

Jobs-Plus helps individual members work and earn more

The 2019 Urban Institute (Urban) report presents findings from New York City's implementation of the place-based, workforce development program, Jobs-Plus. The evaluation aimed to understand the program's effectiveness in NYC, and to make recommendations for program enhancement.

NYC Opportunity launched the first City-funded Jobs-Plus site in East Harlem with its agency partners in 2009, modeling the program after the federal Department of Housing and Urban Development's (HUD) pilot by the same name. A rigorous evaluation of HUD's initiative by MDRC showed that residents of targeted developments that fully implemented Jobs-Plus had 16 percent higher average earnings than residents of comparison developments three years after the pilot ended ([MDRC, 2010](#)).

Urban's evaluation examined recent implementation successes and challenges, and whether NYC's Jobs-Plus program increased earnings and employment for members and entire targeted developments. Urban conducted interviews and focus groups with program staff and participants, and used administrative data from HRA, NYCHA, and the New York State Department of Labor on earnings and employment, program participation, and public housing residency.

One-year gains for Jobs-Plus members:

↑ \$497 in average quarterly earnings
(from \$1,537 to \$2,034)

↑ 12 percentage points in employment rate
(from 16.7% to 28.7%)

What is Jobs-Plus?

Jobs-Plus is a place-based, workforce development initiative designed to meet the needs of public housing residents. Services are provided on-site at or near targeted New York City Housing Authority (NYCHA) developments. Sites are managed through contracts held by NYC's Human Resources Administration (HRA), and are overseen by the "Jobs-Plus Collaborative" of NYCHA, HRA, the Mayor's Office for Economic Opportunity, and the Department of Consumer Affairs' Office of Financial Empowerment.

The Jobs-Plus model has three key components that support public housing residents' efforts to move toward economic security: (1) employment services, (2) financial education, rent-based and other incentives that help "make work pay," and (3) community support for work that organizes neighbors to promote work and serve as a

Key Findings

Jobs-Plus in NYC had strong, positive employment-related impacts on individual participants. Staff and members reported positive feelings toward the program, and it is helping individual New Yorkers increase their earnings and employment.

The program has not yet demonstrated community-level impacts. We are generally not yet seeing impacts for entire NYCHA developments similar to those MDRC observed in HUD's earlier national demonstration.

"[The Jobs-Plus staff] make you understand that... no matter where you come from, no matter your story, you are a person. You should have the same opportunities as everyone else."
-Young male Jobs-Plus member

Additional Highlights

Jobs-Plus members increased their average quarterly earnings by \$497 (to \$2,034 from \$1,537) and their average employment rate by 12 percentage points (to 28.7% from 16.7%) after joining the program. The analysis found statistically significant results showing that members who had been involved with Jobs-Plus for one year were 72 percent more likely to be employed and earned 32 percent more than their peers who had not. This analysis used a methodology that compared quarterly earnings and employment status of Jobs-Plus members who had enrolled in the program for one year to members who had just enrolled, while controlling for variables including demographics, prior work history, and job readiness.

Development-level impacts were either small or not significant, depending on the methodology used, but data limitations may partially explain this. Urban's development-level analysis aimed to assess if Jobs-Plus elevated the earnings of entire developments as seen in the original MDRC evaluation. However, Urban's analysis could only include on-lease residents due to data constraints, and the proportion of off-lease NYCHA residents is uniquely high among American Public Housing Authorities. By excluding these people from the analysis, the lack of observed, development-level results might not fully capture the impact of Jobs-Plus. In addition, some program members in NYC are not NYCHA residents, suggesting that a development-level analysis would not capture the full impact of NYC's implementation of Jobs-Plus. Also, NYC's developments have a much higher number of residents than those in the original MDRC evaluation. Development-level impacts may become observable as Jobs-Plus serves a higher proportion of public housing development residents in the future.

Urban noted that providing more resources to sites that serve larger developments might improve development-level effects. Three sites demonstrated small but significant development-level impacts on earnings and/or employment. These sites also had the highest share of households served by Jobs-Plus. To achieve development-level impacts at other, typically larger sites, more resources or time may be needed to expand the share of households served.

Sectors of employment for members were largely stable after enrollment in Jobs-Plus. Jobs-Plus enrollment produced no major shifts in the industry sectors members worked in, except for an increase in placement within the administrative and waste services sectors. It is worth noting that Urban's analysis used data from before the program's adoption of NYC's Career Pathways framework, which emphasizes placement in jobs and industries with significant potential for career growth.

Participants appreciated the personalized approach of Jobs-Plus, compared to other workforce programs. Members valued the range of services offered by Jobs-Plus, the staff's responsiveness, dedication, and motivation tactics, and the provision of one-on-one assistance. Jobs-Plus participants also appreciated that the program was voluntary and free.

Providers reported that members were often focused on jobs rather than careers, but lacked strategies to promote more long-term thinking. Identified challenges included helping members: look beyond their desire or need for immediate earnings; familiarize themselves with new and highly competitive industries; get basic credentials; and move beyond the retail-heavy labor market in NYC.

Looking Ahead

Urban's report includes recommendations to enhance Jobs-Plus and possibly improve development-level effects. The Jobs-Plus Collaborative took these recommendations under advisement while developing a new RFP for Jobs-Plus providers. In addition to serving new developments, the RFP moves toward equalizing the number of people served by each Jobs-Plus site, alters the structure of milestone payments to prioritize Career Pathways principles, and includes new mental health supports to equip staff with additional tools and better serve members.

Further Reading:

- [The Urban Institute's Evaluation of Jobs-Plus in New York City \(2019\)](#)
- [MDRC's Implementation Evaluation of Jobs-Plus in the Bronx and San Antonio \(2015\)](#)