	No	Yes	No
State of Colorado	Two	Yes	No	Yes	Yes
Denver, Colorado	One	Yes	Yes	Yes	No
Des Moines, Iowa	Two	Yes	No	Yes	Yes
Erie, Pennsylvania	Two	Yes	No	Yes	No
Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania	Two	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Seattle, Washington	One	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
St. Paul, Minnesota	Three	Yes	Yes	Yes	No
West Palm Beach, Florida	Two	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes

Evaluators needed to draw data from multiple sources to evaluate youths’ outcomes²²:

- Demonstration management information system (MIS) data on clients’ characteristics at the time they enrolled at the project and on their postenrollment outcomes;
- MIS-based data on the services that clients received from the demonstration projects;
- Wage data, provided by state agencies, that contain information on clients’ employment and earnings after enrollment; and
- CJS data, also provided by state agencies, which contain information on clients’ arrests, convictions and other involvement in the CJS after enrollment.

²¹ For a complete description of the selection strategy, see Volume Two, Chapter II, page 28-35.

²² For a complete description of needed data and the sources to be accessed for data, see Volume Two, Chapter II, pages 35-42.

MIS-based information on outcomes also is used to supplement the administrative data. The content and quality of the projects' MIS data were crucial for a successful completion of the outcome study. The MIS data had to include unique identifying information, such as participants' names, Social Security numbers (SSNs), and dates of birth, so that wage records and CJS records from agencies that maintain these administrative data could be collected.²³ The projects must also have collected and maintained data on participants' characteristics at the time of enrollment, since these items would serve as explanatory variables in the regression analyses. The variables would be important (1) for identifying their relationship to participants' outcomes, and (2) for avoiding attribution of these relationships to other data items, such as the characteristics of projects or neighborhoods, that would be included in the regression analyses.

The MISs also needed to contain information on services received. Evaluators planned to use service receipt data in two ways:

- As dependent variables—the projects and the characteristics of participants could be used to explain participants' receipt of services, and
- As explanatory variables—service receipt information could be used to explain employment, CJS and education outcomes.

Evaluation researchers expected that the quality of the MIS data on service receipt would be lower than that of the data on participant characteristics at enrollment, and the data were not expected to be as comprehensive as would be ideal for the analysis. They recognized that the types of service information requested—on the kinds of services that participants received, their start and stop dates for participation in the services, and their completion status—would probably not all be available in a consistent way across projects. Furthermore, it was unlikely that all of the services that projects leveraged through other providers would be included in the data.

Evaluators recognized that data definitions, data collection and data reporting requirements changed from one round of grantees to another. Working with demonstration agency staff, evaluators created standardized variables to create the most complete and flexible database for the analysis of outcomes across projects and across rounds of projects.

The primary source of outcomes related to employment and earnings is the state unemployment insurance (UI) wage records data maintained by state employment security agencies (SESAs). Employers report these data quarterly to the SESAs for UI administrative purposes. The use of wage data for the Outcomes Study offered three advantages. First, the data provide broad, uniform coverage of legal-sector earnings. Nationally, the UI program covers about 97 percent of all wage and salary workers (**Green Book 2000**). Therefore, these data have the potential to provide a nearly uniform measure of legal-sector employment and earnings outcomes by project participants.

²³ During the design phase, evaluators explored the feasibility and potential usefulness of collecting administrative data on educational outcomes. In conjunction with DOL, it was decided that collecting these data would not be a good use of evaluation resources for the reasons described previously. The analysis used the projects' reported educational outcomes based on their MISs. The educational outcomes, therefore do not include the outcomes for the two-year follow-up period.

The second advantage is that data items that are important for the analysis are consistently defined across the states in which Outcomes Study participants lived. This benefit means that cross-project comparisons are accurate and sensible. Key pieces of information used for the Outcomes Study are (1) whether or not someone had a job in the quarter, as indicated by the presence of earnings in the quarter; (2) the level of earnings for the quarter; and (3) the number of jobs the client had during the follow-up period, as measured by the number of distinct employers for whom wage data were reported.

Next, wage data provided evaluators with an opportunity to examine employment and earnings patterns of demonstration participants for a period of up to two years. Participants who enrolled at projects by September 30, 2002, could be followed for this two-year period, between October 1, 2002, and September 30, 2004. The follow-up period for clients who enrolled after September 30, 2002, would be from the time they enrolled until September 2004, which would be shorter than two years; however, many of them still had periods of one or one-and-a-half years.²⁴

However, wage data have limitations. The social security numbers of some youths in the MIS files might be missing or incorrect, which would mean that wage data generally could not be matched to the MIS data. Wage records also do not contain wage information from “off-the-books” earnings, such as informal gardening or babysitting, or working unofficially for one’s family business. This may produce data that are less comprehensive, especially for juveniles. Wages could also be earned in a state different from that of the youth’s demonstration project site; for example, a Cincinnati project youth might work across the state line in Kentucky. Earnings from jobs in states different from those of the youths’ project sites are not included in the analysis, because wage data were collected from only the states containing projects. Evaluators assumed that a youth was not working if there was no wage record for that person in the report from the state in which the youth’s project was located. A final limitation of the wage data is that they contain little information on the characteristics of the jobs the youths held.

For a more nearly comprehensive picture of youths’ employment and earnings outcomes, the wage data are supplemented with MIS-based data on employment and earnings. Compared with wage data, the MIS-based data contain richer information on the characteristics of jobs that youths had. Furthermore, the MIS-based employment data are not restricted to earnings derived from jobs in the states in which the youths lived. However, the MIS data do not provide as long a follow-up period on employment and earnings, nor are they as likely to be consistent across projects. Ultimately, the two data sources should be viewed as complementary, given their strengths and limitations.

As part of the analysis of outcomes, the evaluation team used CJS records to provide information on participants’ official records of involvement with the police and courts for up to two years after their enrollment in the demonstration. These records came from five of the nine projects

²⁴ Two reasons explain why some clients had less than a full two-year follow-up. First, some projects, such as St. Paul, began their enrollments later than did other projects, because they either obtained their grants at a later date or had a lengthy start-up period. Second, some clients enrolled at projects near the end of the project’s demonstration period. Because enrollments at each project could take place over a period of two years, youths who enrolled near the end of the demonstration period were less likely to have the full follow-up period. In most cases, wage data pertaining to quarters after September 2004 were unavailable for inclusion in the study, given the time that it took employers and SESAs to prepare the data and the time needed for analysis of the data.

that were included in the Outcomes Study: The State of Colorado, Des Moines, Pittsburgh, Seattle, and West Palm Beach.²⁵

The exact information available in the CJS records for each state varied by project. Broadly speaking, the CJS records contained the full list of events that were available to the public and in which the subject of the record was involved prior to the date of the extraction. However, in contrast to wage records, which were quite uniform across states in their content, the precise content of CJS records varied across states because of:

- State-specific laws or regulations on public access to the records; and
- Requirements about which CJS agencies in the state need to report, and actually do report, information to the state-run repository.

Standardized variables were developed from each data set to prepare them for the regression analysis to follow.²⁶

One can provide descriptive data about many aspects of the demonstration projects; yet given the variation in participant and project characteristics, it would be hard to distinguish the influence of different factors in explaining variation in outcomes across projects. Hence, the descriptive analysis was enhanced by the use of regression methods. Not only did regression methods allow the variation in outcomes to be attributed to different influences, they also allowed a control for competing influences, so that the effects of participation in one project relative to other projects could be isolated.

The regression analysis reported in detail in Volume Two does not provide estimates of the *impact* of participation in a program. To estimate the impact of a program, one would need to examine whether participants who participated in the demonstration had better labor market outcomes and CJS outcomes than they would have had they not participated. However, it is not possible to directly know what would have happened to the participants had they not participated.

Lacking a control group or a way to approximate one, evaluators chose multivariate regression analysis. This approach allowed an examination in a standardized fashion of how the outcomes of participants differed by the participants' characteristics, their program experiences, and the characteristics of the projects. Moreover, the regression analysis compared the outcomes of participants from a project (or a group of projects) to the outcomes of participants at other projects. An important limitation of the strategy was that not all factors that influence outcomes and that vary systematically across projects could be observed. However, the regression framework allowed for the control of differences in factors (for which data are available) that may influence outcomes, so that the effects of participation in one project relative to other projects could be isolated.²⁷

²⁵ From the beginning of the evaluation, the number of projects to be included in the analysis of CJS outcomes was dictated to some degree by the resources available. The design for the evaluation called for the collection and analysis of CJS records from about half the Outcomes Study projects, and this proportion was maintained.

²⁶ A complete description of data collection and preparation can be found in Volume Two, Chapter II pages 35-42.

²⁷ A further discussion of the regression methodology is found in Volume Two, Chapter III, pages 110-117.

2. Extended Model Studies

To examine the three Research Questions through the extended model studies, evaluators needed to perform three steps:

- Select a sample of projects to study,
- Identify, locate and collect the needed data, and
- Analyze the data collected.

Evaluators drew a sample of demonstration projects to be studied intensively rather than administer a process evaluation of all 29 Round Three projects. By looking at a sample of demonstration projects in depth, evaluators planned to concentrate as much as possible on the connections made between youth and their families with the project, and between the youth and the project with employers and the community that may have affected youth persistence, progress and outcomes. It was important to select a sample of projects in order to have the time and resources to study these connections more thoroughly.

Evaluators prepared an initial profile containing information on each project. They analyzed the data across the 29 Round Three projects to gain a better understanding of what types of information were most useful in distinguishing among the projects.²⁸ Working with DOL staff's priorities, evaluators selected projects in Round Three for extended project model studies:

- Operation Safe Kids (OSK), Baltimore City Health Department, Baltimore, MD,
- Gateway Alliance, Brockton Area Private Industry Council, Brockton, MA,
- Youth Incentive Project, Wildcat Services Corporation, Inc., The Bronx, NY,
- Project UNIDOS, Imperial Valley Regional Occupational Program, El Centro, CA,
- HoustonWorks, USA, Houston, TX,
- Project Craft, Home Builders Institute, Nashville, TN,
- Cochise County Workforce Development, Sierra Vista, AZ, and
- Building Lives, Workforce Solutions, St. Paul, MN.

The Phase Three extended project studies evaluation required the evaluators to identify the data needed to respond to each research question and locate where the data were likely to be found.²⁹ The primary method for collecting the data identified was to develop protocols that were used during evaluation visits by evaluators to the selected sites.

Evaluators collected data during the evaluation visits through:

- Interviews with the staff of the project and partner organizations,
- Case file selection, review, and data abstraction,
- Youth observations, focus groups and interviews, and
- Interviews with family members, employers, and other stakeholders.

²⁸ A complete description of selection criteria can be found in Volume Two, Chapter II, pages 43-45.

²⁹ For a complete list of data needed listed by source, see Volume Two, Appendix D.

For each of these data gathering strategies, evaluators prepared protocols for uniform data collection. In preparation for the visits, the evaluation team also developed a series of materials to provide information to the projects' staff and youth on the nature of the evaluation as well as materials to guide evaluators in the use of the protocols and in logistics of the visits.³⁰ Orientation sessions were held with the evaluation field teams to assure that they understood the protocols and the intended uses of the data being collected.

The primary data collection effort occurred during a preliminary visit and two subsequent site visits to the selected projects. One evaluator made the preliminary visit and the extended visits had two or three evaluators based on an estimate of the amount of work that needed to be accomplished in the field.³¹

During the preliminary visits, evaluators explained the nature of the study to grantee and partner staff and answered their questions. The evaluator also explained the various steps in the evaluation visit, particularly the interest in meeting and interviewing youth and in abstracting data from the individual case files. In every instance, the grantees assured the evaluators of their willingness to be evaluated and to provide access to youth and to needed files.

The two extended site visits to each project varied in length from five to ten days each. During the extended site visits, teams of two or three evaluators focused on specific aspects of each project. One evaluator concentrated on the project's organizational, operational, and collaborative features that related to planning, service delivery, and management. This interviewer also studied the relationships between the project and the wider community.

Another evaluator focused on what the study called "youth connections." The youth connections evaluator sought to study the dynamics and interactions of youth with the project, with their families and peers, as well as with the community. The youth connections evaluator focused on youth interviews, observations, and focus groups. The youth connections evaluator also interviewed others in the youths' lives: case managers, family members and employers.

At the time of the first visit, evaluators drew a random sample of case files. They selected files of older youth where that was possible in order to understand better the youths' transition to employment. In projects with few older youth, evaluators selected all the case files of older youth and drew a random sample of the younger youth to complete a set of at least 25 files. Where there were no older youth, the evaluator drew a random sample of enrolled youth without distinction by age. The sample of case files was drawn purposefully, but evaluators made efforts to assure that they were able to study a range of patterns of service planned for project youth compared to services they received.

During the first evaluation visits, evaluators also asked various members of the project staff to array a set of "flash cards" according to the pathway of typical youth. Each card named a kind of service the youth might be receiving, and the staff reported whether or not project youth received the service and in what sequence.

³⁰ For a detailed description of protocol development, see Volume Two, Chapter II, pages 45-46. To review the protocols themselves, see Two, Appendix E.

³¹ A more detailed description of the site visits is found in Volume Two, Chapter II, pages 47-50.

For the second visits, the evaluators used a modified version of the field guide to highlight what new data needed to be collected. The evaluator who focused on the project operations and organization updated the first visit field notes and completed the case file data abstraction to bring the record of sample youth up-to-date. The evaluator noted changes in partners and services as well as the evolution of the original project plan.

To build a deeper understanding of the “youth connections” portion of the study, the evaluators who interviewed youth during the first site visit focused on four to six youth in each project (39 altogether) for lengthy interviews (2 hours or more). To the extent possible, the evaluator also interviewed each youth’s route counselor, family members and work place supervisors. The youth connections evaluator met with other youth, case managers, project staff and others who worked with project youth.

Each field evaluation team prepared a report based on a common outline that the evaluators had prepared collaboratively.³² Frequent exchanges among the evaluators guided the preparation of the reports as evaluators addressed unique aspects of the projects. An evaluator, who had not been a member of the evaluation site visit team, reviewed each project report. Information gathered about the supplemental grants was included in each project report, and it was also analyzed and reported separately by grant topic. These focused studies reports are included in Volume Four.

Across the eight projects, case files were abstracted for 233 youth. The heart of the case file analysis was the examination of the services and outcomes planned and received for each youth. These findings and the graphic depiction of the “typical” youth pathway were reported project-by-project in the final project reports in Volume Three. Evaluators collaborated in developing a coding scheme for the lengthy youth interviews. Each interview was coded using NVivo qualitative software, and the 39 coded interviews were analyzed for patterns of engagement with and persistence in project activities.

3. Focused Project Model Studies

The Phase Three evaluation also studied a series of specific issues that were of special interest to DOL, which were termed “focused studies.” There were basically two types of focused project studies:

- Evaluations of the supplemental grants awarded only to selected projects in Rounds Two and Three of the demonstration, and
- Evaluations of projects in Round Three of the demonstration featuring differences in service delivery in specific settings; i.e., a project specializing in services to youth offenders with drug or alcohol addictions and projects in a rural areas. (See Table I.2 for a list of Focused Study Projects.)

³² The analysis methods are described in greater detail in Volume Two, Chapter II, pages 50-51.

Table I.2. Focused Studies in the Phase Three Evaluation

Project Name	Round	Supplemental Grant	Other Focused Interest
Baltimore, MD	Three	Academic Skills	
Brockton, MA	Three	Academic Skills	
Bronx, NY	Three	Academic Skills	
El Centro, CA	Three	Academic Skills	Rural
Hartford, CT	Two	Academic Skills	
Los Angeles, CA	Three		Substance Abuse Treatment
Pittsburgh, PA	Two	AmeriCorps/ Job Corps	
Sierra Vista, AZ	Three		Rural
St. Paul, MN	Three	Academic Skills, Employment Bonus	
West Palm Beach, FL	Two	Employment Bonus	
Willmar, MN	Three		Rural

DOL awarded three types of supplemental grants to demonstration projects: Academic Skills and Workforce Preparation (Academic Skills), Employment Bonus, and Partnerships with AmeriCorps and Job Corps. The evaluation team and DOL agreed that the focused studies would include all five projects receiving Academic Skills grants in Round Three. The Employment Bonus grants were awarded to West Palm Beach and St. Paul. St. Paul was also an extended study site and an Academic Skills grantee. West Palm Beach, a demonstration project from Round Two, became one of the focused study sites. Pittsburgh, also a Round Two demonstration project, received the grant to assist youth offenders in accessing AmeriCorps and Job Corps. Round Three included the first demonstration grants to rural communities. Two rural grantees were included in the extended studies: El Centro and Cochise County. Willmar, a community near St. Paul, was added as a third rural study site.

Since youth offenders were observed to struggle with chemical dependency, one project was chosen for its specialty in treating adults and youth with addictions. The Asian American Drug Abuse Program in Los Angeles was selected as a focused study.

Evaluators prepared a primary research question for each of the five types of focused studies. Evaluators expanded this question through a series of more specific questions of interest for that particular topic. For the projects that were the subject of both extended and focused studies, the evaluation teams had a separate field guide for the focused study portion of the visit. Evaluators spent additional time in communities with more than one research topic on its agenda. For example, one of the two site visitors to St. Paul spent additional time on site to study both its Academic Skills grant and its Employment Bonus grant. For the evaluation of projects that were solely focused studies, the site visits were shorter and the data collection more limited.

During the evaluation site visits, team members closely studied the particular aspect of the project that was of interest as well as pertinent contextual and environmental issues and project activities. The evaluators conducted unstructured and semi-structured interviews with key project

members, youth, partners, employers and stakeholders to gain a better understanding of the research area of interest.

After the site visits, evaluators prepared detailed reports of the visits, including data about the number of youth served and the services provided. A member of the research team synthesized the reports on a given focused study to prepare a summary of what was learned about each topic.³³

In Chapter II, we present the findings about youth from the analysis of both the quantitative and the qualitative data collected.

³³ For a more detailed description of the methods used for the focused studies, please see Volume Two, Chapter II, pages 53-55. The reports of the focused studies constitute Volume Four.

Chapter II

EVALUATION FINDINGS: YOUTH

All of the data collection and analysis effort was directed to responding to DOL's fundamental research question:

What has been learned from the Youth Offender Demonstration Project about how to help youth offenders and youth at risk of court involvement prepare for and secure long-term employment at wage levels that will prevent future dependency on public support and break the cycle of crime and juvenile delinquency that contributes to recidivism and diminished public safety?

The overarching research question was divided in to three sub-questions during the investigation. This chapter focuses on **Research Question 1**: To what extent are youth achieving educational goals, gaining pre-employment skills and attitudes, entering employment at adequate wage levels, and breaking out of the cycle of crime?

Chapter II is organized to follow the flow of the Logic Model, Section A describes the youth clients in the Outcomes Study and in the Project Model Studies. Using case file data from a sample of youth in the eight Extended Model Studies, Section B reports on the services these youth received in relation to those planned for them and some short-term outcomes they achieved. Using the data collected from a sample of projects about two-years after project enrollment, Section C describes the workforce, criminal justice system (CJS) and educational outcomes of youth. The chapter concludes in Section D with a summary of the youth findings in relation to Research Question 1.

A. Youth

1. Youth Profiles in the Outcomes Study

Examining client characteristics serves two important purposes. First, it provides an understanding of who enrolled at projects, whether they were likely to need demonstration services because of challenges they were facing, and the types of services that might have been most beneficial to them. Understanding who clients are can help to determine whether project staff efforts, and grant resources were directed toward the youth and young adults who might benefit. Second, it helps to provide insights into the different patterns in outcomes across projects. Because DOL allowed demonstration project grantees great flexibility in whom they targeted for services, and in the services they offered, it is likely that variations in client outcomes across projects can be explained in part by whom the projects recruited.

The Outcomes Study involved youth from a sample of projects in all three rounds of the demonstration. Table II.1 reports the characteristics of youth in the Outcomes Study.

Clients served at Outcomes Study projects varied considerably in their demographic characteristics, such as their sex, age, and race/ethnicity. Most projects served predominantly male participants (Table II.1). The lone exception is West Palm Beach, which prepared participants for employment in health care professions in which women predominate. Juveniles (ages 14 to 17) were half or more of clients at most projects. Four of the nine projects served predominantly black participants (Cincinnati, Des Moines, Pittsburgh, and West Palm Beach); Denver served a largely Hispanic population, and Erie served a predominantly white one. The racial/ethnic composition of clients at the other three Outcomes Study projects was more heterogeneous. It is likely that the racial and ethnic composition of the clients at each project reflects the racial and ethnic compositions of the populations in the communities that the projects served.

All demonstration grantees were supposed to assist youth who either were at risk of court or gang involvement or were youth offenders or gang members. Thus, one would expect that a high proportion of clients, but possibly not all, had been involved in the CJS at the time of their enrollment. At least 40 percent of participants at each project were offenders; in two projects, Cincinnati and Colorado, all participants had been previously arrested (Table II.1). Although information on clients' preenrollment incarceration history is not comprehensively available, it is clear that clients' preenrollment incarceration rates also varied greatly. For example, all participants in Colorado had been incarcerated prior to enrollment, in contrast to only 1 percent in Des Moines.

Similarly, clients' educational attainment upon enrollment, and hence their potential educational needs, varied across projects. For example, none of Erie's very young participants (96 percent were under age 18) had completed their secondary education, but most were attending school when they enrolled. Denver also had a large percentage of juveniles (70 percent), of whom less than 5 percent held a high school diploma or GED, but unlike with Erie, most (56 percent) were not enrolled in school. In contrast, projects such as Colorado and Des Moines, half of whose clients were age 18 or older, had higher percentages of clients who had completed their secondary education. However, the completion rates were still low; for example, about one-third to two-fifths of Colorado and Des Moines clients had a high school diploma or GED. Overall, since most youth were in the 14-to-17 age group at enrollment, many could have been expected to be in school at the end of the follow-up period.

A significant number of participants had no work experience before their demonstration involvement, but this is not surprising, given the young age of most participants at the project (Table II.1). At the two projects with the highest percentages of participants at least 18 years old, Colorado and Des Moines, over 50 percent had work experience before enrollment. Pittsburgh and St. Paul clients also had high rates of pre-demonstration employment, at 45 percent and 67 percent, respectively.

Few Outcomes Study projects reported data on participants' history of mental health and substance abuse problems, and those that did indicated that such problems were probably under-reported, because the information was self-reported by clients. Even so, the available data

Table II.1. Demographic Characteristics of Participants When They Enrolled at a Youth Offender Demonstration Project
(Percentages Unless Stated Otherwise)

Characteristics	Cincinnati	Colorado	Denver	Des Moines	Erie	Pittsburgh	Seattle	St. Paul	West Palm Beach
Sex									
Female	23.3	0.0	37.3	30.6	31.9	26.7	33.3	33.1	92.7
Male	76.7	100.0	62.7	69.4	68.1	73.3	66.7	66.9	7.3
Age Category									
14 to 17	50.0	40.2	70.1	36.7	95.6	49.3	70.2	64.2	52.4
18 to 24	50.0	59.8	29.9	54.1	3.5	50.0	29.8	35.8	46.0
Don't know/missing	0.0	0.0	0.0	9.2	0.9	0.7	0.0	0.0	1.6
Average age (in years)	17.7	17.7	16.7	18.7	15.7	17.9	16.8	17.4	17.8
Race/Ethnicity									
White	15.8	42.5	11.7	12.2	65.5	6.7	24.3	9.6	4.0
Black	84.2	17.8	2.9	79.6	21.2	92.7	24.7	51.2	86.3
Hispanic	0.0	33.8	81.8	5.1	6.2	0.0	10.6	4.4	7.3
Other	0.0	6.0	3.7	3.1	7.1	0.7	40.4	34.8	2.4
Offender									
Arrested or charged with a crime	100.0	100.0	42.5	61.2	58.4	77.3	69.0	75.0	41.9
No known criminal arrests or charges	0.0	0.0	57.5	38.8	41.6	22.7	31.0	25.0	58.1
Has Been Incarcerated									
No	--	0.0	--	99.0	--	41.3	--	28.9	--
Yes	--	100.0	--	1.0	--	58.7	--	71.1	--
Secondary School Completion									
No completion	93.3	59.4	95.5	67.4	100.0	--	--	83.8	79.0
Has a GED, diploma, or other certificate	6.7	40.6	4.5	32.6	0.0	--	--	16.2	21.0
School Enrollment Status									
Enrolled	43.3	63.4	43.6	34.7	96.4	45.3	--	67.0	--
Not in school	56.7	35.6	56.4	57.1	3.5	54.7	--	32.6	--
Don't know/missing	0.0	0.9	0.0	8.2	0.0	0.0	--	0.5	--
Prior Employment Status									
Any prior employment	--	56.2	11.2	52.0	0.0	45.3	--	66.6	20.2
No prior employment ^a	--	43.8	88.5	48.0	0.0	54.7	--	33.4	79.8
Missing	--	0.0	0.2	0.0	0.0	0.0	--	0.0	0.0
History of a Mental Health Problem									
No	--	--	--	--	--	83.3	--	--	75.8
Yes	--	--	--	--	--	16.7	--	--	24.2
History of a Substance Abuse Problem									
No	--	--	80.9	--	--	--	76.5	71.8	67.7
Yes	--	--	19.1	--	--	--	23.5	28.2	31.5
Number of Participants	120	219	445	98	113	150	255	408	124

SOURCE: Tabulations of Youth Offender Demonstration Project management information systems data by MPR.

^a Colorado reported data on prior subsidized employment only. An assumption was made that clients did not have subsidized employment.

-- = not applicable.

suggest that quite a few participants were diagnosed with (or self-reported) a mental health or substance abuse problem upon enrollment.

To sum, as a result of the demographic makeup of the communities in which projects operated and differences in recruitment strategies, the projects served diverse populations. Each served a different socioeconomic and demographic population, with varying opportunities for and obstacles to successful outcomes. Some projects served older youth, some younger youth. Projects served participants with a variety of backgrounds, including a wide range in the level of involvement with the CJS and level of education. For example, Colorado recruited all participants from a maximum-security male incarceration facility, and Pittsburgh recruited primarily adjudicated youths referred by probation officers and judges. Erie and Des Moines, on the other hand, recruited participants from agencies serving youth in the community. It is extremely important to take into account this variation when examining and interpreting projects' service delivery strategies and clients' outcomes across projects.

2.Youth Profiles in the Extended Project Model Studies

The project model studies examined the characteristics of all the youth enrolled in eight projects in Round Three and the characteristics of a sample of youth based on their case files. The next section looks at the features of both the total youth in the eight projects and the case file sample.

a. Total Youth in the Eight Project Model Studies

Youth findings for the eight project model studies are drawn from analyses of data grantees reported quarterly to DOL, a sample of case file records and interviews with youth and others who knew them.

As with the Outcomes Study, the eight extended studies also found significant variations in the definition of target populations. See Table II.2. The eight extended study projects enrolled a total of 1,575 youth of which 1,174 were youth offenders (75 percent). The majority (62 percent) of the youth belonged in the 14-17-age category at enrollment, and the majority of them were male (72 percent).

Table II.2. Total Project Youth by Age, Offender Status and Gender

	Baltimore	Brockton	Bronx	EI Centro	Houston	Nashville	Sierra Vista	St. Paul	Totals
Total Enrolled	138	153	323	100	219	127	96	419	1,575
Offender Youth	138 (100%)	153 (100%)	109 (34%)	50 (50%)	211 (96%)	127 (100%)	96 (100%)	290 (69%)	1,174 (75%)
Nonoffender Youth	0	0	214 (66%)	50 (50%)	8 (4%)	0	0	129 (31%)	401 (25%)
Older Youth	0	60 (39%)	103 (31%)	16 (16%)	111 (50%)	127 (100%)	36 (38%)	155 (37%)	608 (38%)
Younger Youth	138 (100%)	93 (61%)	220 (68%)	84 (84%)	108 (50%)	0	60 (62%)	264 (63%)	967 (62%)
Male Youth	136 (99%)	121 (79%)	178 (55%)	77 (77%)	146 (67%)	123 (97%)	75 (78%)	280 (67%)	1,136 (72%)
Female Youth	2 (1%)	32 (21%)	145 (45%)	23 (23%)	73 (33%)	4 (3%)	21 (22%)	139 (33%)	439 (28%)

Projects selected the enrolled youth differently:

- Baltimore youth were all between 14-17 years of age and offenders.
- Houston, Brockton, and Sierra Vista enrolled youth 14-17 and 18-24, and they were virtually all offenders. (Houston reported 8 youth at-risk of court supervision.)
- Nashville enrolled only 18-24 year old youth, and they were all offenders.
- Only Bronx, El Centro and St. Paul enrolled both youth offenders and youth at risk of court supervision who were in both the 14-17 and 18-24 age groups. El Centro enrolled primarily youth 14-17, but they had 16 youth in the older category: 11 youth at risk of court supervision and 5 offenders.

b. Youth in the Case File Sample

There were 233 case files abstracted for youth in the eight projects. See Table II.3. As in the complete population of youth in the eight sites, in the sample there were more males (82 percent), and the percentage of offenders was a good match at 76 percent.

Table II.3. Characteristics of Youth In Case File Summary Sample

	Baltimore, MD	Brockton, MA	Bronx, NY	El Centro, CA	Houston, TX	Nashville, TN	Sierra Vista, AZ	St. Paul, MN	Totals
Sample	30	28	32	26	27	28	32	30	233
Offender	27	28	10	10	22	28	30	21	176 (76%)
Male	30	26	18	21	23	28	24	22	192 (82%)
Female	0	2	14	5	4	0	8	8	41 (18%)
Average Age (Yrs.)	15.3	20.6	16.8	16.5	19	22	19	19.5	18.6
Last Grade Completed (Avg.)	9.7	9.9	8.9	10.5	10	10.5	9	10.3	9.85

There were more older youth in the sample than in the total population because evaluators were interested in studying the transition to work among older youth. Note that the relationship between average age and average last grade completed indicates that most youth had not achieved the academic level of their age-group peers, with the exception of El Centro. With an average grade completed at 9.85, it would be unlikely for many youth to complete high school while enrolled in a 24-30 month project.³⁴

³⁴ While the coding scheme developed for examining academic achievement in case records provided for information about grade-level advancement and improved grades, case managers had not recorded these data regularly.

The narrative and text boxes below provide descriptions of the youths' experiences based on interviews with youth and those that knew them. The interview excerpts demonstrate the issues that they and the project staff needed to address to meet demonstration goals.

Based on the youth interviewed, the majority of youth came from families where youth lacked parental support, but almost all the youth could name a family member who provided him/her assistance. When some youth described their family, they spoke of a spouse or partner and their children. While some youth in all eight projects grew up in households where substance abuse and crime were present, others grew up in households where parents worked multiple part time jobs to keep the family economically secure. In either case, however, the youth were often unsupervised and without direction.

Family

B is a 16-year old male who lives with his mother and maternal grandmother. His father passed away last year. His mother works second shift so B is unsupervised during the evening.

When asked about his family during the first site visit, D responded, "I have lived in a homeless shelter called Promising Futures since I was released from the correctional facility. I have no family and I was lucky enough to get into the shelter for kids."

CD says her father is an immature drug addict, who upon her release from incarceration asked her for money to feed his habit.

All of the demonstration projects operated in high crime areas, and entire communities could be stigmatized by the criminal involvement of some residents. Drug selling and use was a characteristic of all these communities. These neighborhoods and communities were typically poor, and the lure of fast and easy money trapped many project youth who yearned for a better life.

Environment

For a time, OB worked as an escort or "coyote" for illegal aliens crossing into the U.S. from Mexico, a commercial enterprise of sorts among some local gangs.

SF admits that one challenge is to ignore what old acquaintances might think or may be saying about her. She admits that she is occasionally tempted to engage in some of the negative behaviors that got her into trouble, but she thinks about how far she has traveled since then and she is able to turn back such thoughts.

There is a record of substance abuse in B's family (among his brothers and father) and he is getting treatment around his own substance abuse issues. He recalls how he would wake up from his high without his clothes or in odd places, suggesting that he neither wanted to end up in jail nor return to his lifestyle of the past.

Youth were typically not successfully engaged with school; they were almost universally behind in their education compared to their age group. While some youth had learning difficulties, youth

were more characterized by their truancy. The youths' need for additional educational achievement was a tension in every project; the youth resisted learning opportunities and insisted that their major goal was to find a job.

Education

"I was slacking off, didn't go to school. I had a job and got fired. I sat around for a year."

In part because of the many [family] moves, JO never became engaged in school, finally dropping out in the 10th grade.

AP has gotten his GED. He wants to go further with college but his fiancé is currently pregnant so employment is his priority.

The lack of supervision and direction in the youths' lives meant that they frequently needed to be coached by project staff in fundamental behavior issues: Appropriate boundaries in relationships; ways to establish trusting relationships with adults and peers; appropriate clothing for different kinds of activities; how to greet and converse with adults (especially potential employers); and how to make a constructive use of time. Staff members reported that they needed to spend time in developing trusting relationships that allowed them to coach youth toward more positive values, better decisions and a stronger personal identity.

EM graduated from high school but he had no idea how to get a job.

"[Career coach] took me shopping [for clothes to wear to job interviews]. Made me buy the clothes I did not want to wear. But I understood they were for interviews so I wore them.

He said that in his previous job, if the supervisor said anything to him he did not like, he would answer back and didn't care if it jeopardized his job.

To address these personal development needs, projects planned services for them, and most youth received planned services. The design of the demonstration required that awardees provide key workforce and reentry services in order to fully integrate youth offenders, gang members, and youth at-risk of court involvement into their communities and improve their labor market outcomes.

c. The Services Planned for and Received by Youth

The extended model studies examined patterns between the services planned for youth and the services they received. These findings are based on the 233 case files reviewed during evaluation visits to the eight sites.

In examining the match between services planned for a youth compared to the services the youth received, it is important to note that the youth may not have reached the right milestone to receive a service and would receive it at a later time or the youth's plan changed for legitimate reasons. On the other hand, a youth might receive a service that had not been in the original plan

as circumstances changed. In the tables that follow, the reader will find columns for services planned, received and total received, whether planned or not. The evaluators focused their analysis of the data on services planned and received on four kinds of services: Assessments, education, work force and support services.

There is no report on reentry services because they were chiefly offered through a justice system partner and few of them were noted in the case files. Participation in project activities was part of an alternative to incarceration for at least some of the youth in each project. Typically, the project activities were not different for youth receiving an alternative sentence from those in aftercare or different from youth at risk of court involvement.

Evaluators found that those assessments that were planned were generally received by the youth, but 73 percent of sample youth received no assessments while others received batteries of assessments for risk, needs, education, substance abuse and mental health. The most frequently assigned assessment was for education. Evaluators were surprised that fewer than 10 percent of the youth were assessed for substance abuse because the youths' self-reports suggested that chemical dependency was an issue for many of them.

In Table II.4, evaluators report the educational services planned and received by youth in the sample. A youth could have completed high school during the project and started college or long-term vocational training classes, so the table includes duplicated counts for such a youth.

Table II.4. Educational Services Planned and Received by Sample Youth

Educational	Total Planned	Received (% of Planned)	Total Received
GED	73	56 (76%)	71 (30%)
High School	34	26 (76%)	29 (12%)
Alternative School	38	31 (82%)	43 (18%)
College Exploration	29	14 (48%)	27 (12%)
Tutoring	12	2 (17%)	9 (4%)
Occupational Training	77	52 (68%)	68 (29%)
Basic Skills	46	32 (70%)	49 (21%)
Other	13	7 (54%)	10 (4%)

In the category of education services, the services projects offered were directed to high school completion primarily. For projects with a majority of younger youth, education was a primary focus. For these younger youth, academic enrichment and counseling were planned to help participants stay in school. For older youth, the primary educational need was to obtain a GED. Projects recognized the importance of occupational or vocational training for older youth, but with the exception of Nashville, projects placed few youth in vocational training.

The workforce development emphasis of the projects was on work readiness, career exploration, and job placement. See Table II.5. The majority of the youth in the case file sample received work readiness training and job placement services. Work Readiness and job search services

were the only services received by a majority of all the youth in the sample (56 percent and 70 percent respectively).

Table II.5. Workforce Services Planned and Received by Sample Youth

Workforce	Total Planned	Received (% of Planned)	Total Received (% of Sample)
Career Exploration	67	54 (81%)	67 (29%)
Job Shadowing	13	8 (62%)	14 (6%)
Work Readiness	120	97 (81%)	135 (58%)
Job Search	137	119 (87%)	163 (70%)
Job Retention	14	7 (50%)	25 (11%)
Other	11	6 (55%)	21 (9%)
Totals	362	289 (80%)	425

Workforce development activities varied in intensity and duration. Work readiness, for example, was from 4:00 to 5:00 on Fridays for a total of 20 hours in one project while in another it consisted of two four-hour sessions for a total of eight hours. In Nashville, the last two weeks of the program (sixty hours) were devoted entirely to work readiness and job placement. One can see from Table II.5 that few youth received job retention services.

Projects offered a wide range of support services and activities. All projects offered transportation assistance and most youth received it at some point. Other services youth received were life skills, recreation, and community service. Of the services considered in the evaluation, the one least often offered, using any funding mechanism, was a formal mentoring program. Some services were difficult to provide, even when the staff recognized youths' need, for example, housing.

The duration and intensity of support services were the most variable of all the project services. They could be episodic, such as a one-day field trip in El Centro or a one-day, 8-hour substance abuse prevention class in Houston. Most projects offered something they called life skills classes: for example, two 3-hour sessions in El Centro, one hour every evening of the school term in The Bronx, four hours a week for eight weeks in Sierra Vista and eight to forty hours in Brockton.

In the narrative and text boxes that follow, youth and others reflect on the youths' experience of the project.

d. Youths' Experience of the Projects

Youth reported great appreciation for the lengths staff members went to meet their needs. There were, nevertheless, compliance issues: Getting youth to come regularly and on time for education and workforce activities, facing and acting on a mental health or substance abuse issue, a lack of skill in juggling multiple responsibilities and competing priorities. Some staff members were frustrated by the lack of resources they needed to meet youths' needs: mental health and substance abuse services in rural areas, few job prospects in economically fragile

communities, and the lack of public transportation that would open job and service opportunities for youth.

Route Counseling

CM says her case manager has made a real difference in her life, helping her through personal difficulties, including the deaths of her boyfriend and grandmother, and encouraging her to persist.

LJ volunteered for a contest at a strip club; her counselor learned of it and advised her not to “sell pieces of yourself.” LJ decided to go ahead, and she says “I’m standing there almost naked, and I feel someone tap me on my shoulder and it’s [the counselor]! She just told me, ‘LJ, we care about you.’ Then she took off outta there.”

With her case manager’s encouragement and project support, including basic skills remediation, tutoring, academic counseling, and leadership training, AM obtained her diploma in May 2004, only months after giving birth to her daughter.

Youth resisted services on three fronts primarily: they would not acknowledge a substance abuse or mental health problem, they were unfocused, or their reasons for being in the project conflicted with project priorities.

Resisting Services

OB also has a history of substance abuse, although he and his parents deny drug involvement and say his late night outings, often ending at 2 or 3 AM, is more about hanging out with his friends than anything gang- or drug-related. Of himself, OB says that it is hard to stay away from “his homies” who are fellow users. He is unwilling to get further treatment, preferring to rely “on his personal willpower to kick his addiction.”

She is, in fact, reluctant to talk about anything beyond the present and her “mission” to help people, especially children and the elderly. She bluntly states that she does not like to think about life too much, preferring to follow her heart instead of her head.

Thirty-nine youth [in one project] were recommended for mental health assessment; youth workers scheduled 61 appointments for these 39, and 28 received the assessment. Of this number, 12 began to attend therapy sessions. For substance abuse, 63 appointments were scheduled for 46 youth and 35 received the assessment.

Many youth displayed to project staff a difficulty with coping skills or juggling multiple priorities. Staff related the difficulty to the truancy and disengagement from other activities that led youth to expect to control their time and resist others’ expectations for their participation, but they pointed out that it was a new experience for some youth to have multiple time commitments and they were struggling with learning how to manage multiple priorities.

Juggling Priorities

K has very real responsibilities of supporting his young children. With his lack of education and work history, he is only qualified for service and manual labor types of positions. Yet he left two positions because they did not meet his expectations.

AM acknowledges that her life has not been easy, and with motherhood, marriage and education to juggle, more challenges will surely crop up in the future, but she is determined to succeed.

“This bike is your transportation from now on. I will be damned if I am going to get up and take you to work at 5:00 am every morning.” “The next day I got up determined to be self sufficient and handle my own affairs. My job was fifteen miles away, so I left at 4:15—no problem. The next day I had to ride in the pouring rain. Upon my arrival at work, the boss looked at me like I was crazy and said, ‘Is transportation going to be a problem?’ I said in my soaking wet clothes, ‘I’m here ain’t I?’”

The overarching issue in getting youth to attend activities regularly and punctually was complications in the youths’ lives. Evaluators were surprised to learn how many youth were virtually homeless. It might not have been that they were sleeping in the streets, but they had no fixed night time residence, moving from family member to friend’s house as he or she wore out his/her welcome. Staff found this to be a huge issue in compliance with their project services plans. The youth could not control his/her life situation (food, clothing, etc.) and it was so difficult to find alternative housing for the age group. They were too young for subsidized housing and often too old for foster care or other temporary arrangements. One case manager in Baltimore remarked that when the youth had a “roof over their heads, heat in the house, and food in the refrigerator, they were less angry!”

Transience

A rotated among family members for housing and no one wanted to be the responsible person of record for her.

AJ has a troubled relationship with his family, particularly his father. According to AJ, his father is volatile and abusive, both to him and his mother. When he broke irrevocably from his parents, he bounced from sibling to sibling.

AB’s mother went to jail right after the first evaluation visit. He currently lives with an aunt and her four kids, his brother and his grandfather. “I thought I was going to get put back in a foster home again [but] my aunt talk to my PO for me to stay with her.”

Project staff in several projects reported that there were few options they could offer youth. If the job market were difficult, the projects urged the youth to stay in school so that they had more to offer to employers; they looked for subsidized employment to provide some work experience for their resumes. Yet these projects were thwarted to some extent by the sparse opportunities in their locale.

Limited Employment Opportunities

[Case Manager:]“The employers just want a body. They need someone to work shift. The hours are crap, very low, under ten hours in a 2-week period. Sometimes 30 hours for two weeks. The pay is \$6.50 - \$8.00 an hour. The jobs are mostly fast food, sales, movie theaters, bagel shops, and the jobs are not permanent.”

The youth went through an intense week of work readiness culminating in a job fair. They were eager, confident, and dressed for success. They spent the afternoon in short interviews and completed applications, but at the end they were all jobless. One young man expressed that he and his girlfriend were expecting a baby in a few months. He would settle for any job, but honestly did not know how long he could wait for something to come along. He did not think employers were serious about hiring youth like him. Asked what he would do otherwise, he gave a short laugh and looked wearily down at his shoes.

Unsubsidized employment was the second most frequently planned type of employment outcome [in this project], but given the general dearth of jobs in the community, only 21 percent of project youth achieved this goal. Staff reported that youth were competing with displaced adult workers or immigrants.

Section B describes the immediate outcomes of the Logic Model. The quarterly data projects submitted to DOL as well as the case file data analysis of the eight Extended Project Model Studies allowed evaluators to capture some of the early outcomes of project youth.³⁵ These are described in the next section on short-term changes in the youth.

B. Short Term Changes in Youth

Table II.6 reports on some of the outcomes the eight Extended Project Model Studies' projects reported in their quarterly reports to DOL. The table reports the number of youth who completed high school before the project as well as the number who completed education during the project, so the reader can see the total number who passed this milestone. The total number that completed high school includes the projects' reports of those who received a diploma and those who received a GED. For this table, both subsidized and unsubsidized employment are combined. Further education includes post-secondary education and long-term vocational education. Youth may be enrolled in college classes or in vocational education at the same time as they are working, so the counts of outcomes are duplicated. The category convicted of a crime refers to a crime committed after enrollment in the project whether or not it led to incarceration.

All the projects except El Centro had more workforce outcomes than educational outcomes. Few youth in any project completed high school while enrolled, but Brockton, Nashville, and St. Paul reported the largest numbers of youth in vocational training. These three projects also reported the highest numbers of youth entering employment. The data do not allow evaluators to assess for how long youth retained the positions that they acquired.

³⁵ Early project outcomes for youth in the eight extended studies are discussed in greater detail in Volume Two, Chapter IV, pages 180-192.

Table II.6. Outcomes Reported for All Youth in the Eight Projects

	Baltimore, MD	Brockton, MA	Bronx, NY	El Centro, CA	Houston, TX	Nashville, TN	Sierra Vista, AZ	St. Paul, MN
Total Enrolled	138	153	323	100	210	127	96	419
Completed H.S. Before the Project	0	4 (3%)	29 (9%)	10 (10%)	48 (23%)	59 (46%)	10 (10%)	68 (16%)
Completed H.S. in the Project	2 (1%)	19 (12%)	2 (1%)	32 (32%)	16 (8%)	6 (5%)	4 (4%)	39 (9%)
Entered Employment	13 (9%)	65 (48%)	68 (21%)	10 (10%)	41 (19%)	83 (46%)	28 (29%)	200 (48%)
Further Education	0	20 (13%)	9 (3%)	5 (5%)	7 (3%)	6 (5%)	1 (1%)	49 (12%)
Convicted of a Crime	12 (9%)	11 (7%)	11 (3%)	5 (5%)	22 (10%)	11 (9%)	4 (4%)	46 (11%)
Probation Revoked	15 (11%)	4 (3%)	4 (1%)	5 (5%)	7 (3%)	15 (12%)	5 (5%)	52 (12%)

Not unexpectedly, younger youth did not, in the quarterly data (Table II.7) or the case file summaries, have strong outcomes for either education or workforce. The two-year demonstration did not provide sufficient time for many youth to complete high school. Most employment for this group came from subsidized summer youth employment programs and school-year internships.

Table II.7. Education and Employment Outcomes for Total Younger At-Risk and Offender Youth

	At-Risk Youth 14-17 (N=252)	Youth Offenders 14-17 (N=720)
Completed H.S. Before the Project	3 (1%)	16 (2%)
Completed H.S. in the Project	26 (10%)	37 (5%)
Entered Employment	49 (19%)	125 (18%)
Further Education	10 (4%)	32 (4%)

A higher percentage of older youth had completed high school (Table II.8), but that was because a larger number of older youth enrolled in the demonstration with high school already completed. Older youth, who had not completed high school, were more likely to be trying to complete high school by completing the GED. A majority of older youth, offenders or not, obtained employment of some kind.

Table II.8. Education and Employment Outcomes for Total Older At-Risk and Offender Youth

	At-Risk Youth 18-24 (N=149)	Youth Offenders 18-24 (N=462)
Completed H.S. Before the Project	62 (42%)	121 (26%)
Completed H.S. in the Project	6 (4%)	38 (8%)
Entered Employment	78 (52%)	243 (53%)
Further Education	21 (14%)	33 (7%)

Looking at the youth in the case file summary data allowed evaluators to examine education outcomes for youth by age and offender status. As the reader would assume from looking at the statistics for the total population of the eight projects, few youth completed high school during the demonstration. The educational outcomes for the youth in the sample support the finding in the last section, and there were few differences in high school completion between the older and the younger youth (Table II.9), except that older youth (Table II.10) were trying to complete high school by earning a GED.

Table II.9. Educational Outcomes Achieved by Younger Sample Youth

Younger Youth Total = 85	Planned	Planned & Achieved	Total Achieved (% of 85)
GED Completion	30	4 (13%)	6 (7%)
Diploma	21	3 (14%)	4 (5%)
Other	7	5 (71%)	10 (12%)
Vocational Education	6	2 (33%)	4 (5%)
Vocational Certificate	3	1 (33%)	3 (4%)
College Enrollment	3	0	2 (2%)
Total	70	15 (21%)	29 (34%)

Table II.10. Educational Outcomes Achieved by Older Sample Youth

Older Youth Total = 145	Planned	Planned & Achieved	Total Achieved (% of 145)
GED Completion	38	6 (16%)	12 (8%)
Diploma	11	4 (36%)	8 (6%)
Other	1	0 (0%)	6 (4%)
Vocational Education	4	3 (33%)	9 (6%)
Vocational Certificate	44	30 (68%)	36 (25%)
College Enrollment	11	3 (27%)	7 (5%)
Total	109	46 (42%)	78 (54%)

From the case file analysis, evaluators were able to distinguish active and inactive youth enrollees at the time of the second evaluation visit. In every category of educational outcome, persistence led to receiving more services and reaching more milestones, such as completing high school, receiving vocational training, and enrolling in college. **Almost twice as many active youth completed a GED compared to inactive or terminated youth.**

Table II.11 reports the employment achievement by younger youth by offender status. Younger youth were more likely to achieve subsidized employment. Combining the count of unsubsidized employment with the count of both subsidized and unsubsidized (35 youth), 28 or 50 percent of younger youth offenders for whom data were available received subsidized jobs and 14 youth or 40 percent achieved unsubsidized jobs. Combining the count of unsubsidized employment with the count of both subsidized and unsubsidized (21 youth), 18 youth or 72 percent of nonoffender youth received subsidized employment and 7 youth or 28 percent received unsubsidized work.

Table II.11. Employment Outcomes of Younger Youth by Offender Status

Younger Youth Total = 85	Offender Youth	Nonoffender Youth	Unknown	Totals
Subsidized Work Only	21 (25%)	14 (17%)	2 (2%)	37 (44%)
Unsubsidized Work Only	7 (8%)	3 (4%)	1 (1%)	11 (13%)
Both Subsidized and Unsubsidized Work	7 (8%)	4 (5%)		11 (13%)
None or Unknown	21 (25%)	4 (5%)	1(1%)	26 (31%)
Totals	56	25	4	85

Among younger youth, 33 per cent of the active youth for which there were recorded data had found subsidized employment compared to 14 per cent for the inactive younger youth. Considering only active younger youth in the case file sample (31 youth), 90 per cent (28 youth) received some kind of work experience compared to only about half of the inactive younger youth.

Considering only active younger youth in the case file sample (31 youth), 90 percent (28 youth) received some kind of work experience compared to only about half of the inactive younger youth.

Examining sample data for older offender youth, one observes that a substantial portion of the older youth offenders received a work experience through the demonstration (Table II.12). Combining the counts for subsidized, unsubsidized or both types of employment, 63 percent of the total number of 145 older youth who were offenders received some kind of work experience. Considering only older offenders 77 percent (92 of 120) received a placement in some kind of employment and 69 percent (83 of 120) received a placement in unsubsidized employment. The nonoffender older youth were few in the sample and yet 90 percent (20 of 22) achieved employment through the demonstration, almost 60 percent (13 of 22) achieved unsubsidized employment.

Table II.12. Employment Outcomes of Older Youth by Offender Status

Older Youth Total = 145	Offender Youth	Nonoffender Youth	Unknown	Totals
Subsidized Work Only	9 (8%)	7 (32%)		16 (11%)
Unsubsidized Work Only	54 (45%)	4 (18%)	1	59 (41%)
Both Subsidized and Unsubsidized Work	29 (24%)	9 (41%)	2	40 (27%)
None or Unknown	28 (23%)	2 (9%)		30 (21%)
Totals	120 (100%)	22 (100%)	3	145 (100%)

Among older active youth (79 youth) in the case file sample, 73 or 92 per cent received work placements. Eighty-five per cent of the older active youth obtained unsubsidized employment.

Among older active youth (79 youth) in the case file sample, 73 or 92 percent received work placements. Eighty-five per cent of the older active youth obtained unsubsidized employment.

Although evaluators were not able to collect data on long-term persistence in employment, such high placement rates seem to indicate substantial success by youth, demonstration staff, and cooperating employers. The expectation was that youth offenders and youth who had not completed high school and who lacked work experience would not have been able to find work.

The following narrative and text boxes illustrate some of the youths’ work experience.

Work Experience

The project placed AA in the Department of Immigration for his internship experience. Although he was assigned only to general office tasks, he enjoyed the experience and took the job seriously. Unfortunately, it did not lead to an unsubsidized job.

The project found two jobs for CM, but he lost both. He claimed that the daily commute to Brooklyn was too far.

LM has been working for 4-5 months, having learned to strip metal and how to prepare paint for light fixtures, racecar chassis, and metal finishing. He has completed payment of the 12 financial installments required by [drug court] to move to the next phase of the program.

L got a job, but the hours conflicted with his parole and court obligations so he was fired.

J is working for a mover; he is paid under the table, flat rate, for his work. Since the work is under the table, it is unclear whether there is a record of J working at all.

Through the project, JW obtained part time work at a concession stand at the Houston sports stadium. He also does auto detailing for his cousin. With two part time jobs, he is able to live on his own.

Few demonstration projects invested significant resources in job retention, but St. Paul received an Employment Bonus grant to support additional retention services, and Nashville had a grant

(not DOL funds) to provide retention services as well. The large majority of youth in both projects, who participated in the retention services, were able to retain their jobs for the follow-up period. **Youth and their counselors reported that youth were able to learn job retention skills.**³⁶

Youth reported that they appreciated what employment allowed them to do: Leave a negative living situation, buy a car, or gain custody of a child. They also appreciated other outcomes, such as healing relationships with their families or establishing relationships with more positive peers. Several acknowledged the importance of gaining control of addictive behavior or a bad temper, and some were able to complete probation while enrolled in the project. Several excerpts from the interviews illustrate their responses.

Youths' Experience with the Impact of Employment

TS works part time as an electrician, currently earning \$8.50 an hour. Since he started work as an electrician's helper in February 2004, he has received three pay raises, and he is a quarter of the way through his electrical apprenticeship.

A became a certified CNA in January and now works two jobs as a nursing assistant and at Dunkin Donuts.

JA was offered fulltime employment at the car dealership where he successfully completed a subsidized work experience. He has been with the same employer since January 2004 and has received a raise in recognition of his good work. He was able to gain full custody of his son in January 2005.

JS has successfully completed probation, the two jobs enabling him to pay restitution in full. J purchased a vehicle in July 2004; he secured employment and obtained a GED.

Section C describes the longer term outcomes of the Logic Model. It presents the findings from the Outcomes Study analysis of employment, criminal justice and education outcomes for a sample of youth from Rounds One, Two, and Three of the demonstration.

C. Longer Term Changes in Youth

1. Descriptive Information on Clients' Postenrollment Outcomes

This section presents statistical information on three types of participant outcomes: employment and earnings outcomes, CJS outcomes, and educational outcomes. Several key findings emerge from this analysis. First, most participants worked for at least a portion of the follow-up period, although earnings are low because of low wages, or intermittent or part-time employment. The earnings levels observed, on average, do not permit self-sufficiency. Second, rates of post enrollment involvement in the CJS varied considerably and were strongly related to clients' preenrollment involvement. Third, while relatively few participants obtained high school diplomas or GEDs, most who had been in school when they enrolled at a project remained in

³⁶ See Chapter V, Section B, pages 211-216 for a discussion of the Employment Bonus Study. The entire study is in Volume Four.

school; but, relatively small portions of participants who had dropped out of school were re-engaged in it during the follow-up period.

a. Employment Outcomes

At most projects, between 60 and 70 percent of participants were employed at some point during the two-year follow-up (Table II.13). Since the data do not provide a full two-year follow-up for every participant, it may be that jobs would have been detected for even more participants if a two-year window had been observed for all of them. Even though these employment rates are high, given the youthfulness of the clients, many clients who had a job during the follow-up period did not work continuously throughout it. Some participants worked a small proportion of the period.³⁷ Relatively few participants worked in most quarters. On average at most projects, clients had earnings in about one-third of the possible follow-up quarters, although Seattle and West Palm Beach clients were employed for higher average percentages of the quarters. The average number of employers during the follow-up period at each project ranged from 1.4 to 3.9, which suggests that many clients had several employers.

Unsurprisingly, earnings vary substantially, both across and within projects. As Table II.13 shows, participants generally achieved progressively higher earnings each quarter after enrollment when they worked. At most projects, participants who worked earned \$1,000 to \$3,000 per quarter, in year 2004 dollars. Of course, it is important to recognize that these measures are only for participants with earnings in the quarter, so the composition of participants changes across the quarters. Furthermore, an examination of average earnings, across both participants who worked and those who did not, would yield much lower average quarterly earnings estimates.

Table II.13. Employment and Earnings Outcomes of Outcomes Study Participants
(Percentages Unless Otherwise Stated)

Characteristics	Cincinnati	Colorado	Denver	Des Moines	Erie	Pittsburgh	Seattle	St. Paul	West Palm Beach
Ever Employed	70.8	67.1	74.3	63.3	70.8	60.3	92.2	60.5	92.7
Employed, by Quarter After Enrollment^a									
1	30.8	17.6	32.4	25.6	17.7	36.3	58.8	29.6	48.4
2	38.3	31.9	35.3	22.2	32.7	32.9	56.1	35.1	46.8
3	40.0	33.8	38.0	31.1	28.3	26.7	43.1	33.8	50.8
4	35.8	34.1	38.3	30.0	31.0	30.8	44.3	34.7	58.1
5	40.2	34.2	39.6	29.9	34.6	28.8	47.5	31.7	62.1
6	39.6	35.2	43.1	32.5	37.4	27.4	42.4	37.0	66.9
7	31.4	32.1	42.1	35.3	35.5	24.7	38.4	37.8	65.6
8	31.7	30.5	44.0	34.6	43.8	32.8	40.4	20.5	69.5

³⁷ The percentage employed reflects the percentage of participants for whom that many quarters of follow-up data were collected. Thus, the percentage employed in each quarter reflects a progressively smaller number of participants. On average, St. Paul participants were observed for 5 quarters of follow-up, Pittsburgh participants for 6 quarters; Cincinnati, Colorado, Des Moines, and Erie participants for 7 quarters, and participants at the other projects for 8 quarters.

Table II.13. Employment and Earnings Outcomes of Outcomes Study Participants (Continued)
(Percentages Unless Otherwise Stated)

Characteristics	Cincinnati	Colorado	Denver	Des Moines	Erie	Pittsburgh	Seattle	St. Paul	West Palm Beach
Percentage of Possible Quarters with Earnings^b									
0% to 20%	40.8	48.6	36.9	53.3	46.0	48.0	22.4	47.3	12.1
21% to 40%	23.3	19.9	21.4	14.4	22.1	21.2	31.0	16.7	21.8
41% to 60%	8.3	11.6	9.3	6.7	13.3	12.3	10.6	13.0	15.3
61% to 80 %	10.8	13.0	16.6	12.2	8.9	10.3	16.1	11.3	17.7
81% to 100%	16.7	6.9	15.7	13.3	9.7	8.2	20.0	11.8	33.1
Average Percentage of Possible Quarters with Earnings^b	36.5	30.3	39.3	30.9	31.8	29.0	46.6	33.2	58.9
Average Number of Employers	2.1	2.2	2.7	1.7	1.6	1.6	2.9	1.4	3.9
Average Earnings, by Quarter After Enrollment, for Participants Who Worked in the Quarter(\$)^c									
1	1,740	947	1,646	822	856	1,355	996	905	1,758
2	1,633	1,39	1,880	1,478	999	1,213	1,301	1,424	1,882
3	1,319	1,359	2,215	1,982	1,124	1,597	1,940	1,740	2,176
4	2,114	1,768	2,273	1,509	1,131	1,468	1,876	1,559	2,101
5	1,871	1,714	2,146	1,454	1,231	1,602	1,965	1,825	2,269
6	2,326	1,572	2,301	1,672	1,252	1,241	2,093	2,009	2,282
7	2,553	1,965	2,649	1,553	1,496	1,443	2,317	2,098	2,379
8	2,431	1,771	2,699	1,662	1,434	1,341	2,117	2,815	2,709
Average Hourly Wages Earned (\$)^d	6.6	--	7.5	--	--	--	8.2	7.5	7.4
Average Hours Worked per Week^d	31.8	--	31.1	--	--	--	30.9	27.1	--
Number of Participants^e	120	216	439	90	113	146	255	408	124

SOURCE: Tabulations by Mathematica Policy Research, Inc. Information on average hourly wages and average weekly hours worked are based on MIS data. All other tabulations are based on administrative wage records data.

NOTE: Three projects did not provide information on the date of enrollment. In these cases, the date of recruitment or the date of first service was used as a proxy for it. Quarter 1 is defined as the calendar quarter when the youth was enrolled if the enrollment date was in the first half of the calendar quarter, and as the calendar quarter after the youth was enrolled if the enrollment date was in the second half of the calendar quarter.

^a“Percentage employed” reflects the percentage of participants for whom each subsequent quarter of follow-up data was collected. Thus, the percentage employed in each quarter is calculated using a progressively smaller number of participants.

^b“Percentage of possible quarters with earnings” reflects the number of actual quarters with earnings divided by the number of quarters for which wage data were potentially available for a participant.

^c“Average earnings” reflects the earnings of participants for whom positive earnings were detected in the quarter. Furthermore, quarters that are later in the follow-up period may be based on smaller number of participants, because some participants do not have a full 8-quarter follow-up period.

^dThese statistics are reported only for participants who obtained a postenrollment job.

^eThe numbers of participants in the table are for statistics based on wage data. The number of participants for statistics based on MIS data are 219 for Colorado, 445 for Denver, 98 for Des Moines, and 150 for Pittsburgh. These differences in participants for statistics from the different data sources arise because the wage data required that the clients have a valid SSN and enrollment date (or proxy) in the MIS files.

These earnings findings are consistent with expectations that participants earned low wages when they worked. Clients' earnings in a quarter are based on their number of weeks worked within the quarter, their hours worked per week, and their hourly wage rate. Although some clients worked fulltime at a steady job during the follow-up period, the qualitative data reported in **Miller and MacGillivray (2002)** and **MacGillivray et al. (2004)** suggest that many clients had difficulty finding or keeping fulltime jobs. For these clients, quarterly earnings are low because of their intermittent or part-time employment, even if their wages were above the minimum.

Data from project MISs support the view that most jobs were unlikely to provide good career paths and fringe benefits. The average job paid about \$7 to \$8 per hour (somewhat above the federal minimum wage of \$5.15 per hour) and provided about 30 hours of work per week.³⁸ If participants were to keep a job in which they made \$8 per hour and worked 30 hours per week for a full year, their annual income would be \$12,000 to \$13,000. Although participants were young, many at some projects had to support children, and this annual pay is below the poverty line for a family of four, which ranged from \$17,030 in 1999 to \$19,307 in 2004 (**U.S. Census Bureau 2005**). Thus, the earnings levels achieved do not permit self-sufficiency.

b. CJS Outcomes

Administrative data from five of the nine Outcomes Study projects provide insights to the nature of clients' CJS involvement in the two years after their enrollment in a demonstration project (Table II.14).³⁹ Data on the CJS records of clients are from the state of Colorado and the cities of Des Moines, Iowa; Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania; Seattle, Washington; and West Palm Beach, Florida. These five projects were chosen from among all outcome study projects since they appeared to provide the highest quality CJS data and the fewest limitations. However, the comparability of the data across projects is limited, to some extent, by variations in the policies and procedures of the CJS agencies in each state. Thus, general patterns in the data can be detected, but cross-project comparisons should be conducted only very cautiously.

The projects had extremely varied rates of postenrollment involvement in the CJS. At one extreme is Colorado, which recruited its clients from an incarceration facility. Nearly two-thirds (66 percent) of Colorado clients were arrested at least once in the follow-up period, and nearly one-third (31 percent) had at least three postenrollment arrests. The most common type of crime category was offenses against the authority of law enforcement, such as having an outstanding warrant or failing to appear in court (shown in the category of "miscellaneous crimes"). However, crimes related to property, violence, or drugs also were very common. One in five (22 percent) Colorado clients had a guilty disposition during the follow-up period, and almost one in six (15 percent) were sentenced to an incarceration facility. Furthermore, technical violations of probation or parole are not shown in the data as convictions or sentences, although these frequently lead almost immediately to incarceration after the parolee or probationer is cited for

³⁸ The MIS data report earnings in nominal dollars. These data are not adjusted for inflation, as the information on the timing of postenrollment jobs is unavailable.

³⁹ The MIS data provide information on clients' CJS outcomes for all nine Outcomes Study projects. For those projects in which both data sources are available, the MIS data indicate substantially fewer post enrollment arrests and convictions than are detected through administrative data. This is unsurprising, because the MIS data relied on clients' self-reports of CJS involvement and because route counselors probably did not know of clients' CJS involvement after they stopped receiving YODP services. The analysis of MIS-based CJS outcomes can be found in greater detail in Volume Two, Chapter III, pages 100-106.

Table II.14. Criminal Justice System Outcomes During the Follow-Up Period
(Percentages Unless Stated Otherwise)

Characteristics	Colorado	Des Moines	Pittsburgh	Seattle	West Palm Beach
Arrested or Charged	65.8	21.4	38.3	16.5	6.5
Number of Times Arrested					
0	34.3	78.7	61.7	83.5	93.6
1	19.2	15.7	20.1	12.6	4.0
2	15.5	5.6	11.4	2.8	2.4
3 or more	31.1	0.0	6.7	1.2	0.0
Mean Number of Arrests, Including Those with Zero Arrests	2.1	0.3	0.7	0.2	0.1
Arrested at Least Once for the Following:					
Murder or assault	19.2	10.1	10.1	3.9	1.6
Robbery	2.7	0.0	2.7	0.4	0.0
Theft	15.5	4.5	8.7	2.4	1.6
Drugs	15.5	14.6	19.5	2.8	0.0
Other property crimes	24.7	3.4	15.4	4.7	0.8
Other personal crimes	9.6	3.4	2.7	0.8	0.8
Miscellaneous crimes	55.7	5.6	17.5	9.0	4.0
Probation or parole violations	16.9	2.3	NA	0.8	0.8
Average months to first arrest, for those with a first arrest	10.8	12.3	10.4	13.4	10.9
Average months to second arrest, for those with a second arrest	13.3	19.6	12.4	18.7	16.8
Had the Following Disposition of at Least One Charge^a:					
Convicted, pled guilty, or adjudged delinquent	21.5	36.0	12.1	18.0	0.8
Acquitted of charge(s) or had charge(s) dropped	21.0	NA	NA	0.4	1.6
Other	1.8	NA	NA	0.0	0.0
Sentenced at Least Once to^b:					
Prison, jail, or detention home	15.1	29.2	2.0	14.9	NA
Probation or parole	11.4	20.2	4.7	11.4	NA
Deferred sentence	1.8	19.1	0.0	8.2	NA
Fine	0.0	6.7	1.3	6.3	NA
Other	8.7	15.7	0.7	1.6	NA
Number of Participants	219	89	149	255	124

SOURCE: Tabulations by Mathematica Policy Research, Inc., based on administrative records data provided by the states.

NOTE: The tabulations in this table exclude 9 Des Moines clients and 1 Pittsburgh client for whom MIS-based identifying information was insufficient for a data request to be submitted to the state agency that maintains CJS records. Included in the tabulations are 126 clients for whom the follow-up period is less than two years. All except 41 of these clients have a follow-up period of at least 18 months. Exclusion from the analysis of the 126 clients who have less than a full two-year follow-up period does not substantively change the patterns in the tabulations across projects.

^aThis includes clients who were not rearrested. The sum of the percentages of clients with each type of disposition may be more than the percentage of clients who were arrested, since some clients have more than one arrest charge. In addition, the number of dispositions may not equal the number of arrests, because one type of CJS event may not occur in the follow-up period though another event does. For example, a client may have been arrested prior to YODP enrollment and convicted during the two-year period following enrollment. Thus, the client would be shown as having had a disposition but no arrest.

^bPercentages may sum to more than the percentage who were convicted, pled guilty, or were adjudged delinquent, since some clients received more than one sentence. In addition, the number of sentences may not equal the number of dispositions, because one type of CJS event may not occur in the follow-up period though another event does. For example, a client may have been convicted prior to YODP enrollment and received a sentence during the two-year period following enrollment. Thus, the client would be shown as having had a sentence but no disposition.

NA = not available. It appears that the data repository does not contain information on this type of CJS event.

the violation. Inclusion of these would lead to a higher estimate of the reincarceration rate of Colorado clients.

Because the rates of CJS involvement of Colorado clients were high, and because the average time to first arrest for those arrested was about 11 months, it is likely that large percentages of these clients were unavailable for project services during portions of the follow-up period. Some of these arrests were for probation or parole violations, which can lead to swift reincarceration, so clients' availability for demonstration services and for community-based employment and education might be curtailed.

CJS involvement among Des Moines, Pittsburgh, and Seattle clients also was high, although the extent of the involvement appears to be less than for Colorado. For example, the arrest rates were 21 percent, 38 percent, and 17 percent at these projects, respectively. Some clients from these projects also were arrested more than once, although this was less common than in Colorado. However, the data on arrests, convictions, and sentences for these three projects showed unusual patterns. Des Moines and Seattle clients appear to have high rates of convictions and sentences compared with their arrest rates. Pittsburgh clients had relatively low conviction and sentencing rates, even though they had a high arrest rate. Although the conviction and sentence events cannot be linked explicitly to the arrest events, the contrasts in the rates and patterns of the events for these three projects are stark. Based on their experience in working with the data and on discussions with staff at the state data repositories, evaluators believe that a portion of the explanation is that the CJS records are incomplete, even though these projects were included in this analysis because they appeared to have higher-quality data than did other Outcomes Study projects.

The CJS outcomes of West Palm Beach clients stand in dramatic contrast to clients' outcomes at the other four projects. Only 7 percent of West Palm Beach clients were arrested, none more than twice. West Palm Beach recruited clients who differed, as a group, in important ways from the typical clients at other Outcomes Study projects (and from demonstration projects generally); furthermore, the project was distinctive in focusing its employment services on a specific occupation.

Three implications emerge from the analysis of CJS outcomes for clients at these five projects. First, variations in postenrollment CJS involvement mirror the preenrollment involvement. A second and related implication is that it is probably unrealistic to expect the criminal activity of clients to have been reduced to zero, except in the best of circumstances. A third implication of the data is that charges for which participants were arrested are both pecuniary and non-pecuniary in nature. Thus, providing clients with the ability to obtain income through legal employment is likely to be only a portion of the solution to their needs.

c. Education Outcomes

To the extent possible, the analysis of education outcomes takes into account the fact that participants had different educational goals. For example, participants who had a GED or high school diploma at enrollment did not need to obtain another secondary degree; their goals would have involved postsecondary education or employment. In contrast, projects may have helped youths without secondary degrees at enrollment to attain one. In some cases, that meant that projects helped high school dropouts set goals to obtain a GED through a GED class or individual study, or projects encouraged participants to return to high school to obtain their diplomas. Alternatively, for those participants who were attending school at enrollment, projects

focused on encouraging participants to stay in school so they could complete their secondary educations.

At most projects, between 10 and 20 percent of participants completed high school after enrollment (Table II.15). At West Palm Beach, over 50 percent did so, since the project recruited many participants from high schools and helped those who had not completed high school to do so. On the other hand, Erie and St. Paul participants had low postenrollment high school completion rates; however, this is not surprising, since both projects had many young participants. Furthermore, since St. Paul's follow-up period is shorter, on average, than the follow-up period available for other projects, St. Paul participants may still have been working toward their educational goals. At some projects, such as Denver, more participants obtained GEDs than high school diplomas postenrollment; the opposite holds for other projects. As mentioned, the availability and appropriateness of clients' participation in some educational venues could have led to an emphasis at some projects on obtaining a GED over earning a high school diploma.

Data on whether participants remained in school or returned to school are less comprehensive than the data on high school completion after enrollment. Among participants who were attending school at the time of enrollment, at least two-thirds remained in school (or remained until they completed high school), while the rest dropped out. However, projects seemed less successful in helping out-of-school participants return to school. Across projects, most participants who had been out of school when they enrolled at the project did not return. But it is important to remember that many participants may have wished not to return to school but instead to obtain a GED, and this desire seems evident in the data. For example, while 46 percent of Denver's participants and 41 percent of Pittsburgh's participants did not return to school, 41 percent in Denver and 24 percent in Pittsburgh entered a GED program.

2. The Regression Findings

The data described in the previous section were used to specify multi-variate regression equations to examine how labor market, CJS, and education outcomes varied across projects after taking into account different individual, local, and project-specific factors. For the labor market outcomes, data from all nine projects were examined, and for CJS outcomes data were examined for the five projects for which CJS administrative data were acquired. Several important findings emerge. First, participants' demographic characteristics and educational backgrounds, such as a participants' age, race/ethnicity, and reenrollment education level, play a strong role in their postenrollment labor market and CJS outcomes. Second, offender status is associated both with lower quarterly earnings (weakly statistically significant) and higher arrest and conviction rates (strongly statistically significant). Third, some projects that enrolled participants with disadvantaged backgrounds may have been relatively successful in improving the outcomes of clients, even if the descriptive measures of these clients' outcomes look unfavorable, compared to the outcomes of participants at other projects and with less disadvantaged backgrounds.

**Table II.15. Clients’ Education Outcomes After Their Enrollment
at a Youth Offender Demonstration Project**
(Percentages Unless Stated Otherwise)

Characteristics	Cincinnati	Colorado	Denver	Des Moines	Erie	Pittsburgh	Seattle	St. Paul	West Palm Beach
Obtained a Degree									
No ^a	--	37.0	83.6	46.9	93.8	88.7	85.8	76.5	23.4
GED	--	5.5	11.7	13.3	2.7	4.7	14.1	0.7	0.8
High school diploma	--	16.9	0.2	7.1	3.5	6.7	0.0	6.6	54.8
Not applicable (had a degree at enrollment) ^a	--	40.6	4.5	32.6	0.0	0.0	0.0	16.2	21.0
Remained in School									
No	--	--	15.1	10.2	--	12.7	--	16.9	--
Yes	--	--	28.1	20.4	--	27.3	--	43.6	--
Left school because obtained a degree	--	--	0.0	5.1	--	6.0	--	6.1	--
Not applicable (already had diploma/degree or since was not in school at YODP enrollment)	--	--	56.9	61.2	--	54.0	--	32.8	--
Don't know/missing	--	--	0.0	3.1	--	0.0	--	0.5	--
Returned to School									
No	--	--	46.1	26.5	--	40.7	--	13.2	--
Yes	--	--	6.3	2.0	--	13.3	--	3.4	--
Not applicable (already had diploma/degree or since was in school at YODP enrollment)	--	--	47.6	68.4	--	46.0	--	82.8	--
Don't know/missing	--	--	0.0	3.6	--	0.0	--	0.5	--
In GED Program After Enrollment									
No	--	--	54.8	--	--	76.0	--	76.2	75.0
Yes	--	--	40.7	--	--	24.0	--	7.6	4.0
Not applicable ^a	--	--	4.5	--	--		--	16.2	21.0
Number of Participants	120	219	445	98	113	150	255	419	124

SOURCE: Tabulations of Youth Offender Demonstration Project management information systems data by MPR.

NOTE: The data on outcomes should be interpreted with caution, for two reasons. First, the time frame to which the outcomes pertain varies across participants. Participants’ lengths of involvement in the projects varied; thus, the time frame during which route counselors were likely to have learned about clients’ outcomes also varied. Second, YODP staff typically obtained information on outcomes from the participants, which would lead to incorrect measures of outcomes if they misreported, or chose not to report, information.

^aThe Pittsburgh and Seattle data most likely overstate the percentage of participants who did not complete high school after enrollment. Data were not available at these two projects on education level at enrollment, so the percentage of participants who did not complete high school after enrollment likely includes some participants who did not try to earn a diploma or GED after enrollment because they did not need one.

-- = not applicable.

As expected, younger clients were significantly less likely to participate in the labor market and to be involved in the CJS than those 18 years old or older (Table II.16). Results suggest that participants aged 18 or older were nearly 17 percentage points more likely to obtain a job as well as 8 percentage points more likely to be arrested in the follow-up period compared to those 17 years old or younger.

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Table II.16. Post Enrollment Participant Labor Market and Criminal Justice System Outcomes
(Regression Coefficients/Marginal Effects (T-Statistics))

	Obtained Job Anytime After Enrollment ^a	Proportion of Quarters Employed ^b	Log of Average Earnings ^b	Arrested ^a	Number of Arrests ^b	Convicted ^a
14 to 17 Years	-0.167*** (7.283)	-0.176*** (10.680)	-1.575*** (10.940)	-0.077* (1.876)	-0.246** (2.050)	-0.043 (1.352)
Female	0.041 (1.613)	0.039** (2.250)	0.227 (1.520)	-0.153*** (3.050)	-0.24* (1.640)	-0.082** (2.389)
Race						
White	0.046 (1.364)	0.039* (1.670)	0.477** (2.350)	-0.090* (1.656)	-0.468** (2.840)	-0.094** (2.553)
Other	-0.005 (0.145)	0.008 (0.380)	0.194 (1.050)	-0.015 (0.249)	-0.097 (0.620)	-0.069 (1.770)
Offender	-0.017 (0.618)	-0.034* (1.950)	-0.276* (1.800)	0.123*** (2.581)	0.249* (1.820)	0.099*** (3.164)
High School Diploma/GED	0.055 (1.616)	0.086*** (3.770)	0.673*** (3.400)	0.018 (0.376)	-0.090 (0.630)	0.015 (0.384)
Unemployment Rate	-0.051*** (3.130)	-0.027** (2.36)	-0.281*** (2.820)	0.010 (0.560)	-0.104 (1.340)	0.017 (1.003)
Adjusted R ²	--	0.14	.156	--	0.224	--
AIC	2040.027	--	--	890.76	--	736.69
Number of Participants	1,905	1,904	1,904	828	835	828

SOURCE: Analyses of Youth Offender Demonstration Project management information systems data, wage data, and criminal justice system data by Mathematica Policy Research, Inc.

NOTE: West Palm Beach is the omitted category for these models. The regressions of employment-related outcomes include all 9 Outcomes Study projects. The only projects included in the models predicting interactions with the criminal justice system are Colorado, Des Moines, Pittsburgh, Seattle, and West Palm Beach. Other control variables in the regressions, for which coefficients and t-statistics are not shown, are an intercept term, the violent crime rate, the property crime rate, and project-specific indicators.

^aFor these binary outcomes, table reports marginal effects, estimated using a logistic regression.

^bFor these continuous outcomes, table reports coefficients estimated using ordinary least squares.

-- = not applicable.

*Significantly different from zero at the .10 level, two-tailed test.

**Significantly different from zero at the .05 level, two-tailed test.

***Significantly different from zero at the .01 level, two-tailed test.

Female participants had jobs for a higher proportion of quarters, which is contrary to what is usually observed in the labor market for the general population.⁴⁰ They also were less likely to be involved with the CJS. On the other hand, the ever-employed rates of females as well as the average quarterly earnings of female participants were not significantly different from males.

African-American clients had significantly lower average quarterly earnings compared to whites. The differences, however, in the probability of obtaining a job and the proportion of follow-up quarters that they were employed were not statistically significant. The number of arrests and conviction rates were significantly higher for African-American participants than they were for white participants. Although the probability of ever being arrested during the follow-up period was also higher for African-American participants on average, the difference was only marginally statistically significant.

Consistent with previous literature, self-reported ex-offender status was associated with worse labor market and CJS outcomes. Although offenders were not significantly less likely to find employment, average earnings of offenders were nearly 28 percent less than they were for nonoffenders even after controlling for variables such as education, race, and community- and project-specific conditions. Since the average earnings per quarter among nonoffenders were \$853, this translates to a gap of approximately \$239 per quarter.⁴¹ However, this difference was only partially statistically significant. Previous offender status also served as a strong predictor for both being arrested and being convicted after enrollment.

Consistent with human capital theory, participants who had completed high school or had a GED at the time of enrollment were more likely to be employed at follow-up (not statistically significant), were employed for a larger proportion of their follow-up period, and had higher average earnings.⁴² However, clients who had not completed high school could still be attending school. If they were working, it might be only part-time. The average earnings of participants with this higher level of education attainment were nearly 67 percent higher than those with lower educational attainment, once other factors had been controlled for. However, this gap was reduced to around 45 percent when participant's school status was controlled for in projects that provided information on this variable. (Results not shown.) Despite the better labor market outcomes, surprisingly, higher education attainment was not associated with significantly lower levels of involvement in the CJS.

The local unemployment rate at the time a participant enrolled was found to exert a negative influence on a participant's success in the labor market, and the influence was statistically

⁴⁰ This finding is not simply a consequence of West Palm Beach's disproportionate enrollment of women. Moreover, the statistically significant positive coefficient on females' proportion of quarters employed remained about the same when services variables were added to account for the possibility that some of the "beneficial effects" of being female are because of differences in the types of services that West Palm Beach provided, and which are not absorbed by the project indicator.

⁴¹ The estimate of the differences in average earnings does not take the error term from the regression estimation into consideration when making the re-transformation from the log scale; hence, these should be considered as approximations only.

⁴² An approximation for Pittsburgh and Seattle was made to allow a variable capturing educational attainment to be included in the regression models, since the projects did not provide explicit information on whether or not participants had obtained a high school diploma or a GED.

significant. For instance, a one-percentage point increase in unemployment rates was associated with nearly a 28 percent reduction in average earnings for participants. However, the unemployment rate was not statistically associated with CJS outcomes, on average.

The receipt of assessment services was found to be consistently associated with positive labor outcomes (Table II.17). For instance, participants who received assessment services were six percentage points more likely to obtain a job than those participants who did not, even after accounting for any project-specific characteristics that were unobserved. Receipt of the other services generally was not associated with statistically significant coefficients for labor market and CJS outcomes, after controlling for other characteristics.

Table II.17. Influence of Service and PMM Variables on Post Enrollment Labor Market Outcomes, Marginal Effects (T-Statistics)

	Obtained Job Anytime After Enrollment ^a	Proportion of Quarters Employed ^b	Log of Average Earnings ^b	Arrested ^a	Number of Arrests ^b	Convicted ^a
Service Categories						
Workforce services	0.011 (0.359)	-0.008 (0.410)	0.054 (0.310)	-0.005 (0.110)	-0.103 (1.130)	0.007 (0.180)
Assessment services	0.059* (1.776)	0.023 (0.980)	0.312 (1.560)	0.120 (0.912)	0.030 (0.130)	0.088 (1.004)
Academic education	0.018 (0.560)	0.017 (0.820)	0.248 (1.360)	0.003 (0.060)	0.094 (1.010)	-0.039 (0.910)
Support services	0.005 (0.174)	0.012 (0.600)	-0.016 (0.090)	0.003 (0.060)	-0.070 (0.720)	0.022 (0.540)
Adjusted R²	--	0.160	0.179	--	0.095	--
AIC	1,391.843	--	--	531.073	--	408.415
Number of Participants	1,369	1,368	1,368	526	525	526

SOURCE: Analyses of Youth Offender Demonstration Project management information systems data, wage data, and criminal justice system data by Mathematica Policy Research, Inc.

NOTES: The models examining employment-related outcomes variables were estimated only for Denver, Pittsburgh, Seattle, St. Paul, and West Palm Beach, with West Palm Beach as the omitted category. The models examining criminal justice systems outcomes data were estimated on Pittsburgh, Seattle, and West Palm Beach, with West Palm Beach as the omitted category.

The regressions also included the following binary control variables that indicated whether the participant was younger than 18 years, gender of the participant, racial/ethnic status, offender status, and whether the participant had a high-school diploma or equivalent degree (such as a GED). Additional control variables included the unemployment rate, the violent crime rate, and the property crime rate of the community in which the YODP was located.

^aFor these binary outcomes, the table reports marginal effects, estimated using a logistic regression.

^bFor these continuous outcomes, the table reports coefficients estimated using ordinary least squares.

-- = not applicable.

*Significantly different from zero at the .10 level, two-tailed test.

**Significantly different from zero at the .05 level, two-tailed test.

***Significantly different from zero at the .01 level, two-tailed test.

Table II.18 indicates that controlling for the influence of clients’ characteristics and the communities in which programs operated may affect the relative rankings of projects on client outcomes. The table contains rankings based on two outcomes: the proportion of quarters that participants in the project were employed on average, and the proportion of participants who had been arrested at any time after enrollment. One set of results indicates results before regression adjustment (the “unadjusted” results), while the other indicates results after controls were made for individual and community characteristics (the “regression-adjusted” results). The rankings on these outcomes are generally representative of other labor market and CJS outcomes.

Table II.18. Unadjusted and Adjusted Relative Rankings of Projects

Characteristics	Cincinnati		Colorado		Denver		Des Moines		Erie		Pittsburgh		Seattle		St. Paul		West Palm Beach	
	Unadjusted	Regression Adjusted	Unadjusted	Regression Adjusted	Unadjusted	Regression Adjusted	Unadjusted	Regression Adjusted	Unadjusted	Regression Adjusted	Unadjusted	Regression Adjusted	Unadjusted	Regression Adjusted	Unadjusted	Regression Adjusted	Unadjusted	Regression Adjusted
Proportion of Quarters Employed	4	6	8	8	3	5	7	9	6	3	9	2	2	4	5	7	1	1
Arrested Anytime After Enrollment	--	--	5	5	--	--	2	3	--	--	3	2	2	2	--	--	1	1

SOURCE: Analyses of Youth Offender Demonstration Project management information systems data, wage data and criminal justice system data by MPR.

NOTES: The table assigns ‘unadjusted’ rankings to projects based on mean values of the outcomes and ‘adjusted’ rankings from regression coefficients on the project specific indicators. A rank of one indicates that the proportion of quarters that participants in the project were employed for, on average, was the highest among Outcomes Study projects. A rank of one also indicates that the proportion of participants who had been arrested at any time after enrollment was the lowest among all projects. Larger rankings indicate worse outcomes (lower proportions of quarters employed and higher proportions of clients who were arrested) compared with other Outcomes Study projects. The rankings for other labor market and CJS outcomes were similar to the rankings shown above. A further discussion of the descriptive and regression results is found in Volume Two, Chapter III, pages 89-110 and 117-129.

-- = not applicable.

The table suggests that, with some exceptions, the rankings of projects do not change much before and after controlling for individual and community characteristics; this is especially true for CJS outcomes. This finding suggests that differences in participant characteristics or the community characteristics do not explain much of the variation in labor market and CJS outcomes for most projects. However, notable exceptions with the labor market outcomes are Pittsburgh and, to a limited extent, Erie. Although Pittsburgh participants had the lowest rates of employment and also low average wages, regression results suggest that their low success rate in the labor market was explained largely by the participant and community characteristics of the project. For instance, Pittsburgh enrolled a high proportion of African Americans and offenders, groups whose regression results suggest a negative association with labor market outcomes. Similarly, Erie enrolled a very high proportion of young participants and also operated in a community with very high unemployment.

The regression analysis with education as the outcome variable showed, unsurprisingly, that participants younger than 18 years old were less likely to complete high school (partially statistically significant), but were more likely to remain in or return to school (Table II.19). Interestingly, although offenders were neither more nor less likely to complete high school than nonoffenders, they were significantly less likely to return to or remain in school.⁴³

**Table II.19. Post Enrollment Participant Educational Outcomes
Regression Coefficients/Marginal Effects (t-statistics)**

Characteristics	Obtained High School/ Equivalent Degree ^a	Remained/Returned to School
Aged 14 to 17 Years	-0.049* (1.808)	0.344*** (9.966)
Female	0.024 (0.779)	0.032 (0.805)
Race		
White	0.009 (0.232)	0.006 (0.089)
Other	0.030 (0.849)	0.0003 (0.005)
Offender	-0.040 (1.326)	-0.158*** (3.710)
Unemployment Rate	-0.020 (1.329)	0.013 (0.356)
AIC	1,136.36	1,142.641
Number of Participants	1,364	949

SOURCE: Analyses of Youth Offender Demonstration Project management information systems data.

NOTES: Because Cincinnati did not provide enough information to permit construction of a measure for obtaining a high school degree or GED, it is excluded from the model, which uses West Palm Beach as the omitted category. Information on whether participants remained or returned to school was provided only by Denver, Des Moines, Pittsburgh, and St. Paul. In contrast to all other regressions, models using the remained/returned to school outcome use Denver as the omitted category. The regressions also included control variables for the violent crime rate, the property crime rate, and project-specific indicators. The table reports marginal effects, estimated using a logistic regression.

^aThe estimated model includes only participants that did not have a high-school (or equivalent) degree prior to enrollment.

*Significantly different from zero at the .10 level, two-tailed test.

**Significantly different from zero at the .05 level, two-tailed test.

***Significantly different from zero at the .01 level, two-tailed test.

-- = not applicable.

⁴³ This analysis did not include all nine projects since the high school completion variable was not available for one project and information on continuation or return to school was not available for five projects.

Considering any human capital accumulation, that is considering a variable that includes both labor market and educational outcomes, projects varied significantly. West Palm Beach, Pittsburgh, and Erie had the highest rates of human capital accumulation. These outcomes provided a good sense of the relative success of participants in different projects after accounting for the differences in the composition of participants and in the local characteristics.

Overall, the regression analysis of outcomes was able to examine the influence of different individual, local, and project-specific factors on youth enrolled in demonstration projects. Several insights can be drawn from the Outcomes Study:

- **Youth offenders were at a considerable risk of poor outcomes during the follow-up period.** Although offenders were no less likely than previous nonoffenders to find jobs, they did have lower average earnings and were employed for a smaller proportion of the follow-up time. They also had a higher likelihood of CJS involvement.
- **In comparing outcomes across race and ethnicities, there was no statistically significant difference between the most simplistic measure of “any employment” for African Americans and whites,** but (as is typically the case) whites earned more per quarter.
- **Females and males were about equally likely to have worked at all,** and females and males had about the same average quarterly earnings despite the fact that females worked for a higher proportion of the time.
- **Projects that enrolled clients with extremely disadvantaged backgrounds or characteristics may have been relatively successful in improving the labor market and CJS outcomes of clients,** even if the descriptive measures of outcomes did not indicate high levels of success.
- While limitations in the research design do not allow firm causal conclusions, **the analysis showed a positive association between key human services outcomes and receipt of specific kinds of demonstration services.** In particular, assessment services, which were intended to help route counselors understand the needs of participants better, were found to be positively associated with obtaining a job or completing high school.
- **Among the three projects for which information was available, both workforce and academic education services were significantly and positively associated with the most comprehensive outcome measure examined—**whether a participant worked, earned a high school credential, or remained in or returned to school.

Section D summarizes the youth findings in relation to **Research Question 1.**

D. Summary of Youth Findings

The four aspects of Research Question 1 asked whether youth:

- Achieved educational goals,
- Gained pre-employment skills and attitudes,
- Entered employment at adequate wage levels, and
- Broke out of the cycle of crime.

Did Youth Achieve Educational Goals?

The Outcomes Study and the Extended Project Model study reported similar findings about educational achievement, both based on project MIS data: overall, relatively few youth achieved their educational goals, although there were some instances of greater success.

- Relatively few youth in the Outcomes Study or the Extended Project Model Study, who entered the project without a high school diploma or a GED certificate, completed high school while they were enrolled in the demonstration.
- Youth, who were in school or enrollment, tended to remain in school, but few youth who had dropped out of the school system were re-engaged with it.
- El Centro youth were more likely than youth in other Round Three projects to complete high school.
- Projects that emphasized vocational training in a specific, high-demand industry were likely to have youth complete their training program.

With the Academic Skills supplemental grants, five projects were able to strengthen the academic education components of their projects. Where the funds supported youth in school, principals and project staff reported that strengthening the schools' ability to address youth's needs prevented youth from dropping out. Other projects used the funds to strengthen services to out-of-school youth.

Youth were ambivalent about the projects' emphasis on educational goals. Many, if not most, lacked successful histories with school, as much from transience and truancy as from learning difficulties. What attracted them to the projects was their need for employment.

Examining the youth profiles led one to recognize that many were speaking rationally about their situations: They needed a steady source of income to support themselves, contribute to their families, and/or meet restitution requirements. Some projects tried to meet these needs by offering financial incentives for participation and/or for academic gains. One project alternated a week in high school with a week in subsidized internships. Projects that enrolled school-age youth provided summer employment for work and school year internships.

Did Youth Gain Pre-employment Skills and Attitudes?

Evidence from the youth and the project staffs suggests that many youth did improve their pre-employment skills and attitudes. It also indicates some of the project approaches that contributed to this success.

Route counselors reported that intensive case management was critical to prepare youth for the culture of work: Coming on time, attending work consistently, learning to take direction, dealing with workplace pressures, dressing appropriately, and communicating well.

Learning these attitudes and skills was part of a larger youth development effort. Case managers served as coaches with a goal of fostering a greater maturity and better decision-making. Some youth reported that helping them improve their decisions and make better choices was the most valuable aspect of their participation.

Formal work readiness efforts were a part of every project's service profile. In both the Outcomes Study and the model studies, work readiness and job placement were the most commonly provided workforce development services, and most youth received at least some of them.

Workforce preparation services tended to be self-designed by project staff. These services varied from a few hours to a semester's curriculum. Staff in several projects redesigned the work readiness curriculum based on the experience of the first work placements; yet few incorporated accredited or evidenced-based work readiness curricula.

Staff of most projects reported that youth had to find work before they were truly work ready, raising special job retention challenges. The Employment Bonus supplemental grant provided retention services to youth and employers to help youth retain the positions that they achieved. Youth seemed able to learn job retention skills on the job with the help of retention specialists.

Did the Youth Enter Employment at Adequate Wage Levels?

Both the outcomes and the project model (Extended and Focused) studies showed that youth offenders and youth at risk of court involvement were able to find employment. African American youth were as likely to achieve employment as white youth, and female participants were as likely to achieve employment as males. The studies are consistent, however, in showing that youths' overall wage levels were low as a result of the combination of low hourly wages and few hours worked.

Using the case file summary data from the eight extended studies, evaluators learned that the majority of youth found subsidized or unsubsidized employment. Ninety percent of those youth who were active or had completed their individual service plans achieved a placement in employment. Older youth tended to find unsubsidized employment or both subsidized and unsubsidized employment, while younger youth were more likely to find subsidized employment, consistent with their greater participation in school.

Youth employment outcomes across the longer term were more sobering. The Outcomes Study used UI wage records to report that most youth who found employment held multiple jobs across the eight quarters for which there were available employment and wage data. Between 30 and 40 percent of the youth had not held a job during the eight quarters.

The quarterly earnings were very low – on average, between \$1,000 and \$3,000 per quarter for youth who worked. Offender average wages were lower than nonoffender average wages. These averages include youth who held a fulltime job throughout the entire quarter, but they also included wages of a youth who worked only one or a few days in the quarter.

Youth found a difficult labor market when they were looking for work. Youth and staff reported that fulltime work was difficult to find; youth were working part time or working multiple jobs to earn enough to live on.

Did Youth Break Out of The Cycle of Crime?

While youth were engaged with the demonstration projects, few of them seem to have been arrested for crimes or for parole or probation violations. After they left the project, however, the evidence about breaking the cycle of crime was less positive.

The project model studies showed relatively low levels of youth involvement with the justice system. In the quarterly data that projects reported to DOL, the reported convictions for a crime committed after enrollment ranged from three percent to eleven percent. These data reflect convictions known to the project; projects were not required to track justice system involvement after youth left the project.

The criminal justice system administrative data collected for five projects in the Outcomes Study, however, showed substantial involvement with the law over time. In one project, two-thirds of the youth were arrested for crimes over the two years of the follow-up period, and about one-third were arrested in the first year. For other projects, the number of youth arrested during the follow-up period ranged from 7 percent to 38 percent. Variations in postenrollment CJS involvement mirrored the preenrollment involvement, that is, projects that enrolled more offenders had higher rates of arrests in the follow-up period than those that had fewer offenders.

In general, the demonstration projects were seen as having positive outcomes that went beyond their education and employment goals: project youth seemed less likely to come under court supervision while they were enrolled; youth who received support services in school were less likely to drop out; and youth were more mature and focused and had acquired more positive peer friendships.

Chapter III reviews and discusses the project-level findings that respond to Research Questions 2 and 3.

Chapter III

EVALUATION FINDINGS: PROJECTS

All of the data collection and analysis effort was directed to responding to DOL's fundamental research question:

What has been learned from the Youth Offender Demonstration Project about how to help youth offenders and youth at risk of court involvement prepare for and secure long-term employment at wage levels that will prevent future dependency on public support and break the cycle of crime and juvenile delinquency that contributes to recidivism and diminished public safety?

The overarching research question was divided in to three sub-questions during the investigation. This chapter focuses on **Research Question 2:** To what extent have grantees implemented a comprehensive program that effectively serves the target population, and **Research Question 3:** To what extent has the grantee strengthened relationships with employers and the workforce development system?

Chapter III, Section A reviews the project-level findings from the Outcomes Study and Section B describes the project-level findings from the Extended Project Model Studies. Section C describes the supplemental grant and other special studies. Section D provides a summary of project level findings.

A. Outcomes Study

The design of the demonstration required that awardees provide key workforce and reentry services in order to fully integrate youth offenders, gang members, and youth at-risk of court involvement into their communities and improve their labor market outcomes. The evaluation's findings about project services come from both the Outcomes Study and the extended model studies.

One component of the Outcomes Study was a description of the services youth received and the relationship between services received and the characteristics of projects and participants. Only five of the Outcomes Study projects maintained sufficient data on service delivery to provide meaningful analysis. In the absence of adequate comparison groups, the quantitative Outcomes Study analysis compared the characteristics and experiences of participants from one of these five projects to those of participants at other projects.

In line with the primary goal of the projects to improve labor market outcomes for participants, all projects provided some form of workforce services (Table III.1). At least 70 percent of participants in Denver, St. Paul, and West Palm Beach received some workforce services, while the proportions were 40 and 33 percent in Pittsburgh and Seattle, respectively. Clients that received workforce services were more likely to participate in work readiness and job placement services than they were in job retention services (data not shown); staff emphasized preparing their clients for work more than helping them keep jobs.

Table III.1: Receipt and Completion of Services at Outcomes Study Projects
(Percentages Unless Stated Otherwise)

Service Receipt	Denver	Pittsburgh	Seattle	St. Paul	West Palm Beach
Any Workforce Services					
Received	74.0	40.0	33.3	78.0	100.0
Did Not Receive	26.1	60.0	66.7	22.0	0.0
Any Assessment Services					
Received	42.7	--	93.7	39.9	100.0
Did Not Receive	57.3	--	6.3	60.1	--
Unreported by Project	--	100.0	--	--	--
Any Route Counseling Services					
Received	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0
Any Academic Education Services					
Received	60.9	38.0	72.2	81.8	54.0
Did Not Receive	39.1	62.0	27.8	18.1	46.0
Vocational Education					
Received	2.9	--	--	27.7	99.2
Did Not Receive	97.1	--	--	72.3	0.8
Unreported by Project	--	100.0	100.0	--	--
Any Reentry Services					
Received	--	3.3	--	17.0	100.0
Did Not Receive	--	96.7	--	83.0	--
Unreported by Project	100.0	--	100.0	--	--
Any Support Services					
Received	21.6	42.0	20.8	65.4	100.0
Did Not Receive	78.4	58.0	79.2	34.6	--
Number of Participants	445	150	255	419	124

SOURCE: Tabulations of Youth Offender Demonstration Project management information systems (MIS) data by MPR.

NOTES: Diverse service categories used in projects' MIS were mapped into a standardized set of service categories. Each service listed in a project's MIS was mapped to only one standardized service category. All projects, except St. Paul, either confirmed the mapping or suggested changes to it. Pittsburgh project staff indicated that some of their MIS service categories could not be mapped into only one standardized service category. However, the project's suggested mapping was simplified by mapping the MIS data items into only one standardized category, so that the data on participation across projects could be comparable. In addition, projects were given the opportunity to indicate whether services that they provided were not recorded in their data files. Some projects reported that certain services were provided to all participants, but these services were not recorded in their data files. In these situations, the data were adjusted to reflect the information provided by project staff. Four Outcomes Study projects could not be included in the analysis of services data because of difficulties obtaining and standardizing their data. The categories of services shown in this table are composite categories, constructed from subcategories of related services.

-- = not applicable.

Assessment services were provided to many clients, with 100 percent in West Palm Beach and nearly 94 percent of Seattle participants receiving them. Some projects used extensive informal assessments that guided the route counselors in developing individual service plans. Other projects used standardized tests, which were sometimes administered by other agencies. Although not captured by the MIS data, Pittsburgh offered education, substance abuse, and mental health assessments to its clients (MacGillivray et al. 2004).

Route counseling was thought to be important and was provided to almost every client. The counselors often acted as an advocate for the client. In addition, the counselor understood the broad set of challenges that each client faced, and the client's goals for participating in the project.

All projects, with the exception of Pittsburgh, provided academic education services to at least half their participants; Pittsburgh provided them to nearly two-fifths. In St. Paul and West Palm Beach, a greater proportion of participants received high school or alternative high school services, compared with GED services (data not shown). Denver and Pittsburgh emphasized both types of education (data not shown). It is important to recognize that clients might have often received services that were not under the umbrella of the project. For instance, Seattle does not report any of its participants as having received high school or alternate secondary school services. Many of Seattle's clients were under 18 and participated in the project after attending a school in which they had already been enrolled. Therefore, although clients are likely to have been in school, this activity would not have been reported, since the service was not directly a part of the project.

Vocational services were extensively provided at West Palm Beach, which focused on training its clients for careers in the health care system. While West Palm Beach's focus on specific occupation training is distinctive, vocational education services were also offered by Denver and St. Paul.

Although many projects reported to site visitors that they offered reentry services, most projects did not record this information for each participant, possibly because the services were open to all participants. Projects often stated that they provided reentry services of aftercare services, anti-gang activities, and community service, even though these activities were not part of official CJS sanctions. One reason that reentry services might not have been recorded is that these types of services may have been open to clients regardless of the needs of the specific individuals who would participate. Many anti-gang services were designed to engage the participants in productive activities at the project, thereby keeping them "off the streets." Thus, very few anti-gang activities were targeted to specific individuals.

All five projects saw the need and value of offering some form of support services to help clients achieve stable, long-term employment. These included services to address issues surrounding the physical and mental health of participants, substance abuse, and other needs, like housing and transportation, that might hinder success in the labor market. A substantial percentage of clients in Pittsburgh, St. Paul, and West Palm Beach received support services, and about one-fifth of the Denver and Seattle clients received them. Some support services may have been brief one-time services, such as the provision of bus tokens to help a client to and from a job or job

interview; other services, such as mental health and substance abuse counseling, may have been much more extensive. The MIS data may not fully reflect all the support services that were provided directly or indirectly as a result of clients' involvement in the demonstrations, because in some instances the projects referred clients to other sources of support so that grant funds could be conserved.

Projects were likely to have strategies of service delivery that involved offering certain types of services together or matching the services to each client's unique needs. Correlations of the data and regression analysis were used to indicate these types of patterns in service receipt. Interesting patterns that were observed include:

- Workforce services were offered in packages in some projects. People who received work readiness services also were likely to receive job placement services.
- For most projects, it was unlikely that participants received both workforce services and academic services. One possible explanation, which is consistent with data collected during prior demonstration evaluations, is that projects provided different kind of services to people of different ages (**MacGillivray et al. 2004**). Another is that the intensity of these services is sufficiently great that participation in both types of services is infeasible.
- Support services seem to be provided usually in conjunction with other services.
- Older participants were generally more likely to get workforce services and less likely to get academic services.
- In general, it does not appear that projects targeted services by gender, since there is little difference in the services received by males and females.
- Clients with more years of schooling were generally more likely than those with fewer years of schooling to receive workforce services.
- Projects varied in providing academic education services to participants with different levels of educational attainment at the time of enrollment. More-educated participants in two projects were less likely to receive academic education services, but patterns were less clear at other projects.
- The pattern of service receipt was generally similar for offenders and nonoffenders. However, some projects were more likely to provide offenders with assessment services.

B. Extended Project Model Studies

In this section, we present four components of the Extended Project Model Studies that directly concern the grantees when viewed at the project level, as opposed to the individual youth level. The four components are:

1. Project Descriptions
2. Project Organization
3. Project Services
4. Sustainability Efforts and Status

In presenting our findings for the eight projects in the Extended Project Model Studies in this chapter, evaluators generally have tried to summarize findings rather than offer specific examples. Volume Two, Chapter IV contains numerous examples, typically indicating the specific project(s) represented by the examples.

1. Project Descriptions

Grants were awarded to communities in two categories depending on population size. In Table III.2, the large communities are described along with the total amount of funding each received (including supplemental grants).

Table III.2. Contexts of Extended Project Model Studies in Large Areas

	Context
<p>Baltimore, MD <i>Operation Safe Kids</i> \$1,700,000</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Baltimore is a city of 651,154 residents in 2000. It is ethnically diverse; forty-two per cent of the householders have never married, and in the 52 percent of the households that include a grandmother and grandchildren, the grandmother is responsible for raising the grandchildren. ▪ Despite the education-base of its major employers, 80 percent of adults over 25 have less than a bachelor's degree (Compared to 56 percent for the nation). ▪ Data on juvenile violence, death rates, arrest rates, school police incidents, substance abuse, mental health issues, unemployment, and truancy show numbers significantly higher than in the rest of Maryland. The city defined youth homicides as a public health issue: 400 to 500 youth were seen as most at risk of experiencing violence, either as a perpetrator or as a victim.
<p>Bronx, NY <i>Youth Incentive Program</i> \$1,700,000</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ The Bronx is one of the five boroughs of New York City. Once considered an affluent suburb of the Manhattan, large numbers of economically disadvantaged families came to the Bronx in 1950s and 1960s as public housing was replaced in Manhattan with up-scale construction. With rent control, landlords neglected the extensive apartment sections, leading to widespread urban decay during the 1960s and 1970s. ▪ Since the 1980s, the city reinvested in the area, and apartments were renovated. In 2000, 1,333,000 people lived in the Bronx, largely immigrant groups. Eighty-two per cent of the residents are renters; 40 percent of the households are female-headed.
<p>Houston, TX \$1,337,594</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Houston is located in Harris County, the third largest county in the nation. The city of Houston has a population of approximately 2 million people, 38 percent youth under age 24. Latino/a people of any race account for nearly 40 percent of the population, chiefly of Mexican origin. ▪ Harris County is estimated to have over 600 incarcerated or recently released youth offenders between the ages of 14 and 24 at any one time. The majority of these youth offenders lives or relocates after incarceration within inner city Houston's enhanced enterprise zones, its most impoverished area. ▪ Gangs, estimated with 5,600 members, are prominent in the area due to the lack of supports and economic opportunities in the neighborhoods.

Table III.2. Contexts of Extended Project Model Studies in Large Areas (Continued)

	Context
Nashville, TN <i>Project CRAFT</i> \$1,500,000	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Project CRAFT (Community, Restitution, Apprenticeship-Focused Training) is located in Nashville, TN. Nashville, which includes all of Davidson County, has a population of about 570,000 and covers a 533 square mile area. ▪ Nashville had a high rate of youth confinement in correctional systems—a state custody rate of 8.6 percent, which was more than twice the state rate. ▪ The home building industry in the Nashville area has a high need for skilled workers. Construction-related contractors were listed as one of the top ten industries for projected employment in middle Tennessee. ▪ The intent of the demonstration was to create a sustainable infrastructure of training, support, and supervision services for youth offenders to enter construction work after release from incarceration.
St. Paul, MN <i>Building Lives</i> \$1,912,000	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ramsey County has a population of about 500,000. The project service area was primarily the City of Saint Paul’s Enterprise Community, which extends in an arc around downtown St. Paul and has a population of 54,887. The population is diverse, including Caucasian, Hmong, Black and Hispanic residents. • Economic decline in the area reduced available services for the target population as well as employment opportunities. • The EC’s overall crime rate is 11 percent higher than the city at large, and it has the highest concentrations of crime in Ramsey County. Gang activity is significant with 50 gangs and 1,500 members of many races and cultures.

Table III.3 describes the communities that received grants in the smaller category of awards. The amount of the grant awards also includes awards for supplemental grants.

Whether in large or small communities, the areas served by the Youth Offender Demonstration Project include youth who were disproportionately coming under court supervision and lacked educational achievement or employment opportunities. Because the contexts varied so greatly, evaluators developed a common set of features they used to view and report on the projects’ successes and challenges as they implemented the demonstration.

2. Project Organization

The study of project organization was a particular feature of the project model studies, both the eight extended studies and the focused studies. Evaluators used a common conceptual framework for observing features of project organization: the Public Management Model (PMM), which identified organizational attributes associated with successful project implementation, the need for a comprehensive set of workforce development and reentry services, and the importance of data collection and analysis to be used for continuous improvement.

The seven organizational attributes are relevant to Research Questions 2 and 3. Some of them, however, emphasize one question more than another. Four organizational attributes relate more directly to the project itself (Research Question 2: To what extent has the grantee implemented a comprehensive program that effectively serves the target population?).

Table III.3. Contexts of Extended Model Studies in Small and Mid-size Areas

	Context
Brockton, MA <i>Gateway Alliance</i> \$760,000	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Brockton is an economically depressed, former manufacturing community of about 94,000 in southeastern Massachusetts. It is both a suburb of Boston and the central city within Plymouth County. ▪ Its poverty rate is above the statewide rate, and its unemployment rate has been above the statewide average for nearly 20 years. ▪ The population of Brockton is predominantly White. There is a sizeable community of immigrants from Cape Verde, who speak Portuguese as a first language. ▪ Significant numbers of youth are involved in criminal activity. ▪ Youth released from incarceration face challenges with jobs, housing, and transportation.
EI Centro, CA <i>Project UNIDOS</i> \$800,000	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ UNIDOS served youth who lived in Calexico, a town of about 27,000 in southern Imperial County, California's poorest county. Agriculture is the county's predominant industry. ▪ Calexico, an empowerment zone. There is limited public transportation. The city's population is 95 percent Hispanic. ▪ The city's unemployment rate is the state's highest, at 27 percent; 40 percent of out-of-school youth are unemployed. The high unemployment rate is seen as related to gang membership, involvement with the criminal justice system, and teenage pregnancy. ▪ Calexico blends culturally and economically with its "twin city," Mexicali, Mexico, which has more than 1.2 million residents. Alcohol and drugs are found there more readily than in the U.S. ▪ In spite of the high poverty rates and low English proficiency, the city's one public high school has been an exemplar in reducing the dropout rate and increasing the percentage of students going beyond high school.
Sierra Vista, AZ \$583,000	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ The project served all of Cochise County, situated in the southeast corner of Arizona, at the border with Mexico. It is the state's largest county geographically, more than 6,000 square miles with about 119,000 residents. The two largest ethnic groups are Latino and White. ▪ The county is rural, and its towns are geographically isolated. Towns served by the project were often an hour's drive from the next closest town. ▪ Services available to youth were limited. During the period of the demonstration, schools and service agencies received large budget cuts. The county lacked a coordinated effort to address service issues. ▪ Employment opportunities for youth were extremely limited. Illegal drug and human smuggling trades were active. Gang membership and the use of methamphetamines seemed to be increasing.

Projects that were effectively implemented:

- Ensured grantee involvement,
- Developed a well-conceived plan,
- Leveraged resources through collaboration and partnerships, and
- Shared leadership and information.

Three of the attributes specifically address a project's relationships at the community level (Research Question 3: To what extent has the grantee strengthened relationships with employers and the workforce development system?). Projects that were effectively implemented:

- Established partnerships between the workforce development and justice systems,
- Built a network of community support, and
- Connected community systems that are relevant to the project's success.⁴⁴

Grantee Involvement: For each project, the grantee was the lead agency. Each grantee provided continuous involvement and support, although some were more directly involved than others. For some projects, the grantee involvement developed over time. By the mid-point in the demonstration, the grantee for each of the projects was actively providing direction and coordination for the project.

Develop Plans: In determining whether a grantee had developed a well-conceived plan, the PMM proposes that one look for (1) a clear and focused vision or mission and goals and (2) objectives that are realistic and measurable. All the grantees had generally well-developed plans, according to these criteria. Two projects, however, were implemented more as a strategy than a plan. In designing and implementing similar projects in the future, project managers may find it useful to consider not only the specifics of these individual projects but also the kind of implementation challenges grantees faced. Most commonly, the challenges involved working with partners, which all the grantees agreed was crucial yet difficult at times.

Workforce and Justice Partnerships: Evaluation of Rounds One and Two of the demonstration showed that, where grantees could build on previous experience working with the workforce development and justice systems, effective partnerships could more easily be established. That observation was supported, especially with respect to the justice system, by the experience of the grantees in the Round Three Extended Project Model Studies. All of the projects established and maintained partnerships with the justice system, although some had more challenges in doing so than did others. Typically, the relationship with the justice agency was as a referral source. With respect to workforce development, six of the eight grantees were a part of the workforce development systems.

Connected with Community Systems: Most of the grantees maintained or developed networks of community agencies that supported the projects. Projects were generally able to develop a network of employers who would accept youth for internships or subsidized work experience, but they had more difficulty building a network of support with employers who would hire youth for unsubsidized jobs. Projects were able to identify from their experience several "lessons learned" about developing relationships with employers for unsubsidized work:

- They learned that identifying employers who were willing to hire youth offenders required a concerted effort. In the project areas, competition was generally so fierce even for low-wage jobs that many employers preferred to hire an adult rather than take a chance on an inexperienced youth, especially one with a criminal record.
- Making the connection with employers also had to be an ongoing effort because of turnover in small businesses and in the human resources staff in larger businesses.

⁴⁴ See Volume Two, Chapter IV, pages 137-151, for a more detailed discussion of project organization.

- A personal connection between project or grantee staff and the employer representative seemed to help. The employer needed to have trust in the individual who was referring a youth, trust that the project understood the employer's needs and would send someone appropriate.

Grantees were generally successful in establishing relationships with those community systems that were most relevant to their particular project. While all projects would have some contact with workforce development, justice, education, health care and other systems, the primary focus of each project affected which system(s) got priority attention. For example, projects with primarily younger youth typically placed more emphasis on connecting with the education system, which could include public schools and community colleges. Projects also differed in the strength of the connections made: some projects were able to develop strong connections with all the relevant community systems, while others were less successful in doing so.

Leveraged Resources Through Collaboration and Partnerships: The projects' experiences in connecting to community systems reinforced the importance of developing partnerships and other collaborative initiatives. Partnerships with community agencies made project funds go further by identifying services other agencies could provide or fund. Collaboration with other agencies on grant applications was also a good way to be more successful in getting resources to help project youth. All projects leveraged some resources through collaborations and partnerships. Examples of leveraging were sharing the use of a recreational facility in return for including neighborhood youth in recreational activities or referring youth to city service agencies where youth receive services through the agencies', not the demonstration's, budget. On the other hand, some grantees were more reactive than others and did not seem to have sufficiently anticipated the importance of partnerships, especially in providing a full range of services to youth. Some grantees' approach to the demand for varied services was, "We'll cross that bridge when we come to it." When the time came (a youth was homeless, in a drug, health or mental health crisis), the project was unable to respond to the need in a timely manner if at all. The lack of resourceful partnerships not only affected the youth; evaluators were dismayed by the amount of time route counselors had to invest to get a homeless youth into a stable environment or to place a youth in a job that would match the youth's locational constraints and school hours. Having partners with the expertise and experience to provide these services would have made a significant difference for the youth and the case managers.

Shared Leadership and Information: Projects that shared leadership and information with partner agencies, other stakeholders and the larger community created a sense of ownership and developed better coordination of services. Sharing information about youth needs led projects to identify resources available and improve their efficiency and effectiveness. For example, when agencies shared information about job opportunities, they improved the efficiency of youths' job search and improved relationships with employers because employers were not approached by so many different community agencies trying to get "leads" about jobs. Half of the projects used formal advisory committees as an important mechanism for information sharing with external stakeholders and for gaining their input on project decisions. However, the other projects either had no formal advisory committees or made little use of them. Projects used a variety of mechanisms to share information and obtain input on decisions within the project. Most commonly, they used staff meetings, which sometimes included staff from partner agencies.

Data Collection and Use: Data collection was a challenge for most of the grantees, even though many of them recognized that, especially in a demonstration project, management needed to pay special attention to making sure there was documentation of services delivered and outcomes achieved. Actually using the data, where it existed, for continuous improvement was even more of a challenge. Though data elements required by DOL were designed to limit the burden on the grantees, especially those that lacked electronic data records systems, the projects needed to collect more information if they were to identify problems and continuously improve. For example, few projects kept track of the length of youth employment or of wages. As a result, knowing only how many entered unsubsidized employment gave them no understanding of how many moved in and out of low-paying jobs instead of persisting in jobs at wages adequate for them to be independent.

Case managers did not always put a priority on maintaining files, and staff turnover of case managers or information managers led to files being neglected until new staff was in place. It was a challenge for project managers to establish policies that clearly required adequate documentation, encouraged staff to follow those policies, and monitored and took prompt action if they found adequate documentation was not occurring. Projects needed to establish a balance between helping youth and documenting their services: no matter how effective a staff member was with individual youth, if that staff member left the project with no record of youths' needs, plans, and services, then the project's ability to serve those youth was damaged. Standards of documentation were needed as well.

Continuous Improvement: Project leadership rarely asked for data-driven reports that would have identified the paucity of information on record and would have led eventually to data being applied to a continuous improvement loop. Developing an adequate MIS required resources, and project leadership was reluctant to use scarce grant funds for fundamental infrastructure. Only the leadership, however, was in a position to provide for such infrastructure development, especially if the resources for it needed to be drawn from multiple sources to make it happen.

In summary, all eight of the projects in the extended model studies implemented comprehensive projects to serve youth in their project's target group. Each of the projects had some distinctive features, while they all had some features in common in both their general approach and the specific services and activities they offered. All succeeded in making the arrangements to serve youth, and they all exhibited many features of the PMM. Most projects struggled with developing effective partnerships and with developing and using a MIS effectively.

3. Project Services

This section presents information about the projects' general approach: recruitment and referral, enrollment, assessment, and coordinating mechanisms. It also gives an overview of the specific workforce development, education, reentry, and support services projects provided.⁴⁵

⁴⁵ More detailed information about the individual projects' approach and service and activities is provided in Volume Two, Chapter IV, pages 162-169 and in Appendix I.

To provide a general understanding of the process by which services are made available to youth, Figure III.1 presents a general project-level pathway. Evaluators for each of the eight extended model study projects reviewed the “pathway” through which youth entered the project with the project staff to develop a specific pathway that reflected how that project recruited youth, what assessments were done of the youth and at what point in the process, and the mechanisms used by that project to coordinate the delivery of services to youth. Separately, evaluators confirmed the extent to which specific services were available at that project by means of an instrument on the intensity and duration of services, also indicating whether participation in services was required or optional for youth in the project.



Figure III.1. Project-Level Pathway – A General Perspective

a. Referral, Enrollment and Assessment

For all the projects, the justice system was a primary source of referrals. The school system was also a primary referral source for at least two projects. Another common source of referrals was the grantee’s other programs.

The projects’ enrollment processes differed substantially in complexity, required documentation, and length of time required for a decision to be made. A relatively straightforward process would consist of review of the assessment prepared by the probation officer, then intake consisting of a one-hour interview and an informal assessment, after which the youth was admitted right away, if the case manager decided he/she was appropriate for the project. A more complex enrollment process could have multiple steps after referral from a partner agency in the justice system, and it could be several weeks or longer before a decision was made about whether a youth was accepted into the project.

Projects also differed in the assessments required of all youth, as shown in Table III.4. While two projects had no required assessments, the others all used some form of needs assessment before enrollment or along with intake. These assessments ranged from a 12-page structured interview guide used in Houston to the discussion of needs with the case manager as part of preparing an individual development plan in El Centro. The next most frequently required kind of assessment was educational, for which all the projects used the Test of Adult Basic Education (TABE). Projects provided other assessments as needed. The assessments were done by project or partner staff or through referral to other agencies.

Table III.4. Assessments Required for All Youth

	Baltimore, MD	Brockton, MA	Bronx, NY	El Centro, CA	Houston, TX	Nashville, TN	Sierra Vista, AZ	St. Paul, MN
Needs Assessment (usually project-developed)		X		X	X	X	X	X
Risk						X		
Education (TABE)		X		X		X	X	
Mental Health								
Substance Abuse								
Career/Employment		X				X		X
Other						Drug screen		

With one exception, **all the projects used what they typically described as “intensive” case management/route counseling as the principle mechanism for coordinating youth’s service delivery, though the intensity differed substantially across projects.**

In general, an Individual Service Plan (ISP) was completed as a joint action of a youth and a case manager or route counselor. The ISP typically identified the goals of the youth and the types of

services and activities that would be appropriate for achieving the goals. Across the eight projects, the evaluation teams found that the extent to which ISPs were completed and updated varied considerably, which could be a factor in how staff viewed requirements for documenting services as opposed to time spent in actually working with youth in their caseload.

b. Services and Activities: Workforce Development

Most of the projects offered a similar set of workforce development activities and services to youth, although there were differences in expectations about which youth would participate in the activity or receive the service. Because of the diversity of youths’ individual needs, most projects expected that some but not all youth would participate in each individual activity. As Table III.5 shows, however, some projects required all youth to participate in some activities.

Table III.5. Workforce Development Activities and Services That Projects Offered or Required for Some or All Youth

	Baltimore, MD	Brockton, MA	Bronx, NY	El Centro, CA	Houston, TX	Nashville, TN	Sierra Vista, AZ	St. Paul, MN
Career exploration	(X)	(X)	X	(X)	(X)	X	X	(X)
Internship or subsidized employment	(X)	(X)	(X)	(X)	(X)		(X)	(X)
Job shadowing					(X)		(X)	
Work readiness training	(X)	X	(X)	(X)	(X)	X	X	(X)
Job search and guidance	(X)	(X)	(X)	(X)	(X)	X	X	(X)
Job retention encouragement (e.g., support group, telephone calls) after youth is employed	X	X	X	(X)	X	X	X	X

Note. (X) means service or activity was required for some but not all youth or open to all on an individual basis. X means service or activity was required for all youth.

Workforce development activities varied considerably in intensity and duration. In some projects, work readiness was one-on-one between a counselor and a youth, whereas in most projects there were group sessions that could be one or more hours at a time, lasting for a few weeks or many weeks over an extended period.

Internships or subsidized employment components were similar in length among the projects that offered them. In several projects, the total period of an internship was within the range of six to 12 weeks and 125 to 200 hours.

c. Services and Activities: Education

In terms of education, the services projects offered younger youth were primarily academic enrichment and counseling to help participants stay in school. Projects tried many different

approaches to encourage participation in educational activities. For example, one project required youth to be in school in order to get subsidized jobs, which youth valued for the income the jobs provided. Another project offered incentives for educational accomplishments: \$25.00 Target gift card for honor roll, a \$20 Target gift card for grade improvement or attendance improvement, and \$100 Mall of America gift card for earning a high school diploma or GED.

For older youth, the primary educational need was to obtain a GED. In every project that served a significant number of older youth, the majority of the out-of-school youth lacked a high school diploma or GED. Some youth needed basic educational remediation before they were even ready to work on GED preparation. **Getting older youth to participate in basic skills education or GED preparation activities long enough to get their certificates was a challenge for all the projects.** The competing need to spend their time making enough money to support themselves, and often a family as well, was a major impediment to spending time in GED preparation.

Projects also recognized the importance of occupational or vocational training for older youth, but with the exception of Nashville, projects placed few youth in vocational training. As a construction skills training program, the first eight weeks of the Nashville project's 10-week training session were devoted to vocational and educational skills training. The remaining 2 weeks focused on employability skills and job placement. Other projects had to rely on referring youth to community colleges or other organizations for vocational skills training. Funding for the training was an obstacle as was youths' unwillingness or inability to invest in their educational future instead of seeking full-time employment.

Duration and intensity of educational services varied by type of instruction. Some youth were attending school on a traditional school day and school year calendar. GED classes were usually two to four hours a day, every day of the week until the youth was ready for testing. Tutoring was available at some projects on a regular schedule, but most projects offered tutoring as needed. All the projects also offered basic skills classes; some were on going and others were for a few weeks' span.

d. Services and Activities: Reentry

The term "reentry service" in the context of the demonstration includes some services to youth who have *not* been convicted or adjudicated as well as services to youth returning to the community from detention or incarceration. For the demonstration projects, reentry generally encompassed three types of services or activities: anti-gang, alternative sentencing, and aftercare/compliance.

Anti-gang activity includes both direct efforts to reduce violence in a neighborhood and indirect efforts to provide constructive activities to engage the youth as a substitute for gang activity. Alternative sentencing means community activities and special restrictions assigned to a youth convicted of a crime in lieu of assignment to residential confinement. The evaluation also considered what was called "aftercare/compliance." That term was used to combine the concept of aftercare, meaning activities and services assigned to a youth in an environment of graduated sanctions designed to have the youth accept greater responsibility for his/her behavior, with activities related to monitoring or encouraging a youth's compliance with terms and conditions of probation or parole.

Projects offered few direct reentry services. As staff in several of the projects articulated, **the projects themselves served as anti-gang activities**. Involving youth in educational and workforce development activities at the very least took youth “off the streets” for a while and away from less wholesome activities, as did other cultural and recreational activities of the project. The project also provided alternative models of adult behavior and peers who were similarly engaged in improving their lives. Support services, such as anger management and substance abuse counseling, gave the youth tools to cope with the culture of gangs, substance abuse, and violence in their community.

Participation in project activities was part of an alternative to incarceration for at least some of the youth in each project. In most projects, arrangements were made on a case-by-case basis through project staff’s relationships with the justice system. Yet the youth received the same types of services as the other enrolled youth.

As with anti-gang activities, all of the project activities and youths’ participation in them played a role in aftercare/compliance in the sense of encouraging youths’ development of appropriate behavior and compliance with court-ordered conditions. Staff in each of the projects coordinated with probation and/or parole officers as needed.

Several projects offered support to the youth to meet the requirements of probation. These were on-going activities, so intensity and duration varied.

e. Services and Activities: Support

Projects offered a wide range of support services and activities. These included life skills training, substance abuse services, health care, mental health care, anger management, formal mentoring, housing services/assistance, recreation, multi-cultural awareness, community service, transportation and financial aid. Other support services included miscellaneous but important activities such as helping youth get an identity card, driver’s license, “green” card; work-appropriate clothing from a community thrift shop or Dress for Success group; or emergency supplies, such as disposable diapers or a grocery shopping card.

As Table III.6 shows, projects made support services available through a combination of arrangements: Provision by project staff or vendors, referral to partners or other agencies that provided services at no expense to the project, or both mechanisms. The services most frequently funded directly by projects were transportation assistance (usually through bus tokens or vouchers) and other financial aid (such as books to use in studying for the GED), community service projects, and recreational activities.

Of the services considered in the evaluation, the one least often offered, using any funding mechanism, was a formal mentoring program. Project staff frequently noted that all the adults that youth encountered in the program served as informal mentors to them. Four projects had formal mentoring programs, but the extent to which mentors were actually available for youth varied widely.

Knowing that a project offered particular support services does not mean that all the youth who needed particular services received them. In many instances, the project may not have been

aware that a youth needed a particular service. At other times services, such as substance abuse treatment and mental health counseling, were not readily available because of limited resources in the area. In most projects, finding housing was a problem for youth who were not living with their families.

Table III.6. Support Activities and Services That Projects Offered Directly or Through Referral

	Baltimore, MD	Brockton, MA	Bronx, NY	El Centro, CA	Houston, TX	Nashville, TN	Sierra Vista, AZ	St. Paul, MN
Life skills training		X	X	X/(X)	X/(X)	(X)	X	X
Substance abuse services	(X)	X	(X)	(X)	X/(X)	(X)	(X)	(X)
Health care	(X)	(X)	(X)	(X)	X/(X)	(X)	(X)	(X)
Mental health care	(X)	(X)	(X)	(X)	(X)	(X)	(X)	(X)
Anger management	X/(X)	X	X/(X)	X/(X)	X	(X)	(X)	(X)
Formal mentoring		X	X			X		X
Housing services/assistance	(X)	(X)	(X)	(X)	X	(X)	(X)	X
Recreation	X	X/(X)	X/(X)	X	X	(X)	X	X
Community service	(X)	X	X	X/(X)	X	X	(X)	X
Transportation	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
Financial aid (books, test fees, clothes, etc.)	(X)	X	X	X	X	X	X	X

Note. X means service was provided by project staff or funds, including contract with a vendor. (X) means service was available through referral to partners or other community-based agencies at no cost to project. X/(X) means service was available through both mechanisms.

The range of support services was the most variable of all the project services. They could be episodic, such as one- to three-day field trips, or offered over extended periods of time, which tended to be the case with life skills classes, which most projects offered in some form. Other support services were individualized like transportation and work clothes assistance or individual therapy.

f. Challenges in Delivering Services

In summary, projects and their staff were able to deliver a broad range of services to meet the needs of many of their enrolled youth. However, project staff indicated that they faced challenges from two sources: First, getting some youth to participate in needed services or activities, and second, having access to sufficient resources to meet the many and multiple needs of this population. As reported earlier, youth expressed great appreciation for the lengths staff members went to meet their needs. They were, nevertheless, non-compliant about many issues: Staff struggled with the lack of consistent attendance and the frequent tardiness to assignments. Some staff members were frustrated by the lack of resources they had to meet youths' needs: Mental health and substance abuse services, too few job prospects in economically fragile

communities, and the lack of public transportation that would open job and service opportunities for youth.

Another factor that affected delivery of services was staff turnover, especially among case managers or route counselors. Continuity of staff working with youth was considered crucial to developing trust and then building a relationship where there could be an honest exchange between a youth and his/her case manager. Turnover became a factor in some projects in lessening their effectiveness in ensuring that the needs of their youth were being met on an on-going basis. In other projects, turnover was very low despite concerns as the end of the grant period approached as to whether staff positions could be maintained. Some projects were structured in such a way that youth interacted with several members of the project staff, and different youth bonded with different staff members, thus lessening the effects of turnover.

4. Sustainability Efforts and Status

Even though Round Three grantees were advised as part of the Post-Award Conference in 2002 that planning for sustainability should begin as soon as they began implementing their projects, doing so proved to be a challenge for many of the grantees. In general, projects found it difficult to design and implement a new project while at the same time working on sustainability issues.

Neither El Centro nor Sierra Vista found funds to continue project services because of the challenges of being in small towns and/or rural communities. These projects had few resources. Matching funds were limited, and they found it hard to compete for funds with larger, urban centers that were better able to document the need for services.

Some features that enhanced prospects for sustainability were community support and program structure. Strong community support helped make additional funding available in Baltimore. It had funding to continue as a project similar to what it had been operating. The city had committed funds to support the project for at least two additional years and the project also had some foundation support.

Other projects planned for sustainability of services to youth by emphasizing co-enrollment in other funding streams. Houston and St. Paul anticipated continuing to serve youth who were eligible for services through WIA funding or, in the case of St. Paul, the Minnesota Youth Program funds. As a result, most of the youth who were enrolled when the demonstration funds ended would continue to be eligible for similar services. No funding was expected to be available, however, for youth who could not document that they met WIA, Minnesota Youth or, while funds lasted, YO, eligibility criteria.

Three projects (Brockton, Bronx, and Nashville) received DOL funding to continue their demonstrations as part of an impact evaluation of an extended youth offender demonstration project. That funding, however, was limited to use with younger youth who were youth offenders. As a result, the Bronx and Nashville projects were facing significant redesign issues, and all three projects were searching for funds to serve older youth or younger nonoffender youth.

The ability of projects to sustain their program activities can have serious implications for the youth being served. While the case file summary data indicated that many youth had largely completed their participation during the grant period, many more youth either had needs that were still being met or the youth enrolled later in the grant period and thus may have just started receiving services. Evaluators found that sustained involvement of staff with youth over an extended period was often needed before youth could achieve substantial changes in their lives. An inability to serve all youth who were actively participating in projects at the end of the grant period would adversely affect those youth and the overall accomplishments of the projects.

Section C describes and discusses the findings from the Focused Project Model Studies.

C. Focused Project Model Studies

The third major component of the Phase Three evaluation – in addition to the Outcomes Study and the Extended Project Model Studies – consisted of a series of specific issues that were of special interest to DOL, which were termed “focused studies.” There were basically two types of focused project studies: Evaluations of the supplemental grants awarded only to selected projects, and evaluations of projects in Round Three featuring differences in service delivery in specific settings.

In Chapter I, we discussed the methods used in conducting the focused studies, including selection of project sites and the data needed for the evaluation. In this chapter, we present findings from the data collection and analysis performed across the focus areas in the following sections:

Supplemental Grants

1. Academic Skills
2. Employment Bonus
3. Partnerships with AmeriCorps and Job Corps

Special Focus

4. Projects in Rural Settings
5. Los Angeles Project Approach to Substance Abuse Treatment

Since the supplemental grants were each funded separately from the main demonstration, the evaluation team prepared Final Reports on the three supplemental grants that are essentially comprehensive “stand-alone” reports for use by DOL. Copies of the Final Reports are contained in Volume Four. In this section, we present a summary of the findings for each supplemental grant.

For the special rural focus studies, two of the three projects were already among the Extended Project Model Studies, and thus only the Willmar project had a separate final report. The full report on projects in rural settings appears in Volume Four. The other special focus study concerns a single project – the Asian American Drug Abuse Program (AADAP) in Los Angeles.

In this chapter we present a summary of the findings of the evaluation team regarding this unique program; the full report on the project can be found in Volume Four.

1. Academic Skills

In June 2003, the U.S. Department of Labor (DOL) awarded nine Academic Skills and Workforce Preparation supplemental grants of \$200,000 in a limited competition for existing Youth Offender Demonstration Project (demonstration) grantees. Four went to Round Two projects in Colorado, Erie, Hartford, and New York City, and five went to Round Three projects in Baltimore, Brockton, Bronx, El Centro, and St. Paul. The grants were awarded effective July 1, 2003 for 12 months through June 30, 2004. The Solicitation for Grant Applications (SGA) indicated that a second year of funding might be possible pending availability of funds and satisfactory progress, but those funds did not become available.

Of the nine projects, six were selected for focused studies in the Phase Three evaluation. Hartford represented the projects in Round Two, and all five projects in Round Three became focused studies as components of the extended site visits.

The SGA stated that the objectives of these supplemental grants were to:

Increase the long-term labor market success of court-involved youth by improving their literacy, numeracy, and pre-employment skills, their high school graduation rate, and the rate at which they go on to post-secondary education and training.

As stated in the SGA, grantees were given considerable flexibility in the use of grant funds, permitting any combination of the following three approaches: (1) Establishing literacy and “credit retrieval” programs to help youth improve their basic reading and math skills and/or make up credits they need for high school graduation through independent and self-paced instruction; services would emphasize the integration of academic and pre-employment skills; (2) Hiring reading and math teachers to improve the literacy, numeracy, and pre-employment skills of court-involved youth; and/or (3) Strengthening partnerships with local schools to increase high school graduation rates through providing staff on-site at schools to provide mentoring and support to youth and monitor their academic progress and attendance, or by establishing an alternative school to serve youth returning from correctional facilities.

a. Research Question

For the Academic Skills grant, the overarching research question of interest to DOL and evaluators was:

To what extent has the Academic Skills and Workforce Preparation program enhanced the ability of the project to assist youth in achieving project outcomes?

Additional questions sought to explain *how* the program attempted to enhance the ability of the project to assist youth in achieving educational outcomes. The following questions reflect the major components that guided data collection during the two site visits.

- What goals and objectives did the project establish for its Academic Skills grant and what was the general approach developed to achieve those goals?
- What activities and services was the project able to add to its existing programs through the grant?
- In what ways did the project integrate work readiness into academic preparation? How did the program contribute to the application of learning to employment?
- How did the program facilitate youths' academic progress?
- In what ways did the program strengthen partnerships with local schools?
- What challenges did youth and the project face in enhancing academic success? What opportunities were identified?

b. Goals and Approaches

Each of the grantees proposed to use a combination of the approaches allowed under the SGA. All six programs included the use of funds to hire reading and/or math teachers to improve the literacy, numeracy, and/or pre-employment skills of youth. Four of the six programs (all except Brockton and Hartford) proposed to use funds for independent and self-paced instruction, using computer-based educational software, through which youth could improve their basic reading and math skills and/or make up credits they needed for high school graduation. The Hartford program emphasized credit retrieval but proposed to use group rather than independent and self-paced instruction. The St. Paul program emphasized strengthening partnerships with local schools that included use of grant funds for staff on-site in the traditional high schools. All of the programs had some degree of partnerships or linkages with the public schools or community colleges, even if activities occurred largely in non-traditional settings, such as in an alternative school.

c. Findings

Generally, evaluators and project staff identified challenges facing youth that have been well-documented during the three rounds of the demonstration. Within the academic environment, these challenges seemed to manifest themselves as the lack of success in school, compounded by falling behind to such an extent as to be discouraged about ever obtaining a high school education. To counter these challenges, projects seemed to have placed special emphasis on developing ways by which the youth could be successful, under the assumption that some success leads to even more success and persistence.

In general, the evaluation team found evidence that **participation in the Academic Skills programs contributed to youths' retention in school** or other academic programs, and that retention and persistence were likely to result in achievement of academic outcomes (e.g., a GED

or high school diploma) for many youth. However, since many youth were still of school age through the end of the one-year grant period, specific measures on outcomes were limited. For many youth, staying in school was the major outcome.

All projects offered a work readiness component within their Academic Skills program, but the nature of this component varied considerably across the six projects. Some programs essentially had a stand-alone class for work readiness, while others incorporated work readiness into their academic curriculum or offered it as part of the activities available to all youth in the demonstration.

One of the three approaches offered to grantees by DOL for the use of supplemental grant funds was to undertake efforts for “strengthening partnerships with local schools.” Projects differed in the extent to which their program design involved partnerships with public schools. Several already had close working relationships with the schools, and the Academic Skills grant appeared to have enhanced those relationships. In other cases, the Academic Skills programs appeared to provide another option for both school-age youth and the schools – beyond the choices of mainstream and alternative high schools – whereby youth offenders and youth at risk of court involvement could gain more support and attention, than they would otherwise have received, that may enable them to successfully transition back to the schools or obtain a GED.

The programs used a variety of approaches to make clear to youth the link between academics, i.e., “learning”, and employment. At a minimum, since all youth in the Academic Skills programs were also in the main demonstration project, they automatically were able to participate in a range of employment-related activities. These included paid internships, mentoring, job readiness workshops, job search, and job retention. Similarly, project staff attempted to link youth in the Academic Skills programs with employers just as they did other youth in the project.

d. Lessons Learned

Regardless of the specific ways in which grant funds were used, what the programs had in common was a conviction on the part of program staff and community partners that **the additional funds significantly enhanced the ability of the projects to assist youth in achieving project outcomes**. During the first two rounds of the demonstration, initiatives to strengthen educational collaboration and support were often part of grantees’ plans, but the initiatives were not easy to bring to fruition. The Academic Skills grants seemed to provide a mechanism for projects to have more options for carrying out such efforts.

At least three projects significantly strengthened partnerships with the local school system. Evaluators also noted some evidence of leveraging – **schools appreciated even moderate amounts of funds to help schools address issues that they would not have been able to tackle on their own**. It was certainly encouraging that initiatives undertaken with the support of the supplemental grants gained enough support in several of the grantees’ communities that the programs were able to obtain funds to continue in similar or slightly modified fashion and thus build on the successes of the first year.

The flexibility of the supplemental grant allowed each project to design a combination of program components that reflected differences in local contexts and the needs of the youth served by the project. Some projects put emphasis on school partnerships while other projects used the additional funds to provide other options beyond the choices of mainstream and alternative high schools, enabling youth to successfully transition back to the schools or obtain a GED as appropriate for the individual youth.

2. Employment Bonus

In July of 2003, DOL awarded two limited-competition supplemental grants to West Palm Beach from Round Two and St. Paul from Round Three of the Youth Offender Demonstration Project to implement an employment bonus component within their demonstrations. The grants, of approximately \$225,000 each, covered a period of 24 months through June 30, 2005. The SGA stated that:

The goal of this demonstration is to test how monetary employment bonuses, when coupled with a host of tailored reentry, employment retention and advancement services, enhance job retention and advancement outcomes for youth offenders and youth at risk of court or gang involvement, ages 17 to 24.

Since a goal of the supplemental grant was to test how monetary employment bonuses enhance job retention, DOL asked grantees to choose among four “treatment options.” West Palm Beach chose to “award the entire incentive amount after six months of continuous employment,” whereas St. Paul proposed to “deliver a specified percentage at multiple intervals throughout the participant’s employment.”

a. Research Question

For this supplemental grant, the overarching research question was:

To what extent has the Employment Bonus program enhanced the ability of the project to assist youth in achieving and maintaining employment?

The evaluation team developed additional questions to explain how the program attempted to enhance the ability of the project to assist youth in achieving employment outcomes.

b. Goals and Approaches

Though the St. Paul and West Palm Beach projects implemented bonus programs that generally encompassed the main components specified by DOL, the actual program designs were distinctly different.

The grantee in West Palm Beach is a nonprofit educational institute, the Academy for Practical Nursing and Health Occupations (APNHO). The project was well-established before receiving the supplemental grant and had strong connections to employers in the health care industry that pre-dated the Youth Offender Demonstration Project grants. Participants in both the high school

program and the postsecondary vocational training program concentrated on the field of health care, and work readiness components were integrated into the vocational training curriculum.

St. Paul, on the other hand, essentially created a pre-employment training program through the supplemental grant. During the first phase of implementation of the bonus program, project staff found that youth in general were not well-prepared for jobs and would need more work readiness than just the Job Seeking Skills class offered by the demonstration project. For this reason, they established a 30-hour pre-employment training as a requirement for all bonus program candidates. The program also cast a broad net for all types of jobs throughout the project’s service area, essentially performing extensive job development for fulltime positions.

c. Findings

Both programs successfully implemented bonus programs that included major components for work readiness, placement, and retention. **Staff at both programs indicated that participants recruited to the bonus program were generally less “work-ready” than they would have expected**, even taking into account the projects’ knowledge of the educational attainments and limited work experience of the youth.

A high proportion of youth who qualified for the bonus program were placed in employment, and most of these participants were in full-time jobs (considered 30 hours or more per week for purposes of qualifying for the bonus awards). **A very high proportion of those placed in fulltime employment persisted for the six months required for receipt of the full \$1000 bonus payments, resulting in retention rates averaging over 90 percent for the two programs combined**, as shown in Table III.7. (Under West Palm Beach’s bonus program, participants did not receive any bonus payments until the end of the six months.)

Table III.7. Participants Qualifying for Bonuses as of June 30, 2005

	2 weeks	3 months	6 months
St. Paul, MN	66 of 71	41 of 48	29 of 33
West Palm Beach, FL	NA	NA	78 of 78

Participants in both projects gained numerous advancements during the initial six months of employment. The projects tracked eight types of advancements, including: increased earnings, job promotions, more desirable title, more desirable shift/hours, and increased benefits/conditions. Given that participants could achieve more than one type of advancement during their period of employment, the total number of advancements exceeds the number of participants in both programs. St. Paul participants had a cumulative 127 forms of advancement by June 2005, and West Palm Beach reported 80 advancements. Though advancements in the health care industry generally seem to occur most commonly after a year of employment (thus the smaller number of “advancements per participant” in West Palm Beach compared to St. Paul), the number of advancements in both programs was steadily increasing from quarter to quarter as more participants persisted in employment for an extended period of time.

Average hourly wages earned by participants in both projects exceeded the minimum wage by a substantial margin. St. Paul reported that as of June 1, 2005, that for the 56 participants who remained eligible for the bonus based on maintaining 30 hours per week and continuous employment, the average wage for these participants was **\$9.45**. Despite the expectation that wage increases for West Palm Beach participants may not be awarded during the first year of employment, enough participants gained wage increases that the average wages reported by the program steadily increased over the period of the supplemental grant. As of December 2004, the average wage was \$7.00 per hour; by December 2005, the average had risen to \$8.25 and by June 2005, the average was at **\$9.07**.

Managers and staff at St. Paul and West Palm Beach indicated that **the supplemental grant enabled the projects to hire fulltime retention specialists who were able to work much more closely with youth – from an early stage of recruitment to the bonus program through placement and persistence in employment – than would have been possible without the grant.** Probably the most common strategy for fostering retention was the ability of retention specialists to regularly follow-up with both participants and employers after placement to address any problems that the youth may be experiencing at the earliest possible point in their employment.

Finally, with regard to the effect of the bonus itself as a method of increasing retention, evaluators and staff found it difficult to assess the relative importance of the bonus compared to the role of retention support. There are indications that the prospect of a \$1000 bonus got the attention of participants and might have encouraged them to enroll in the bonus program. However, over time the satisfaction of being successful in a job, in conjunction with the continuing support of program staff, might have become relatively more important.

d. Lessons Learned

The West Palm Beach project was able to take advantage of well-established relationships with employers in the health care field who were familiar with the training programs offered by the grantee, enabling the project to place virtually all of the participants who sought fulltime employment.

In contrast, the St. Paul staff spent a considerable amount of time in developing contacts with employers willing to hire this target population. The amount of time spent in job development certainly exceeded their plans and using the career coach for both job development and retention support made it difficult to perform either task to the desired level of effectiveness. The use of a job developer with the appropriate experience, contacts with employers, and expertise seemed to be a promising approach for St. Paul, especially as their agreement called for payment of fees based on actual placements.

Based on staff reports and evaluators' interviews with employers, it appears that **both projects found the screening and retention support provided by retention specialists was a value that employers recognized and appreciated.** Overall, both projects reported a high level of satisfaction by employers in their experience with the Employment Bonus program. Over time,

this component could be effectively marketed as a service that could be stressed during the efforts to recruit employers and for job development.

Different approaches to increasing work readiness can be effective, while recognizing that a considerable investment of staff time would be needed for many youth who lacked necessary experience or workplace skills. St. Paul in particular expended more effort in assisting youth to become well prepared for success in the workplace than anticipated, while West Palm Beach relied on integrating a work readiness component into its vocational training curriculum.

The ability to hire a fulltime retention specialist seemed to have a marked effect on the intensity and duration of retention support that both programs could provide. The retention specialists were able to follow-up with participants after placement on a frequent basis and were able to work closely with supervisors to ensure that youth were performing satisfactorily on the job and provide additional support to the participants as needed (e.g., work clothes, transportation, child care, further guidance on communications with employers, being on time, etc.). The retention specialists at both programs worked with participants for at least six months after placement, and communicated to youth that they would continue to be available beyond that period.

3. Partnerships with AmeriCorps and Job Corps

In April 2003, the Employment and Training Administration solicited applications from Round Two grantees of the Youth Offender Demonstration Project (demonstration) for the Sustainable Partnerships with AmeriCorps and Job Corps grant to develop new knowledge that would also enhance the applicant's demonstration. A single grant was awarded for up to \$200,000 for a period of 18 months, starting July 1, 2003 and ending on December 31, 2004.

The SGA essentially indicated three components for the grant:

1. Develop new partnerships with multiple AmeriCorps programs and Job Corps components.
2. Identify barriers that may exist for the grantee to refer participants to AmeriCorps and Job Corps.
3. Develop long-term organizational partnerships and sustainable relationships with AmeriCorps and Job Corps.

YouthWorks, of Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania, received the single grant for incorporation of the initiative into its existing Blue Print demonstration project.

a. Research Questions

Though the original intent of DOL and McNeil Research was to conduct a tightly focused study of the supplemental grant, DOL asked for the scope to be expanded when the grantee experienced difficulties in making suitable progress in developing working relationships with AmeriCorps and Job Corps during the initial stage of implementation. As a result, three major research questions directed the expanded study:

- **What are the individual, youth-level experiences in preparation for and placement in the two programs?**
- **What have been the interactions between Pittsburgh’s Blue Print project and the local AmeriCorps and Job Corps offices?**
- **What policies and procedures at the regional and national level of AmeriCorps and Job Corps affect the likelihood that Blue Print youth will be eligible for these programs?**

b. Goals and Approach

In its original grant application, YouthWorks proposed to provide “workforce orientation, personal leadership development, and life skills training to youth identified for potential AmeriCorps placement” by means of a partnership with a local AmeriCorps program. Separately, YouthWorks planned to offer information workshops about the wide range of opportunities available at Job Corps, and then “assess youth interests, inform of services, arrange tours, and serve as support systems for youth who want to enroll in Job Corps.” YouthWorks set goals of 40 youth in the training for AmeriCorps, 15 host sites for AmeriCorps participants, and 25 placements in Job Corps.

As might be expected, the actual initiative to develop partnerships with AmeriCorps and Job Corps evolved through the planning and implementation stages in 2003. In fact, substantial changes were made in a number of respects, including partners, training design, and recruitment. By August 2003, Blue Print staff members indicated that they planned to change the pre-AmeriCorps training to be a Pre-Corps training, such that youth completing this training would have the opportunity to go into either an AmeriCorps or Job Corps program, as well as choose other employment or to continue their education if they did not enter one of the programs.

When they applied for the supplemental grant, administrators at YouthWorks had hoped that the local AmeriCorps and Job Corps programs would be willing to enter into agreements to accept Blue Print youth who had completed the Pre-Corps training into their programs. However, the directors of the local AmeriCorps and Job Corps programs indicated that they did not have the authority or discretion to enter into agreements with community-based organizations (CBOs) to accept a certain number of participants – no matter how well qualified or trained or deserving – directly into their program. This misunderstanding of the nature of these programs made it more difficult for Blue Print staff to initially develop local partnerships.

The Pre-Corps training followed a community service project design, whereby an AmeriCorps program provided a number of services to participants, including the development of a community service project, mentoring in basic life skills, arranging for training in specific skills, and hands-on experience in the community service project. Blue Print would continue to provide case management and other support services to the participants.

c. Findings

The first cohort of participants who entered Pre-Corps training consisted of a mix of older and younger youth, and youth offenders and youth at risk of court involvement. Four groups met five days a week for three and one-half hours per day for a period of 17 weeks. Participants received a stipend of \$50 per week and could qualify for up to \$450 in bonuses at the completion of training based on attendance, positive attitude, performance, effort, and completion of a weekly journal. Ten of the 24 youth enrolled in the first cycle completed the training. Based on the evaluation team's interviews with Blue Print staff, group leaders, and participants, it appeared that an extended training program in combination with a modest stipend was of limited appeal to many youth, especially older youth. Though Blue Print made some changes in its recruitment for the second cohort, focusing more on younger youth who had not been involved in the criminal justice system, the results were similar -- overall, 11 of 23 participants completed the second cycle.

As participants approached completion of the Pre-Corps training, participants began to consider their options – whether to apply to AmeriCorps or Job Corps, continue with their education or other training, or enter employment. **While the grantee had expected that many youth would apply for and be accepted in either AmeriCorps or Job Corps, relatively few did so.** Of the 47 youth who participated in the two Pre-Corps cycles, and of the 21 who completed Pre-Corps, only 10 participants applied to AmeriCorps or Job Corps or both. There were nine applications made to AmeriCorps and four were accepted and enrolled. All four youth who applied to Job Corps were accepted and three of the four enrolled. Two of the youth entered the Job Corps Pre-College program in the fall of 2004 and subsequently enrolled in the Community College of Allegheny County through the off-center Job Corps option in the January 2005 semester.

In addition to the goal of assisting youth to enroll in AmeriCorps or Job Corps, Blue Print facilitated placement in employment. Of the 47 participants in Pre-Corps, 27 attained employment during or after their participation in Pre-Corps. In general, **there appeared to be a strong relationship between completing the Pre-Corps training and obtaining employment.** Overall, 15 of 21 completers found employment, including 10 of 11 in Cycle 2. In contrast, only 12 of 26 non-completers found employment, approximately half of the non-completers in each cycle. Of course, participants in Pre-Corps were not all expected to seek employment, so the number attaining employment reflects individual preferences as much as success in gaining employment.

Based on the interviews conducted with Blue Print youth who participated in Pre-Corps, there was considerable evidence that youth found the training to be a valuable experience, both personally and for future opportunities. They cited a number of skills they gained, including: communications, cooperation, building trust, positive workplace attitudes and behaviors, networking, and confidence in preparing for a job. They indicated they had learned to appreciate challenging work and the satisfaction of working together to achieve a goal (e.g., produce a documentary). The youth also felt that participating in Pre-Corps changed them in various ways – they had become more responsible, had more patience with people, grown and matured as individuals, and set higher goals.

d. Lessons Learned

Since there was a single grant, and Blue Print focused on one particular approach for preparing youth for AmeriCorps, Job Corps, staying in school, and employment, we cannot say to what extent different approaches might have produced different outcomes for youth in the Blue Print project. There was evidence that Pre-Corps was a valuable experience for a number of Blue Print youth – not just those who completed the training and went on to placements at AmeriCorps or Job Corps, but for others who stayed and progressed in school or went on to employment.

With regard to CBOs developing partnerships with AmeriCorps and Job Corps, the Blue Print experience seems to indicate that a **substantial investment in time is needed to learn about the policies and procedures of two distinct Federal programs**, especially as these policies affect the eligibility of at-risk youth and youth offenders. In addition, the application process for each program is somewhat more complex than it may appear. For example, the fact that there are two discrete entities that are involved in the application and admissions process for Job Corps was not readily evident to Blue Print staff, resulted in some misunderstanding and slowed the process of developing working relationships.

Similarly, **an investment of staff time is needed to get to know and build relationships with the local entities operating those programs**. CBOs working with this youth population need to be prepared to spend time working with local representatives to describe the mission of their own program and learn about how the local versions of AmeriCorps and Job Corps work to determine how partnerships can be formed to mutual advantage. Local organizations that wish to place these youth in either program need to work closely with each local program to understand what that program is looking for and then try to identify youth who fit their criteria. Blue Print staff had also not been aware that there were a number of different AmeriCorps programs in the Pittsburgh area, and thus had not developed relationships with other programs that might have provided more opportunities for Blue Print youth.

Assuming that the CBO has been able to determine which programs seem to be a good fit for their youth, there needs to be a concerted effort on the part of the CBO's case managers to work with each youth through each step in the process – from application through interviews – to maximize the chances that the youth will meet the expectations of the AmeriCorps or Job Corps staff making the admissions decision. This is especially crucial for youth offenders to help them understand the eligibility criteria that affect them. The process can be rather intimidating, especially for youth who may not have gone through this type of process before, and patience and persistence are certainly needed on the part of both youth and CBO staff. The evaluation team would also recommend that the CBO staff follow-up on the outcome of every application, especially if a youth was not accepted, to determine the reason for the outcome. This helps the CBO staff to confirm that they understand the requirements and expectations of each program, to best match youth to the right programs in the future (and minimize disappointments), and to also reassure themselves that each youth was treated fairly.

The role of a CBO in assisting youth to prepare for programs such as AmeriCorps and Job Corps, and for employment in general, needs careful consideration. The CBO needs to consider such factors as the age of the youth, their prior work experience, and their expectations for income or

stipends when determining the scope, intensity and length of any “readiness” program. While the Pre-Corps program seemed to be of value for a number of participants, there did not seem to be a need for Blue Print youth to participate in Pre-Corps to qualify for Job Corps.

This initiative may provide some lessons for the development of other partnerships beyond AmeriCorps and Job Corps. Certainly an important goal for CBOs like YouthWorks is to take advantage of programs where a number of youth could be placed, given that individual placements are so time-consuming. Thus, CBOs might take a broader perspective and attempt to identify both large programs such as AmeriCorps and Jobs Corps, which have a number of openings every year, and also other entities within a community that may have significant numbers of positions appropriate for youth who have completed a work readiness program with the CBO. One example would be city and county governments, which generally have entry-level jobs across a range of fields come open every year. In effect, a program like Blue Print could provide a regular pool of youth who have been screened and prepared for employment, serving as a form of recruitment service for large-scale employers.

4. Projects in Rural Settings

During the first two rounds of the demonstration, grantees were principally located in urban areas of various population sizes but not in rural areas. In Round Three, several grants were awarded to communities that were much more rural in nature, providing the first opportunity for DOL and evaluators to consider whether a rural environment would affect the implementation of the grant and the delivery of services. For reasons explained in Chapter I, the evaluation team recommended that the projects in El Centro, CA and Sierra Vista, AZ be included in the Extended Project Model Studies, thereby also enabling evaluators to look at rural factors while on the site visits. In addition, since there was already agreement on the selection of the St. Paul project (which also had two supplemental grants) for an extended study, evaluators recommended the addition of Willmar, MN, which could be visited by a member of the St. Paul evaluation team during the same trip.

a. Research Question

For this focused study, the overarching research question is:

To what extent have enrolled youth in rural and widely dispersed service areas achieved educational goals, gained pre-employment skills and attitudes, entered employment at adequate wage levels, and broken out of the cycle of crime?

A series of additional questions expand on this overarching question, focusing on how projects managed to provide youth with an array of services despite the distances among youth and distances from services. The following components of the study guided the development of the field guide used by evaluators:

- To what extent has the project been able to deliver workforce, education, reentry, and support services to target youth in a rural and widely dispersed service area?

- To what extent and how has the project worked with employers in a rural and widely dispersed service area to involve them in the project's workforce development activities?
- What strategies appear to affect persistence and goal attainment of youth in a rural and widely dispersed service area?
- What kinds of obstacles and opportunities do youth in rural and widely dispersed service areas encounter as they try to achieve educational goals, gain pre-employment skills and attitudes, enter employment at adequate wage levels, and break out of the cycle of crime?

b. Findings

Despite the relative geographic isolation of the three projects, all three were able to bring together a core group of key partners that offered services across the areas needed for the youth in the demonstration. The types of partnering organizations were similar to those of projects in larger, more urbanized locations. All three of the projects achieved strong connections with other community agencies. These connections may, in fact, have been facilitated by the rural nature of the projects' settings. For example, in El Centro, the grantee was well known in the community, and the staff, who was native to the area, were well connected personally and committed to the community and the success of the project. In Sierra Vista, the closer connections were in the smaller and more rural communities. Central to the Willmar project was connection with different agencies in each of the communities or counties: it was organized around the idea of youth being served by community agencies where they lived.

All three projects seem to have been able either to develop or to build on relationships with a variety of employers within their service areas. Although the three projects had in common their location in a rural area, they differed in their assessment of the difficulty of linking youth with jobs. In Willmar, it was said that unsubsidized employment was readily available if a youth was willing to be flexible in the job he/she would accept. In El Centro, however, finding employers for unsubsidized jobs was described as quite difficult because of the fierce competition for even low-wage jobs. And in Sierra Vista, staff described difficulty in getting employers to hire youth with the characteristics of those in their project.

Contrary to the "common wisdom" that projects in rural areas would not be able to provide a full range of services, **all three projects were able to offer a full array of services that would be comparable to those available to youth in urban areas.** This might not mean, however, that projects had a range of service providers from which to choose. Rather, all the agencies seemed to appreciate the fact that the choices were indeed limited and that they had to coordinate their activities carefully.

As might be expected, it was the actual delivery of services in rural areas that presented challenges for the coordination of services. The projects in Sierra Vista and Willmar, because their service areas were much larger than that of the El Centro project, developed strategies to bring youth and service providers together. The brunt of the work fell on the route counselors, rather than on the service providers. The projects allocated the areas to be served among their

counselors, and the counselors made frequent trips to reach out to youth within their areas. This resulted in substantial amounts of what the Willmar staff termed “windshield time.”

For the purpose of these focused studies related to the rural nature of the projects, the key question was whether projects developed strategies to foster persistence that specifically addressed the fact that the projects were located in rural and geographically isolated areas within their state. The strategies projects used to foster persistence do *not* seem to be uniquely designed to deal with the challenges of being in a rural area. Rather, the strategies are similar in many ways to those of other projects in urban areas: case management and follow up and some use of incentive payments.

Many of the challenges and opportunities facing youth in these three demonstrations were similar to those facing youth offenders and youth at risk of court involvement in other projects. At the same time, several types of challenges facing this target population may be unique, or more severe, to the rural and/or isolated environment. Transportation was the most obvious such challenge, as public transportation was very limited, thus putting much more stress on route counselors either to provide transportation or to help arrange it. These youth also faced the obstacle, or “stigma” as noted in one report, of being recognizable in smaller communities as an offender. This recognition made it more difficult to find local employment, and given the challenge of transportation, it was difficult for youth simply to apply for jobs in the next neighborhood, which might be an option in a larger city.

To some extent, it appears that the challenges that faced the projects were similar to those of urban areas with weak economies and cuts in state and local government funding. As the larger economic situation improves, then prospects in these rural areas may improve as well. On the other hand, some challenges for the projects were perhaps unique to rural areas: a limited number of *types* of employment, few social and after-school activities, fewer educational options within reasonable travel range, fewer choices among service providers, and the opportunity for staff to move to agencies in urban areas where the salaries, benefits, and other perquisites may seem greater.

Projects in rural communities may also have some unique opportunities or assets. The other side of people knowing everyone else is that there seemed to be more of a shared sense that they were all in this together. Youth, employers, and agency staff all lived in the same communities. Since they knew that, generally, these youth were not going anywhere, it was to everyone’s advantage to try to “help their neighbor.” This attitude was especially evident in comments from service providers who recognized that, since each might be the only agency providing a particular service, each needed help from the others to be able to accomplish its missions.

c. Lessons Learned

In designing and implementing projects in these rural and widely dispersed service areas, grantees faced two fundamental challenges: (1) identifying and developing relationships with service providers – in an environment of scarcity rather than abundance of providers, and (2) getting the youth and providers together – in areas where the geographical distances were great and public transportation was limited or nonexistent. Using different approaches, all three of

these projects were successful in implementing projects that provided the range of services that youth needed. The diverse approaches projects took in doing so suggest that there is no single strategy that could, or should, be replicated for use by other rural communities attempting to implement a similar initiative.

The demonstration projects, as represented in these three diverse rural settings, indicate that such initiatives can be effective in serving youth offenders and youth at risk of court involvement. **Youths' needs actually seem quite similar to those of youth in urban settings**, including addressing educational deficits and providing mental health and substance abuse treatment services. In contrast to projects in urban settings, such initiatives need to carefully consider the impact of their rural context on the allocation of resources – especially the amount of time spent by case managers in travel and the cost for such travel.

The evaluation team would also pose that **rural initiatives may require a higher order of partnerships than may be the case in urban settings**. Given that the number of community-based organizations tends to be limited, partnerships and collaborations are crucial for sharing costs, leveraging in-kind resources, and building on the strengths that each organization can bring to the table; for example, the personal knowledge, commitment, and connections of local project staff.

5. Los Angeles Project Approach to Substance Abuse Treatment

While interested in all aspects of the Asian American Drug Abuse Program (AADAP) grant activities, the project was selected for a focused study because of its extensive experience in treating youth who had substance abuse problems. Identifying, assessing, and treating chemical dependency issues among youth offenders and youth at risk of court involvement was a struggle for many projects. Evaluators and DOL foresaw a value in closer attention to a project that had experience with these issues.

While the organization originally focused its services on Asian American/Pacific Islander clients, it no longer kept the mission of prioritizing these clients. The background of staff members became more diverse as the organization widened the scope of clients it served.

a. Research Question

For this focused study, the overarching research question was:

To what extent have youth enrolled in a project that specializes in the treatment of youth offenders with substance abuse addictions attained educational goals, gained pre-employment skills and attitudes, entered employment at adequate wage levels, and broken out of the cycle of crime?

A series of additional questions expanded on this overarching question, focusing on how this particular project planned to meet the needs of youth with substance abuse addictions. The following components of the study guided the development of the Field Guide used by the evaluation team:

- From where does the project recruit or have youth referred?
- What strategies does the project use to keep youth engaged with project activities and with the substance abuse intervention?
- What are the educational, work readiness, and job placement activities of the project and how are they organized around the substance abuse intervention activities?
- What have been the educational and work readiness skills achievements of the youth?
- What special expertise does the staff have to assist youth in overcoming their addictions?
- What strategies could be exported to other communities attempting to support addicted youth offenders to achieve their educational and work readiness goals?

b. Goals and Approach

AADAP planned the demonstration as a comprehensive youth reentry program designed to assist youth offenders in Metro/South Los Angeles obtain and retain long-term employment, maintain stable residence and successfully address the barriers that impeded employment and youth development.

The traditional services offered by AADAP were drug assessments and services. The agency provided residential and outpatient services for both adults and youth. The first step to addressing substance abuse effectively, according to experienced staff members, was to help the client recognize the need for help. The second step was to help the client recognize that substance abuse was a symptom of trouble in other parts of the clients' lives.

The strategy AADAP used to accomplish the first step was close case management. Through frequent contact and interaction, staff members learned about the clients' background, activity patterns and outcomes from those activities. Staff would confront a client who, for example, was in trouble for being late by asking where he/she had been the night before and what had he/she been doing. When the youth would admit staying out late and using drugs, the staff member would ask if this behavior was causing a problem in the client's life. Typically, the youth would deny that the late nights and/or the drug use was a problem, but staff's experience was that at some point—after being arrested, not passing a grade, getting fired or put on suspension—the youth would admit that some patterns in his/her life had to change. Staff consistently reported that, until the client reached this point, it was not useful to insist on drug assessment or treatment.

The strategy for approaching the second step was group and one-on-one interaction, helping the client to understand the stresses, frustration, or deprivation that led to the behavior that was interfering with a wholesome pattern of life. Staff at the Olympic Academy, AADAP's residential facility for teens, reported how much more effective this strategy was when the youth were in a residential setting. Having worked with youth in both outpatient and in residential settings, staff believed that youth could be "detoxified from their environment" faster and more completely away from home.

c. Findings

Learning from the AADAP experience, the evaluation team found that the work is extremely hard even for highly trained and experienced drug counselors. The key steps to recovery remained with the youth, and **the best staff effort was to be bonded sufficiently with the youth that staff could credibly confront the youth as often as needed to encourage the fundamental self-awareness that life did not need to be as difficult as the youth was experiencing it.**

Multiple strategies were needed to achieve changes in youths' views and behaviors over time. From the point of self-awareness, the staff effort created a structured use of time with sanctions for violations of policies or schedule. Youth experienced counseling and group work to identify, confront and resolve the life issues that led to chemical dependency. Family sessions were a crucial element toward the end of the therapeutic period. Despite the careful programming and follow-up, staff expected youth to backslide. Staff's role was supporting youth through such difficult periods until they regained their resolve.

The youth served by AADAP were consistently positive about what its dedicated staff had helped them to do. Assuming that budget reductions at the city, county, and state levels would be restored, AADAP planned to continue the work it started with youth offenders and other vulnerable young people.

d. Lessons Learned

AADAP staff emphasized the importance of bringing chemically-dependent youth to the point of self-understanding about the effects of addiction on their lives before assigning them to treatment. Other projects found that youth assigned by project staff resisted treatment services, and AADAP staff reported that such youth resistance would continue until the youth developed self-understanding.

AADAP used the DOL funds to strengthen the workforce development component of the program of services. The DOL effort convinced the AADAP leadership that every component of the program needed to develop a workforce development module. The experience also convinced the County of Los Angeles Probation Department that an employment-oriented program was beneficial for the reentry youth it served.

D. Summary of Project Findings

1. Research Question 2: Project Model Studies

The study of project organization was a particular feature of the project model studies, both the eight extended studies and the focused studies. Evaluators used a common conceptual framework for observing features of project organization: the Public Management Model, which identified organizational attributes associated with successful project implementation, the need for a

comprehensive set of workforce development and reentry services, and the importance of data collection and analysis to be used for continuous improvement.

Projects generally demonstrated organizational attributes key to successful implementation and provided a comprehensive set of services for the target population. They were less successful in collecting, analyzing and using data to manage and improve their projects and identify lessons learned from the demonstration.

Most projects developed careful implementation plans or overall implementation strategies, and they implemented the main features of the youth offender demonstration project. Some grantees, however, did not conceptualize the demonstration effort as linking youth-serving systems in meeting the needs of targeted youth and attempted to serve the youth directly with a small project-specific staff. These grantees resisted the requirement to provide a broad range of services. When a crisis occurred (a youth was homeless, in a drug, health or mental health crisis), the project was unable to respond to the need in a timely manner if at all.

The lack of resourceful partnerships not only affected the youth; evaluators were dismayed by the amount of time route counselors had to invest to get a homeless youth into a stable environment or to place a youth in a job that would match the youth's locational constraints and school hours. Having partners with the expertise and experience to provide these services would have made a significant difference for the youth and the case managers.

Building a network of community support led to a broader base of services for the youth and to a greater likelihood of sustaining the coordinated services to youth. A major factor in marshaling the appropriate levels of resources was the involvement of the senior staff of the grantee or the community, the person who could invite, negotiate, and implement agreements.

Related to the outreach activity needed to develop a network of community support was the value of connecting community systems that were relevant to the project's success. The partnership between workforce development and justice was at the heart of the demonstration. Typically, the relationship with the justice agency was as a referral source. Where the two systems were able to coordinate their services as well, they reinforced each other's expectations with the youth.

The Academic Skills supplemental grants were used in several instances to establish partnerships with the local school system. Partnering with the schools had been typically difficult to manage in earlier rounds of the demonstration. With modest investments of funds, the Academic Skills grantees were able to support youth while they remained in school, and school officials reported that the project youth were more likely to persist in school with the extra attention they were receiving.

Where partnerships were developed, the effort to share leadership and information among partnering agencies developed ownership by these agencies for the demonstration project and the youth. Based on the analysis of the project organization in rural areas, partnerships appeared to be especially crucial to providing the needed range of services to rural youth offenders.

Virtually all youth received route counseling or case management. If the youth persisted long enough after enrollment to meet a route counselor, that person became the most important link to services for the youth. The role that the case managers played was crucial to the accomplishment of the youth's individual service plan. The bond that case managers developed with the youth became the basis of trust that allowed them to coach the youth to learn constructive personal habits and social interactions. Youth were uniformly appreciative of the help they were receiving from their route counselors.

Often the youth had multiple route counselors during the demonstration. Most typically, they had a probation officer and the demonstration case manager. The case manager, often working with the youth, prepared an individual service plan that allowed the youth and the case manager to track progress and be accountable for plans. In some cases, these plans were shared with or became part of the probation officers' plan as well. Turnover among case managers affected youth persistence. Projects struggled to reconnect youth after a popular case manager left for other employment.

Some projects used one or more assessments to design the individual service plan. Other projects deliberately avoided batteries of assessments because the youth thought they were always being tested, and the tests usually identified them as problems. Since the Outcomes Study found assessments to be positively related to labor market and CJS outcomes, project staffs may need to rethink the value of assessment-driven youth plans.

Typically the reentry services were offered through the justice system, and the route counselors supported the efforts of the probation officers and the court. Most project staffs saw their efforts as anti-gang measures since they were trying to provide an alternative to gangs through their relationships and activities. Almost all the projects were alternative sentencing venues for some youth offenders, and these youth received the same services through the project as the nonoffenders.

The main education effort by projects was facilitating youth to complete their high school education. As alluded to earlier, projects supported youth to remain in school if they could. Projects offered GED or pre-GED classes, basic skills classes, ESL, and other educational activities, such as driver education. The majority of the youth in the sample drawn at the eight extended studies projects obtained at least some of the educational services planned for them. Several projects that enrolled older youth engaged them in vocational certification training without requiring them to complete high school. The tension youth expressed repeatedly between education and finding work was negotiated by some youth by achieving needed workplace skills and making the effort to continue with the education after securing employment. In other words, it did not have to be an either-or situation.

The main workforce services projects offered were work readiness and job placement services. Knowing that many youth were not work ready after completing work readiness training, several projects looked for "bridge" programs that demonstration youth could join to buy more time before they needed to enter unsubsidized employment. Some youth were co-enrolled in WIA or Youth Opportunity Grant (YO) programs, and one project received funds to explore connections with Job Corps and AmeriCorps.

The Pittsburgh supplemental grant explored what it would take for its clients to participate in Job Corps or AmeriCorps as a middle phase between the demonstration and unsubsidized work. While the project did assist some youth to enter these programs, it learned that project staff needs to be knowledgeable about and in communication with local Job Corps or AmeriCorps program offices to achieve good enrollment results.

Projects expended their resources on work readiness and rarely budgeted sufficient resources to assist with job placement and work retention. The lack of a thoughtful program of job placement and retention services seemed to defeat the efforts to help youth be work ready.

St. Paul, West Palm Beach and Nashville all used additional grant funds to establish a job retention program, and the projects found that most youth receiving these services met the projects' job retention goals. Over 90 percent of the youth who entered the Employment Bonus program persisted in employment for the six months required to earn their \$1,000 bonus.

Using experienced job developers and job retention specialists assisted youth to find better jobs—fulltime and at better wages. Employers were also served by retention efforts. They expressed to evaluators that they were pleased that someone was matching youth skills to job requirements and helping youth to persist.

Projects anticipated that youth would need transportation help and that community service and recreation would provide constructive camaraderie to offset the influence of negative peers and gangs. Projects that had not been providing services to the youth offender population before the demonstration were unprepared for the extent of the housing, anger management, mental health and substance abuse issues youth brought to the project.

Some projects sought new partnerships; others found additional resources to meet these additional needs. The special study of the Asian American Drug Abuse Program emphasized the importance of assisting youth to recognize the effect addictive behavior was having in their lives before assigning youth to assessment and treatment.

Every project struggled to collect and use information to improve operations. Knowing that a demonstration project was required to report on the outcomes of the effort, grantees needed to make a special effort to collect the information required in a consistent and timely fashion; yet data collection and record keeping were often sporadic. Few projects used the data they collected for purposes other than accountability, that is, using data for project improvement and for making a case for sustaining the activities.

2. Research Question 3: Project Model Studies

There are two parts to Research Question 3: strengthened employer relationships and strengthened relationships with the workforce development system. The difficulty projects had in accomplishing both of these tasks provides insights that may be useful to future efforts in working with this population.

Projects differed in the extent to which they attempted to establish relationships with employers who would hire project youth and in their success at doing so. Some maintained on-going

relationships with potential employers while others used personal networks to find open positions. A few of the projects screened the youth for an appropriate skill match for position openings, and employers appreciated the effort to do so.

Employers also appreciated the retention effort that meant that youth had help adjusting to work, and they had someone to help them resolve problems the youth posed in the workplace. Projects that employed staff dedicated specifically to job development and job retention found those resources helped youth find and keep better paying jobs.

Grantees for six of the eight projects were a part of the workforce development systems, and one of the other two projects developed a strong partnership with the One-Stop Center operator. Nevertheless, the projects often had limited connections with local One-Stop Centers and other workforce development agencies. The majority of demonstration youth were too young for One-Stop Center services, and several projects developed their own job search and placement services. The performance measures that One-Stop Centers were trying to achieve made them reluctant to work with youth who were not work ready.

Chapter IV reviews and discusses the findings with recommendations for future youth and youth offender employment programs

Chapter IV

SUMMARY AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The goals of the Youth Offender Demonstration were to assist youth at-risk of court or gang involvement, youth offenders, and gang members between the ages of 14 and 24 to find long-term employment at wage levels that would prevent future dependency and break the cycle of crime and juvenile delinquency. The demonstration's objectives were to identify effective community strategies that supported youth in becoming work ready and capable of attaining and keeping employment that would provide a future of economic stability and support civic engagement. Grantees were encouraged to build upon the services and partnerships already supporting target youth and fill in the gaps in service delivery and coordination.

The goal of the evaluation was to “develop cross-site analyses to assess the demonstration's success in effectively providing core reentry services and employability skills and employment for youth offenders, gang members, and youth at risk of gang or court involvement” (RFP-DCS-03-09, January 16, 2003). The over-arching research question posed by DOL was:

What has been learned from the Youth Offender Demonstration Project about how to help youth offenders and youth at risk of court involvement prepare for and secure long-term employment at wage levels that will prevent future dependency on public support and break the cycle of crime and juvenile delinquency that contributes to recidivism and diminished public safety?

Evaluators approached this question by separating the investigation of the youth participation and outcomes from the project organization in providing services. Since the SGA preferred that grantees build on services and partnerships already in place, evaluators addressed the project, not only from its internal organization, but also from its relationships to employers, the workforce development system and the wider community. These three levels of investigation were stated as three sub-questions to the overarching evaluation question:

Question 1. To what extent are youth achieving educational goals, gaining pre-employment skills and attitudes, entering employment at adequate wage levels, and breaking out of the cycle of crime?

Question 2. To what extent have grantees implemented a comprehensive program that effectively serves the target population?

Question 3. To what extent has the grantee strengthened relationships with employers and the workforce development system?

Evaluators addressed these questions with both quantitative and qualitative data analyses, remaining aware that both the Outcomes Study and the project model studies included diverse projects that made cross-site comparisons tentative. The diversity involved the age and offender status of the target population, the variation in planned services and in the ability of grantees to

supply the services that would benefit the youth. The contexts in which the projects operated varied in economic conditions, geographic spread, public agency funding levels, and in the range of community-based and faith-based organizations that could partner with grantees to leverage funding. While there were families in every community that lacked the ability to support youth, some contexts were particularly lacking in the protective factors that would buffer youth from community or neighborhood risk factors. The wide range of variation led researchers to comment frequently throughout the report that the averages were reflecting wide variations in project structure, environmental context and target group features.

Researchers approached the research questions in several ways:

- Studying workforce, criminal justice, and education outcomes for youth in a sample of projects from Rounds One, Two, and Three of the Youth Offender Demonstration, using projects' MIS data, data from UI wage records and CJS administrative data;
- Reviewing data that projects reported quarterly to DOL;
- Analyzing case files for a sample of youth in each of eight Round Three projects selected for intensive study;
- Interviewing grantees, partners and direct service providers;
- Interviewing, holding focus groups and observing youth enrolled in demonstration projects, especially in the eight projects selected for intensive study.

Drawing data from these various sources, evaluators addressed the three research questions in order. Research Question 1 addressed the characteristics and experiences of the youth; Research Question 2 addressed the organizational features of the projects either through multivariate regression analysis or qualitatively using the lens of the PMM that identified aspects of successfully implemented projects; Research Question 3 addressed the relationship of the projects to employers, the workforce system and the larger community. A summary of what we learned follows.

A. SUMMARY

1. What We Learned About Youth

Overall, relatively few youth achieved their educational goals, although there were some instances of greater success.

- Most youth, who had been in school when they enrolled in the demonstration, remained in school; yet few youth who had dropped out of the school system were re-engaged with it.
- Projects that used Academic Skills Grants to support youth to remain in school reported fewer dropouts.

- Relatively few youth in the Outcomes Study or the project model study, who entered the project without a high school diploma or a GED certificate, completed high school while they were enrolled in the demonstration.
- Projects that emphasized vocational training in a specific, high-demand industry were likely to have youth complete their training program.
- Several projects that enrolled older youth engaged them in vocational certification training without requiring them to complete high school first. One of these projects was part of the Outcomes Study, and the findings indicated that a high proportion of the youth eventually completed high school, and they had strong labor market outcomes in the eight follow-up quarters.

Both the outcomes and the project model studies showed that youth offenders and youth at risk of court involvement were able to find employment.

- The majority of youth found subsidized or unsubsidized employment.
- Ninety percent of those youth who were active or had completed their individual service plans achieved a placement in employment.
- Youth offenders were as likely to obtain employment as nonoffenders, but their wages were significantly less.
- African American youth were as likely to achieve employment as white youth, and female participants were as likely to achieve employment as males. Earnings, however, were lower for both female and African American participants.
- Older youth tended to find unsubsidized employment or both subsidized and unsubsidized employment while they were demonstration clients.
- Younger youth were more likely to find subsidized employment while they were enrolled in the demonstration. This was consistent with the finding that younger and nonoffender youth were more likely to remain in school.
- Youth receiving incentives and post-placement support were more likely to persist in employment. Staff reported that some youth became work ready on the job with intensive help from a retention specialist.
- Using Unemployment Insurance (UI) wage records evaluators learned that most youth who found employment held multiple jobs across the period, up to eight quarters, for which there were available employment and wage data. Between 30 and 40 percent of the youth had not held a job during the eight follow-up quarters.
- The quarterly earnings were very low — on average, between \$1,000 and \$3,000 per quarter for youth who worked. These averages include youth who held a fulltime job

throughout the entire quarter, but they also included wages of youth who worked only one or a few days in the quarter.

- Youths' employment opportunities were significantly affected by the labor market conditions of their communities, that is, higher unemployment rates were significantly related to lower earnings.

While youth were engaged with the demonstration projects, few of them seem to have been arrested for crimes or parole or probation violations. After they left the project, however, the evidence about breaking the cycle of crime was less positive.

- In the quarterly data that projects reported to DOL, projects that were evaluated in Phase Three reported that convictions for a crime committed after enrollment ranged from three percent to eleven percent.
- The CJS administrative data collected for five projects in the Outcomes Study, however, showed substantial involvement with the law over time.
- For one project, two-thirds of the youth were arrested for crimes over the two years of the follow-up period, and about one-third were arrested in the first year. For other projects, the number of youth arrested during the follow-up period was much lower, ranging from 7 percent to 38 percent.
- Projects that enrolled more offenders and offenders involved with more serious violations had higher rates of arrests in the follow-up period than those that enrolled fewer offenders.
- Women participants were significantly less likely to be involved with the criminal justice system than men.

2. What We Learned About Projects

Most grantees did not conceptualize the grant effort to provide the full range of services and coordination at the start. Project staffs generally needed coaching to develop the range of services required in the Solicitation for Grants Applications (SGA) and to recognize the system-level coordination that the SGA was inviting. Some projects were still struggling to implement needed services and partnerships at the time of the final evaluation site visit.

- Most projects developed careful implementation plans, and they eventually implemented the main features of the demonstration project.
- They were less successful in collecting, analyzing and using data to manage and improve their projects and to identify lessons learned from the demonstration.

Projects typically provided a comprehensive set of services for the target population over time.

- Some projects used one or more assessments to design the youths' individual service plan. The assessments were generally standardized tools, such as the test of adult

basic education (TABE). The Outcomes Study found that youth who received assessments had better labor market and criminal justice system (CJS) outcomes.

- Virtually all youth received case management (route counseling). The route counselor became the most important link to services for the youth.
- Typically, youth offenders had a probation officer and the demonstration case manager; in some venues, they were able to reinforce each other's goals for the youth.
- The reentry services were almost always offered through the justice system, and the case managers supported the efforts of the probation officers and the court.
- The main education effort by projects was facilitating youth to complete their high school education.
- The main workforce services projects offered were work readiness and job placement services. Fewer resources were devoted to the transition to work and to job retention.
- Work readiness and education interventions were typically self-designed. Few efforts were made to design evidenced-based service delivery modules.
- The lack of a thoughtful program of retention services seemed to defeat the efforts to help youth be work ready. Where projects provided retention efforts, youth were able to retain employment and employers expressed satisfaction that someone was screening youth and helping them persist.
- The delivery of support services was the most difficult component for projects. Projects anticipated the need for some services, such as transportation, but struggled to meet youths' needs for other services, such as housing, anger management, substance abuse and mental health services.

Grantees found it difficult to establish strong partnerships.

- Where partnerships were developed, the effort to share leadership and information among partnering agencies developed ownership by these agencies for the demonstration project and youth clients. Partnerships seemed to be particularly crucial in rural areas.
- Building a network of community support led to a broader base of services for the youth and to a greater likelihood of sustaining the coordinated services to youth.
- More needs to be learned about feasible strategies for providing stable youth and youth offender employment services. Evaluators learned that without high level leadership projects may have provided short-term services to a few more youth than would have been served otherwise but a lasting infrastructure to serve youth and youth offender employment needs was not likely to be in place.

3. What We Learned About Outreach to Employers and One-Stop Career Centers

Projects differed in the extent to which they attempted to establish relationships with employers who would hire project youth and in their success at doing so.

- Some maintained on-going relationships with potential employers while others used personal networks to find open positions.
- Projects that were able to employ trained staff to focus specifically on job development and job retention were able to place youth in better matched and better paying jobs.

Employers appreciated the efforts to screen and support youth referred to them for employment.

- A few of the projects screened the youth for an appropriate skill match for position openings, and employers appreciated the effort to do so.
- Employers also appreciated the retention effort that meant that youth had help adjusting to work.

Grantees for six of the eight projects were a part of the workforce development systems, and one of the other two projects developed a strong partnership with the One-Stop Center operator.

- Projects often had limited connections with local One-Stop Centers and other workforce development agencies, particularly projects that enrolled a majority of youth under the age of 18.
- Projects frequently had the computer-based job listings at the project facility and did not need to visit the One Stop Center.
- Even though youth over age 18 were eligible for services there, the One Stop Centers were often seen as not “youth friendly.” One-Stop Center performance targets made them reluctant to engage with youth who often were not work ready.
- Some project staff had limited experience with One Stop Centers, and did not attempt to build relationships with them.

The analysis and discussion led to the development of recommendations.

B. Recommendations

Evaluators identified recommendations in three areas: project goals, the use of demonstrations as a policy development tool, and remaining gaps in knowledge that need to be closed. In addition, evaluation findings suggest a direction for specific future activities.

1. Project Goals

- Grantees generally did not conceptualize projects to provide the full range of services required in the SGA and to develop the system-level partnerships that would make the project design feasible. Future projects would benefit by planning to address the full range of needs youth offenders and other vulnerable youth are likely to present: housing, mental health, substance abuse, educational preparation, and transition to work support. Partnerships and collaborations would be needed to meet this range of needs in timely and effective ways.
- Persistence in the project activities was associated with high school completion and with finding employment. Projects need to monitor their enrollment and persistence patterns and implement proactive strategies to reconnect absent youth to assure that they are engaged long enough to achieve the outcomes planned for them.
- Grantees frequently relegated the operation of the demonstration to mid-level administrators while high-level leadership involvement is needed to negotiate effectively across services systems and between public and private organizations. Community leadership was a valuable resource that increased the services available to youth and provided some basis for sustainability. More needs to be learned about sustaining youth and youth offender employment programs.
- Projects were designed to emphasize education as part of work readiness; yet the attraction for youth was the chance to find employment. Projects need to be attentive to the youths' priorities as well as the staff's priorities. Most youth were not exaggerating when they said that they needed employment as a first priority. At the same time, the Outcomes Study findings demonstrated that staff is correct about the need for better academic or vocational preparation to get and keep jobs that will pay a good wage. Projects need to be designed to accommodate both concerns.
- Grantees did not always plan for skill matching and retention in their transition to work services. They need to set aside funds for job development and job retention services and/or for engaging partners who have the experience and expertise to facilitate the transition to full time, well-paying employment.
- Employers appreciated efforts to match youth skills to job requirements and to support youth through the transition to work process. Grantees need to develop relationships with employers to learn their skill needs and to work with them in helping youth adjust to work.

2. Use of the Demonstration as a Policy Development Tool

The substantial investment in the youth offender demonstration was intended to provide policy direction about better ways to serve youth offenders and youth at risk of court involvement. The experience of these demonstrations identified issues to consider in planning and funding future such demonstrations. Communities that commit to being partners in developing model programs and public policy need to keep these issues in mind as they implement the demonstrations:

- Demonstrations need a strategy to assure that databases are designed with future research in mind and are maintained adequately. Over three rounds of the demonstration, despite careful and sustained efforts by stakeholders, the lack of usable data to evaluate key aspects of the demonstration thwarted the Outcomes Study. A demonstration project can inform policy decisions only if clear and consistent data are available about the characteristics of participants, services delivered, and outcomes attained.

Although future demonstrations may invite innovations in service delivery and coordination mechanisms, defining a minimum set of services that all projects will provide would make the demonstration as a whole more useful.

- Reviewing the services offered in relation to the services received in this evaluation showed that projects were able to deliver only a certain range of services. It would help to be clear about which are essential, and all projects would be required to provide them from the beginning of grant operations.

Demonstrations might be more useful if they defined a narrower target group than this demonstration did.

- No one would argue that youth who are experiencing a context of risk factors should be receiving special support, but a demonstration that attempts to address the needs of older youth who need unsubsidized employment as well as younger youth whose primary needs are education and subsidized employment is taking on a very broad task. Outcomes for youth offenders and youth at risk of court involvement were sufficiently different to recommend that a demonstration focus on either youth at risk of court involvement or youth offenders rather than both target groups.

3. Gaps in Knowledge

In spite of the useful information obtained in this demonstration, particular gaps remain in the knowledge of how best to assist youth in preparing for and securing long-term employment at wage levels that will prevent future dependency on public support and break the cycle of crime and juvenile delinquency that contributes to recidivism and diminished public safety. Future research and evaluation studies are needed to address the following issues.

- Information is still lacking about the impact of education and workforce preparation on employment and criminal justice outcomes. The design of this demonstration did not allow conclusions about impact to be drawn because no suitable control or comparison groups were available to show the difference in outcomes between those who were in the projects and those who were not.
- Specific workforce development strategies, activities, and curricula that could be replicated and tested in other projects have yet to be developed. In order to develop them, key workforce development components of a demonstration need to be designed in more research- and evidence-based ways.

- Grantees, preoccupied with implementing a complex strategy of cross-system services and cooperating partnerships, rarely planned for sustainability. Projects need to begin designing and piloting sustainability strategies early in the service delivery effort to avoid an interruption of services.
- Alternatives to the Unemployment Insurance wage records need to be identified for use in measuring the effectiveness of the workforce development activities of youth. The UI wage records provided only very coarse information on the patterns of participants' dynamic employment situations.
- More needs to be known about the advantages and limitations of incentives. The \$1,000 Employment Bonus seemed high enough to engage St. Paul and West Palm Beach youth in the effort to persist in employment, and project staff reported that the services the youth received to help them persist was equally or more important than the money incentive. The two pilot projects used different bonus strategies; there could be others. What are the best conditions for awarding incentives effectively, consistently and fairly? Would incentives yield such outcomes consistently without the job placement and job retention support services?

4. Future Directions

The evaluators recommend that a group of communities design and implement over a longer period of time a carefully composed set of service modules that will bring service providers into partnerships for the benefit of the youth clients. A period longer than 24-30 months would allow these communities to assess and improve the modules and track over time the outcomes of the client youth. These communities would commit to participate with researchers in the design of a database that the grantees can manage, that will meet their needs for on-going assessment and improvement and meet the needs of researchers. Communities would also commit to investigating sustainability strategies that would eliminate interruptions in service delivery to the target population. The larger framework of a strong intervention program has been developed over the three rounds of the demonstration; the next generation of activities is needed to refine the major components of the intervention.

Communities should also be encouraged to develop projects to prepare youth offenders and youth at risk of court involvement even without further research. Enough has been learned to give communities a basis for designing local efforts that bring the resources of the justice, workforce, education, and human services systems into collaborating alignment to serve youth, especially youth offenders. The current research supported the findings of previous projects that served youth: Helping them continue their development toward maturity, recognizing their need for a range of services that are easy for youth to access, finding ways for youth to gain needed income and to continue their education, and providing them access to supportive services for their other needs. A community vision would be needed to assure that teens and young adults have a secure living environment as a foundation for all other services. A substantial commitment of community leaders would also be required to negotiate the cooperation among service agencies. As with the demonstration projects' stakeholders, leaders, route counselors, youth, and their families will learn as they gain experience.

While there is more work to do and lessons to be learned about youth and youth offender employment, DOL's demonstration efforts have already borne fruit in the lives of participants. One vantage point for reflecting on the value of the demonstration is learning what these youth thought would be their situation without their participation in the demonstration. The following text box lists some of their responses to, "Where would you be if there had not been this project?"

Where Would You Be Without the Project Services?

If it weren't for the project M would "probably be selling dope, probably doing some conniving to get money."

OO thinks that, without the project, it would have taken him much longer and maybe never to come to the realization that he needed to change.

If it were not for the project, LJ would be a hooker working the corner. "Sometimes I don't have the money to eat."

JW is quick to answer the question where he would be without the project, "Probably involved with drugs and on a path of destruction."

AN reports that without the project, she "may be dead; if not dead, without hope for the future. Knowing that they are in my corner means that I can rely on them to help when I have a problem."

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