

NYC Opportunity Response to MDRC Evaluation of the Young Adult Internship Program

September 2018

This report presents final findings on the impacts of NYC Opportunity's Young Adult Internship Program (YAIP) from a rigorous randomized control trial conducted by the research firm MDRC. The results of this evaluation depict a strongly implemented program model which succeeded in achieving short-term gains for participating youth, but did not result in sustained impacts over a longer period.

As part of the federally funded Subsidized and Transitional Employment Demonstration (STED)ⁱ, this evaluation was designed to build on existing research that had documented promising early outcomes for YAIP participants.ⁱⁱ To assess the program's potential impact, MDRC worked with 12 YAIP service providers from July 2013 to March 2014 to identify 2,678 young adults interested in receiving YAIP services, that met the program's eligibility criteria of being ages 16 to 24, out of school and out of work (OSOW), and relatively job ready.ⁱⁱⁱ Eligible young adults were then randomly assigned to either a program group which was offered YAIP services, or to a control group which was not offered YAIP but could still seek out alternative services. MDRC tracked outcomes over time through surveys and administrative data.

The YAIP services offered to the program group consist of a 2-4 week orientation and 10-12 week subsidized internship with weekly paid educational workshops. After their internships, participants also have access to 9 months of follow-up services providing support with job placement and retention. YAIP is managed by the Department of Youth and Community Development (DYCD). DYCD expanded the program in 2011 with funding from the Young Men's Initiative and currently implements YAIP at 17 sites.

The findings from this evaluation highlight some notable successes of the YAIP model, particularly in the short-term impacts on employment and earnings. However, the lack of longer term impacts suggests it did not achieve NYC Opportunity's goal of sustainably improving the employment and educational outcomes of young New Yorkers. Specifically, at about 9-months post-program:

- 95 percent of the YAIP group had been employed during the past year, as compared to 66 percent of their peers in the control group;
- The YAIP group earned an average of \$6,674 over the year, compared to \$3,247 for the control, with only \$1,704 of that amount coming from the subsidized internship;
- YAIP youth were also more likely to report work in a higher quality job post-internship, as indicated by more reported work in permanent and full-time positions.

By the end of the full follow-up period of about two years post-program, employment rates and earnings largely converged between the two groups. The remaining employment-related impacts were small and came from a survey of participants' self-reported outcomes.^{iv} MDRC did not find sustained employment impacts in the administrative data, which captures most formal employment opportunities. This outcome suggests that YAIP participants may be working more in informal work arrangements than their peers, which could include earning money through things like babysitting, dog-walking, or self-started entrepreneurial efforts.

As part of the study, MDRC also examined outcomes related to education, training, economic and personal well-being, and criminal justice system involvement. The evaluation did not find any impacts for the full program group in these domains. However, for the subgroup of youth entering the study without a high



school diploma or its equivalent, YAIP participants were 15 percent more likely to attain that credential.

In addition to assessing the potential impact of the program model, these findings also shed light on the work experiences and resiliency of the young New Yorkers YAIP sought to serve. The evaluation suggests that providers were successful in enrolling a relatively job-ready population of young adults into the study, with 72 percent of the study participants having some work experience prior to participation. Over half of the control group sought out some alternative employment-related assistance as a substitute for YAIP, and by the end of two years over 80 percent were working, in school, or participating in training.

The YAIP model has remained largely unchanged over time as NYC Opportunity worked to evaluate the approach and due to contracting constraints. However, NYC Opportunity recognizes that there have been significant changes in the landscape and context in which YAIP operates over this period of time. From 2010 to 2016, NYC has seen large declines in the number and share of OSOW youth ages 16 to 24, from over 196,000 (or 18 percent of the age group), to close to 132,000 (15 percent).^v These young adults, though smaller in number, potentially face greater barriers to work and may require more intensive support to successfully advance in their careers.^{vi}

Through the Career Pathways initiative, the City's approach to delivering employment-related services has also been shifting, informed by growing evidence on the most effective workforce development strategies.^{vii} Results from NYC Opportunity evaluations have contributed to this evidence base. For example, rigorous evaluations of Sector-Focused Career Centers and WorkAdvance have demonstrated the success of sector-focused workforce development strategies.^{viii} These types of approaches to building skills may be more effective strategies to consider for OSOW youth than the YAIP model, which was not designed to include an industry-focused strategy.

Looking forward, NYC Opportunity remains committed to building evidence for what works and continuing to develop new services to improve outcomes among young adults who are not in school and not working. NYC Opportunity is working with DYCD to ensure the lessons from our work implementing and evaluating YAIP and other models are incorporated into future models for this population. Additional evaluations of related program models serving youth are currently underway to further add to the evidence in this space, including comparison group studies of Young Adult Literacy (YAL) and the Work Progress Program (WPP).^{ix} As we continue to assess these and other programs, we will find opportunities to collaborate with service providers, young New Yorkers, and other partners to learn from their experiences and help inform our next steps in program and service design.

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ⁱ See <https://www.acf.hhs.gov/opre/research/project/subsidized-and-transitional-employment-demonstration-sted>

ⁱⁱ An outcomes evaluation documented that 76 percent of YAIP participants were placed into a job or educational opportunity post-internship. See Westat, 2009, "[Evaluation of the Young Adult Internship Program \(YAIP\): Analysis of Existing Participant Data.](#)"

ⁱⁱⁱ Job readiness is assessed through a multi-step intake process and requires that youth enter with at least a 6th grade reading level.

^{iv} For example, 65 percent of the YAIP group reported being employed on the survey at the end of follow-up compared to 61 percent of the control group.

^v American Community Survey Public Use Micro Sample analysis by NYC Opportunity.

^{vi} See Lazar Treschan and Irene Lew, 2018, "[Barriers to Entry Update: Fewer Out-of-School, Out-of-Work Young Adults, as Warning Signs Emerge.](#)" Community Service Society and Jobs First NYC.

^{vii} See www.nyc.gov/careerpathways.

^{viii} See David S. Berman, 2015, "Piloting and Replicating What Works in Workforce Development: Using Performance Management and Evaluation to Identify Effective Programs," in [Transforming U.S. Workforce Development Policies for the 21st Century](#).

^{ix} For more information on these and other NYC Opportunity programs, see www.nyc.gov/opportunity. Young Adult Literacy results are anticipated in late 2018 and results for WPP, in mid-2019.