

Findings at a Glance: A Look at Sector-Focused Career Centers

Center for Economic Opportunity • Department of Small Business Services
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Sector-Focused Career Centers Offer Better Job Opportunities

Early research findings from an evaluation of Sector-Focused Career Centers (SFCC) by the evaluation firm Westat indicate that the model increases the likelihood of participants finding employment, as well as raises their wages and improves job security.

Sector-focused employment strategies have emerged as an innovative approach to workforce development, providing unemployed and under-skilled workers with the services and skills necessary to fill positions in high growth industries.

To help employ New Yorkers in these key industries, in 2008 the New York City Department of Small Business Services (SBS) in partnership with the NYC Center for Economic Opportunity (CEO) created SFCCs in three distinct growth areas: Transportation (launched in 2008), Healthcare (launched in 2009), and Manufacturing (launched in 2010). SFCCs are designed to provide industry-specific services and training to both unemployed jobseekers and incumbent workers looking to advance in their careers. In 2011, the Workforce1 Transportation and Manufacturing Career Centers were consolidated to better meet participant and employer needs.

Support for Low-Wage Workers

SFCCs target specific high growth industries that offer competitive wages, competitive hours per week, and advancement opportunities. SFCCs offer a range of services to both unemployed jobseekers and incumbent workers centered on job placement and career advancement, including industry-specific education and training, career advisement, job search counseling, and support services tailored to their particular industries.

Compared to matched participants at standard career centers, workers served by Sector-Focused Career Centers:

- Are more likely to secure a job
- Earn more on average
- Enjoy greater job stability

Employed Sector-Center Participants Earn More

When compared to matched participants at standard career centers, SFCC participants earn significantly more up to one year after program exit.



Sector-Focused Career Centers **Workforce1 Career Centers**

Analyses were conducted on 13,102 participants one year after exit from the program according to NY State Department of Labor Wage data. All data compare SFCC participants to career center participants who were matched on prior earnings and demographics from the years 2009-2011.

What are Sector-Focused Career Centers?

Created in 2008, SFCCs serve both unemployed jobseekers and incumbent workers looking to advance in their careers, targeting industries offering:

- Competitive wages of at least \$10 per hour;
- Schedules with at least 30 hours per week, and;
- Mid-wage goals for placement of jobseekers and promotion of incumbent workers to \$15 per hour.

A dual-customer strategy targets both jobseekers and incumbent workers, creating a pipeline of highly qualified candidates while saving businesses time and money through more efficient hiring and increased productivity.

New York City SFCC Industries

Healthcare Career Center

To meet the needs of one of New York City's fastest growing industries, CEO and SBS launched the Healthcare Career Center in 2009. The Center connects healthcare industry employers with qualified jobseekers while providing training to incumbent workers looking to advance their careers. Specifically, the Center prepares jobseekers for occupations including but not limited to: RN, LPN, Certified Nursing Assistant (CNA), paramedic, EMT, direct care, and medical billing and coding positions. Compared to standard career center participants, Healthcare Career Center participants are 9.4 percent more likely to retain their jobs for at least one full year after placement, and earn nearly \$7,381 more per year on average compared to standard career center participants.

Transportation & Manufacturing Career Center

The transportation industry provides thousands of jobs for entry and mid-level workers in New York City, as New York ranks first among U.S. cities in passenger miles flown, transit passenger miles and truck freight volume. To better meet these high demands, in 2011 the Workforce1 Transportation and Manufacturing Career Centers merged to create the Industrial and Transportation Career Center (ITC) located in Jamaica, Queens. The ITC matches jobseekers with positions in transportation, manufacturing, wholesale trade and construction; job placements include positions as baggage handlers, mechanics, drivers, dispatchers, machinists and customer service representatives. Workers are 14-16 percent more likely to retain their employment for one full year after completing the ITC program, compared to their counterparts at standard career centers; combined, these participants earn, on average, more than \$5,000 more per year.

Moving Forward

The research and evaluation firm Westat will release a full report later this year, which suggests that SFCCs are more effective than traditional career centers for low-wage workers and should be expanded.

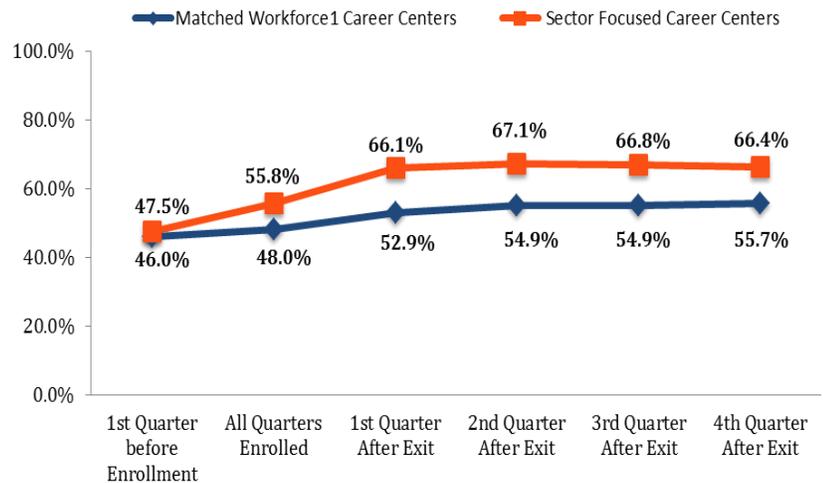
Sector-Focused Centers Research

Further reading on Sector-Focused Employment:

- [Targeting Industries, Training Workers, and Improving Opportunities: Final Report of the Sectoral Employment Initiative](#), Public-Private Ventures
- [Sector Snapshot: A Profile of Sector Initiatives 2010](#), Center for Community Economic Development
- [Sector Strategies for Low-Income Workers: Lessons from the Field](#), The Aspen Institute

SFCCs Improve Employment rates

Sector Center participants overall are significantly more likely to work in each of the four quarters after program exit and work more consistently than matched standard career center participants. SFCC participants are 12 percentage points more likely to be employed in the year following the program, 19 percentage points more likely to be employed one year later, and they earn 50 percent more on average than regular career center participants.



Policy Implications

SFCC Participation and Labor Market Outcomes:

- Services such as job search support, counseling and training are associated with positive outcomes at SFCCs.
- Localities can invest in and expand sector-focused employment strategies with federal Workforce Investment Act funds.
- Hard skills training tied to employer demand leads to better outcomes, suggesting that the strategy merits further investment.