

# Improving Training Evaluation Data to Brighten the Future of Black Workers

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## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This report explores the current state of evaluation in workforce development programs with an eye toward improving outcomes for Black training participants. The report is important because increasing the number of Black workers who transition into good jobs depends, in part, on the effectiveness of training programs. Key findings show:

- **Too few training program evaluations report outcomes by race.**

To determine which workforce programs had the best outcomes for Black participants, we reviewed more than 80 program evaluations. Of that group, we selected the 27 evaluations that tracked the race of participants and used the popular “career pathways” approach. Of these 27 evaluations, only six reported outcomes by race.



- **Only four of the training program evaluations reported positive outcomes for Black workers.**

The programmatic practices of these four career pathways programs also differed from one another. Some emphasized strong case management and addressed barriers that might otherwise prevent students from completing training, like child care and transportation. Some provided financial supports, such as weekly stipends or funding for textbooks and other course materials. Another common practice was a strong sectoral connection. Programs used strong ties to employers or unions to better understand the needs of the labor market and place job seekers into internships or permanent employment.

- **To improve performance accountability among programs, federal, state, and local officials should use more robust data analysis to advance racial equity in workforce training.**

To fully maximize outcomes and advance racial equity, program staff and evaluators should take two key steps: regularly disaggregate data by race and use multiple approaches to collect and analyze data by race. Further, we recommend that federal law require reporting and disclosure of program-level workforce performance data by race and allocate resources for this purpose. Also, where Black workers are systematically excluded from jobs that pay livable wages with benefits, we encourage workforce policies and public investments that focus on these occupations to make special efforts to recruit and effectively serve more Black participants.

# INTRODUCTION

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The future of work in Black communities is defined by opportunities to access good jobs, which are identified as jobs that pay livable wages, provide adequate benefits, and promote career advancement.<sup>1</sup> Black workers are overrepresented in jobs that are threatened by automation, such as cashiers, food preparation, stock clerks, and office clerks.<sup>2</sup> Evolving technologies in workplaces have rapidly spread in recent years and have increased during the COVID-19 pandemic. As a result, many jobs were eliminated and others have changed to require new skills.<sup>3</sup> Many other Black employees work in poor-quality jobs that are difficult to automate — such as nursing assistants and personal care aides — and that offer low wages and lack benefits.<sup>4</sup> Additionally, Black workers with only a high school diploma have faced the slowest employment growth throughout the pandemic recovery period.<sup>5</sup>

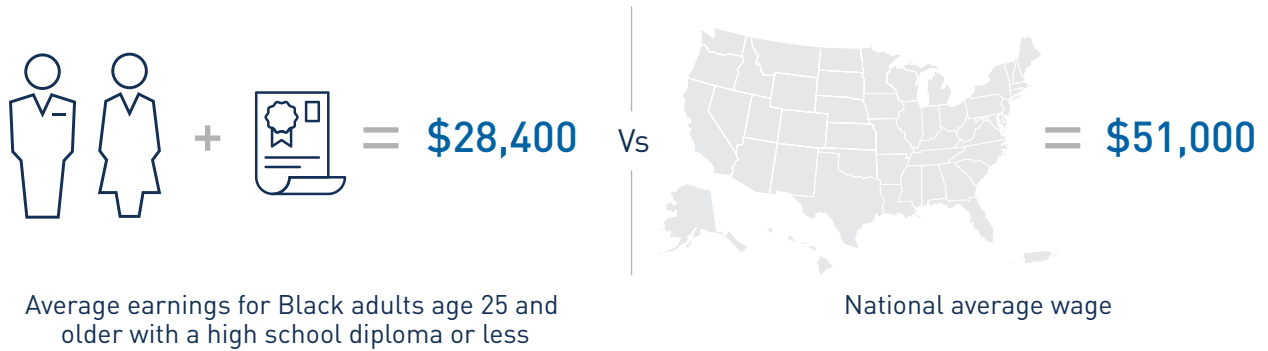
High-quality career pathways can help Black workers in low-wage positions transition into high-demand, higher-wage jobs. Although researchers evaluate data to improve training programs, existing research has not sufficiently studied workforce training evaluations to determine which programs result in the best outcomes for Black workers. It is essential that research on training policies and practices address racial disparities in the labor market and focus on linking job seekers to high-quality employment if we are to ensure Black workers have access to good jobs in the future economy.

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Improving the future of Black workers depends, in part, on the effectiveness and quality of workforce training programs that help them secure meaningful, living wage employment in their communities. While all jobs should be good jobs,

unfortunately that is not the case. Jobs that promote economic mobility increasingly require skills and credentials acquired through effective training or education beyond a high school diploma, such as an industry-recognized certificate or associate's or bachelor's degrees. Currently, 44 percent of Black adults aged 25 and older have a high school diploma or less and on average earn \$28,400 a year (compared to the average national wage of more than \$51,000).<sup>6</sup>

This report reviews evaluations of career pathways training programs, including those offered by community colleges, state and regional workforce agencies, and others. A career pathways approach organizes workforce training into several manageable steps, ideally leading to successively higher credentials, employment opportunities, and earnings.<sup>7</sup> Stackable credentials (e.g., certifications) are designed to prepare workers for the next level of employment or training, and they support advancement in a single career trajectory.<sup>8</sup> For many Black workers paid low wages with limited social networks, the process of selecting the right credentials and skills for a better job can seem opaque and inaccessible.



A career pathways approach coordinated by employers, training programs, and the public workforce system can provide a clearer road map with multiple on-ramps to access a well-paying career.

We find that too few studies report outcomes by race.<sup>9</sup> Of the 27 training program evaluations we reviewed, only six reported outcomes by race, and just four showed positive outcomes for Black participants. Training program evaluations, in theory, should result in best practices that practitioners can adopt to scale the most effective training for Black participants. Acknowledging the role that systemic racism might play in the outcomes of workforce development policy and practice will position decision-makers to bridge the gaps between racial equity, career training access, and job quality for Black workers.

The first section of this report provides a brief overview of economic disparities along racial lines and the emerging use of data to monitor and improve workforce training. The section goes on to explain our methodology in reviewing evaluations of workforce training programs that use the popular career pathways approach. In the second section, we describe our analysis of the limited program evaluations that include Black workers and explain how training program evaluations should disaggregate and analyze data by race and ethnicity to improve workforce programs and advance equity. The third section provides policy recommendations. The appendix lists the training evaluations reviewed and details some of the common traits of the four training programs that reported positive outcomes for Black workers, such as providing supports to ensure trainees were not derailed by life's challenges.

# TRAINING AS A TOOL TO INCREASE ECONOMIC OPPORTUNITY FOR BLACK WORKERS

Long-standing racial disparities exist in earnings and unemployment rates due to the country’s legacy of enslavement, legal school segregation, racial discrimination in hiring, residential redlining, mass incarceration, and many other factors that have reinforced poor labor market outcomes for Black communities.<sup>10</sup> This legacy has contributed to occupational segregation and uneven educational outcomes among Black workers, which was exacerbated by the COVID-19 pandemic.<sup>11</sup>

Long before COVID-19, Black communities had, on average, lower wages, employment rates, educational attainment, and other measures of economic security than other groups, even as the country enjoyed its lowest unemployment rate and longest period of economic expansion in recent history. Black workers continue to be systematically pushed into lower-paying occupations (e.g., personal care aides or cashiers) and thus are excluded from higher-paying, in-demand occupations that typically require postsecondary credentials (e.g., computer science and engineering).<sup>12</sup>

**TABLE 1: EDUCATIONAL AND ECONOMIC INDICATORS BY RACE/ETHNICITY**

MEASURE	BLACK	WHITE	ASIAN	LATINO
Holds associate’s degree, 2020 <sup>13</sup>	10.2%	10.9%	6.4%	8.9%
Holds bachelor’s degree or higher, 2020 <sup>14</sup>	27.8%	37.5%	66.1%	20.8%
Unemployment rate, age 16+, 2021 <sup>15</sup>	6.7%	3.7%	3.8%	5.2%
2020 annual median household income <sup>16</sup>	\$45,870	\$74,912	\$94,903	\$55,321

Eliminating educational attainment disparities would not eliminate these economic disparities.<sup>17</sup> Black male workers, for example, earn less than white male workers with similar credentials.<sup>18</sup> Studies of identical resumés with “Black-sounding” and “white-sounding” names show that the white individuals’ resumés received 50 percent more callbacks for interviews.<sup>19</sup> Although we hope education would be the great equalizer, better training policies can only be improved to reduce but not entirely resolve racial disparities in education and employment.

Acquiring more training, however, can result in better economic outcomes for Black workers. According to the Bureau of Labor Statistics, the annual average unemployment rate for Black high school graduates in 2018 was 6.7 percent while the unemployment rate for Black people with some college or an associate’s degree was 5.2 percent.<sup>20</sup> Completing quality career pathways programs can also ensure that Black workers are qualified for higher-paying jobs. For example, home health aides, positions that

require a high school diploma, typically earn \$24,060 per year. Licensed practical nurses, positions that require a one-year certificate or diploma degree, typically earn nearly twice that, at \$46,240 per year.<sup>21</sup>

To promote economic mobility, the workforce development system should be responsive to the needs of all workers, including Black Americans. Evaluations of workforce training programs can provide guidance on whether these programs adequately serve Black workers and insights on how to improve the programs to serve Black workers most effectively.

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# ANALYSIS OF WORKFORCE PROGRAM EVALUATION PRACTICES

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The federal Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA) requires state workforce agencies to collect and examine performance data on their workforce development activities.<sup>22</sup> Federal grants help states invest in their databases to allow evaluators to measure how participants advance through programs and to understand the connection between training and employment outcomes over time.<sup>23</sup>



Depending on the program, evaluators track various indicators, such as a participant's enrollment in training, the characteristics of the training program (e.g., duration, cost, field, curriculum), the participant's test scores and proficiency obtained through the program, certifications or credentials awarded, completion of training, interviews, success in securing employment, employment status after 12 months, job quality (e.g., earnings, benefits, flexibility, full-time/part-time), the worker's level of satisfaction, the employer's contentment with the worker's skills, the worker's later enrollment in additional education or training, the worker's promotions, the program's costs compared to benefits (return on investment), and more.<sup>24</sup> Training programs also often track demographic, educational, and economic information on each program participant, such as years of education, high school grade point average, prior earnings, financial need, marital status, veteran status, age, gender, disability status, and race.<sup>25</sup>

An evaluation that analyzes the data collected — often conducted by an independent third party and compiled into a report — allows the U.S. Department of Labor and other federal agencies and stakeholders to assess the performance of a federally-funded workforce training program. An evaluation can also help state agencies or officials, local workforce boards, and training program staff improve training strategies and techniques.



For example, an evaluation allows a training program to track its progress toward performance targets and consider variables such as the labor market, the decline of a particular industry, and recent staffing changes.<sup>26</sup> Based on the evaluation, a state, locality, or program can develop corrective strategies tailored to a problem, adjust and improve programming and personnel, and shift curricula toward occupations that appear to be in higher demand. The demographic data on training program participants allow an evaluator to report whether outcomes are different for participants with different characteristics so that practices can be revised to better serve all participants. Additionally, a comparison of evaluations from a multitude of training programs allows policymakers, government administrators, and foundations to allocate resources to the most effective programs and practices.

## METHODOLOGY

To assess which programs and practices produce the best outcomes for Black workers, the Joint Center obtained a list of evaluation reports of training programs from two major research firms that are primary producers of workforce development evaluations for the U.S. Department of Labor — Mathematica Policy Research and Abt Associates.<sup>27</sup> The two firms provided copies of evaluations that met the following criteria:

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- A The training program studied was at least partially federally funded.**
  - B The evaluation included data that identified Black workers as part of the study population.**
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We narrowed these down to focus only on evaluations of career pathways training programs because WIOA repeatedly encourages the career pathways approach, which is designed to support trainees in accessing an initial job on a path to economic mobility through occupational advancement.<sup>28</sup> Other training programs and evaluations may offer other insights that expand on the findings in this paper.

For this research review, Mathematica and Abt provided more than 80 publicly available evaluation reports that met the two criteria above (private/proprietary evaluation reports were excluded). We narrowed them to 27 reports on career pathways training programs. We included six of the 27 evaluation reports that were from ongoing, multi-year studies with rolling reports of preliminary results. Thus, while we believe our research reviews the most relevant publicly available reports, our analysis does not purport to be a comprehensive review of every evaluation.

The evaluation reports examined featured a wide variety of program designs and participant populations. Many of the training programs evaluated focused on multiple sectors and industries. Of training programs focused on a single sector or industry, manufacturing, health care, and information technology were common. The programs targeted parents, youth, low-income people, and a general adult job-seeker population. Program implementers included community colleges, state and regional workforce agencies, and others. The proportion of Black workers in a given program varied widely, and some projects involved multiple sites with different demographic profiles at each site.

Table 2 summarizes key characteristics of the studies reviewed. (See the appendix for a full list of the evaluation reports reviewed and details about each.)

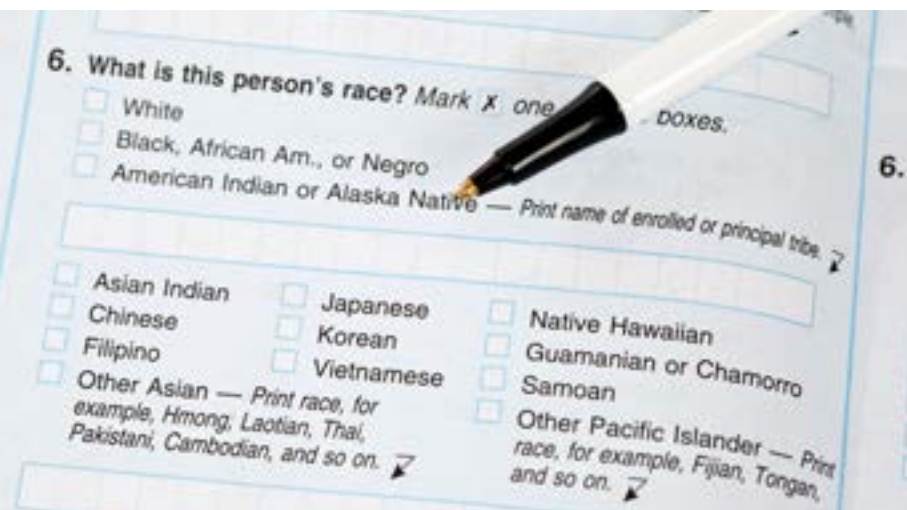
**TABLE 2: CHARACTERISTICS OF THE REVIEWED STUDIES**

STUDY TYPE	NUMBER OF REPORTS
Randomized controlled trial (RCT)*	17
Quasi-experimental design (QED)	4
Other	6
STUDY STATUS	
Complete	21
Ongoing	6
STUDY RESULTS	
Program had positive outcomes overall**	15
Outcomes reported by race/ethnicity	6
Program had significant positive outcomes for Black participants	4

\*Randomized controlled trials compare the results for a treatment group that receives the intervention or program and a control group that does not receive that intervention or program. Quasi-experimental designs match program participants to comparable nonparticipants based on demographics and use other techniques when a control group is not feasible.

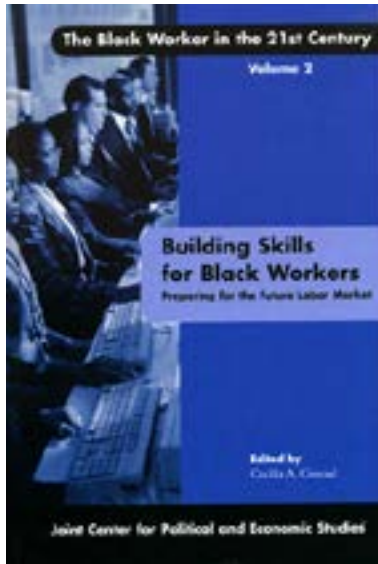
\*\*Positive outcomes show improvement on key indicators list: credentials, earnings, and employment. While some programs attempted are simply not effective, other program efforts do not result in detectible program improvements because of their scale and other factors.

### FINDINGS: TOO FEW EVALUATIONS ANALYZE TRAINING PROGRAM IMPACT BY RACE



Based on our review, we find that too few evaluations report outcomes by race and ethnicity to determine precisely which career pathway training programs and practices work best for Black workers. Just six of the 27 programs reported outcomes by race, and just four reported positive outcomes and contained adequate information to show that those positive outcomes applied to Black participants. See the appendix for a detailed discussion of the four programs with positive outcomes.

Few approaches were common among programs that showed overall success, as shown through increased training retention, credential attainment, and earnings for participants. These practices were helpful to Black participants but also to other participants. The few studies with positive outcomes available also suggest that a coordinated suite of advising/coaching, social and financial supports, and training and employment opportunities informed by employers can improve outcomes for Black participants.<sup>29</sup>



A 1999 conference organized by the Joint Center, “Skills Development for Black Workers in the 21st Century,” led to a W.E. Upjohn Institute report that emphasized counseling and wrap-around services.<sup>30</sup> The Upjohn report recommends that critical elements for Black participants include vocational guidance about training requirements and career payoffs, training targeted to available jobs, a curriculum that is “contextualized to the learners,” career coaching, supplemental supports such as child care and transportation, motivational leaders, diagnostic assessment to ensure program accountability, and adequate funding for the program.

A 2015 report by PolicyLink also emphasized the importance of “human, social, and cultural capital and support” to help Black men transition into the workforce.<sup>31</sup> The report provided case studies of six programs that provide wrap-around services to large Black and Latina/o populations in Baltimore, Chicago, Cleveland, Detroit, New York City, and Philadelphia.<sup>32</sup> The case studies summarize each program’s organizational and management structure, key program components, demographics of the population served, key funders, cost per participant, and outcomes.

The Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act encouraged evaluators to collect data and use evidence to better analyze and understand the labor market and every element of the career pathways process. Unfortunately, program evaluators do not typically conduct a deep analysis of outcomes by race. Evaluators rightly have concerns about drawing conclusions on effectiveness from small sample sizes,

particularly when they must further slice data into even smaller subgroupings. Studies may be limited in size by funding and other factors. However, as we discuss below, this does not negate the responsibility to address race as a factor in training outcomes.

**Not reporting results by race misses a critical opportunity to strengthen workforce development programs and outcomes for Black workers.**

Even if only preliminary insights can be gained, those may still be valuable to process improvements and future program design work. Not reporting results by race misses a critical opportunity to strengthen workforce development programs and outcomes for Black workers.

# RECOMMENDATIONS FOR DISAGGREGATING AND ANALYZING PROGRAM DATA BY RACE

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To fully maximize outcomes and advance racial equity, program staff and evaluators should take two key steps: regularly disaggregate data by race and use multiple approaches to collect and analyze data by race. While our review of training programs focuses on career pathways programs, program staff and evaluators of various types of workforce programs can take these two steps to yield critical insights. Without the evidence to inform program improvements, potential gains for families, businesses, and the nation go untapped.

## DISAGGREGATE DATA BY RACE TO BETTER UNDERSTAND PROGRAM EFFECTIVENESS

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**Without analyzing the similarities and differences in outcomes by race, inequities likely remain hidden, even though they continue to shape participants' lives and the program's overall results.**

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Although workforce programs often collect demographic information on participants, and evaluations sometimes report the demographic breakdown of program participants, career pathways evaluation reports rarely break down and analyze data by demographics when they report outcomes and other findings. Without analyzing the similarities and differences in outcomes by race, inequities likely remain hidden, even though they continue to shape participants' lives and the program's overall results. Understanding what works best for specific populations requires a more nuanced examination of program participation and findings.

To understand those nuances, policymakers, funders, program implementers, and evaluators should ask key questions about a program, such as:

- Do Black jobseekers join the program at a level proportionate to other participants, based on the need, geography, and characteristics targeted by the program?
- What are the characteristics of those who are receiving the program services? Are participants from all backgrounds receiving the same services at the same rate?
- What are the common characteristics of participants who leave the program before completing it?
- Do particular practices work better with some participants than others?
- Are Black workers achieving gains on multiple program indicators (e.g., credential completion, employment, retention)?
- Are there any patterns in the characteristics of participants who are and are not reaching the program's outcome goals? Are there any patterns in differing perceptions of the program by groups of participants identified through interviews, surveys, and focus groups?

To answer these and related questions, program staff and evaluators need quality data. Data collection begins with basic demographics (race, ethnicity, gender, age, etc.). Other characteristics at program entry may also be relevant, such as employment level, use of public benefits, and history of involvement with the criminal justice system. Programs should also document factors such as skill assessment scores, training attendance, dates of service, and outcomes (credentials obtained, employment, earnings, retention rates, etc.), with all data linked at the individual level using a unique identifier. Depending on the program’s goals, the program may need other important data (e.g., sector of employment, source of referral).

Data disaggregation allows the division of general demographic categories into more precise subgroups. For example, participants can be split into racial and ethnic groups (e.g., Black, white, Latina/o, Native American). Racial and ethnic groups can be further categorized to account for within-group differences (e.g., Black men and Black women, or American Indians can be grouped by tribal affiliation).

Most programs collect such data, but maintaining consistent data collection and processing can be challenging, especially when data reside in disparate databases without standardized coding for parameters such as race, location, gender, and income.

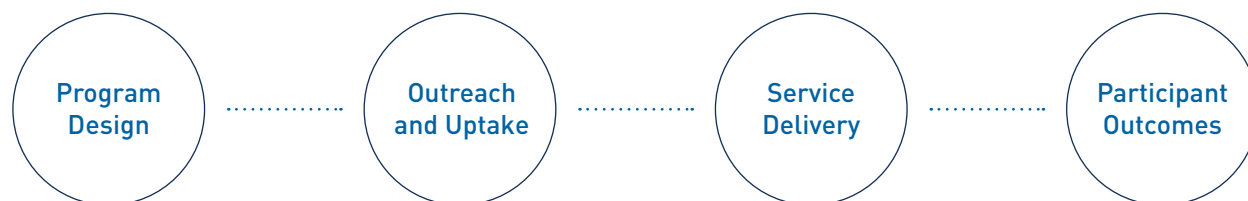
## USE VARIOUS APPROACHES TO ANALYZE DATA BY RACE

In analyzing race and other demographic factors, program evaluators should not limit their analysis to program outcomes. Outcome information alone rarely explains itself; various factors contribute to program results. Looking more broadly at the context of the program and its implementation (e.g., participant experiences in training, policies, funding, and processes) can bring valuable insights.<sup>33</sup> This type of analysis equips program staff to make adjustments using a continuous improvement framework for better results. Program evaluation — and research in general — should add not only to the wider understanding of what works well, but aid in achieving success at a localized level.

The following approaches can be helpful in analyzing data from training programs:

- Analyze all parts of a program, including its design, the outreach to and uptake (enrollment) of potential participants, and the delivery of program services to participants. This is “implementation evaluation.”

— **FIGURE 2:** POINTS OF OPPORTUNITY FOR EXAMINING PROGRAM OUTCOMES BY RACE —



- Compare the demographics of those recruited into a program with the demographics of the community where the program is located. This helps ensure the program reflects the broader population and prompts program staff to develop strategies to improve outreach to under-represented groups.
- Examine the demographics of a program’s participants and attrition rates to identify opportunities to improve engagement and completion. If there are gaps, program leadership and staff can revisit their service strategies.

- Look at results using descriptive statistics, such as cross-tabulations of a demographic characteristic to an outcome measure (e.g., program completion, interviews, employment, employment after a year). Although not indicating causation, this approach identifies disparities (e.g., more Black women completing a program than Black men) and allows program staff to examine their approaches more closely.
- Examine indicators from various perspectives. For example, an evaluation that examines raw placement rates may discover that 75 percent of white participants secure employment compared to only 60 percent of Black participants, but it may miss the fact that gains by Black participants are actually higher (e.g., matched comparison groups show that Black participants are twice as likely as Black nonparticipants to secure employment, whereas white participants are only slightly more likely than white nonparticipants to secure employment).
- Separately analyze data on the outcomes of different groups of people within the community. Black communities are diverse, and people with different characteristics have different experiences. For example, outcomes may vary by gender, age, or education level.
- Adjust a program if it was successful for a fairly homogeneous population but could not draw conclusions about outcomes for a subgroup of participants. For instance, if a program with mostly white participants showed increased employment in a particular sector, then testing the program in an area with equivalent sector needs and a mostly Black population would be appropriate. The results could then be studied together or at least compared.
- Examine the outcomes of a program's Black participants over time to help determine if a program is improving in serving Black participants. Comparing a program's Black participant outcome data to similar data from other programs can also benchmark program results and point to alternative techniques that could produce better results.
- Use qualitative research, such as focus groups with Black participants drawn from a randomized, representative sample of program participants, to illuminate different program experiences. Hearing from the participants themselves is important to understanding how staff interactions, the curriculum, and other program features may affect experiences and outcomes for subgroups of participants.

Programs with carefully-designed and well-executed evaluations are positioned to continuously learn and become more effective over time. A primary goal of workforce training programs and policy should be continuous improvement to reach the best possible outcomes for participants. Using different methods for capturing and analyzing outcomes offers more opportunity to make program improvements and achieve more impact for individuals, with benefit to families, businesses, and the economy overall.

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### BENEFITS OF ANALYZING TRAINING PROGRAM OUTCOMES BY RACE

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#### **Continuous Improvement**

Training programs can continuously track outcomes and modify their curriculum, supports, and other practices to more effectively help Black workers.



#### **Transparency & Accountability**

States, localities, and workforce programs that do not effectively serve Black participants are exposed.



#### **Better Investments**

Governments and philanthropy can fund programs that effectively advance equity.



## USE DATA RESPONSIBLY

Reports that include data on outcomes by race are simply tools. Data can be used for good or bad purposes. Policymakers and philanthropy should use data to identify programs that need more support, develop evidence-based plans for improvement, and provide the resources needed to improve outcomes. Evaluators should disclose data collection and analytical processes and goals and invite discussion, scrutiny, and alternative approaches. Data used in this way can detect systemic bias and inform changes.<sup>34</sup>

Unfortunately, data can also be used punitively in ways that are harmful to job seekers. Workforce programs, workforce boards, and government officials should avoid misuses of data that perpetuate racial inequality. For instance, workforce programs may misuse data to identify disadvantaged participants and

exclude them from training programs under the guise of focusing resources on those who are “most likely to succeed.”<sup>35</sup> Similarly, policymakers can use data to defund programs that serve disadvantaged communities, thereby punishing those they purport to help.<sup>36</sup> Instead

**Workforce training programs should use data to increase program retention and completion by identifying the needs of participants and providing adequate support to maximize the likelihood of success.**

of turning data to this end, workforce training programs should use data to increase program retention and completion by identifying the needs of participants and providing adequate support to maximize the likelihood of success.

Tracking is also a concern. Program staff can misuse data to steer Black workers away from occupations that currently have few Black workers or away from more lucrative fields.<sup>37</sup> Rather than using data in this manner, programs should use data to identify good-paying occupations with few Black workers and develop effective strategies to diversify the occupations. Finally, evaluators should disclose data collection and analytical processes and goals and invite discussion, scrutiny, and alternative approaches. The section that follows offers several recommendations for approaching the analysis of data in training programs to understand outcomes for Black participants.

## POLICY RECOMMENDATIONS

Federal, state, and local officials have a significant role to play in encouraging more robust analysis of and advancing equity in workforce training. We recommend that federal law require reporting and disclosure of state workforce performance data by race and allocate resources for this purpose. Government agencies should coordinate to develop common standards to allow evaluators, researchers, and other

stakeholders to compare similar training efforts over time or between different states. Also, where Black workers are underrepresented in high-paying “good jobs” with benefits, we encourage workforce programs focused on these occupations to use data to make special efforts to recruit and effectively serve more Black participants.

Until federal law is amended to require the disaggregation, analysis, and disclosure of outcomes by race at the program level, legislators can encourage those who administer and receive government workforce funding to produce this information during hearings and in written requests.

Finally, disparities identified in data should be addressed, although we acknowledge that holding states, local boards of workforce development, and individual workforce programs accountable is not without challenges.

### REQUIRE STATES TO REPORT PROGRAM OUTCOMES BY RACE

Federal law should require reporting and disclosure of state workforce performance data by race. Currently, WIOA requires that states report program performance data to the U.S. Department of



Labor.<sup>38</sup> These reports generally include totals of participants served and participants by race-ethnicity, gender, and age. They also include total employment rate, median earnings, credential rate, and skill gains.<sup>39</sup> However, these reports do not generally show the outcomes by race and ethnicity or gender at the program level, masking what could be useful information for federal and state administrators and policymakers.



With WIOA reauthorization on the horizon, Congress should require states to report such data and the Department of Labor should publish this information at least annually. For additional recommendations on improving work opportunity through WIOA specifically, please refer to the Joint Center’s issue brief, “Principles to Support Black Workers in the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act.”

Other federal laws require this type of reporting. The Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention Act (JJJPA), for example, requires the analysis of data on race and ethnicity in the state, local, and tribal juvenile justice systems.<sup>40</sup> This requirement exposes elements of the juvenile justice system that create racial and ethnic disparities as a way to help improve equitable treatment of youth.<sup>41</sup>

Another law — the Every Student Succeeds Act — requires states to set long-term educational goals for students.<sup>42</sup> This law also calls for disaggregating state assessment data by race and ethnicity, as well as for measures of school quality that allow for the detection of racial disparities (e.g., suspensions, expulsions, opportunities for advanced coursework, teacher qualifications). Although critics of the law question whether it effectively holds states accountable for ensuring equity in schools, the requirement allows for transparency and evidence-based decision-making that is currently lacking in the workforce training arena.

Until federal law is amended to require the disaggregation, analysis, and disclosure of outcomes by race at the program level, legislators can encourage those who administer and receive government workforce funding to produce this information during hearings and in written requests.

### **ENACT DATA STANDARDS THAT ALLOW FOR COORDINATION AND COLLABORATION**

Government agencies should coordinate with one another to create data standards that will help to more accurately evaluate training by race. Creating common standards will allow evaluators, researchers,

and other stakeholders to compare similar training efforts over time, across agencies, and between different states. For example, where evaluators must rely on external data sources like state unemployment insurance records, these sources should include the indicators needed to complete an effective

To encourage more learning about training programs supported with federal funds, resources should be allocated specifically for collecting and evaluating data, with a requirement that the data be analyzed by key demographic indicators, including race.

evaluation. Policymakers can strengthen WIOA and other workforce-related legislation to prioritize funding to support data standardization, accurate collection, and dissemination through public use data files.

### **PROVIDE FUNDING TO STUDY TRAINING PROGRAMS AND REQUIRE PUBLIC DISCLOSURE**

States are permitted to conduct studies with WIOA’s Title I-IV funding alone or in combination with other funding sources. Given the demand for limited federal resources, however, states generally do not prioritize evaluations.

To encourage more learning about training programs supported with federal funds, resources should be allocated specifically for collecting and evaluating data, with a requirement that the data be analyzed by key demographic indicators, including race. Federal departments and agencies are developing greater focus on evaluations and evidence-building. The agendas and positions should ensure that racial equity and outcomes are part of new program studies.

As discussed above, multiple methods exist for conducting research on workforce development programs. Only experimental and quasi-experimental evaluations can identify causal links between program services and outcomes. However, other methods can help program staff understand who the program serves and how well they are doing on shorter-term measures of success. All have a place in building evidence about which practices are most successful in helping Black participants in workforce programs. Any such studies should closely analyze the results for Black participants, and states should make findings publicly available through their workforce agency websites in a timely manner.

In addition, states and evaluators should provide public-use datasets online (without compromising individual privacy) to improve transparency about program data and to facilitate cross-study or other additional analyses to build wider knowledge. Grants and other funding streams should provide resources to support this task.

### **WHERE DISPARITIES IN OUTCOMES EXIST, IMPROVE PROGRAMMING**

Identifying racial disparities within training program outcomes is only the first step. The federal government, states, localities, and workforce programs should take concrete steps to address racial disparities. Although voluntary efforts to reduce racial disparities are always preferred, various options exist to help states and localities use data to advance equity.

For example, federal law could require states to disclose workforce program racial data and submit plans to address inequities. Also, federal law could require the creation of state and local coordinating bodies to monitor and reduce racial and ethnic disparities, similar to the Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention Act's requirements. For the workforce system, that body could be the state workforce board.



Such bodies could be required to create and implement a work plan and deploy technical assistance to workforce programs with significant racial disparities or that fail to make progress on outcomes for Black participants or other groups.<sup>43</sup> The federal government should provide federal funding to help states implement the improvements outlined in their plans (e.g., quality data, ongoing monitoring, technical assistance, evaluations, staff training) and also provide monetary bonuses to states that succeed in reducing disparities.

### **HELP WORKERS OF COLOR SUCCEED IN NONDIVERSE FIELDS WITH “GOOD JOBS”**

Black workers are systematically excluded in many higher-paying “good jobs” in growing sectors. At the same time, employers are having a hard time filling many of these positions. Workforce programs focused on these sectors should use data to recruit and successfully serve higher proportions of Black workers. To ensure that Black workers do not remain stuck in entry-level jobs in these career pathways, programs should work to address issues such as pay inequities, on-the-job discrimination, and other structural issues that may hinder advancement. Input from employers and workers can help to inform approaches to these barriers.

State and local workforce development plans should address racial inequities by including strategies around transition points within career pathways. For instance, state and local workforce plans can require training providers and employers to collaboratively work to engage Black workers and others to move from entry-level jobs into more advanced, higher-paying positions.

Attempts to address inequities are already occurring in states. For example, in 2016, despite being the state with the fourth lowest poverty rate, Minnesota realized it had the second highest Black unemployment rate and was ranked the second worst state for racial inequality. In response, the state allocated \$59.3 million in Equity Grants to address disparities through a variety of interventions delivered by 172 grantee organizations.<sup>44</sup> In addition, the U.S. Department of Labor is a key resource in identifying evidence-based approaches for programs through its Clearinghouse for Labor Evaluation and Research (CLEAR) and its Chief Evaluation Office.<sup>45</sup>



# APPENDIX

## DETAILS ON FOUR PROGRAMS WITH POSITIVE OUTCOMES FOR BLACK PARTICIPANTS

Of the 27 evaluation reports on career pathway programs that met our criteria, the four that reported positive outcomes for Black workers are the Arkansas Career Pathways Initiative, the Wisconsin Regional Training Partnership, the WorkAdvance Demonstration, and Year Up.

None of the studies examined which factors may have contributed to the racial disparities, and none analyzed the effects of particular program elements on the outcomes for Black participants or any other groups of color. Thus, while the results from these programs present helpful insights, they also have limitations.

The programmatic practices of these four career pathways programs varied. Some emphasized strong case management and addressed barriers that might otherwise prevent students from completing training, like child care and transportation. Some provided financial supports such as weekly stipends or funding for textbooks and

other course materials. However, we found that all four programs leveraged strong sectoral connections. Programs used strong ties to employers or unions to help understand the needs of the labor market and place job seekers into internships or permanent employment.

While these all showed promising results for Black participants (and other groups), the evaluation reports also revealed disparities in outcomes by race/ethnicity. None of the studies examined which factors may have contributed to the racial disparities, and none analyzed the effects of particular program elements on the outcomes for Black participants or any other groups of color. Thus, while the results from these programs present helpful insights, they also have limitations.

**TABLE 3: CAREER PATHWAYS TRAINING PROGRAMS WITH POSITIVE OUTCOMES FOR BLACK PARTICIPANTS**

PROJECT	PRIMARY FUNDING SOURCE(S)	PROGRAM LOCATION(S)	BLACK SHARE OF PARTICIPANTS IN PROGRAM
Arkansas Career Pathways Initiative	TANF funds	AR	35% (2015/16)
Wisconsin Regional Training Partnership	Philanthropic	Milwaukee, WI	78%
WorkAdvance Demonstration	Social Innovation Fund	Bronx, NY; Brooklyn, NY; Tulsa, OK; Cleveland, OH	51%
Year Up	Philanthropic, employer payments	Atlanta, GA; Bay Area, CA; Boston, MA; Chicago, IL; Washington, DC; New York, NY; Providence, RI; Puget Sound, WA	54%



## Arkansas Career Pathways Initiative

The Arkansas Career Pathways Initiative provided education and training to more than 30,000 low-income residents of the state, with a focus on high-demand, high-wage industries. The initiative offered access to postsecondary training as well as “holistic” case management (funds for transportation, child care, and course supplies; mentoring; and individualized counseling).<sup>46</sup> The initiative also incorporated communities of practice, formed “to share proven strategies for enhancing career preparation and to learn from national thought leaders with a demonstrated track record of success in the college-to-work transition.”

Overall, the Arkansas Initiative’s participants attained more education, earned more, and had higher rates of employment than nonparticipants.<sup>47</sup> Between 2005 and 2013, Black participants earned more degrees or higher education certificates (45.2 percent) than Black students in the control group (16.9 percent). The rate was even higher for Latina/o participants (55.6 percent versus 14.2 percent).<sup>48</sup>



## The Wisconsin Regional Training Partnership

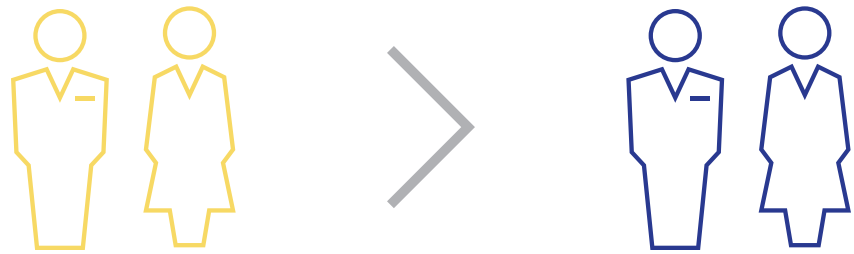
This career pathways program focused on training and placing participants in construction, health care, and manufacturing. The Wisconsin program offered short-term, sector-specific training that was responsive to employer requests and labor market needs. The evaluators emphasized strong links with employers and “new employment networks” for participants as reasons for the program’s success. Black participants, who made up nearly 80 percent of the program’s participants, earned 18 percent more than their peers in the control group, which the evaluation attributed to higher wages rather than working more hours. The program also provided case management, child care, and transportation for those receiving Temporary Assistance for Needy Families, postemployment retention support, job placement services, and “essential skills” training, as well as support to help potential participants qualify for the program, such as developmental education (as needed) and assistance obtaining a driver’s license.<sup>49</sup>



## WorkAdvance

The WorkAdvance model sought to assist both program participants and potential employers with a sector-based approach. In the evaluation that we reviewed, four program providers in three cities focused on five sectors — information technology, environmental remediation, transportation, manufacturing, and health care. The program screened program applicants thoroughly (for skill level), offered pre-employment and career-readiness services, occupational skills training ranging from two to 32 weeks, job development and placement services, and employment retention and advancement services. Most WorkAdvance sites offered training before work placement. Site experience mattered when it came to outcomes, with the most experienced of training providers yielding the best employment outcomes overall.<sup>50</sup>

An evaluation of the WorkAdvance demonstration found that Black (and Latina/o) participants had greater employment and earnings gains than white participants. Black and Latina/o participants saw higher weekly earnings in the first year and higher employment rates in the second year.<sup>51</sup> WorkAdvance was particularly successful in placing participants of color in the information technology field.



WorkAdvance demonstration found that Black (and Latina/o) participants had greater employment and earnings gains than white participants

● Black ● White



## Year Up

This program provided low-income youth (ages 18-24) with six months of full-time, customized training in the information technology and financial sectors, followed by a six-month internship with a large employer. The program emphasized technical and professional skills<sup>52</sup> and used a highly structured approach. Year Up provided important resources, guidance, feedback, and connections through welcome receptions, orientation week, preplanning with social workers to address needed supports, learning communities,<sup>53</sup> and one-on-one mentoring. Employers actively contributed to the program through design, instruction, and hiring, as well as helping to fund internships.<sup>54</sup>

The early results showed that students of all racial and ethnic groups benefited from the program across sites, including higher postsecondary enrollment, higher average quarterly earnings, and greater employment in the targeted fields.<sup>55</sup> Quarterly earnings gains for all racial and ethnic groups participating in the program were at least \$1,000 more than that of the control group. Although the earnings gains of Black students (\$1,577) were smaller than those of Latina/o (\$2,171) and white/other (\$2,374) students, the gains were roughly similar when comparing peers who did not participate in the program (52, 53, and 57 percent gains for Black, Latina/o, and white/other participants, respectively).<sup>56</sup> Black youth made up 54 percent of the Year Up treatment group. Latina/o youth were 32 percent of the participants.

## AN OVERVIEW OF THE 27 CAREER PATHWAY PROGRAM EVALUATIONS ANALYZED

Below we outline the 27 career pathway programs reviewed. Studies without an asterisk are randomized-controlled trials (RCTs), those with one asterisk are quasi-experimental designs (QEDs), and those with two asterisks use another methodology.

**TABLE 4: STUDIES REVIEWED**

EVALUATIONS OF CAREER PATHWAY PROGRAMS	POSITIVE OUTCOMES FOR ALL PARTICIPANTS	POSITIVE OUTCOMES DISAGGREGATED BY RACE	POSITIVE OUTCOMES FOR BLACK PARTICIPANTS
*Sheila Maguire, Joshua Freely, Carol Clymer, Maureen Conway, and Deena Schwartz, "Tuning into Local Labor Markets: Findings from the Sectoral Employment Impact Study" (Philadelphia: Public/Private Ventures, July 2010)	Y	Y	Y
Mary G. Visher and Jedediah Teres, "Breaking New Ground: An Impact Study of Career-Focused Learning Communities at Kingsborough Community College" (New York: National Center for Postsecondary Research, July 2011)	N	N	UNKNOWN
Vanessa Martin and Joseph Broadus, "Enhancing GED Instruction to Prepare Students for College and Careers: Early Success in LaGuardia Community Colleges' Bridge to Health and Business Program" (New York: MDRC, May 2013)	Y	N	UNKNOWN
Anne Roder and Mark Elliott, "Sustained Gains: Year Up's Continued Impact on Young Adults' Earnings" (New York: Economic Mobility Corporation, May 2014)	Y	N	UNKNOWN
**Office of Community College Research and Leadership, "Third Party Evaluation of Implementation of the Health Professions Pathways Consortium: Nine Co-Grantee College Site Reports" (Champaign, IL: University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign, September 2015)	N	N	UNKNOWN
Richard Hendra, David H. Greenberg, Gayle Hamilton, Ari Oppenheim, Alexandra Pennington, Kelsey Schaberg, and Betsy L. Tessler, "Encouraging Evidence on Sector-Focused Advancement Strategy: Two-Year Impacts from the WorkAdvance Demonstration" (New York: MDRC, August 2016)	Y	Y	Y



<p>"Evaluation of SNAP Employment and Training Pilots: Annual Report to Congress, Fiscal Year 2016" (Washington, DC: Mathematica Policy Research and MDRC with Insight Policy Research, Kone Consulting, and Decision Information Resources, November 23, 2016)</p>	N	N	UNKNOWN
<p>Karin Martinson, Julie Williams, Karen Needels, Laura Peck, Shawn Moulton, Nora Paxton, Annalisa Matri, Elizabeth Copson, Hiren Nisar, Alison Comfort, and Melanie Brown-Lyons, "The Green Jobs and Health Care Impact Evaluation: Findings from the Impact Study of Four Training Programs for Unemployed and Disadvantaged Workers" (Bethesda, MD: Abt Associates and Mathematica Policy Research, May 2016)</p>	Y	N	UNKNOWN
<p>**Colleen Graber, Brandon Roberts, Nancy McCrohan, Jasmina Camo-Biogradlija, and Nathalie Winans, "On-Ramps to Career Pathways Evaluation Final Report" (Lansing, MI: Public Policy Associates and Brandon Roberts + Associates, June 2016)</p>	N	N	UNKNOWN
<p>Dominic Modicamore, Yvette Lamb, Jeffrey Taylor, Ama Takyi-Laryea, Kathy Karageorge, and Enzo Ferroggiaro, "Accelerating Connections to Employment, vol. 1" (Fairfax, VA: ICF, May 2017)</p>	Y	N	UNKNOWN
<p>Karin Martinson, Elizabeth Copson, Glen Schneider, Sam Elkin, Bright Sarfo, Tresa Kappill, Claire Ma, Carly Morrison, and Audra Nakas, "Evaluation of the Ready to Work Partnership Grant Program: Findings from the Implementation Study of Four Training Programs for Long-Term Unemployed Workers" (Bethesda, MD: Abt Associates and MEF Associates, August 2017)</p>	N	N	UNKNOWN
<p>Hannah Betesh, Hui Kim, Deborah Kogan, Rachel Lindy, and Anne Paprocki, "Evaluation of Accelerated Training for Illinois Manufacturing: Impact Report (Oakland, CA: Social Policy Research Associates, April 2017)</p>	Y	N	UNKNOWN

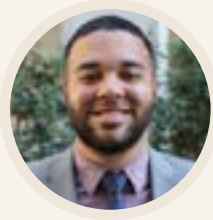
Mark Elliott and Anne Roder, "Escalating Gains: Project QUEST's Sectoral Strategy Pays Off" (New York: Economic Mobility Corp., April 2017)	Y	N	UNKNOWN
**Arlene de la Mora, Elisabeth Callen, Mari Kemis, and William Abraham, "2017 ITC2 Annual Evaluation Report: Information Technology – Credentials to Careers" (Ames, IA: Research Institute for Studies in Education, Iowa State University, September 2017)	Y	N	UNKNOWN
*Theresa Anderson, Daniel Kuehn, Lauren Eyster, Burt S. Barnow, and Robert I. Lerman, "New Evidence on Integrated Career Pathways: Final Impact Report for Accelerating Opportunity" (Washington, DC: Urban Institute, June 2017)	Y	N	UNKNOWN
*"College Counts Evidence of Impact: A Research Analysis of the Arkansas Career Pathways Initiative" (Little Rock, Arkansas: The Arkansas Career Pathways Initiative, January 2018)	Y	Y	Y
**Brandon Roberts, Derek Price, Jess Lewis Valentine, Robert Roach, and Wendy Sedlak, "Advancing Career Pathway Development in Wisconsin Technical Colleges: Final Evaluation Report" (Philadelphia: Equal Measure, DVP-PRAXIS, Brandon Roberts + Associates, October 2018)	N	N	UNKNOWN
David Fein and Jill Hamadyk, "Bridging the Opportunity Divide for Low-Income Youth: Implementation and Early Impacts of the Year Up Program" (Bethesda, MD: Abt Associates, May 2018)	Y	Y	Y
*Deborah Kogan, Przemyslaw Nowackzyk, Mayte Cruz, and Andrew Wiegand, "Connecting Competencies to Employers, Round 4 TAACCCT Grant Final Report" (Oakland, CA: Social Policy Research Associates, September 2018)	N	N	UNKNOWN

<p>**Nitya Venkateswaran, Carolyn Padovano, Jay Feldman, Jessica Robles, Candace Kirksey, and Talia Shalev, "Creating Access to Rural Education in Health Care Professions: Final Report on the Implementation and Impact of HealthCARE Montana" (Berkeley, CA: RTI International, September 2018)</p>	Y	Y	N
<p>Laura R. Peck, Alan Werner, Eleanor Harvill, Daniel Litwok, Shawn Moulton, Alyssa Rulf Fountain, and Gretchen Locke, "Health Profession Opportunity Grants 1.0 Impact Study Interim Report: Program Implementation and Short-Term Impacts"(Cambridge, MA: Abt A</p>		Y	N
<p>Pamela Loprest, "Health Profession Opportunity Grants 2.0: Year Two Annual Report (2016-2017)" (Washington, DC: Urban Institute, July 2018)</p>		N	UNKNOWN
<p>Cynthia Miller, Danielle Cummings, Megan Millenky, Andrew Wiegard, and David Long, "Laying a Foundation: Four-Year Results of the National YouthBuild Evaluation" (New York: MDRC, May 2018)</p>	N	N	UNKNOWN
<p>**Michelle Van Noy, Renee Edwards, Sara B. Haviland, Heather McKay, Daniel Douglas, William Mabe, Victoria Coty, Sofia Javed, Nikolas Pardalis, Laci Hubbard-Mattix, and David Seith, "New Jersey Health Professions Pathways to Regional Excellence Project TAACCCT Evaluation, Final Report: Implementation and Impact" (Piscataway, NJ: Rutgers Education Employment Research Center, September 2018)</p>	N	N	UNKNOWN
<p>Sarah Avellar, Reginald Covington, Quinn Moore, Ankita Patnaik, and April Wu, "Parents and Children Together: Effects of Four Responsible Fatherhood Programs for Low-Income Fathers" (Washington, DC: Mathematica Policy Research, June 2018)</p>	N	N	UNKNOWN

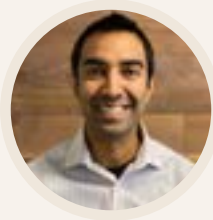
At the time of this report, all of the evaluations are complete except the following six ongoing multi-year evaluations: SNAP Employment and Training Pilots; Ready to Work Partnership Grant Program; both Year Up Programs; Health Profession Opportunity Grants 1.0; and Health Profession Opportunity Grants 2.0.

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- 51.** *Ibid.*, 169. This study used an RCT to assess impacts. The service providers focused on information technology, environmental remediation, transportation, manufacturing, and health care sectors.
- 52.** David Fein and Jill Hamadyk, “[Bridging the Opportunity Divide for Low-Income Youth: Implementation and Early Impacts of the Year Up Program](#)” (Bethesda, MD: Abt Associates, May 2018), 9–10 and 19–22. This program is being studied using an RCT within the larger Pathways for Advancing Careers and Education (PACE) evaluation.
- 53.** Learning communities are groups of people within a program that have a common interest, such as undergoing the sametraining. In this context, the groups are intended to help students by building social connections and reinforce learning within the program.
- 54.** Fein and Hamadyk, “[Bridging the Opportunity Divide,](#)” 10, 14–22.
- 55.** *Ibid.*, 69–77.
- 56.** *Ibid.*, 83.