

An Evaluation of Local Investments in Workforce Development

2014 Update

Tara Smith
Kristin Christensen
Greg Cumpton

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3001 Lake Austin Blvd., Suite 3.200
Austin, TX 78703 (512) 471-7891
www.raymarshallcenter.org

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INTRODUCTION

For more than fifteen years, Travis County has invested between \$1-2.5 million in workforce development programs for disadvantaged residents. The County funds approximately ten providers each year to deliver a variety of adult education, training, and employment services. Many of the County contracts support short-term training in a variety of fields, including: general office and computer skills; general construction and “green” skills in housing construction; computer repair and recycling; and park land conservation. Jobs in these fields often require a high school diploma or GED in addition to training certificates. The County also invests in long-term training, leading to certifications and associate’s degrees for nursing and allied health professions, information and electronic technologies, skilled trades, and other occupations with higher wages.

The evaluation examines outcomes and impacts for participants in Travis County-funded community-based workforce programs over time. Seven providers with long-standing County contracts have been the focus of an ongoing evaluation of the outcomes and impacts of local workforce services investments led by the Ray Marshall Center since 2006:

1. American YouthWorks
2. Austin Academy
3. Austin Area Urban League
4. Capital IDEA
5. Goodwill Industries of Central Texas
6. Skillpoint Alliance
7. Workforce Solutions–Capital Area Workforce Board

Most providers on the list primarily offer short-term occupational and basic skills training. Capital IDEA is the only one to offer longer-term training for higher-skilled occupations, though it should be noted that many American YouthWorks participants can engage in long-term education and training through the program’s adult education and service learning model.

The evaluation examines outcomes and impacts for participants in community-based workforce programs over time. This *2014 Update* report has three objectives: to extend the labor market outcomes analysis for 2009-2011 participants from all seven providers; to add 2012 participants for each provider to the evaluation; and to identify the impact of participation in a County-funded workforce program in comparison with individuals who received other publicly-funded workforce services.

An overview of the evaluation questions and research methods follows this introduction. The report then includes separate sections for each of the seven providers examined. Each section includes a brief profile of the provider and its workforce development program(s), details outcomes for participants from calendar years 2009 through 2012, and highlights statistically significant impacts from participation. All findings examine results in the post-service period through June 2014. The final section provides a summary of the evaluation update and identifies goals for the next evaluation report.

EVALUATION OVERVIEW

The purpose of Travis County's investment in local workforce development services is to help disadvantaged residents build the skills needed for employment. Accordingly, each program is evaluated based on its participants' outcomes. Output and outcome performance goals are established for each provider in its contract with the County. Among the various performance measures utilized, three are shared across the majority of providers:

- Number of unduplicated clients served,
- Percentage of clients who retained employment for 6 months, and
- Average wage at entry.

Other performance measures are based on the type of service provided, for example:

- Number of clients who entered basic education skills training (GED, ESL),
- Number of clients who entered job training,
- Number of clients who complete training program,
- Percentage of clients receiving job placement services, and
- Percentage of clients who obtained employment.

Performance results of workforce and other social service investments are detailed annually in the *Community Impact Report* prepared by the Travis County Health and Human Services & Veterans Service Department. While that report assesses how a provider or program fared in relation to the contractually-established performance goals, its focus is primarily on immediate and near-term objectives (e.g., wage at entry, two calendar quarters of employment).

The Ray Marshall Center's evaluation extends the analysis of Travis County's workforce investments by examining participants' labor market experiences prior to entering the program and then tracking their labor market outcomes following training. The Local Workforce Services Evaluation draws on multiple data sources to answer the following questions:

- Are services being delivered as planned?
- Who is being served?
- What outcomes are achieved?
- What are the impacts of the investment?

The outcomes evaluation focuses on four key labor market measures:

1. Average quarterly employment,
2. Average quarterly earnings of those employed,
3. The share meeting monetary eligibility requirements for Unemployment Insurance (UI) benefits quarterly, and
4. The share filing a claim for UI benefits quarterly.

It should be noted that the third measure is a proxy measure for employment stability. In Texas, monetary UI eligibility is based on the claimant earning sufficient wages in at least two consecutive quarters of the five quarters prior to filing a claim for benefits. For the 2009-2012 participant groups, labor market outcomes are examined in the four quarters prior to program entry, the last quarter of participation in provider services, and at the 2nd and 4th post-service quarters (6 months and 1 year after the participant left the program). Post-service outcomes for the 8th and 12th post-service quarter (2 to 3 years after program exit) are available for most of the 2009 through 2011 groups, and 16th post-service quarter (4 years after program exit) outcomes are available for most of the 2009 and 2010 participants. The report also summarizes participants' labor market outcomes across all post-service quarters through June 2014.

Data Sources

The evaluation of Travis County-funded workforce development programs draws from multiple data sources, including participant records maintained by individual programs, UI wage records and benefits claim files¹, The Workforce Information System of Texas (TWIST) records, *Work In Texas* records, interviews with program administrators and staff, program documents, provider websites, and published reports.

Three caveats should be noted about the data used for this evaluation. First, incomplete participant records resulted in a number of individuals served by County-funded workforce programs being dropped from the analysis. Second, UI wage records have known coverage gaps. Workers in industries with high-levels of self-employment or independent contracting, such as construction and truck driving, are less likely to be in a UI-covered position. Researchers

¹ While UI benefit data is collected and reported weekly, the outcomes are examined on a quarterly basis to mirror UI wage records.

therefore acknowledge that the outcomes reported here for some programs that train for construction and truck driving occupations likely undercount actual labor market outcomes. Third, UI wage records are subject to review and correction by workers and employers as part of the claims determination process for UI benefits. Therefore, numbers reported here are based on the most recently available records and may not be fully consistent with prior reports.

A total of 6,610 unduplicated participants were included in the dataset for this report.² A total of 530 participants were clients of more than one Travis County-funded workforce development service during the study time period. Outcomes for these participants are documented for each program in which they were enrolled.

Program Impacts

The *quasi-experimental impact analysis* seeks to gauge the “value-added” from workforce program participation by comparing labor market outcomes for participants with those of a matched comparison group. Comparison group members were drawn from The Workforce Information System of Texas (TWIST) records and include Travis County residents who registered for employment with the state’s *Work In Texas* program or who received job search services at local Workforce Solutions Career Centers or online. Quasi-experimental approaches tend to work well when participants for whom comparison groups are created have sufficient prior employment and earnings histories and when data are available on a sufficient number of variables with which to perform the match. Youth and ex-offenders are problematical in this regard precisely because their prior employment and earnings histories are either lacking or difficult to determine with any real confidence. Ex-offenders present an additional problem since offender status is generally lacking for comparison group members. The report presents quasi-experimental impacts only for groups/providers for which adequate matching could be performed. Three of the seven providers included in this analysis had some cohorts excluded: the 2009 cohort of the Austin Area Urban League, the 2009, 2010, and 2011 cohorts of Ascend Center for Learning, and the 2011 cohort of Workforce Solutions REM program are the cohorts for which an adequately-matched comparison group could not be established. Net effects and adjusted net effects are included in the impact estimates; adjusted

² A total of 849 records were removed from the analysis due to missing Social Security Numbers.

net effects (labeled as “impact measure” in the tables) have been modified to account for unmeasured socioeconomic and other differences not already controlled in the matching process. More information on the matching process and the quality of comparison groups is provided in Appendix A.

Because of the way data is tracked in the *Work In Texas* system, members of the comparison group were known to have been located in Travis County at the time the data was obtained by RMC, however, individuals may or may not have been located in Travis County during the time periods examined.

The mission of American YouthWorks is “building brighter futures and better communities through job skills training, education, and service.”*

The program offers GED and job training programs based on a service learning model which combines academic instruction with occupational skills development and community service projects.

Travis County invested \$201,992 annually in workforce training through American YouthWorks in 2009 through 2012. The 2011 and 2012 contracts included an additional \$83,300 for parks improvement work with the E-Corps program.

*www.americanyouthworks.org/about-american-youthworks. Accessed: 02.06.2015



For more information visit:
www.americanyouthworks.org

AMERICAN YOUTHWORKS

Workforce Development Programs and Services

Travis County funds multiple training programs through American YouthWorks, including Casa Verde Builders, Environmental Corps (E-Corps), Computer Corps, and the Green Energy Corps. Each of these programs uses a Service Learning Academy model to combine occupational skills training and academic instruction with community service projects. Students often switch from one training program to another and may complete multiple programs over time. The two largest programs, Casa Verde Builders and the Green Energy Corps, served over half (69%) of American YouthWorks participants from 2009 through 2012.

Casa Verde Builders is part of the national YouthBuild initiative led by the U.S. Departments of Labor and Housing & Urban Development. Students learn “green” construction skills while constructing energy efficient, affordable homes, primarily in East Austin. Participants in the Casa Verde program typically range in age from 17-24 years old. The Casa Verde training takes approximately nine months to complete and is generally reserved for high school seniors or those who will earn a high school credential within the year. Participants earn 18 credit hours at Austin Community College at the completion of the construction training. Participants also earn certifications through the Occupational Safety and Health Administration (OSHA) and the Home Builders Association.

The Green Energy Corps was developed “in response to a growing need for job training in home improvement and

weatherization.”³

The E-Corps program trains youth to build, restore, and maintain the natural environment. Through work in parks, nature trails, and wildlife habitats, participants learn environmental management and safety practices. A key area of focus is invasive species management. Contracts with Travis County, the City of Austin, the Texas Parks and Wildlife Department, and the National Parks Service, among others, give participants real work experience while creating benefits for the broader community.

Beyond the academic and occupational skills training, American YouthWorks participants also receive training in soft skills, job search, and resume building. For participants who are interested in pursuing higher education, the program has recently added college access and persistence services.

Support Services

In addition to job training and high school academy, American YouthWorks provides a number of wrap-around support services to help individuals succeed. Participants in both Casa Verde Builders and E-Corps receive bi-weekly stipends to help cover their living expenses while in training. The program also provides uniforms and safety equipment, tools, clothing for interviews, bus passes, on-site childcare, and emergency assistance for food, diapers, and other necessities.

American YouthWorks has dedicated staff to help participants with the job search process and internships, as well as full-time counselors to help participants overcome other obstacles to success. The program partners with the local One-Stop Career Center to connect participants with other training opportunities and support services.

Participant Profile

Participants in most American YouthWorks training programs must be between 17-24 years of age at program entry and have a family income at or below 200% of the Federal Poverty Income Guideline level or at or below 80% of the Austin Median Family Income Level.

³ Matvy, Rachel. “Job Training for Youth – Service to Low Income Home Owners.” October 4, 2012.

Many also have significant barriers to employment, such as homelessness, or prior criminal justice system involvement.

The majority of Austin YouthWorks participants included in this evaluation were White or Hispanic. Just over half of the participants studied were male, with an average age of 20 years old. Most participants lived in south, southeast, or east Austin at the time of enrollment. In 2012, about 64% of American YouthWorks clients had an income between 50 and 150% of FPIG.

Participant Outcomes

Table 1 presents outcomes over time for 2009-2012 American YouthWorks participants. There are 551 participants in the outcomes evaluation⁴. Of these, the largest share (41%) was enrolled in the Green Energy Corps program.

⁴ Sixty-two records were removed from analyses due to missing Social Security numbers.

Table 1. American YouthWorks 2009-2012 Participant Outcomes^a

Cohort Outcome Measure	Four Qtrs Before Service	Last Qtr of Service	2nd Qtr Post-Service	4th Qtr Post-Service	8th Qtr Post-Service	12th Qtr Post-Service	16th Qtr Post-Service	All Post-Service Qtrs
Quarterly Employment:								
2009	25.3%	18.6%	32.7%	42.3%	45.5%	53.9%	55.7%	47.7%
2010	23.3%	22.2%	35.9%	39.3%	50.4%	48.5%	.	44.5%
2011	18.4%	36.5%	47.9%	46.1%	57.4%	54.6%	.	51.8%
2012	25.2%	25.0%	41.1%	46.4%	.	.	.	40.7%
Overall	22.8%	26.1%	39.7%	43.6%	49.8%	52.0%	54.5%	47.2%
Average Qtrly Earnings:								
2009	\$1,605	\$1,537	\$3,047	\$2,687	\$3,836	\$4,711	\$5,511	\$4,275
2010	\$1,918	\$2,267	\$2,708	\$2,798	\$4,015	\$4,338	.	\$3,641
2011	\$2,233	\$1,943	\$2,772	\$2,892	\$3,334	.	.	\$3,044
2012	\$2,717	\$1,937	\$3,009	\$3,429	.	.	.	\$3,151
Overall	\$2,076	\$1,918	\$2,874	\$2,919	\$3,717	\$4,503	\$5,383	\$3,724
Qualified for UI Benefits:								
2009	16.0%	.	.	25.0%	39.7%	46.8%	52.5%	41.6%
2010	15.2%	.	.	29.1%	37.4%	38.4%	.	36.0%
2011	7.8%	.	.	38.9%	49.2%	59.1%	.	43.1%
2012	16.1%	.	.	32.0%	.	.	.	26.3%
Overall	13.4%	.	.	31.5%	41.8%	44.8%	52.2%	39.9%
Filed UI Claim:								
2009	0.16%	0.00%	0.64%	2.56%	0.64%	1.28%	0.00%	1.03%
2010	0.43%	0.00%	0.85%	0.85%	0.87%	1.01%	.	0.66%
2011	0.15%	0.00%	2.40%	0.60%	0.00%	4.55%	.	0.82%
2012	0.45%	0.89%	0.00%	0.00%	.	.	.	0.00%
Overall	0.27%	0.18%	1.09%	1.12%	0.49%	1.44%	0.75%	0.79%

Source: American YouthWorks participant records and Texas Workforce Commission UI wage and claim records.

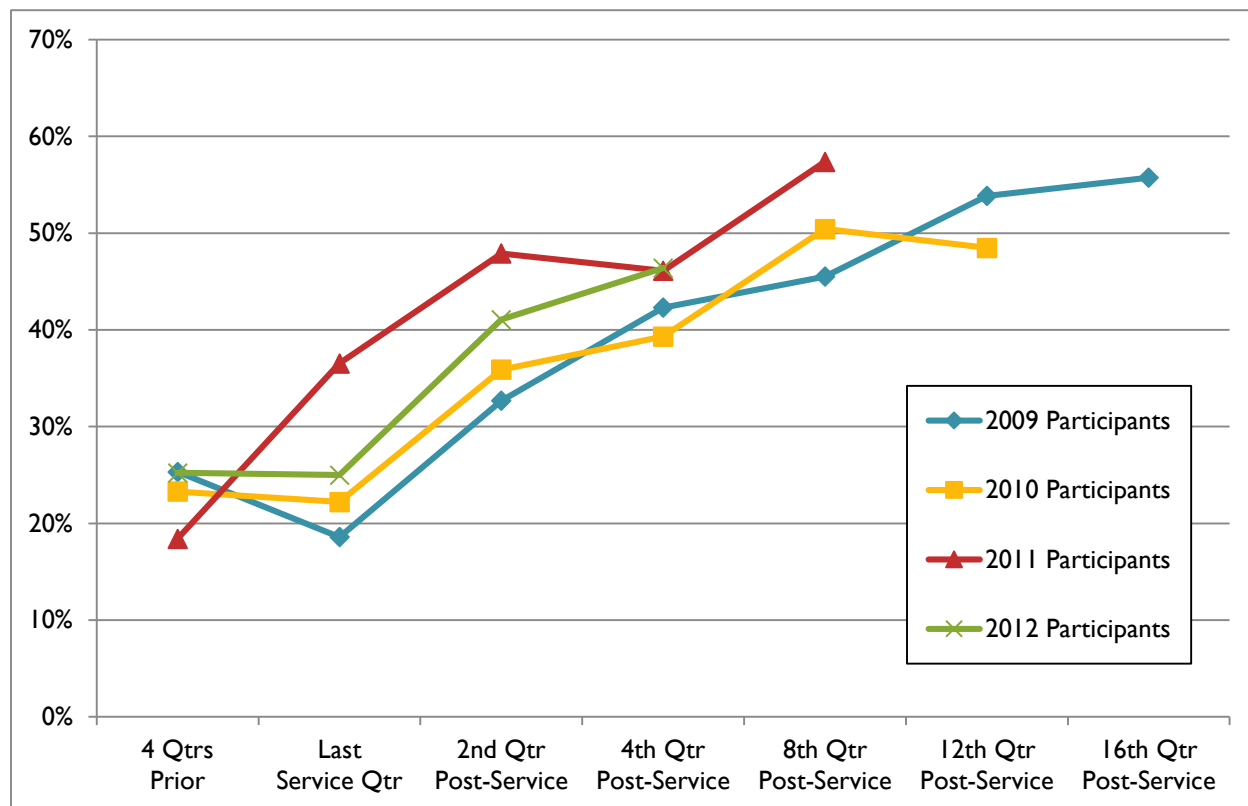
Note: A dot represents too few participants, no data to report, or insufficient time passing to report for that timeframe.

^a Participants were counted as employed if they were found in Texas UI wage records. Those who were not found may be unemployed, employed outside of Texas, or employed in Texas in a position that is not reported to TWC.

Overall, in the four quarters prior to entering the program, quarterly employment in a UI-covered job in Texas for youth served by American YouthWorks was roughly 23% from 2009 to 2012. Quarterly employment among these American YouthWorks participants overall grew in each subsequent period examined from the last quarter of service through the 4th post-service quarter (one year after the last date of service). For those cohorts for whom data is available, quarterly employment continued to rise more than two years after leaving the

American YouthWorks program. Across all post-service quarters through June 2014, approximately 47% of 2009-2012 American YouthWorks participants were employed.

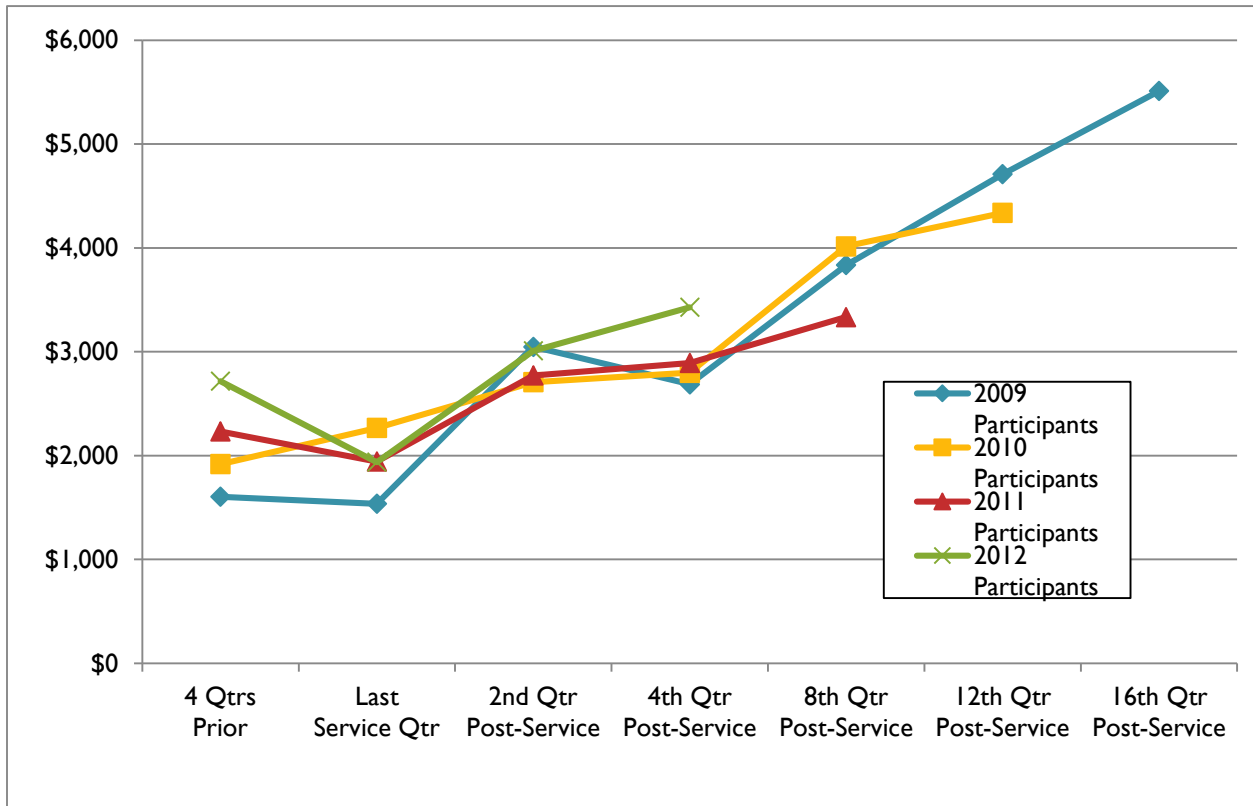
Figure 1. Average Quarterly Employment of American YouthWorks 2009-2012 Participants Over Time^a



^a Participants were counted as employed if they were found in Texas UI wage records. Those who were not found may be unemployed, employed outside of Texas, or employed in Texas in a position that is not reported to TWC.

Pre-program earnings overall averaged about \$2,076 a quarter for those employed in the year prior to entry. In the second quarter after service, average earnings rose by about \$800 dollars to \$2,874. Earnings flattened between the second and fourth post-service quarters but continued to rise again in the eighth quarter. The 2009 participant group has shown steady earnings growth, with those employed earning an average of \$5,511 in the sixteenth post-service quarter (four years after leaving the American YouthWorks program). Across all post-service quarters American YouthWorks 2009-2012 participants earned, on average, \$3,724 per quarter.

**Figure 2. Average Quarterly Earnings of Employed American YouthWorks
2009-2012 Participants Over Time**



Prior to entering American YouthWorks, approximately 13% of participants overall had sufficient employment and earnings histories to meet the monetary eligibility requirements for UI benefits. A year after leaving training, almost 32% met the requirements for eligibility. This measure is a proxy measure for examining employment stability. Across all post-service quarters, 40% of American YouthWorks participants met UI monetary eligibility requirements. Very few participants (less than 1% overall) filed a claim for UI benefits in the period examined, which included the Great Recession and subsequent recovery period in Austin.

Program Impacts

Table 2 presents findings from the impacts analysis comparing the outcomes of the AYW 2009-2012 cohorts to the outcomes of a matched comparison group. Participation was positively associated with two of the four outcomes of interest: a \$442 advantage in average quarterly earnings for those employed, and one percentage point decrease in the share that filed for UI benefits.

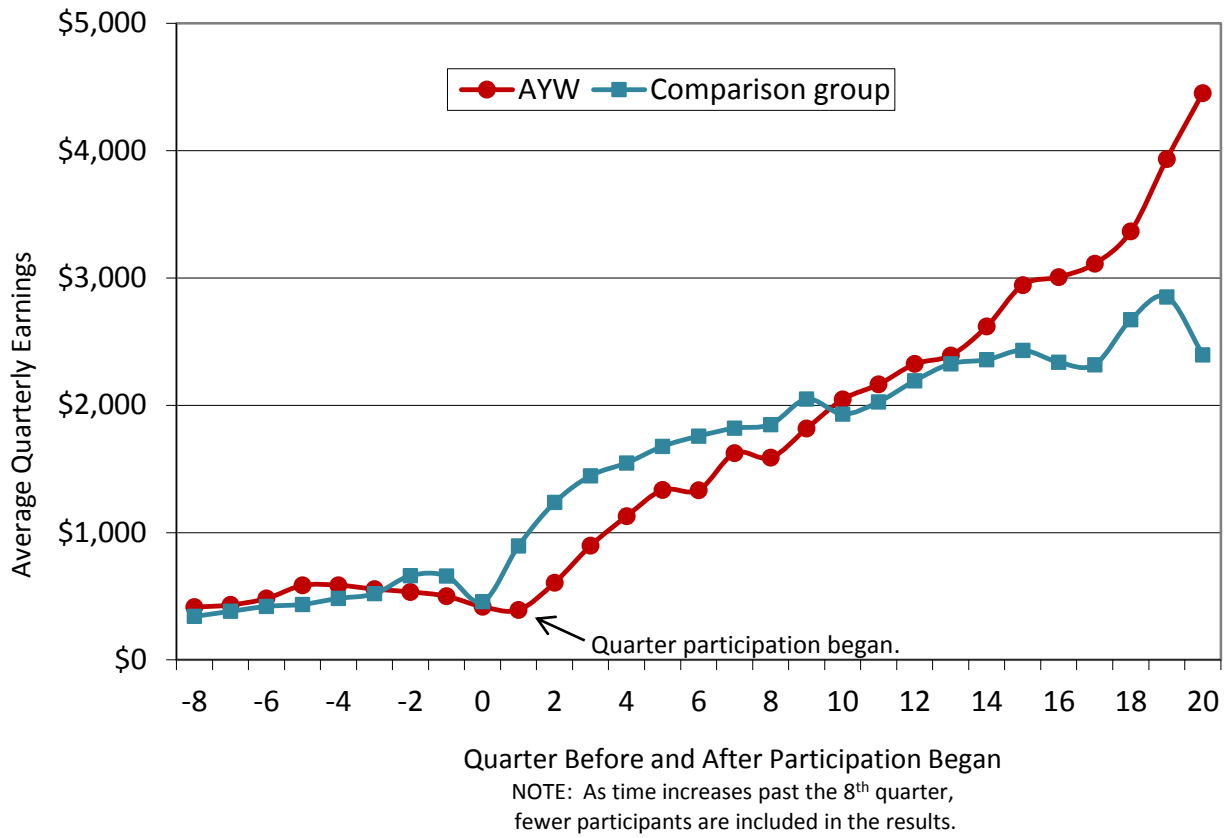
Table 2. American YouthWorks 2009-2012 Quarterly Impacts

Impact Measure	All Qtrs Post-Service: Comparison Group	All Qtrs Post-Service: AYW Participant	Unadjusted Net Effect	Impact Measure
Quarterly Employment	47.0%	47.3%	0.3%	1.5%
Average Quarterly Earnings	\$3,616	\$3,727	\$111	\$442**
Qualified for UI Benefits	39.1%	40.0%	0.9%	0.0%
Filed UI Claim	1.89%	0.80%	-1.09%	-1.40%**

Note: **=significant at p<.01

In Figure 3, below, the impact of participation in AYW is examined by looking at participants' earnings over time, regardless of employment status (i.e., unconditional earnings), in relation to the comparison group's unconditional earnings. The analysis shows that the comparison group out-earned the AYW participants through the 10th quarter after starting the program, when earnings for participants began to equal and then exceed that of the control group. AYW participants show a quarterly earnings advantage over the comparison group of more than \$2,000 in the 20th quarter after entering the program.

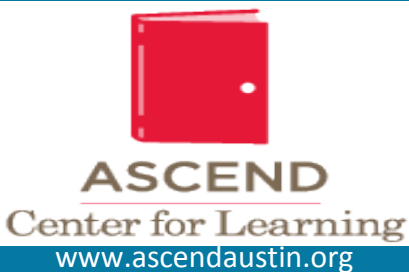
Figure 3. Unconditional Earnings Over Time, American YouthWorks Participants vs. Comparison Group



Austin Academy became the Ascend Center for Learning in 2011. The mission of the organization has remained the same: to help people missed by the traditional school system catch up and succeed in education and the workplace.

The program offers GED preparation, basic computer literacy classes, and occupational skills training.

Travis County invested \$43,609 annually during the 2009-12 period in Austin Academy/Ascend Center for Learning.



ASCEND CENTER FOR LEARNING (AUSTIN ACADEMY)

Workforce Development Programs and Services

This report includes the last two groups of students who attended Austin Academy in 2009-2010, and the first two groups of students to attend the Ascend Center for Learning in 2011-2012. Austin Academy offered a broad-based Workplace Competency Training Program to build literacy and basic office skills, as well as a GED preparation program for individuals testing at a minimum of the 7th grade math and 9th grade reading level. The Workplace Competency program included training in workplace communications, job search, and resume development. The computer literacy training helped individuals build skills in basic computer operations (e.g., keyboarding, Internet basics, file sharing, email) and Microsoft Office applications. All training was provided by program staff.

With the transition to the Ascend Center for Learning in 2011, program offerings were updated. The Job Readiness Program, with a more time-intensive curriculum, replaced the Workplace Competency Program. In addition, Ascend launched a new adult education program for individuals with skills as low as the 3rd grade level. This program is the result of a new partnership with Austin Community College and AmeriCorps, where a full-time volunteer teacher works with a small (no more than 15 students) class in an intensive curriculum that requires daily attendance over the course of approximately one year. The program also began a new participant tracking system in 2011.

The Ascend Center for Learning program includes both daytime and evening options. The day program runs from 8:30 AM to 3:00 PM five days a week. The evening program runs from 5:30 PM to 9:00 PM Monday through Thursday for employed participants. Ascend operates an open enrollment program which has no set semesters. Because the training is individualized for each participant, the amount of time an individual is in training varies but averages approximately four to six months. Participants take the Test for Adult Basic Education (TABE) at the beginning of the program to identify skill strengths and weaknesses. Participants are then tested after every 40 hours of instruction. The structure and program offerings encourage participants to return for additional training or job search services when they were ready.

Support Services

Ascend employs a full-time case manager who makes referrals to organizations throughout Travis County based on the participant's needs. For example, parenting participants may be referred to Workforce Solutions–Capital Area to access childcare development funds. The organization finds that a lack of childcare is a significant barrier to participation.

Ascend addresses another significant participation barrier by providing transportation assistance, primarily in the form of bus passes. The organization also provides emergency rent or utility assistance on a case-by-case basis. Ascend partners with a number of community organizations to provide additional classes to participants on a variety of topics. These include financial literacy classes through Frameworks, healthy relationships training through Safe Place, parenting skills through Any Baby Can, smoking cessation classes through YWCA, and courses on safe sex practices through AIDS Services Austin.

Participant Profile

Ascend Center for Learning intentionally seeks out participants who may face barriers to employment, including disabled veterans, public housing residents, high school dropouts, and victims of violent crimes. The majority of Ascend participants included in this evaluation were White (53%) or Black (25%), the largest share (42%) were between 20 and 29 years old, and resided in east or south Austin. Approximately 63% of Ascend Center for Learning's participants from 2009-2012 were women. Almost half (48%) had an income at less than 50% of FPIG.

Participant Outcomes

A total of 538 participants from Ascend Center for Learning’s 2009-2012 cohorts are included in the outcomes evaluation⁵. Table 3 provides an overview of participant outcomes across the four evaluation measures.

Table 3. Ascend Center for Learning 2009-2012 Participant Outcomes ^a

Cohort Outcome Measure	Four Qtrs Before Service	Last Qtr of Service	2nd Qtr Post-Service	4th Qtr Post-Service	8th Qtr Post-Service	12th Qtr Post-Service	16th Qtr Post-Service	All Post-Service Qtrs
Quarterly Employment:								
2009	40.8%	31.5%	38.6%	43.3%	48.8%	48.0%	45.7%	45.3%
2010	38.5%	26.1%	40.3%	45.4%	46.2%	45.1%	42.5%	44.0%
2011	35.5%	37.6%	44.6%	43.8%	49.5%	46.9%	.	46.8%
2012	43.6%	49.5%	55.2%	58.8%	52.2%	.	.	55.9%
Overall	39.0%	35.9%	44.3%	46.8%	48.6%	46.7%	44.5%	46.4%
Average Qtrly Earnings:								
2009	\$3,227	\$2,487	\$3,164	\$3,096	\$4,036	\$4,307	\$4,591	\$4,110
2010	\$4,012	\$3,097	\$3,486	\$3,393	\$4,154	\$4,682	\$4,576	\$4,219
2011	\$3,380	\$3,270	\$3,511	\$4,127	\$4,167	\$3,331	.	\$3,733
2012	\$4,060	\$3,366	\$4,374	\$3,856	.	.	.	\$4,236
Overall	\$3,629	\$3,106	\$3,645	\$3,675	\$4,177	\$4,282	\$4,586	\$4,044
Qualified for UI Benefits:								
2009	34.7%	.	.	33.1%	40.9%	41.7%	44.9%	40.4%
2010	34.5%	.	.	31.1%	41.2%	45.1%	41.1%	38.3%
2011	29.2%	.	.	36.2%	41.8%	42.9%	.	39.1%
2012	41.4%	.	.	46.4%	43.5%	.	.	44.2%
Overall	34.0%	.	.	36.2%	41.5%	43.3%	43.5%	39.6%
Filed UI Claim:								
2009	2.95%	3.15%	0.79%	2.36%	2.36%	0.79%	0.79%	1.38%
2010	3.57%	5.88%	0.84%	1.68%	1.68%	2.65%	0.00%	2.01%
2011	2.96%	1.61%	3.76%	2.16%	2.20%	0.00%	.	2.26%
2012	4.76%	1.90%	1.90%	5.15%	4.35%	.	.	1.36%
Overall	3.45%	2.98%	2.05%	2.65%	2.22%	1.38%	0.50%	1.79%

Source: Austin Academy participant records and Texas Workforce Commission UI wage and claim records.

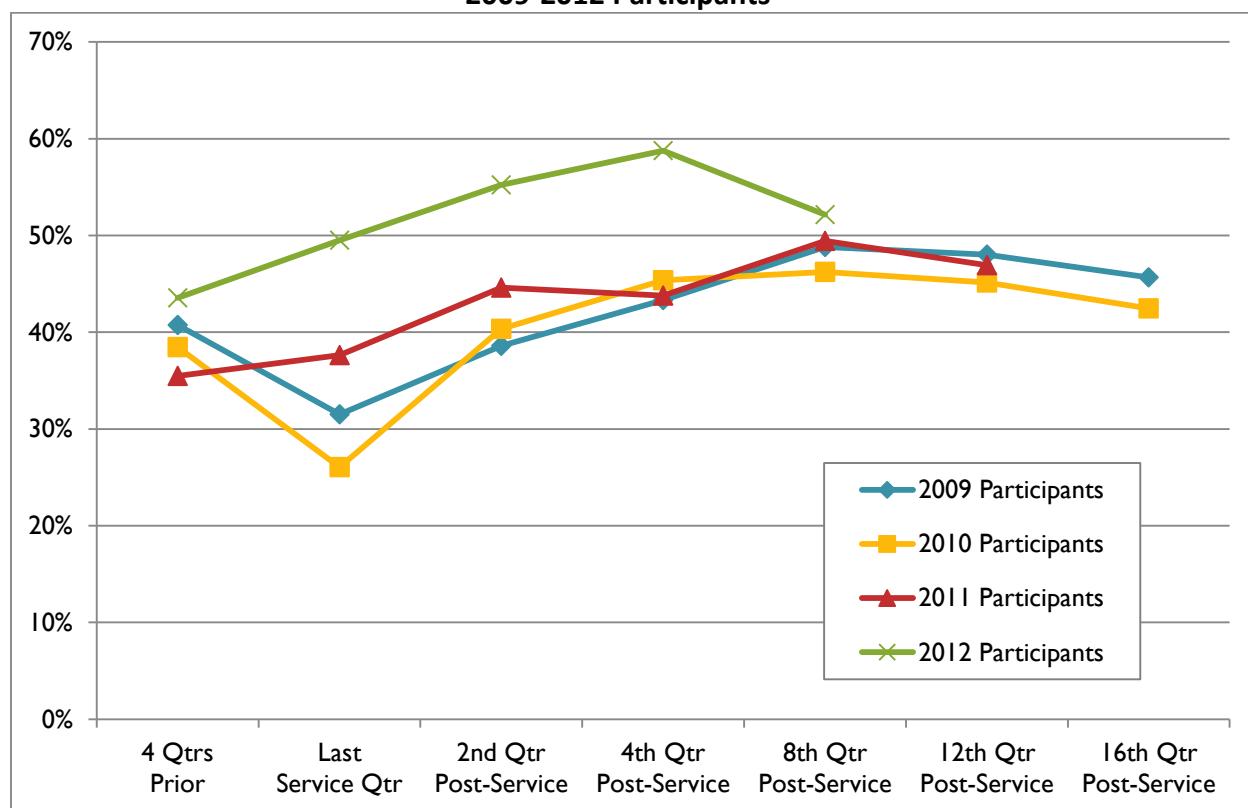
Note: A dot represents too few participants, no data to report, or insufficient time passing to report for the timeframe.

^a Participants were counted as employed if they were found in Texas UI wage records. Those who were not found may be unemployed, employed outside of Texas, or employed in Texas in a position that is not reported to TWC.

⁵ Thirty records were removed from analyses due to missing Social Security numbers.

In the four quarters prior to entering the Ascend program, quarterly employment in a UI-covered job in Texas of 2009 to 2012 participants was 39%. Following a drop during the in-training period, employment rebounded in the second post-service quarter, reaching roughly 49% overall by the eighth post-service quarter (two years after the last date of service). In all post-service quarters through June 2014, employment averaged approximately 46%. Figure 4 below illustrates quarterly employment outcomes for Ascend participants.

Figure 4. Average Quarterly Employment of Ascend Center for Learning 2009-2012 Participants^a

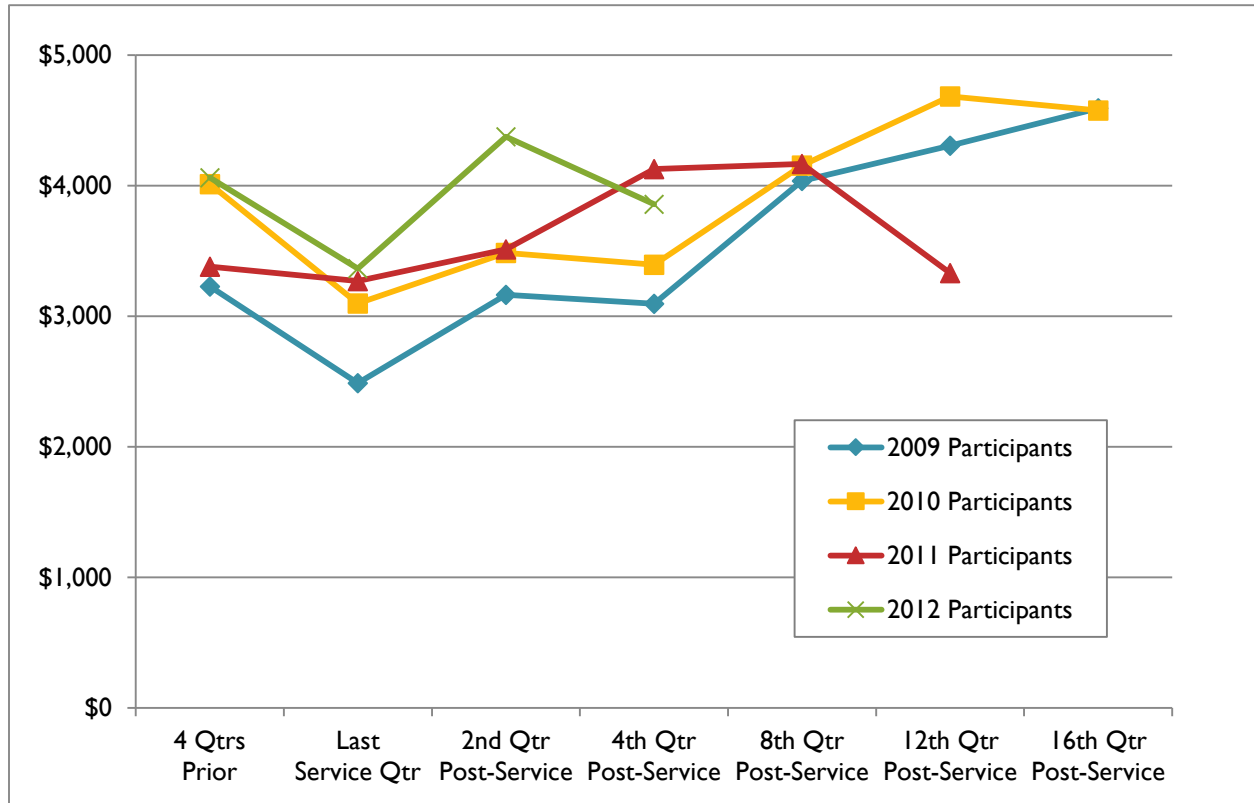


^a Participants were counted as employed if they were found in Texas UI wage records. Those who were not found may be unemployed, employed outside of Texas, or employed in Texas in a position that is not reported to TWC.

Average quarterly earnings in the four quarters prior to entering training were \$3,629 across all annual cohorts. One year after leaving the Ascend program, average quarterly earnings were about the same as pre-service earnings (at \$3,675). Overall, the groups for which longer-term data are available show increased earnings in the second to fourth years post-service. Across all post-service quarters through June 2014, quarterly earnings for employed

participants averaged roughly \$4,044. Figure 5 illustrates the average quarterly earnings of Ascend’s 2009-2012 participants.

Figure 5. Average Quarterly Earnings of Employed Ascend Center for Learning 2009-2012 Participants



Approximately one-third of Ascend’s 2009-2012 participants met the monetary eligibility requirements for UI benefits based on their earnings and employment history in the four quarters prior to entry. In the fourth post-service quarter, roughly 36% of all participants met the monetary eligibility requirements. The percent that met these requirements continued to rise in subsequent post-service quarters. Across all post-service quarters, almost 40% of Ascend Center for Learning participants met the requirements based on earnings and employment. In the year prior to entering the program, roughly 3.5% of Ascend participants filed a claim for UI benefits. Across all post-service quarters, fewer than 2% of participants had filed a UI benefit claim.

Program Impacts

Table 4 presents findings from the impacts analysis comparing the outcomes of the Ascend 2011 cohort to the outcomes of a matched comparison group. Valid comparison groups for the 2009, 2010 and 2012 cohorts were not able to be formed. Based on this limited data, participation was not positively associated with any of the four outcomes of interest; participation was actually negatively associated with quarterly earnings.

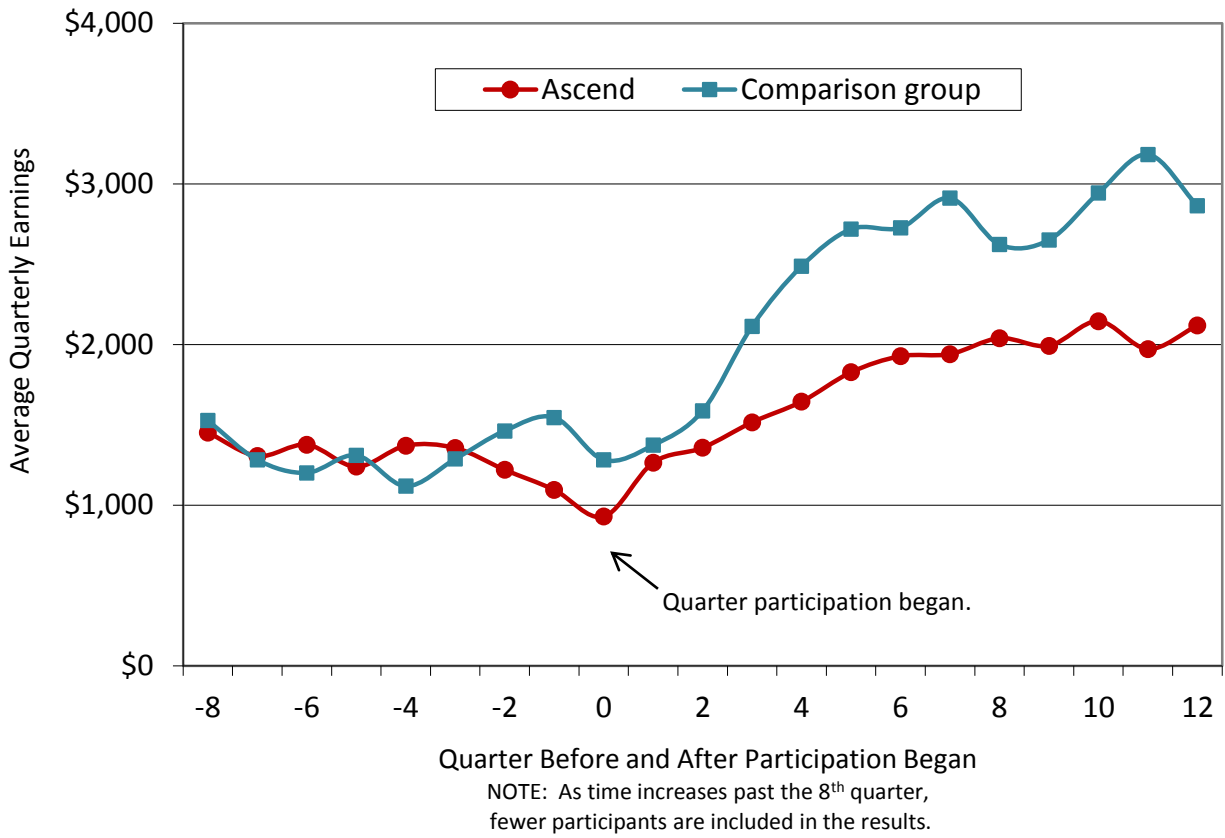
Table 4. Ascend Center for Learning 2011 Quarterly Impacts

Impact Measure	All Qtrs Post-Service: Comparison Group	All Qtrs Post-Service: Ascend Participant	Unadjusted Net Effect	Impact Measure
Quarterly Employment	50.9%	46.8%	-4.1%	0.7%
Average Quarterly Earnings	\$4,722	\$3,733	-\$989	-\$1,194**
Qualified for UI Benefits	46.6%	39.1%	-7.4%	0.0%
Filed UI Claim	2.32%	2.26%	-0.06%	0.45%

Note: **=significant at p<.01

In Figure 6 below, the impact of participation in Ascend is examined by looking at participants' earnings over time, regardless of employment status (i.e., unconditional earnings), in relation to the comparison group's unconditional earnings. The analysis shows that Ascend participants did not fare as well in average quarterly wages as did the comparison group in all quarters after beginning the program.

Figure 6. Unconditional Earnings Over Time, Ascend Center for Learning’s Participants vs. Comparison Group



The mission of the Austin Area Urban League is to assist African-Americans and other under-served residents in the achievement of societal and economic equality by focusing on educational improvement, employment readiness, health and wellness, and the preservation of affordable housing.

AAUL has recently revamped its workforce training program with a new emphasis on helping individuals attain certifications and credentials valued by employers.

Travis County invested \$45,744 annually in AAUL during the 2009-12 period; though it should be noted that 2012 services were only provided in two full quarters.



Austin Area
Urban League

For more information visit:
<http://www.aaul.org/>

AUSTIN AREA URBAN LEAGUE

Workforce Development Programs and Services

The Austin Area Urban League (AAUL) offers four main programs through its contract with Travis County: Essential Office Skills (EOS) classes; GED exam preparation classes; life skills workshops; and job placement assistance. The approach of the AAUL program is to “meet the participant where they are” and help them to build the skills they need for employment.

Essential Office Skills classes focus on developing computer skills, with a particular focus on the Microsoft Office software suite and Internet/email basics. The curriculum includes Workplace Literacy training, such as business math and business communications (both verbal and written). The training also exposes participants to office technology, such as multi-line phone systems and fax/copy machines.

Life skills workshops focus on soft skills to “assist youth and adults in altering those negative patterns of behaviors that create barriers to their success.”⁶ The Job Resource Center provides resume writing, interviewing, and job search best practices training, as well as job leads and referrals. While AAUL does not target any particular industry or occupation, the organization has established relationships with hiring managers in healthcare, insurance, customer service, construction, and education among other fields. The Essential Office Skills Training “model was revamped [in 2012] to align with the Workforce and Education Readiness Continuum (WERC) program funded by the City of Austin. The

⁶ Austin Area Urban League. <http://www.aaul.org/programs/workforce-development.html>. Accessed: 10.28.2013.

existing workforce development program ended after the first quarter of 2012 and the new Essential Office Skills Training program began during the second quarter of 2012. The first reported class enrolled in this revised program in September 2012.”⁷

Participants are typically engaged for several weeks in an AAUL program. The computer classes are offered in 6-week sessions – five hours daily for the daytime classes; three hours daily for the evening classes. Life skills workshops are offered every Wednesday during the daytime computer class for one to two hours each session. The GED program is three days per week, 3.5 hours each day.

Support Services

AAUL works to connect participants with resources in the community, including Dress for Success for female participants and various faith-based agencies for interview and work clothes for male participants. Born Again Ministries is a key resource for transitional housing for men who have been released from incarceration. Bus passes are also provided if funding is available.

Participant Profile

AAUL participants must be residents of Travis County and have a family income at or below 200% of the Federal Income Poverty Guideline Level. Roughly half (50.3%) of the 1,925⁸ participants in the evaluation for the 2009-2012 period were male. Approximately 67% of participants were African-American. The average age of participants was 36. Participants served were primarily from east, northeast, and north Austin.

Participant Outcomes

Table 5 provides an overview of AAUL participant outcomes for the study period. Quarterly employment was approximately 48% for AAUL participants in the four quarters prior to program entry. Across all post-service quarters, almost 55% of AAUL participants were employed. Employment outcomes are also illustrated in Figure 7.

⁷ Lyman, Lawrence. “Workforce Development.” *2012 Community Impact Report*. P. 28.

⁸ Five records were removed from analyses due to missing Social Security Numbers (SSN); 118 were removed due to duplication or other concerns with the SSN.

Table 5. Austin Area Urban League 2009-2012 Participant Outcomes^a

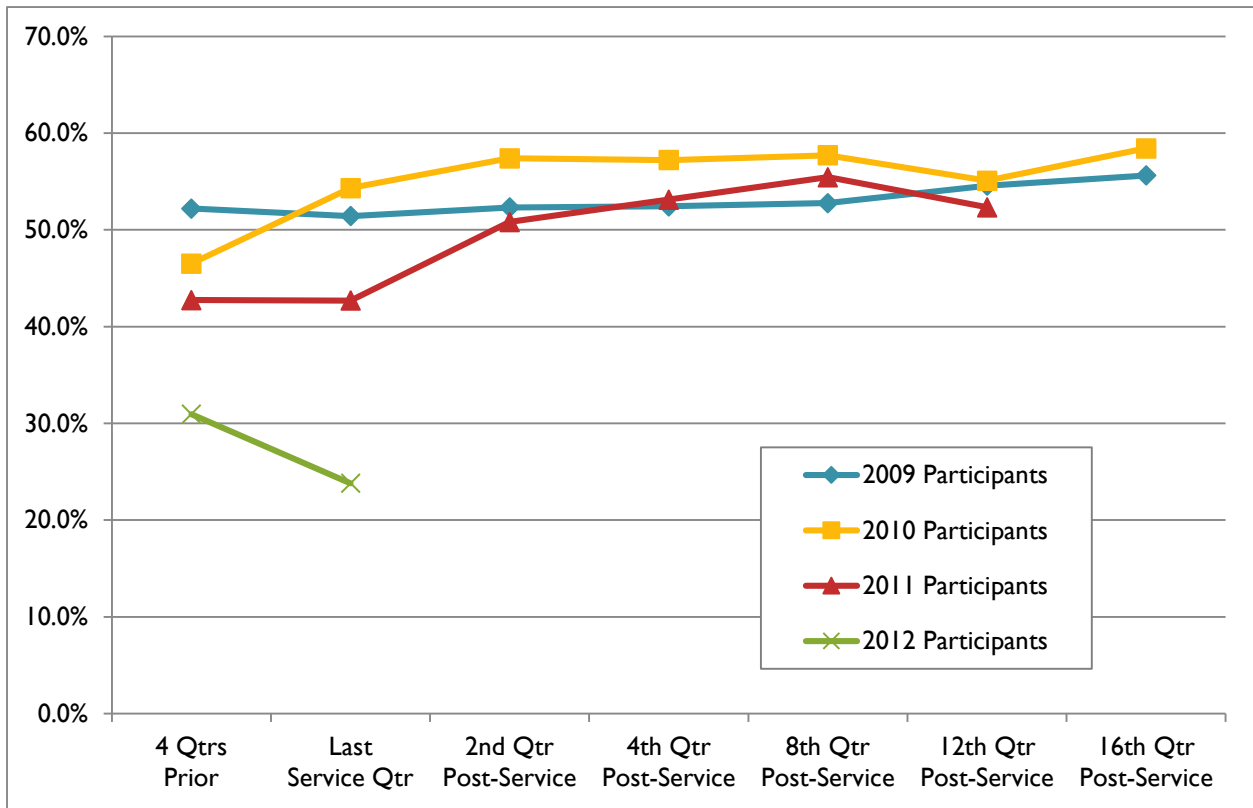
Cohort Outcome Measure	Four Qtrs Before Service	Last Qtr of Service	2nd Qtr Post-Service	4th Qtr Post-Service	8th Qtr Post-Service	12th Qtr Post-Service	16th Qtr Post-Service	All Post-Service Qtrs
Quarterly Employment:								
2009	52.2%	51.4%	52.3%	52.4%	52.8%	54.6%	55.6%	54.0%
2010	46.5%	54.3%	57.4%	57.2%	57.7%	55.1%	58.4%	56.9%
2011	42.8%	42.7%	50.8%	53.1%	55.5%	52.3%	.	53.5%
2012	31.0%	23.8%	42.9%	38.1%	.	.	.	41.6%
Overall	48.1%	50.1%	53.4%	53.9%	54.9%	54.4%	55.9%	54.7%
Average Qtrly Earnings:								
2009	\$4,183	\$3,767	\$4,499	\$4,494	\$5,097	\$5,400	\$5,662	\$5,105
2010	\$4,320	\$3,996	\$4,389	\$5,045	\$5,301	\$5,697	\$5,292	\$5,208
2011	\$4,152	\$3,027	\$3,762	\$4,175	\$4,751	\$4,739	.	\$4,444
2012	\$5,202	.	.	.	.	.	.	\$3,388
Overall	\$4,225	\$3,707	\$4,288	\$4,594	\$5,084	\$5,390	\$5,619	\$5,013
Qualified for UI Benefits:								
2009	47.2%	.	.	47.8%	48.0%	50.6%	50.0%	49.0%
2010	45.9%	.	.	51.1%	52.1%	50.9%	50.5%	51.4%
2011	37.9%	.	.	40.1%	48.3%	50.9%	.	45.4%
2012	38.1%	.	.	33.3%	.	.	.	38.1%
Overall	44.7%	.	.	46.9%	49.3%	50.7%	50.1%	49.1%
Filed UI Claim:								
2009	5.44%	3.17%	2.60%	4.42%	2.94%	1.95%	2.00%	2.94%
2010	5.48%	3.40%	3.74%	3.23%	3.40%	3.72%	0.00%	3.19%
2011	4.58%	6.03%	3.02%	2.78%	2.32%	1.40%	.	2.90%
2012	4.76%	4.76%	4.76%	0.00%	.	.	.	1.60%
Overall	5.25%	3.90%	3.07%	3.64%	2.94%	2.36%	1.78%	3.00%

Source: Austin Area Urban League participant records and Texas Workforce Commission UI wage and claim records.

Note: A dot represents too few participants, no data to report, or insufficient time passing to report for the timeframe.

^a Participants were counted as employed if they were found in Texas UI wage records. Those who were not found may be unemployed, employed outside of Texas, or employed in Texas in a position that is not reported to TWC.

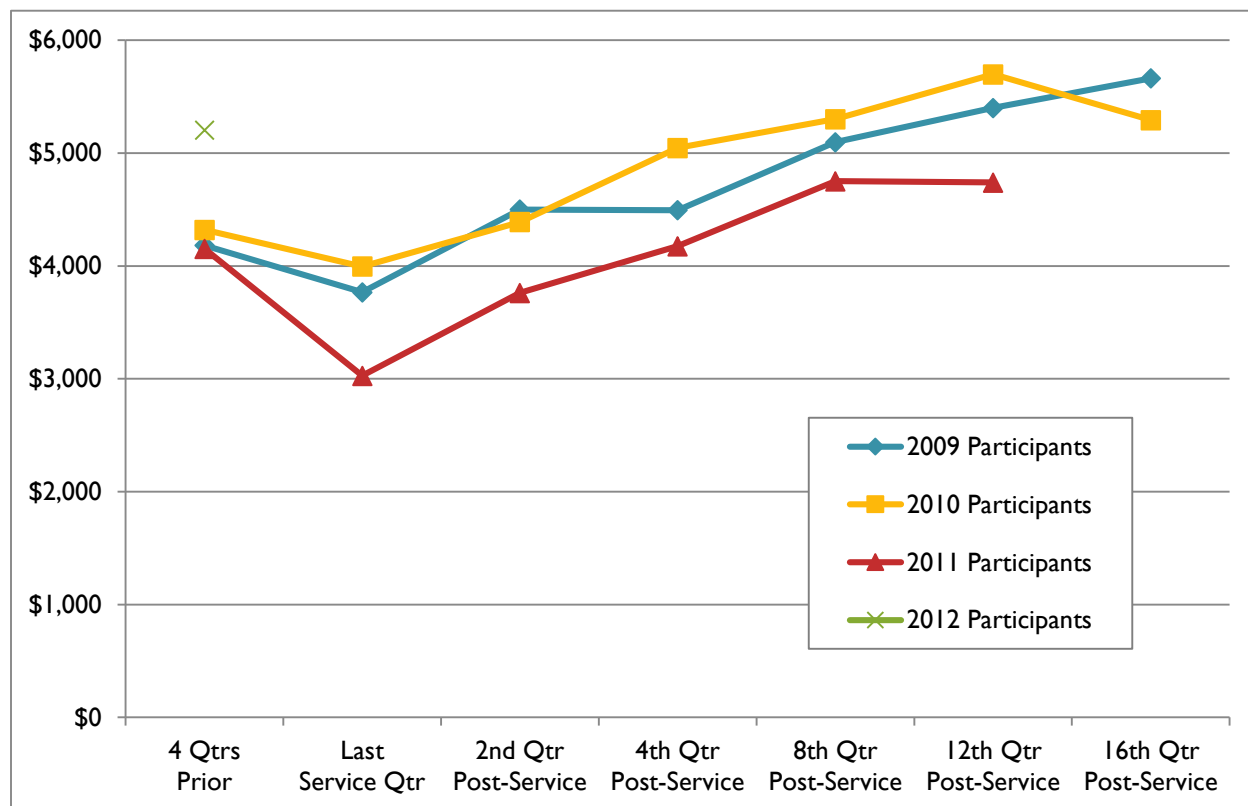
Figure 7. Average Quarterly Employment for 2009-2012 AAUL Participants^a



^a Participants were counted as employed if they were found in Texas UI wage records. Those who were not found may be unemployed, employed outside of Texas, or employed in Texas in a position that is not reported to TWC.

Average quarterly earnings of employed AAUL participants were up, on average, in all post-service quarters in comparison to the pre-service period. Figure 8 below illustrates the earnings outcomes of AAUL’s 2009-2012 participants.

Figure 8. Average Quarterly Earnings of Employed AAUL Participants



Also up in the post-service period was the share of AAUL participants meeting monetary eligibility requirements for UI benefits. Across all post-service quarters the share averaged 49% in comparison to an average 45% in the four quarters prior to program entry. The share of AAUL participants filing a claim for UI benefits was down to an average 3% in the post-service period from an average high of 5.25% in the four quarters prior to service.

Program Impacts

Table 6 presents findings from the impacts analysis comparing the outcomes of the 2010-2012 cohorts of AAUL to the outcomes of a matched comparison group (a valid comparison group for the 2009 cohort was not feasible). Participation was positively associated

with one of the four outcomes of interest: a one percentage point decrease in the share that filed for UI benefits.

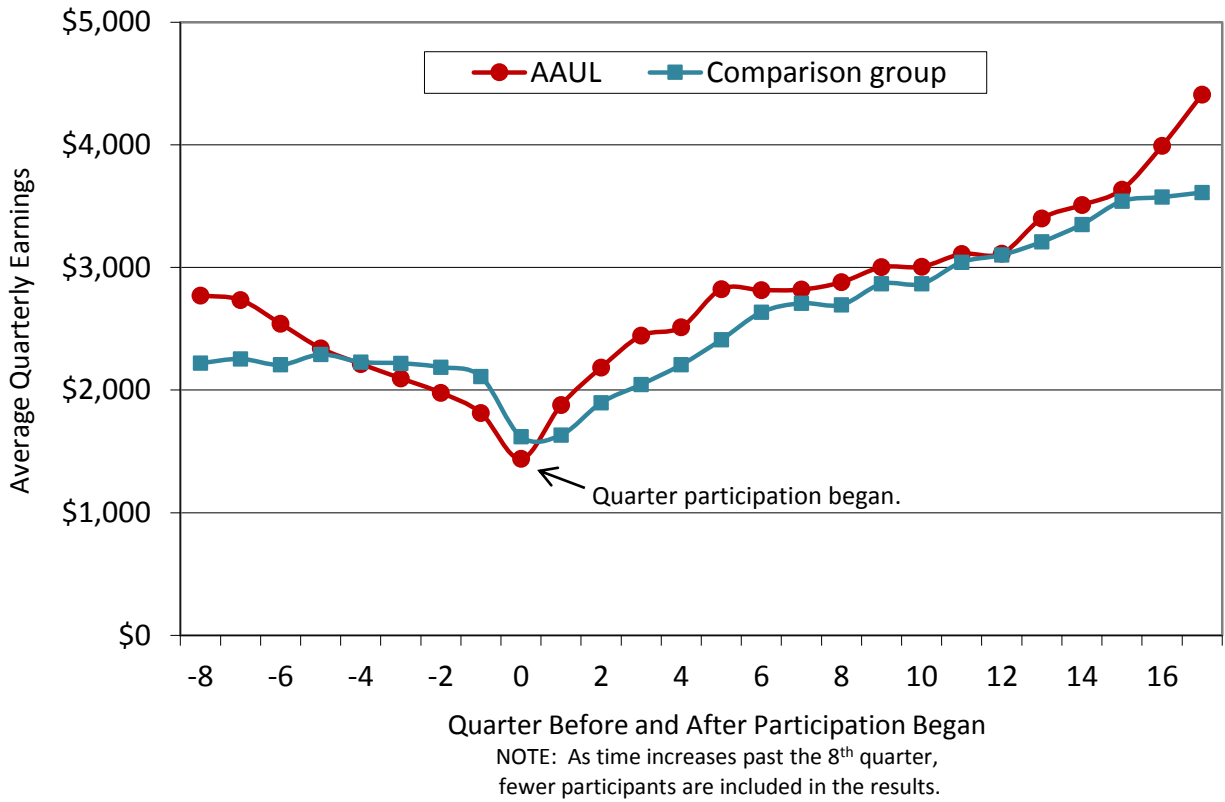
Table 6. Austin Area Urban League 2010-2012 Quarterly Impacts

Impact Measure	All Qtrs Post-Service: Comparison Group	All Qtrs Post-Service: AAUL Participant	Unadjusted Net Effect	Impact Measure
Quarterly Employment	52.8%	55.5%	2.7%	0.8%
Average Quarterly Earnings	\$4,858	\$4,914	\$56	-\$76
Qualified for UI Benefits	48.1%	49.2%	1.1%	0.0%
Filed UI Claim	4.17%	3.06%	-1.11%	-0.95%**

Note: **=significant at $p < .01$

In Figure 9 below, the impact of participation in AAUL is examined by looking at participants' earnings over time, regardless of employment status (i.e., unconditional earnings), in relation to the comparison group's unconditional earnings. The analysis shows that AAUL participants have equaled or out-earned the comparison group in every quarter since starting the AAUL program.

Figure 9. Unconditional Earnings Over Time, AAUL Participants vs. Comparison Group



Capital IDEA provides long-term training in high-wage, high-demand occupations. The mission of the organization is to “sponsor educational opportunities for low-earning adults that lead to life-long financial independence.”*

As a sectoral workforce development program, Capital IDEA collaborates with employers and training providers to help prepare participants for good jobs with family-supporting wages and benefits

In 2009 to 2011, Travis County invested \$700,213 annually in Capital IDEA. In 2012, the program was funded at \$800,000 plus an additional \$113,869 for a Prerequisite Enrollment program based on unspent 2011 funding.

*Capital IDEA 2012 flyer.



For more information visit:
www.capitalidea.org

CAPITAL IDEA

Workforce Development Programs and Services

Capital IDEA is a sectoral workforce development program, offering training in nursing, allied health, skilled trades, utilities, information and electronic technologies, and other fields. Healthcare occupations accounted for approximately 58% of the training that study participants were enrolled in. Each program supported at Capital IDEA is one identified by employers as an occupation in high-demand paying \$16 or more per hour.

Capital IDEA carefully screens applicants for suitability with its intensive program design. Programming includes the College Prep Academy (described below), weekly group sessions with a Career Navigator (case manager/counselor) and other participants, and occupational skills training. Eligibility for the program includes at least a 5th grade skill level in reading and math and a high school diploma or GED. The College Prep Academy is an intensive 6.5 hour per day, five-day a week program to build math, reading, writing, and study skills. Less than 10% of participants require more than one semester of the academy; those that do repeat typically need additional support in math. Twice a week, time is dedicated to tutoring, advising, or other activities. In the fourth quarter of 2012, Capital IDEA invested additional County funding in a Prerequisite Enrollment program. The program helped participants research their chosen careers, provided hands-on case management, and partnered with

ACC instructors to identify barriers to academic success and provide timely interventions.⁹

One of the primary activities in Capital IDEA is the weekly one-hour peer support group session led by a Career Navigator. Topics for these sessions are driven by student needs and their ability to navigate the college experience. Navigators meet individually with participants at the start of each semester to make sure they get off on the right track.

Capital IDEA covers all tuition, fees and books, and provides financial assistance towards the costs of childcare. The program also covers the cost of uniforms, shoes, tools, training software, and anything required on a class syllabus. Participants are encouraged to manage their own self-sufficiency by working part-time during training. Financial literacy is a core skill participants develop through Capital IDEA. Financial aid and budgeting are important topics that help participants stay focused on the training plan.

Support Services

The majority of Capital IDEA training is delivered by Austin Community College (ACC). ACC students have a “green pass” which entitles them to free bus, rail, and Express Bus services in the region for the entire semester. College Prep Academy participants, who are not ACC students, are provided bus passes or emergency gas cards if they have a particularly lengthy commute.

Participants receive Wal-Mart gift cards to purchase school supplies including backpacks, printer ink, and paper. The program also covers the cost of other services important to learning, such as eye examinations and eyeglasses, if needed. Emergency utility vouchers, and mortgage and rent assistance are also available on a case-by-case basis.

Capital IDEA refers participants to Workforce Solutions for child care services. For parents who do not receive support through Workforce Solutions, Capital IDEA offers the following support based on income level: If the participant’s family income is under 100% of the Federal Poverty Level, then Capital IDEA covers 100% of allowable childcare cost; if the participant’s family income is over 100% of FPL, then parents pay 20% of the allowable childcare cost, plus any difference above allowable cost. Many of the participant parents have school-aged children, so the required care is typically before/after school rather than full-day.

⁹ Lyman. (2013). P. 40

Capital IDEA has a robust network of informal and formal relationships with social service providers. Participants in need of mental health counseling may be referred to the Samaritan Center. Other partners include Dress for Success and other sources for interview clothes, Blue/Brown Santa, food bank, Housing Authority and Foundation Communities, SafePlace, and many others. Co-location at the ACC Eastview Campus Workforce Center has improved connections between the local WIA program and Capital IDEA and helps to build partnerships and resource connections.

Participant Profile

More than half (54%) of the 1,678 Capital IDEA participants included in this analysis were female (63%). Black, Hispanic, and Other participants each represent approximately one-fifth of Capital IDEA participants, however, a significant share (24%) are missing data on this variable. Approximately 67% were between 20 and 39 years of age. The majority (62%) started Capital IDEA with a high school diploma or GED.

Participant Outcomes

Table 7 below provides an overview of labor market outcomes for Capital IDEA participants. The evaluation includes participants who started in Capital IDEA between 2003 and 2012 who either completed training or who left prior to completion. Some Capital IDEA completers can be in the program for four or more years; non-completers were typically in the program for more than one quarter. It should be noted, therefore, that participants from the more recent years who are included in this report are more likely to be ones who dropped out of the program rather than those who completed training. Given changes in the Austin-area labor market, the evaluation of longer-term outcomes from Capital IDEA participation is further divided into two groups in the following analysis: participants who entered training prior to the Great Recession (2003-2008), and those who entered afterwards (2009-2012).

Table 7. Capital IDEA 2003-2012 Participant Outcomes ^a

Cohort Outcome Measure		Four Qtrs Before Service	Last Qtr of Service	2nd Qtr Post-Service	4th Qtr Post-Service	8th Qtr Post-Service	12th Qtr Post-Service	16th Qtr Post-Service	All Qtrs Post-Service
Quarterly Employment:	2003	67.8%	73.3%	74.9%	75.1%	79.0%	80.7%	78.2%	73.9%
	2004	65.1%	74.8%	73.7%	78.0%	75.2%	73.9%	75.2%	75.6%
	2005	68.0%	75.1%	85.0%	84.9%	78.7%	79.4%	83.1%	79.9%
	2006	72.2%	75.7%	81.0%	83.3%	79.3%	75.3%	78.2%	77.4%
	2007	64.4%	65.1%	68.9%	69.3%	70.1%	66.0%	70.5%	68.1%
	2008	66.7%	62.8%	63.0%	67.3%	71.4%	67.9%	68.2%	69.1%
	2009	67.2%	69.4%	73.3%	75.9%	64.8%	66.9%	67.4%	69.7%
	2010	64.2%	66.0%	70.5%	69.5%	78.7%	80.4%	84.6%	73.7%
	2011	54.5%	60.7%	66.7%	60.5%	69.4%	.	.	63.7%
	2012	58.2%	65.5%	75.0%	.	.	.	.	61.2%
	Overall	66.8%	70.1%	74.1%	75.6%	74.6%	73.9%	75.9%	74.0%
Average Quarterly Earnings:	2003	\$4,331	\$4,473	\$6,743	\$7,306	\$8,126	\$8,052	\$8,914	\$8,534
	2004	\$4,195	\$3,844	\$5,839	\$6,521	\$7,326	\$7,940	\$8,228	\$8,001
	2005	\$4,699	\$4,601	\$6,702	\$7,052	\$7,911	\$8,601	\$8,558	\$8,205
	2006	\$4,460	\$4,463	\$6,866	\$7,442	\$8,314	\$8,775	\$9,022	\$8,189
	2007	\$4,549	\$4,341	\$7,379	\$7,892	\$7,959	\$7,834	\$8,221	\$8,042
	2008	\$4,813	\$4,858	\$5,757	\$6,379	\$6,311	\$6,921	\$6,517	\$6,406
	2009	\$4,804	\$4,925	\$5,363	\$5,636	\$6,717	\$6,812	\$6,539	\$6,001
	2010	\$4,933	\$5,631	\$5,459	\$5,899	\$6,512	\$6,171	\$7,336	\$6,289
	2011	\$4,746	\$4,206	\$5,118	\$5,121	\$3,734	.	.	\$4,467
	2012	\$3,701	\$4,600	\$4,077	.	.	.	.	\$4,050
	Overall	\$4,569	\$4,594	\$6,283	\$6,805	\$7,456	\$7,886	\$8,278	\$7,785

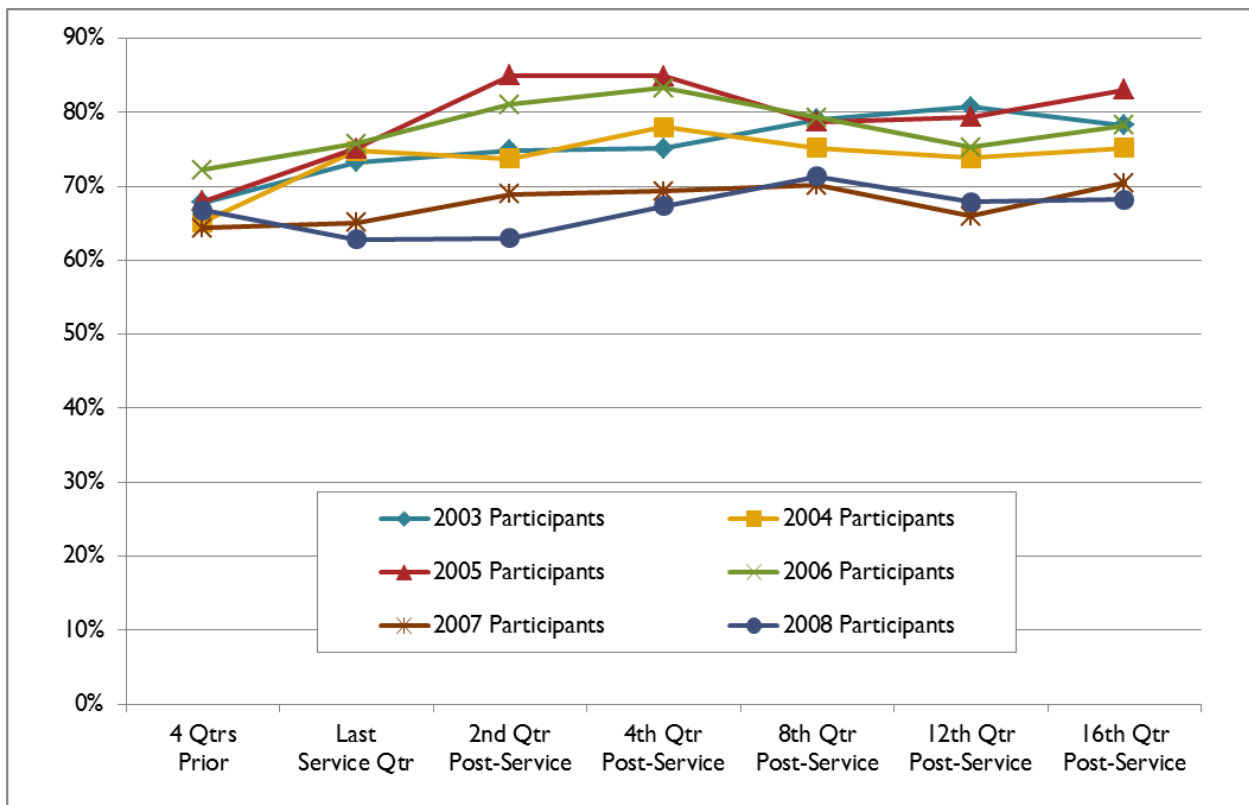
Cohort Outcome Measure		Four Qtrs Before Service	Last Qtr of Service	2nd Qtr Post- Service	4th Qtr Post- Service	8th Qtr Post- Service	12th Qtr Post- Service	16th Qtr Post- Service	All Qtrs Post- Service
Qualified for UI Benefits:	2003	66.3%	.	.	71.2%	74.7%	75.9%	76.4%	72.0%
	2004	59.9%	.	.	73.7%	76.9%	74.8%	73.4%	74.3%
	2005	60.5%	.	.	83.3%	80.9%	76.6%	83.1%	79.0%
	2006	64.2%	.	.	80.2%	78.9%	74.9%	75.2%	75.2%
	2007	55.9%	.	.	66.9%	68.2%	67.4%	65.9%	65.3%
	2008	60.9%	.	.	63.4%	68.8%	67.3%	64.3%	66.3%
	2009	59.8%	.	.	68.9%	68.3%	66.2%	65.2%	67.1%
	2010	62.6%	.	.	65.9%	73.3%	74.5%	84.6%	71.0%
	2011	49.2%	.	.	53.5%	61.1%	.	.	52.4%
	2012	52.3%	.	.	.	.	.	.	.
	Overall	60.8%	.	.	71.7%	73.7%	72.4%	73.6%	72.3%
Filed UI Claim:	2003	5.28%	0.86%	0.87%	0.87%	2.18%	1.32%	1.33%	2.04%
	2004	2.94%	2.52%	1.69%	2.54%	4.27%	2.70%	2.75%	2.12%
	2005	3.24%	1.04%	1.04%	1.04%	3.19%	3.26%	3.39%	2.42%
	2006	2.30%	1.10%	1.49%	1.52%	2.34%	2.43%	1.28%	1.98%
	2007	2.22%	1.78%	1.83%	3.68%	3.90%	1.36%	1.52%	1.65%
	2008	3.67%	1.38%	3.32%	2.93%	3.13%	3.70%	1.55%	1.98%
	2009	4.96%	1.29%	1.33%	1.89%	2.51%	2.16%	1.12%	2.08%
	2010	5.41%	1.03%	3.41%	2.44%	2.67%	1.96%	0.00%	1.68%
	2011	4.92%	1.64%	3.70%	0.00%	0.00%	.	.	1.55%
	2012	4.09%	3.64%	7.14%	.	.	.	.	1.72%
	2013	3.76%	1.40%	1.90%	1.91%	2.83%	2.35%	1.78%	2.04%

Source: Capital IDEA participant records and Texas Workforce Commission UI wage records.

Note: A dot represents too few participants, no data to report, or insufficient time passing to report for the timeframe. ^a Participants were counted as employed if they were found in Texas UI wage records. Those who were not found may be unemployed, employed outside of Texas, or employed in Texas in a position that is not reported to TWC.

In the four quarters prior to enrolling in Capital IDEA, quarterly employment was roughly 67%. In the last quarter of participation, that rate rose to 70%. As illustrated in Figure 10, participants from 2003 to 2006 continued to exhibit strong employment levels (above 75%) at 16 quarters (four years) post-service and across all post-service quarters through June 2014, ranging from 74-80%. Employment for the 2007-2008 cohorts was slightly lower than the prior cohorts in all time periods. This may reflect the difficult times of the Great Recession; however, this group maintained lower employment rates even after the recession officially ended.

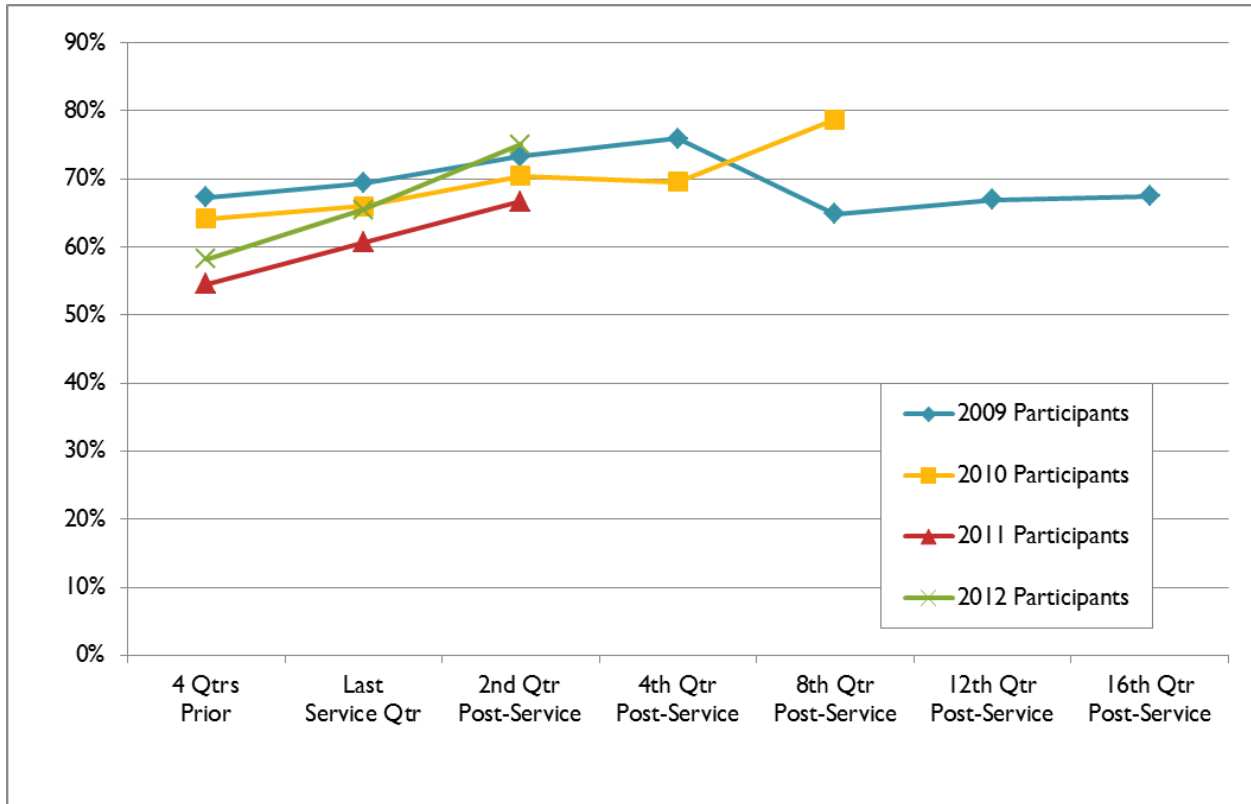
Figure 10. Average Quarterly Employment^a for Capital IDEA’s 2003-2008 Participants



^a Participants were counted as employed if they were found in Texas UI wage records. Those who were not found may be unemployed, employed outside of Texas, or employed in Texas in a position that is not reported to TWC.

As shown in Figure 11, post-service employment for those Capital IDEA participants in the 2009-2012 cohorts averaged approximately 67%.

Figure 11. Average Quarterly Employment for Capital IDEA’s 2009-2012 Participants



Earnings in the pre-service period averaged \$4,504 for employed participants. In all post-service quarters, Capital IDEA 2003-2012 participants earned an average of \$7,785, an increase of 70% over their pre-service earnings. The earnings trajectories of Capital IDEA’s 2003-2008 participants are shown in Figure 12.

Figure 12. Average Quarterly Earnings of Employed Capital IDEA’s 2003-2008 Participants

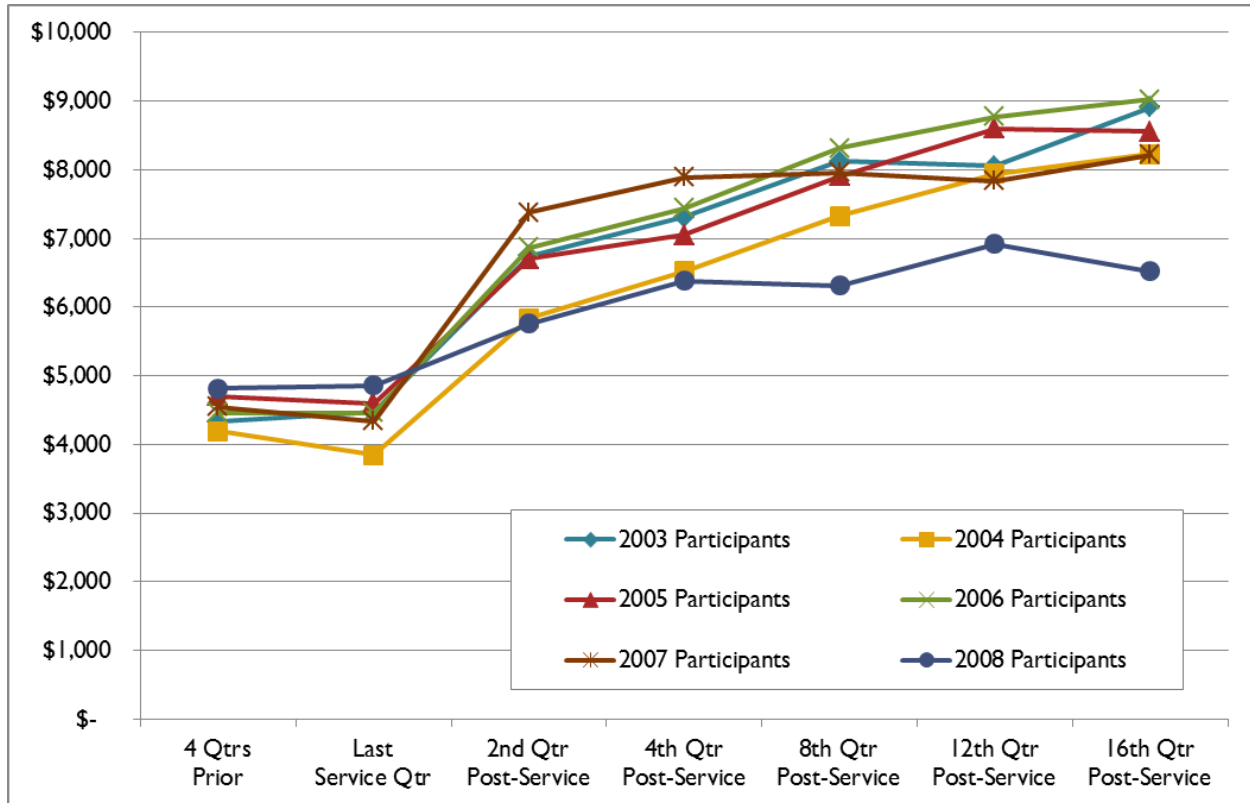
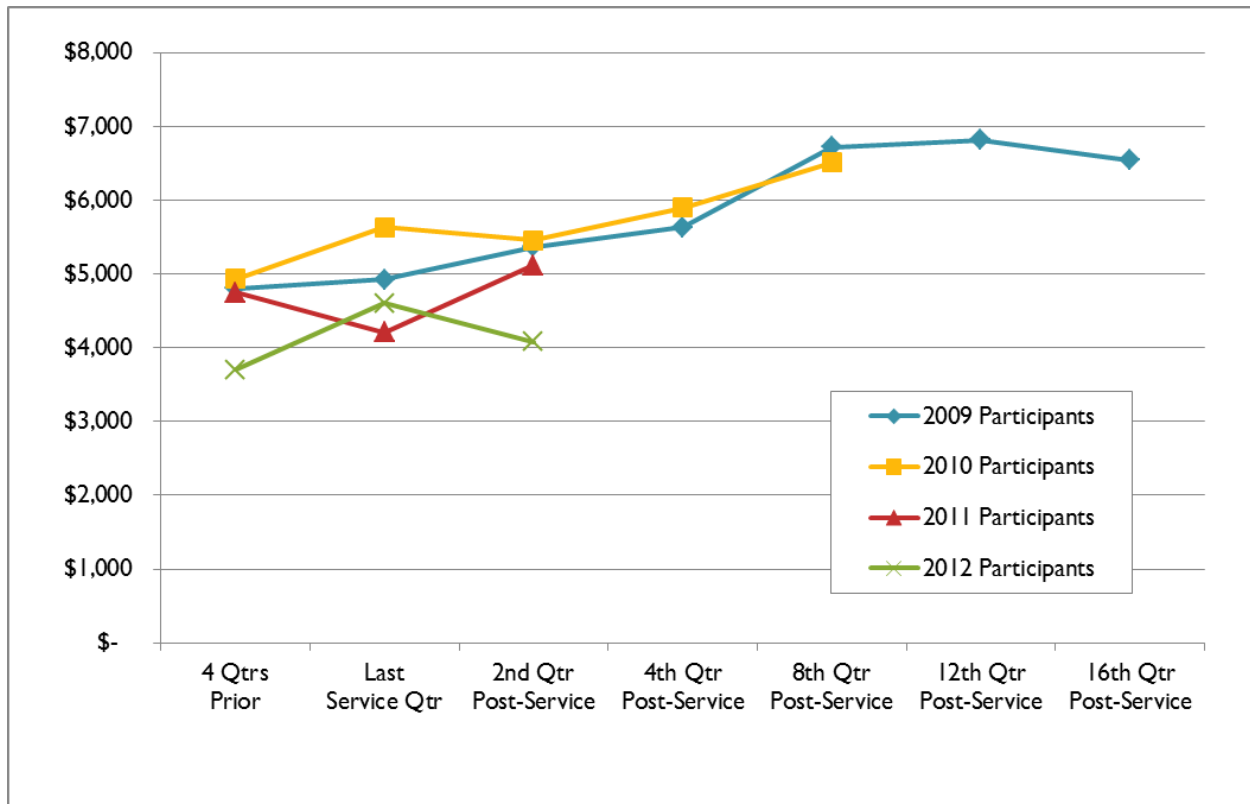


Figure 13 looks at the earnings trajectories of the more recent cohorts of Capital IDEA participants who began the program between 2009 and 2012.

Figure 13. Average Quarterly Earnings for Employed Capital IDEA’s 2009-2012 Participants



Approximately 61% of Capital IDEA participants met the monetary eligibility requirements for UI benefits in the four quarters prior to entry. Across all post-service quarters, that share rose to 72%. Almost 4% of all Capital IDEA 2003-2011 participants filed a claim for UI benefits in the pre-service period, while just 2% on average filed a claim in any post-service quarter.

Program Impacts

Table 8 presents findings from the impacts analysis comparing the outcomes of the 2003-2012 cohorts of Capital IDEA to the outcomes of a matched comparison group. In relation to the matched comparison group, Capital IDEA participants experienced significant gains in three measures: quarterly employment, average quarterly earnings of those employed, and

filing for unemployment insurance benefits. Capital IDEA participants had nearly a 2 percentage point advantage in the share employed and participants who were employed earned an average \$2,400 more in each post-service quarter than the comparison group. Participants experienced about a 4 percentage point decrease, as compared to the comparison group, in the share who filed a UI claims.

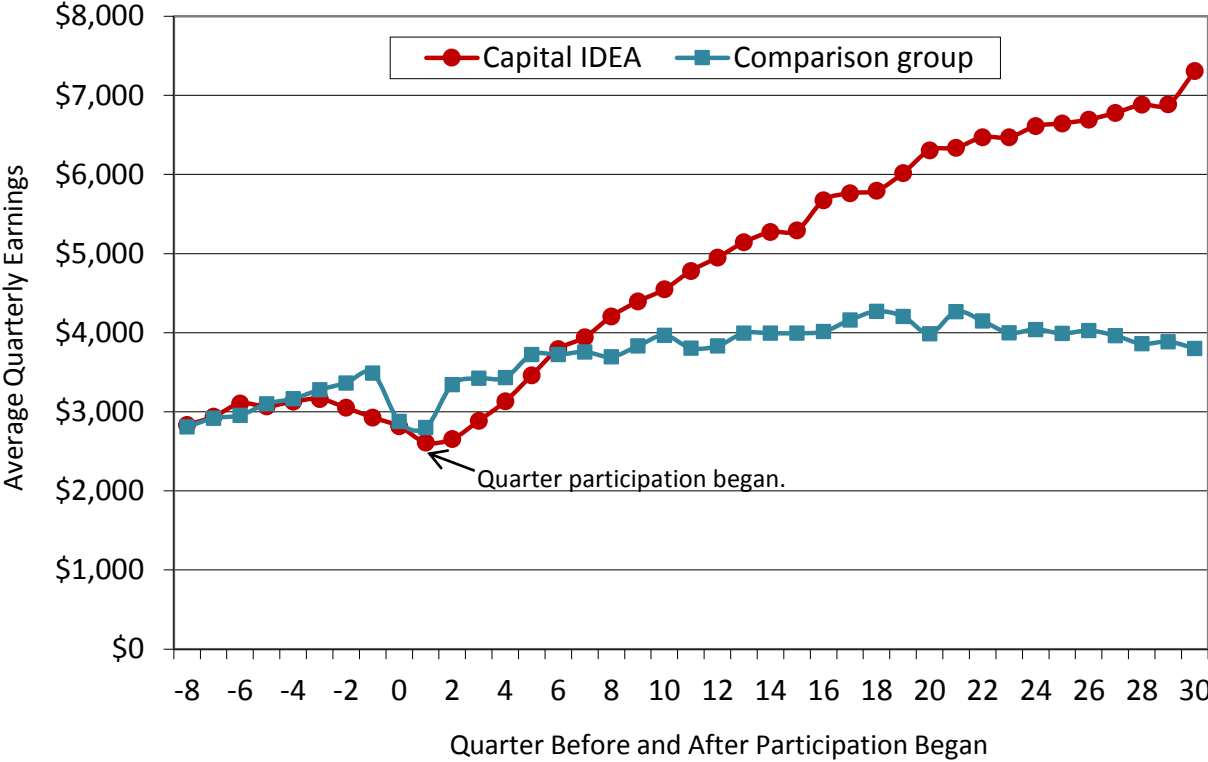
Table 8. Capital IDEA 2003-2012 Quarterly Impacts

Impact Measure	All Qtrs Post-Service: Comparison Group	All Qtrs Post-Service: Capital IDEA Participant	Unadjusted Net Effect	Impact Measure
Quarterly Employment	68.0%	75.2%	7.2%	1.9%**
Average Quarterly Earnings	\$5,599	\$8,113	\$2,514	\$2,413**
Qualified for UI Benefits	64.1%	73.8%	9.7%	0.0%
Filed UI Claim	5.47%	2.13%	-3.34%	-3.99%**

Note: **=significant at p<.01

In Figure 14 below, the impact of participation in Capital IDEA is examined by looking at participants' earnings over time, regardless of employment status (i.e., unconditional earnings), in relation to the comparison group's unconditional earnings. The analysis shows that after earning less than the comparison group for about a year after starting the program, Capital IDEA participants began out-earning the comparison group consistently for the rest of the quarters for which data is available. By the 30th quarter (about eight years) after program start, participants were earning about twice as much as their comparison group members.

Figure 14. Unconditional Earnings Over Time, Capital IDEA Participants vs. Comparison Group



NOTE: As time increases past the 8th quarter, fewer participants are included in the results.

Goodwill Industries of Central Texas provides services to ex-offenders, the homeless, individuals with disabilities, and others who face barriers in the labor market. Its mission is to help individuals generate lifelong connections to work.

Workforce programs at Goodwill include Ready to Work, Job Source, Community Rehabilitation, and WIA Youth.

From 2009 to 2012, Travis County invested \$137,439 annually in Goodwill's Ready to Work program.



<https://www.goodwillcentraltexas.org/education-job-training>

GOODWILL INDUSTRIES OF CENTRAL TEXAS

Workforce Development Programs and Services

Goodwill's Ready-to-Work program is available throughout Travis County. Adults can access this program through many service points, including the County's Community Centers. While both Travis County and the City of Austin support the program, Travis County funding is primarily targeted to support ex-offenders while city funding is used to support homeless individuals. Approximately 43 percent of individuals included in this report were ex-offenders.

The Ready-to-Work program is focused on helping individuals develop occupational skills necessary to earn growing wages. The training includes both soft and hard skills training. Soft skills training includes job search, resume, computers, and interview techniques. Hard skills training is more occupationally focused, with individuals earning certifications such as a Travis County Food Handler permit, or a Texas Commercial Driver's License (CDL). Other training prepares individuals for work in Heating, Ventilation, and Air Conditioning (HVAC) systems, office administration, and basic life-saving cardiopulmonary resuscitation (CPR) certifications.

Since 2004, Goodwill's workforce development emphasis has grown exponentially. From a staff of 7 in 2004, the team now has 70 full-time employees. During the 2009-2010 period, Goodwill shifted away from one-on-one services towards a more cohort-based approach. In a cohort model, a group of individuals start and

complete training together, allowing for the development of peer support. The work process was also re-organized by population of focus to help staff build a stronger knowledge base. Goodwill created taskforce teams that focus on specific types of offenses (for example, a sex offenders team that focuses on identifying job opportunities that meet probation/parole requirements). All Goodwill workforce staff members are certified in Offender Employment Services.

Goodwill focuses on making participants marketable. With many participants coming from prison, there is a struggle to balance their immediate need for employment with intensive case management and longer-term occupational training. Placement specialists help participants to understand that work is a way out of poverty and get their buy-in for starting the pathway to earning money and building skills. Goodwill also works with ex-offenders to develop strategies for responding to employers' questions about their criminal background. The program conducts a background check on all participants and shares the results with the participants to help them understand the information that is available to a potential employer.

The Ready-to-Work program offers classes pre- and post-release focused on peer support and mentoring. This is part of the effort towards simplifying reentry into the community. Job readiness training for ex-offenders includes information on the federal bonding program, understanding career options and limitations, and developing letters of explanation for their crimes. Goodwill also conducts outreach to employers to understand what participants need to be able to demonstrate to gain employment. Companies often have vague policies around hiring ex-offenders, and participants who try for employment but are unsuccessful may feel defeated or overwhelmed. Goodwill works to provide some hope to these individuals and develop a plan for moving forward. Goodwill helps participants recognize that there are legal work opportunities; it just takes time to pursue them.

Support Services

As part of the program, individuals can earn \$25 from Goodwill for every 30 days of employment retention. This helps to keep individuals connected to the program and involved in case management. Case managers may also provide Goodwill/Simon gift cards at their discretion. Case managers help individuals develop housing stability plans, and individuals may

receive up to \$2,000 annually in housing supports. Other services offered to Ready-to-Work participants, based on their individual needs, include transportation, help in obtaining identification cards, child care referrals, connections to food pantries, and resources for work/interview clothes.

As a result of its partnership with United Way, Goodwill has incorporated more financial education into its programs. Ready-to-Work participants are offered classes and one-on-one sessions with a financial literacy trainer, focusing on topics such as budgeting, credit repair, and the dangers of payday loans. Through its co-location with multiple partner programs around Austin, including Caritas, Any Baby Can, Safe Place, Austin-Travis County Assistance Centers, and others, Goodwill is able to help its staff build knowledge and connections that enhance referrals and supports for participants.

Participant Profile

A Goodwill participant must have a documented barrier to employment, be a County resident with income at or below 200% of the Federal Poverty Income Guideline Level, and be ready to work. The challenge is that many participants have multiple, overlapping barriers to employment, including multiple required appointments for probation, unstable housing, lack of technology skills, and lack of identification (as noted by staff, a state prison ID card is not a good employment tool).

Of the 975 participants from 2009 to 2012 in the outcomes evaluation¹⁰, a majority were White (54%) or Black (39%) with a lower share of Hispanic (20%) participants. More than half were between 30-50 years old. Almost three-fourths (73%) of Ready to Work's 2009-2012 participants in this evaluation were male. More than 90% of Ready to Work participants had income at 50% or less of FPIG.

¹⁰ A significant number of records were removed from analyses (743) due to missing Social Security numbers.

Participant Outcomes

Table 9 provides an overview of Goodwill’s 2009-2012 participant outcomes.

Table 9. Goodwill 2009-2012 Participant Outcomes ^a

Cohort Outcome Measure	Four Qtrs Before Service	Last Qtr of Service	2nd Qtr Post-Service	4th Qtr Post-Service	8th Qtr Post-Service	12th Qtr Post-Service	16th Qtr Post-Service	All Post-Service Qtrs
Quarterly Employment:								
2009	43.6%	60.4%	60.1%	57.4%	54.4%	49.8%	51.5%	53.9%
2010	34.2%	50.7%	59.2%	54.1%	51.6%	51.4%	46.8%	53.0%
2011	35.9%	59.9%	61.0%	58.8%	57.1%	.	.	58.8%
2012	36.7%	66.2%	64.9%	67.6%	.	.	.	65.4%
Overall	38.0%	57.8%	60.5%	57.5%	54.3%	50.8%	50.0%	55.0%
Average Qtrly Earnings:								
2009	\$3,471	\$3,483	\$4,136	\$4,279	\$4,947	\$5,747	\$5,410	\$4,973
2010	\$3,034	\$2,404	\$3,320	\$3,815	\$4,541	\$5,103	\$5,602	\$4,338
2011	\$3,163	\$3,932	\$4,235	\$4,603	\$5,055	.	.	\$4,706
2012	\$2,742	\$3,526	\$4,350	\$4,217	.	.	.	\$4,479
Overall	\$3,216	\$3,332	\$3,942	\$4,235	\$4,866	\$5,460	\$5,467	\$4,694
Qualified for UI Benefits:								
2009	41.5%	.	.	51.1%	48.3%	47.3%	51.1%	48.4%
2010	35.4%	.	.	45.9%	48.5%	47.8%	45.0%	46.9%
2011	31.8%	.	.	57.3%	53.1%	.	.	54.4%
2012	29.2%	.	.	63.4%	.	.	.	63.8%
Overall	36.0%	.	.	52.2%	49.8%	48.0%	49.1%	48.9%
Filed UI Claim:								
2009	4.46%	3.02%	3.63%	5.14%	3.63%	2.84%	4.26%	2.93%
2010	2.98%	2.38%	3.74%	5.78%	3.78%	2.83%	0.00%	3.27%
2011	4.01%	2.55%	2.92%	2.55%	2.45%	.	.	2.96%
2012	5.19%	3.90%	3.90%	4.23%	.	.	.	2.12%
Overall	3.94%	2.77%	3.48%	4.54%	3.31%	2.74%	2.91%	3.02%

Source: Goodwill participant records and Texas Workforce Commission UI wage and claim records.

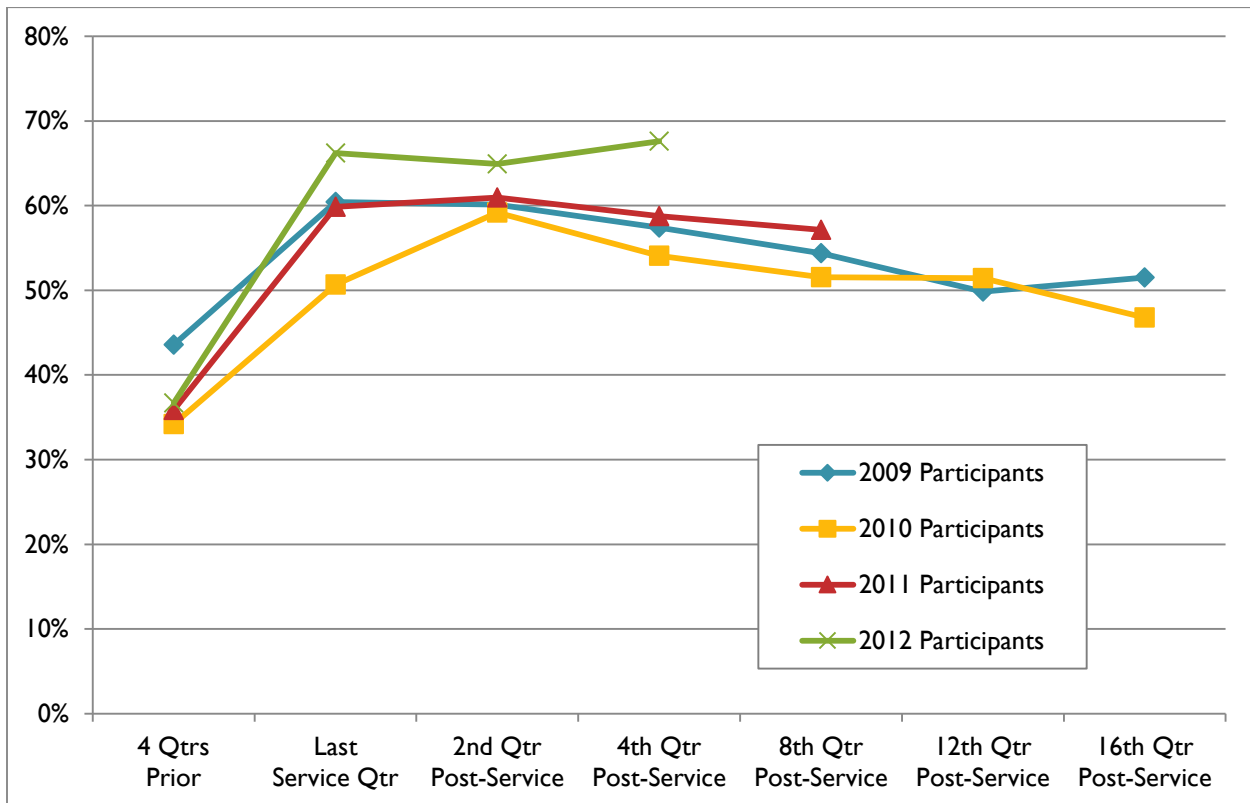
Note: A dot represents too few participants, no data to report, or insufficient time passing to report for the timeframe.

^a Participants were counted as employed if they were found in Texas UI wage records. Those who were not found may be unemployed, employed outside of Texas, or employed in Texas in a position that is not reported to TWC.

Goodwill’s 2009 participants had higher pre-program quarterly employment rates than the 2010 to 2012 groups. Participants in each year had large employment gains in the last quarter of service (a 15% point increase or more in quarterly employment). This jump in employment rates while still in training may be attributed to the program’s focus on helping

individuals find immediate employment and then transitioning to longer-term employment through better skills. Cohort employment results were mixed in the second post-service quarter. Across all post-service quarters, approximately 55% of Goodwill’s 2009-2012 participants were employed. Figure 15 illustrates the employment outcomes for Goodwill participants.

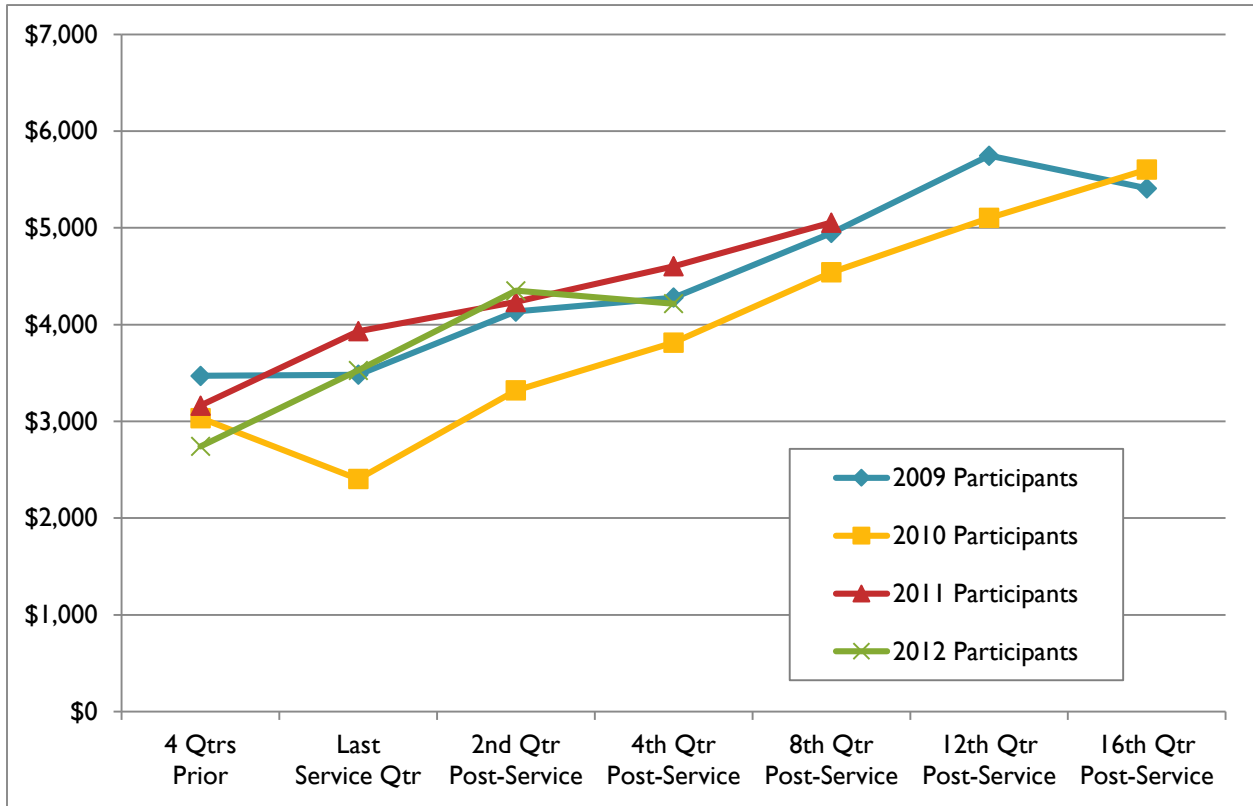
Figure 15. Average Quarterly Employment for Goodwill’s 2009-2012 Participants^a



^a Participants were counted as employed if they were found in Texas UI wage records. Those who were not found may be unemployed, employed outside of Texas, or employed in Texas in a position that is not reported to TWC.

Figure 8 illustrates the average quarterly earnings of employed Goodwill participants. The 2010 participants who were employed experienced, on average, a sizeable drop in wages during the last quarter of services, which is in stark contrast with the other three cohorts. Earnings for all groups showed gains in the post-service period, although the 2010 participants continue to be earning slightly less than the other groups.

Figure 16. Average Quarterly Earnings of Employed Goodwill 2009-2012 Participants



Roughly 36% of Goodwill participants qualified for UI benefits based on their employment and earnings histories in the pre-service period. Across all post-service quarters, the share monetarily eligible for UI benefits grew by approximately 13 percentage points to 49%.

Approximately 4% of Goodwill participants filed a claim for UI benefits in the four quarters prior to entering Goodwill training. In the post-service period, the share dropped to an average 3%.

Program Impacts

Table 10 presents findings from the impacts analysis comparing the outcomes of Goodwill’s 2009-2012 cohorts to the outcomes of a matched comparison group. Participation was positively associated with one of the four outcomes of interest, a one percentage point decrease in the share that filed for UI benefits. While participation was associated with a \$600 decrease in average quarterly earnings, the inability to measure prior incarceration (a

population specifically targeted by Goodwill) for treatment or comparison group members indicates that caution should be used when interpreting results.

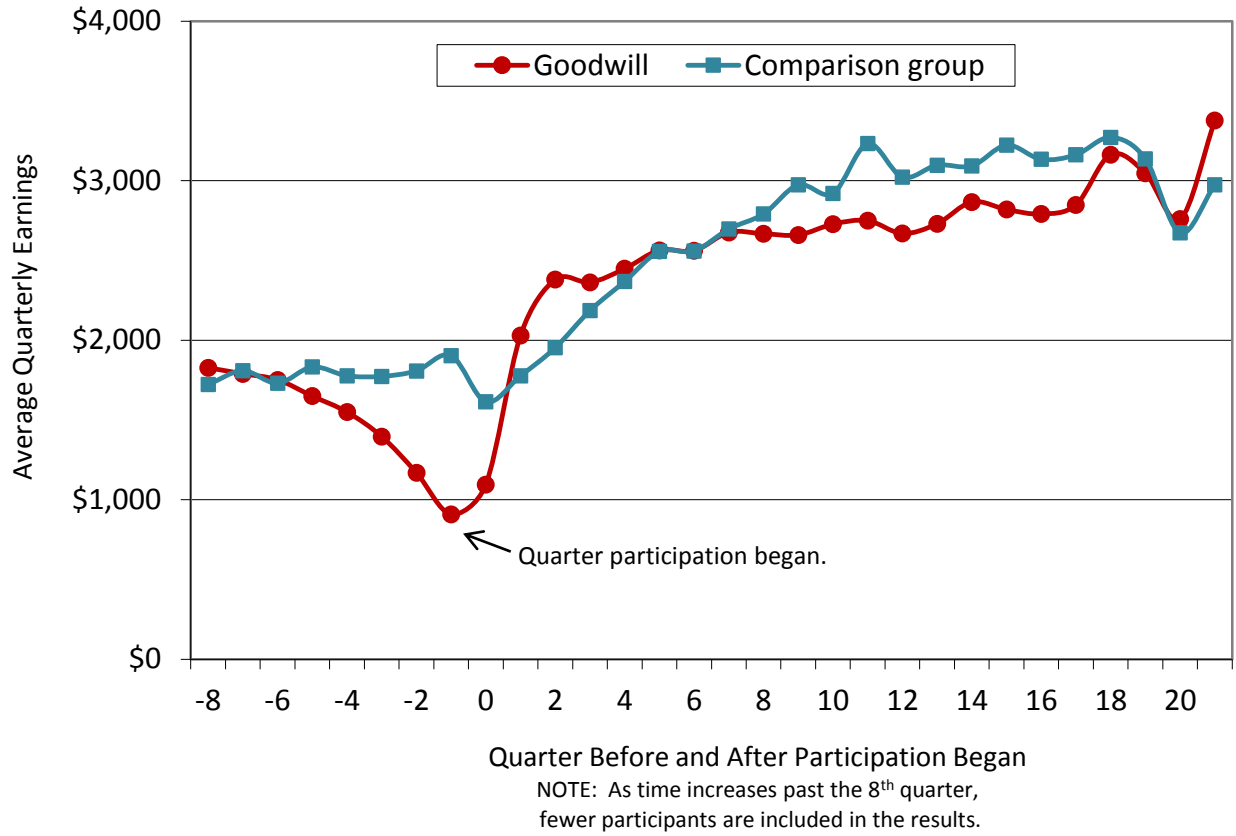
Table 10. Goodwill 2009-2012 Quarterly Impacts

Impact Measure	All Qtrs Post-Service: Comparison Group	All Qtrs Post-Service: Goodwill Participant	Unadjusted Net Effect	Impact Measure
Quarterly Employment	51.1%	55.0%	3.9%	-0.3%
Average Quarterly Earnings	\$5,207	\$4,694	-\$513	-\$601**
Qualified for UI Benefits	45.0%	48.9%	3.9%	0.0%
Filed UI Claim	4.18%	3.02%	-1.16%	-1.35%**

Note: **=significant at $p < .01$

In Figure 17 below, the impact of participation in Goodwill is examined by looking at participants' earnings over time, regardless of employment status (i.e., unconditional earnings), in relation to the comparison group's unconditional earnings. The analysis shows that Goodwill participants, after an initial increase in wages, have generally equaled or earned less than the comparison group in every quarter since the 4th quarter after starting the Goodwill program.

Figure 17. Unconditional Earnings Over Time, Goodwill Participants vs. Comparison Group



Skillpoint Alliance is a regional workforce intermediary based in Austin, Texas. Skillpoint connects individuals, training providers, employers, and other community organizations together to meet identified workforce skills gaps.

Skillpoint offers short-term occupational skills training through its Gateway program.

From 2009 to 2012*, Skillpoint Alliance received \$244,965 from Travis County for two programs: Youth College & Career and Gateway. The evaluation only examines the Gateway workforce training program.

*In October 2011, Skillpoint received an additional \$150,000 for the Gateway program for the period October 2011 through December 2012.



For more information visit:
www.skillpointalliance.org

SKILLPOINT ALLIANCE

Workforce Development Programs and Services

The mission of Skillpoint Alliance's Gateway program is to get people employed in high-demand occupations at a livable wage. The Gateway program is defined by fairly rapid training. Depending on the occupation targeted, full-time training may range from three to ten weeks. The curricula emphasize hands-on learning opportunities, with the program shifting more class time away from lectures towards active skill development in recent years.

In 2010, Skillpoint renewed its focus on employer engagement. Gateway program administrators recognized a need to better engage employers in a dialogue to understand their workforce needs and to give employers and industry groups a bigger role in shaping the Gateway training programs. The new focus is to match training to the demands of employers so that individuals have the skills they need to gain employment.

The Gateway program expanded from training in one field (general construction) in 2009 to three fields in 2010 (adding electrical and allied health). In 2011, Gateway added training opportunities in nurse aide and plumbing. As the program has grown, Skillpoint Alliance has worked with its training providers to develop a core curriculum that serves as the first step in the training sequence for a number of career paths. For example, a 4-week construction core class is now the entry point for additional training in electrical work or plumbing. The new emphasis on specialty skills is intended to better prepare participants for available employment

opportunities.

Professional development became a more formal activity in the Gateway program in 2010. While participants have always developed resumes early in the training sequence, most employment services were offered after the occupational skills training ended. In the new structure, 12 hours of professional development and soft skills training is integrated with the occupational training coursework. Topics include targeted job search, interviewing, and conversational skills. Individual sessions with a workforce development specialist are still offered following training to target participants' specific employment needs.

Many of the Gateway training programs lead to industry-recognized credentials. For example, the construction training program leads to NCCER certifications and apprentice "Level 1" licenses. In 2009, all training was provided through Austin Community College. In 2010, the Associated Builders and Contractors of Central Texas joined as a training provider for the Gateway Electrical training program. Since 2011, Gateway has expanded into other Central Texas counties, often through training partnerships with apprenticeship programs or unions.

Support Services

In addition to covering the full cost of the training and professional development activities noted above, Skillpoint also provides wrap-around support services to help participants manage the travel, equipment, and clothing requirements of the program. Services include bus passes, parking passes for the community college, tools, work clothes, shoes, and books. Child care assistance may be included on a case-by-case basis.

Skillpoint also connects Gateway participants with other resources in the community. For example, participants are referred to Workforce Solutions Career Centers for workshops on job search skills and other topics. Participants receiving SNAP or TANF are also encouraged to take advantage of the resources available through those programs.

Participant Profile

Skillpoint has established different minimum entry-level skill requirements by occupational program. For example, in construction, participants must have at least a 7th grade skill level in reading and math. For the electric program, participants must have at least a 9th

grade English skills level and a 10th grade math skill level. For allied health, participants must have 10th grade skills in both subjects. In 2011, the program began using the GAIN (Global Appraisal of Individual Needs) assessment to identify participants' strengths and weaknesses in reading and math to better target support services.

Gateway administrators noted that the intake process has become more rigorous in recent years, with eligibility interviews focused on identifying candidates who are actually interested in working in the selected field rather than simply participating in training. Interviews are intended to help staff understand the applicant's motivation for training, the individual's attitude and "coach-ability." Staff noted that as the intake process has improved, so too have the employment numbers following training. Approximately 19% of applicants are accepted into a Gateway training program; the number trained each year is driven by space limitations of the training partner, funding limitations, and eligibility.

For Gateway, 536 participants served in the 2009-2012 period were included in the analyses.¹¹ Of these, more than half (58%) were enrolled in the construction program. Approximately 63% were between 20-39 years old, with an average participant age of 34. Sixty-eight percent of Gateway participants entered the program with a high school diploma or GED, while an additional 20% had less than a high school education.

Participant Outcomes

At the outset, it is important to note that the construction industry has significant shares of self-employed and independent contractors – workers who would not appear in UI wage records. Therefore, the outcomes presented here likely under-estimate actual outcomes for Gateway participants. Table 11 provides an overview of Gateway participant outcomes.

¹¹ Four records were removed from analyses due to missing Social Security numbers. One record was removed due to questionable earnings (over \$100,000 annually, both pre- and post-program participation).

Table 11. Skillpoint Alliance’s Gateway Program 2009-2012 Participant Outcomes

Cohort Outcome Measure	Four Qtrs Before Service	Last Qtr of Service	2nd Qtr Post-Service	4th Qtr Post-Service	8th Qtr Post-Service	12th Qtr Post-Service	16th Qtr Post-Service	All Post-Service Qtrs
Quarterly Employment:								
2009	14.6%	33.0%	37.2%	36.2%	36.2%	37.2%	47.9%	40.8%
2010	31.2%	30.3%	52.3%	52.3%	53.2%	45.0%	56.7%	51.2%
2011	37.6%	40.3%	65.5%	64.8%	66.9%	45.8%	.	63.0%
2012	48.6%	48.2%	68.7%	70.3%	60.9%	.	.	67.8%
Overall	36.3%	39.9%	59.0%	59.2%	55.5%	42.4%	51.6%	54.8%
Average Qtrly Earnings:								
2009	\$3,195	\$1,258	\$2,645	\$4,032	\$4,589	\$5,180	\$5,658	\$4,750
2010	\$3,522	\$1,795	\$3,525	\$4,024	\$4,934	\$5,628	\$5,336	\$4,685
2011	\$3,266	\$2,144	\$4,520	\$4,731	\$5,150	\$6,265	.	\$4,967
2012	\$4,066	\$3,002	\$4,560	\$4,771	\$4,918	.	.	\$4,768
Overall	\$3,695	\$2,339	\$4,151	\$4,547	\$4,965	\$5,642	\$5,511	\$4,799
Qualified for UI Benefits:								
2009	12.0%	.	.	29.8%	29.8%	26.6%	42.6%	33.8%
2010	31.0%	.	.	43.1%	52.3%	42.2%	50.8%	46.7%
2011	33.1%	.	.	61.2%	61.9%	47.5%	.	60.2%
2012	46.8%	.	.	66.2%	58.7%	.	.	62.1%
Overall	33.9%	.	.	53.8%	51.8%	37.8%	46.0%	47.1%
Filed UI Claim:								
2009	1.33%	2.13%	1.06%	2.13%	1.06%	1.06%	2.13%	1.65%
2010	3.90%	2.75%	0.92%	6.42%	0.92%	1.83%	0.00%	2.17%
2011	3.06%	5.76%	0.00%	2.16%	0.72%	0.00%	.	1.52%
2012	6.67%	2.05%	2.56%	5.13%	1.09%	.	.	2.36%
Overall	4.24%	3.17%	1.30%	4.10%	0.92%	1.15%	1.24%	1.91%

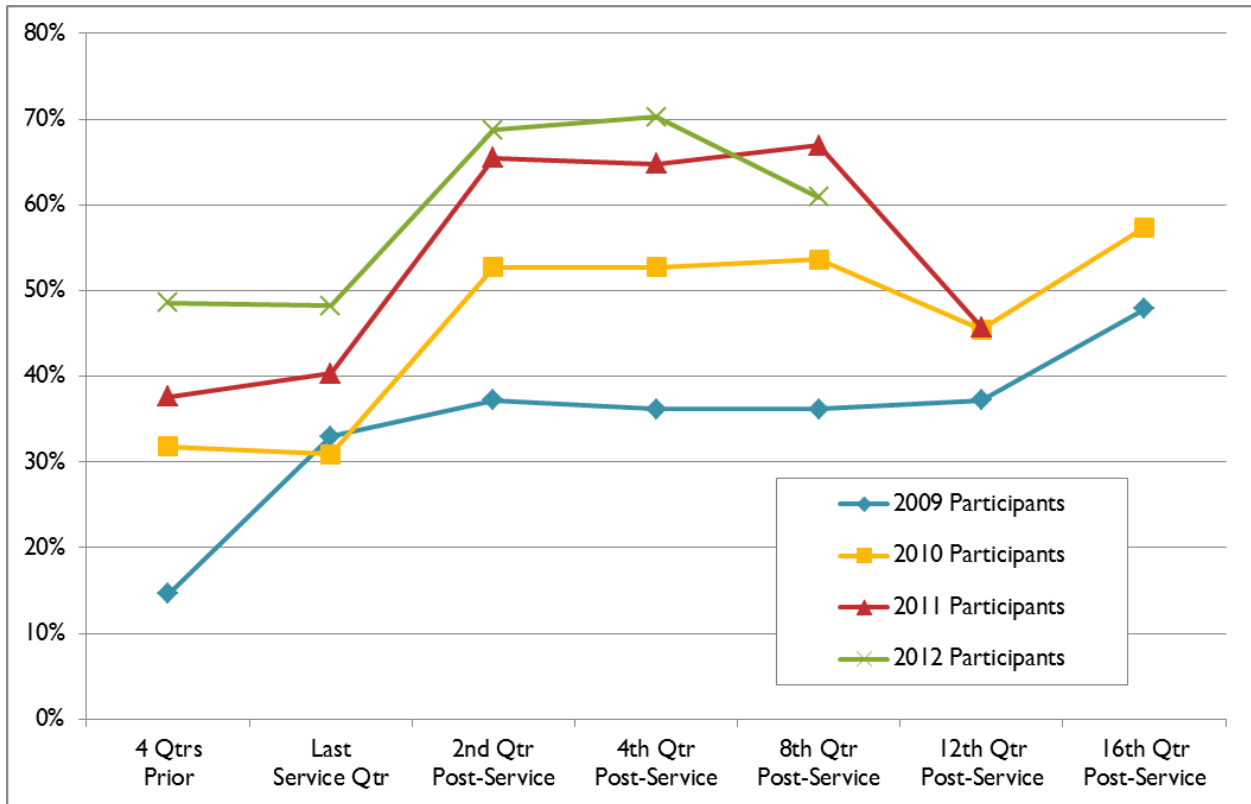
Source: Skillpoint Alliance participant records and Texas Workforce Commission UI wage and claim records.

Note: A dot represents too few participants, no data to report, or insufficient time passing to report for the timeframe.

^a Participants were counted as employed if they were found in Texas UI wage records. Those who were not found may be unemployed, employed outside of Texas, or employed in Texas in a position that is not reported to TWC.

In the four quarters prior to entry, quarterly employment in a UI-covered job in Texas was approximately 36%. Across all post-service quarters, more than half of the Gateway program’s participants (55%) were employed. There is considerable variation in employment and earnings outcomes across cohorts. Figure 18 illustrates the quarterly employment outcomes for 2009 through 2012 Gateway program participants.

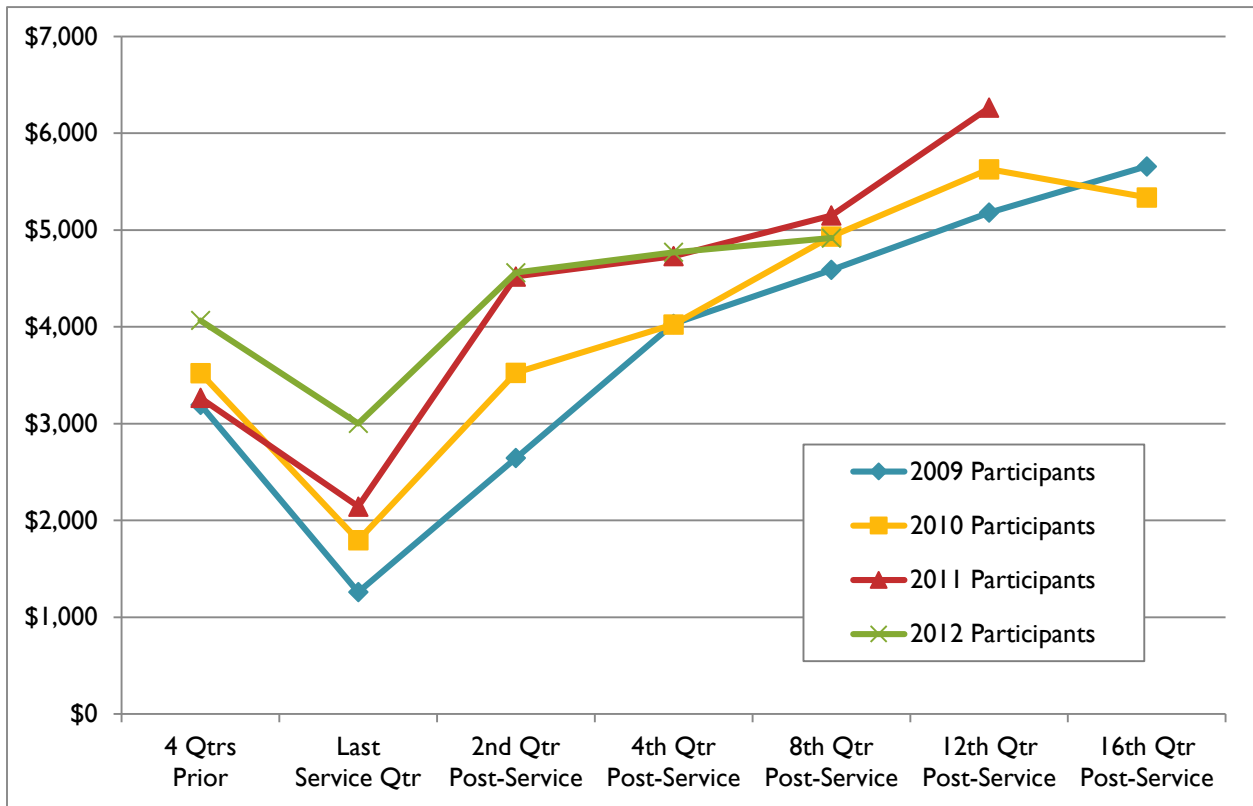
Figure 18. Average Quarterly Employment for 2009-2012 Skillpoint Alliance’s Gateway Program Participants^a



^a Participants were counted as employed if they were found in Texas UI wage records. Those who were not found may be unemployed, employed outside of Texas, or employed in Texas in a position that is not reported to TWC.

The earnings trajectories of Gateway program participants have varied considerably across annual groups of participants, as illustrated in Figure 19. All cohorts exhibited an expected dip in earnings during the last service of participation. In the post-service period, most cohorts showed earnings gains, on average, in each quarter studied.

Figure 19. Average Quarterly Earnings for Employed 2009-2012 Skillpoint Alliance’s Gateway Program Participants



In the four quarters prior to entering Gateway, approximately one-third of Skillpoint Alliance’s participants met the monetary eligibility requirements for UI benefits. The share of participants that met the monetary eligibility requirements has fluctuated over time. Across all post-service quarters, 47% of Skillpoint Alliance’s 2009-2012 participants met the monetary eligibility standard. Approximately 4% participants filed a UI benefit claim before entering training; fewer than 2% filed a claim across all post-service quarters.

Program Impacts

Table 12 presents findings from the impacts analysis comparing the outcomes of the 2009-2012 cohorts of the Gateway program to the outcomes of a matched comparison group. Participation was positively associated with one of the four outcomes of interest, a two percentage point decrease in the share that filed for UI benefits.

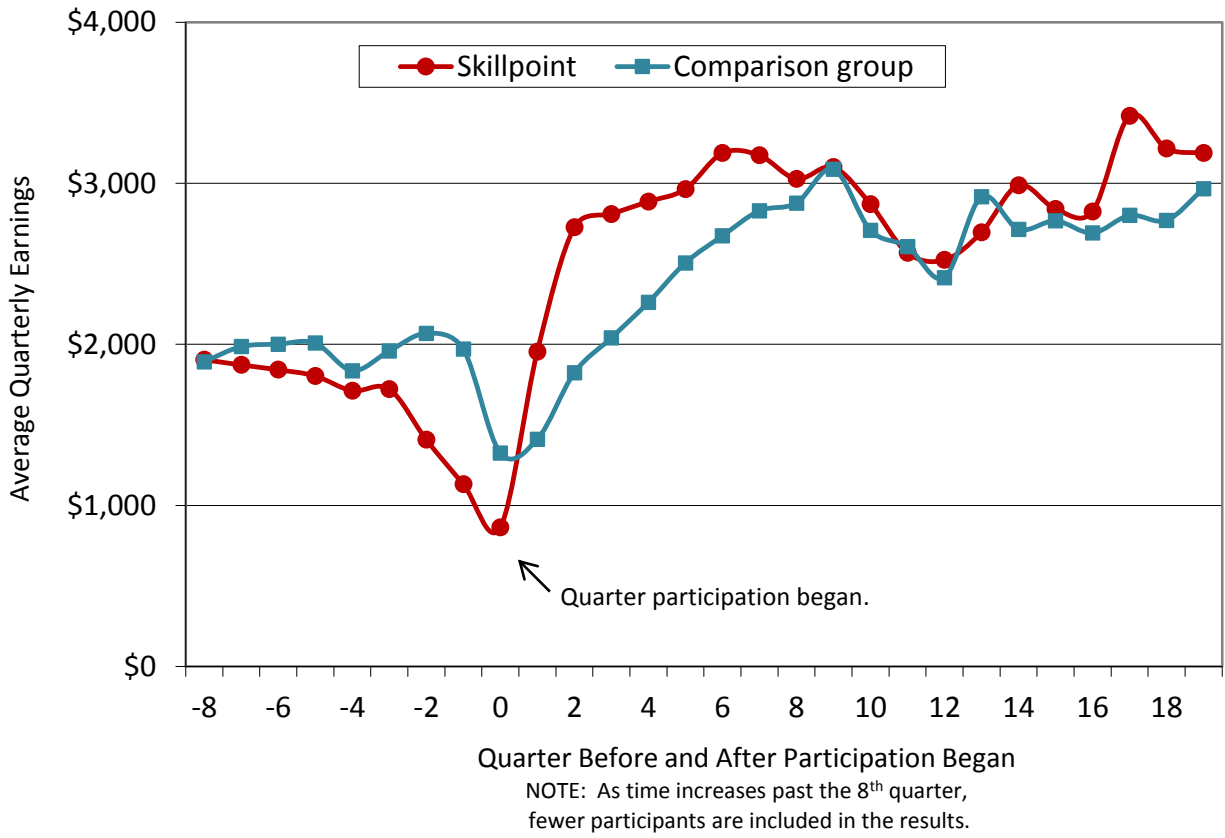
Table 12. Skillpoint Alliance’s Gateway Program 2009-2012 Quarterly Impacts

Impact Measure	All Qtrs Post-Service: Comparison Group	All Qtrs Post-Service: Gateway Participant	Unadjusted Net Effect	Impact Measure
Quarterly Employment	49.6%	56.8%	7.2%	1.4%
Average Quarterly Earnings	\$4,735	\$4,824	\$90	\$90
Qualified for UI Benefits	42.2%	49.5%	7.3%	0.0%
Filed UI Claim	3.18%	1.92%	-1.26%	-1.93%*

Note: *=significant at $p < .05$

In Figure 20 below, the impact of participation in the Gateway program is examined by looking at participants’ earnings over time, regardless of employment status (i.e., unconditional earnings), in relation to the comparison group’s unconditional earnings. The analysis shows that since the first quarter after starting the program, participants experienced higher average quarterly earnings than those in the comparison group. However, based on the analysis above, this difference is not significant.

Figure 20. Unconditional Earnings Over Time, Skillpoint Alliance’s Gateway Program Participants vs. Comparison Group



Workforce Solutions – Capital Area is the local Workforce Investment Board for Travis County. It is one of 28 local boards in Texas. The board oversees federal and state employment and training programs. The Capital Area Board also raises funds through active grant and contract development efforts for targeted workforce development services.

Travis County funded the Rapid Employment Model (REM) project as a regular workforce services program in 2010-2012* for \$244,275 annually; prior to that REM operated as a pilot demonstration project.

*In October 2011, the County provided an additional \$125,000 for an enhanced REM model program in the Oct. 2011- Dec. 2012 period.



For more information visit:
www.wfscapitalarea.com

WORKFORCE SOLUTIONS—CAPITAL AREA WORKFORCE BOARD

Workforce Development Programs and Services

Workforce Solutions—Capital Area Workforce Board operates the Travis County-funded Rapid Employment Model (REM) program, which launched in 2006 as a pilot demonstration project then transitioned to regular workforce program operations in 2010.

Rapid Employment Model

The purpose of the REM program is to accelerate the time it takes for individuals to become reemployed with new skills and a marketable credential. Services are specifically targeted at disadvantaged County residents, in particular ex-offenders, welfare recipients (TANF-Choices), and those receiving food stamp (SNAP) benefits.

Workforce Solutions contracts with a number of training providers to serve REM participants, which during the studied timeframe included the Ascend Center for Learning, Skillpoint Alliance’s Gateway program, Austin Community College, Express Training Services, Ventana Del Sol, and New Horizons. Participants select from a number of occupations requiring two to eight weeks of training. These include: general construction, electric and plumbing; clerical, office work, computer training; line cook; certified nurse aide; and truck driving.

In 2010, Workforce Solutions developed a Job Preview Exercise to help participants think through the training program and next steps for obtaining a job. The Exercise focuses on barriers to employment, participant’s needs and goals for employment, working conditions, and other factors

related to target occupations. The Exercise also asks participants to develop a job search plan that includes identifying three potential job leads. The program specialist then uses the exercise as a framework for discussing training options and opportunities with each participant. The program specialists report that the Exercise has been helpful in keeping the focus on employment rather than training.

The enhanced REM program funded in October 2011 included “individualized, tailored case management services to clients.”¹²

Support Services

REM participants during the 2009-2010 period received a \$100 per week incentive for perfect attendance, as well as a \$50 bonus for reporting employment to their program specialist. In 2011, the incentive model changed. While participants can still earn \$100 per week for perfect attendance and participation in training activities, only \$50 of the incentive is paid directly to the participant each week. The remaining \$50 is held in reserve and paid to the participant when job placement information is verified by the program specialist. Employment must be for a minimum of 20 hours per week, training-related, and obtained within 12 weeks of training completion. Participants that continue to be employed for six months are eligible to earn an additional \$50 bonus.

REM participants primarily are referred to the program through another workforce training service at the board and are often co-enrolled. More than a quarter of participants in the 2009-2012 period were in Project RIO which served ex-offenders.¹³ Other referral sources for REM include TANF Choices and SNAP. Through co-enrollment, these programs primarily provide the wrap-around support services participants need to be successful in REM.

Participant Profile

During the 2009-2012 period, 159 of 408 REM participants were also identified as clients of another workforce program or provider in this evaluation.¹⁴ The majority of REM participants

¹² Lyman. (2013). P. 58.

¹³ Project RIO ended in November 2011.

¹⁴ Among those who were served by another studied agency during the study timeframe, most (93) had also received services at Gateway; 53 had also received services at Ascend Austin, and the remainder were split across AAUL, Capital IDEA, and Goodwill.

included in the analysis were male (68%) and the majority of participants in each cohort earned less than 50% of FPIG. The average age of REM participants during this period was 38; approximately 41% were Black, 28% Hispanic, and 25% White.

Participant Outcomes

Given that a significant share of REM participants were in training for construction trades or truck driving, it is likely that the outcomes reported here undercount the actual employment levels reached by REM participants due to the UI coverage issue noted earlier. Table 13 below provides an overview of labor market outcomes of REM 2009-2012 participants.¹⁵

¹⁵ Data for one participants was removed due to questionable earnings (over \$100,000 annually, both pre- and post-program participation).

Table 13. Workforce Solutions - REM 2009-2012 Participant Outcomes

Cohort Outcome Measure	Four Qtrs Before Service	Last Qtr of Service	2nd Qtr Post-Service	4th Qtr Post-Service	8th Qtr Post-Service	12th Qtr Post-Service	16th Qtr Post-Service	All Post-Service Qtrs
Quarterly Employment:								
2009	13.7%	29.9%	37.1%	33.0%	34.0%	37.1%	37.1%	35.8%
2010	28.6%	38.1%	50.5%	45.4%	38.1%	41.2%	42.2%	44.8%
2011	22.0%	22.4%	43.1%	55.2%	50.0%	48.3%	.	49.2%
2012	43.1%	61.9%	64.1%	64.0%	.	.	.	63.5%
Overall	29.6%	43.0%	51.4%	50.4%	40.3%	40.4%	39.1%	45.3%
Average Qtrly Earnings:								
2009	\$1,653	\$1,241	\$2,793	\$3,558	\$3,176	\$3,826	\$4,511	\$3,528
2010	\$2,846	\$1,468	\$2,605	\$2,627	\$3,849	\$4,358	\$4,066	\$3,575
2011	\$2,398	.	\$2,931	\$3,768	\$4,777	.	.	\$4,433
2012	\$3,859	\$4,932	\$6,347	\$6,732	.	.	.	\$6,344
Overall	\$3,229	\$3,315	\$4,440	\$4,818	\$4,204	\$4,227	\$4,320	\$4,372
Qualified for UI Benefits:								
2009	12.1%	.	.	30.9%	26.8%	23.7%	34.0%	29.7%
2010	29.6%	.	.	41.2%	35.1%	43.3%	34.4%	38.7%
2011	18.5%	.	.	29.3%	44.6%	41.4%	.	40.3%
2012	41.8%	.	.	58.3%	.	.	.	59.9%
Overall	28.5%	.	.	43.0%	35.8%	34.5%	34.2%	35.7%
Filed UI Claim:								
2009	0.52%	1.03%	0.00%	2.06%	1.03%	2.06%	2.06%	1.53%
2010	3.87%	3.09%	1.03%	4.12%	1.03%	1.03%	0.00%	1.98%
2011	1.72%	0.00%	1.72%	1.72%	3.57%	0.00%	.	1.85%
2012	9.84%	3.87%	1.96%	2.16%	.	.	.	1.98%
Overall	5.04%	2.46%	1.23%	2.56%	1.87%	1.35%	1.24%	1.79%

Source: REM participant records and Texas Workforce Commission UI wage and claim records.

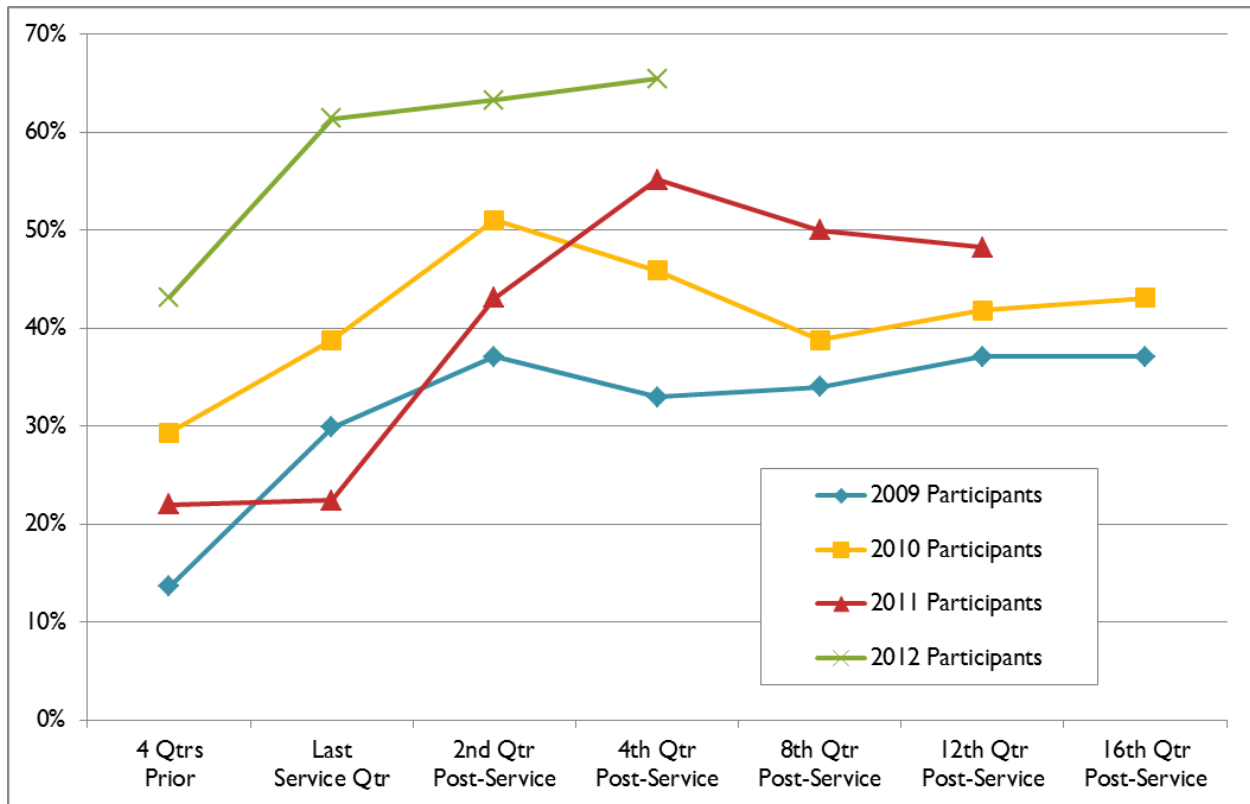
Note: A dot represents too few participants, no data to report, or insufficient time passing to report for the timeframe.

^a Participants were counted as employed if they were found in Texas UI wage records. Those who were not found may be unemployed, employed outside of Texas, or employed in Texas in a position that is not reported to TWC.

The quarterly employment trajectory of REM participants varied widely across annual groups, as illustrated in Figure 21. For the 2009-2010 cohorts, employment peaked in the second quarter after service reaching 37% for the 2009 participants and 50% for 2010 participants. For 2011 participants, however, the share employed continued to show an increase in the fourth post-service quarter (one year after leaving training), a pattern that was repeated by the 2012 cohort to reach the program’s highest post-service employment level at

64%. Across all post-service quarters approximately 45% of REM 2009-2011 participants were employed.

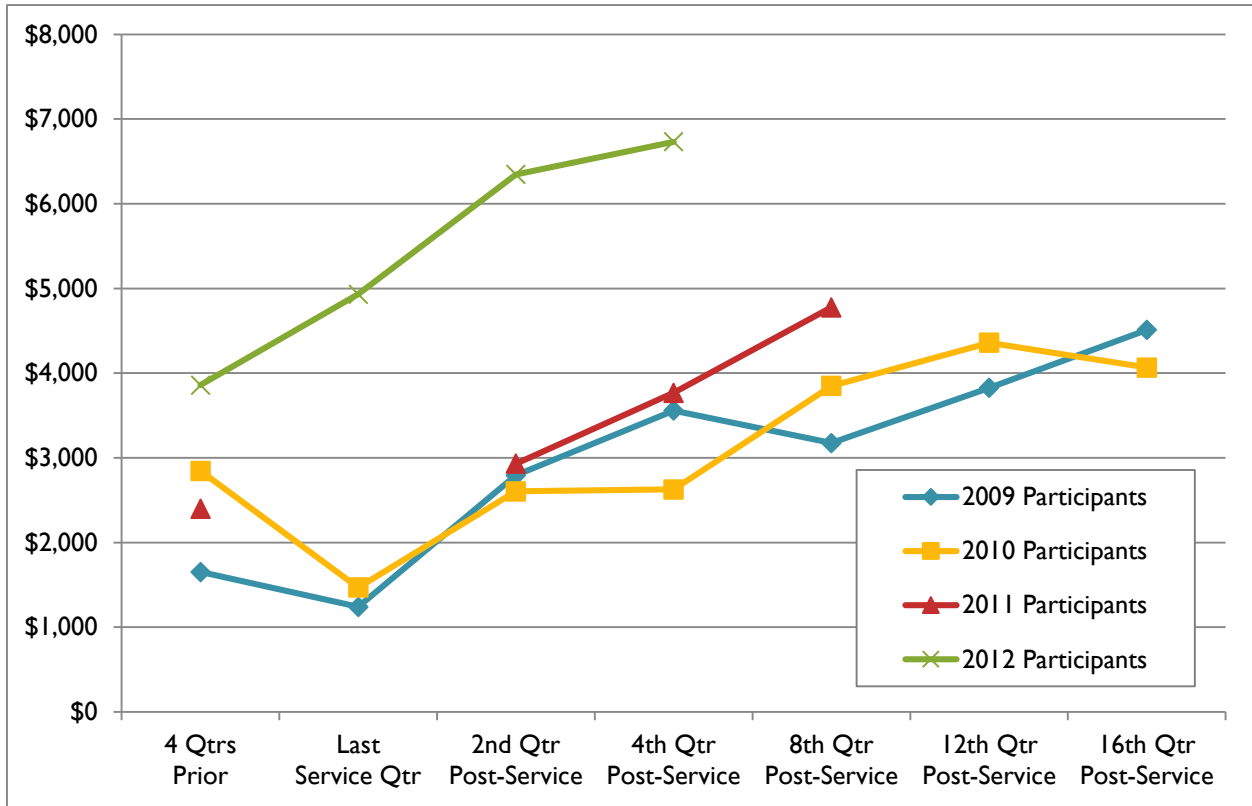
Figure 21. Average Quarterly Employment for 2009-2011 REM Participants^a



^a Participants were counted as employed if they were found in Texas UI wage records. Those who were not found may be unemployed, employed outside of Texas, or employed in Texas in a position that is not reported to TWC.

Figure 22 illustrates that the average quarterly earnings of employed REM participants varied by annual groups. The 2012 cohort not only experienced higher quarterly employment (as seen above), they also had higher average quarterly earnings as compared to previous cohorts. Participants in this most recent year started with average salaries just under \$4,000 per quarter and rose to over \$6,700 per quarter by the year after started the program.

Figure 22. Average Quarterly Earnings of Employed REM 2009-2012 Participants



The share of participants who met monetary eligibility requirements for UI benefits in also varies significantly by cohort. Overall, almost 29% of participants were qualified based on their employment histories in the pre-service period. Across all post-service quarters, that share rose to 36%. The overall share filing a claim for UI benefits dropped from an average 5% in the four quarters prior to entering REM to fewer than 2% per quarter on average in the post-service period.

Program Impacts

Table 14 presents findings from the impacts analysis comparing the outcomes of the 2009-2012 cohorts of the REM program to the outcomes of a matched comparison group. Participation was positively associated with two of the four outcomes of interest; a \$709 increase in average quarterly earnings, and a 1.8 percentage point decrease in the share that filed for UI benefits.

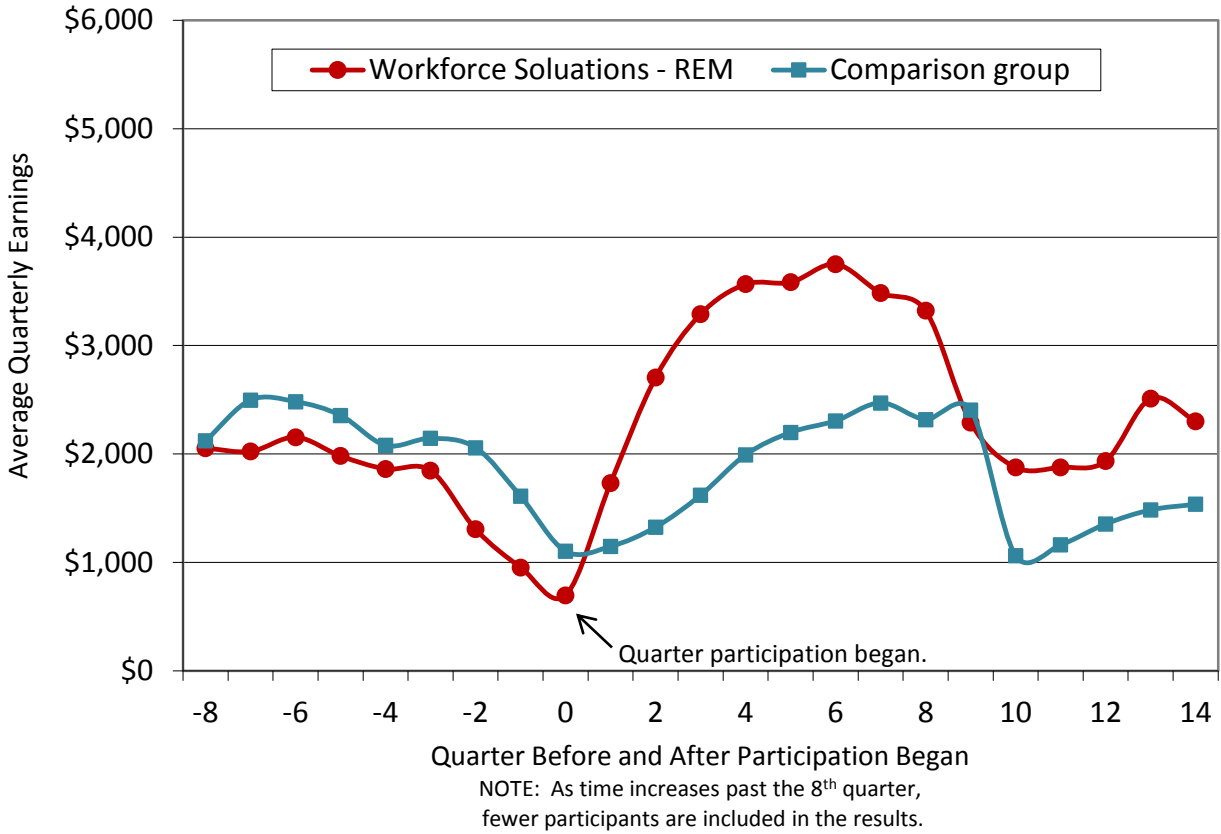
Table 14. Workforce Solutions - REM 2009-2012 Quarterly Impacts

Impact Measure	All Qtrs Post-Service: Comparison Group	All Qtrs Post-Service: REM Participant	Unadjusted Net Effect	Impact Measure
Quarterly Employment	42.0%	53.4%	11.4%	-0.2%
Average Quarterly Earnings	\$4,155	\$5,239	\$1,084	\$709**
Qualified for UI Benefits	34.7%	44.5%	9.8%	0.0%
Filed UI Claim	3.39%	1.79%	-1.59%	-1.77%*

Note: *=significant at p<.05 **=significant at p<.01

In Figure 23 below, the impact of participation in REM is examined by looking at participants' earnings over time, regardless of employment status (i.e., unconditional earnings), in relation to the comparison group's unconditional earnings. The analysis shows that unconditional earnings for REM participants rose notably above the comparison group's earnings in the first six quarters after completing the program, before a four-quarter slide. Overall the treatment group earnings notably surpassed those of the comparison group in all quarters except the ninth quarter in which trajectories crossed at about \$2,400.

Figure 23. Unconditional Earnings Over Time, Workforce Solutions - REM Participants vs. Comparison Group



CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Travis County, Texas, invests local tax dollars in a continuum of services to improve opportunities for disadvantaged residents, including long-standing investments in workforce development services. Through contracts with a mix of workforce development providers and programs, the County funds opportunities that span from adult basic education to short-term job skills training, all the way up to longer-term occupational training for high-wage careers. Each provider has established at least one target population group for its services, with many using County funds to serve individuals facing considerable obstacles to employment such as homelessness or a criminal background.

The variety of services and target populations makes cross-provider comparisons inappropriate. The providers can be grouped, however, by service length—whether short- or long-term. Of the seven providers examined for this report, six offer relatively short-term services. Employment outcomes varied greatly across providers, from a 19 percentage-point increase in quarterly employment across all post-service quarters at American YouthWorks, to an increase of two percentage points at Workforce Solutions – REM, to a decrease of three percentage points at Goodwill.

The earnings outcomes associated with the increased employment also varied across providers. Employed participants from American YouthWorks, Austin Area Urban League and Goodwill earned approximately \$1,300 to \$1,600 more, on average, in the post-service period compared to their average pre-service earnings. Employed participants from Ascend Center for Learning, Skillpoint Alliance, and Workforce Solutions earned approximately \$900, on average, in the post-service period based on the same comparison.

Participants of Capital IDEA, the long-term training provider in the evaluation, show particularly strong earnings gains in the post-service period. Across all cohorts from 2003 through 2012, average quarterly earnings for those employed were up more than \$3,000 from the average pre-service earnings, an increase of about 70 percent. It is possible that more recent cohorts have a higher share of participants still in training, meaning that the individuals who did not complete the program may be driving the outcomes presented here.

Participation in any skills building appears to have some association with increased employment stability, as evidenced by higher shares of participants in all of the programs meeting the monetary eligibility requirements for Unemployment Insurance benefits in the post-service period. Few participants from any program submitted a claim for UI benefits in the quarters examined.

The quasi-experimental analysis compares the outcomes of participants to those of a matched comparison group, providing important context for understanding the benefits of participation in a Travis County-funded workforce development program. Results show that none of the six shorter-term programs had a significant impact on employment rates, while Capital IDEA had a modest positive impact with an increase of just less than 2 percentage points. Two of the six shorter-term programs – American YouthWorks and Workforce Solutions – had a significant positive impact on earnings, while two programs had no significant impact and two had a significant *negative* impact. While it is unknown why the results indicate a negative impact on earnings, it can be speculated that the program participants differed in an unmeasured way from those chosen for the comparison group which may impact their earning potential. Results for Capital IDEA show a significant increase in post-service earnings of approximately \$2,400 per quarter. Most programs showed a significant decrease, compared to the comparison group, in the number of participants who filed for Unemployment Insurance benefits.

Future analyses could match participant records with those from the National Student Clearinghouse to determine if any participants pursued further education and/or training in the post-service period.

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APPENDIX A. QUASI-EXPERIMENTAL IMPACTS ANALYSIS

In an attempt to measure the impacts of locally-funded workforce services, researchers conducted a quasi-experimental analysis comparing labor market outcomes for workforce participants with those of a comparison group of similar non-participants. Quasi-experimental analysis has been shown to produce impact estimates comparable to those resulting from more rigorous and costly approaches involving the use of experimental designs that randomly assign individuals to treatment and control status.¹⁶ In fact, for some groups, quasi-experimental estimates tend to understate employment and earnings impacts from workforce services. For these reasons, results presented in this report should be considered conservative estimates of the true impacts.

Quasi-experimental approaches tend to work well when participants for whom comparison groups are being created have sufficient prior employment and earnings histories and when data are available on a sufficient number of variables with which to perform the requisite match. Youth and ex-offenders are problematical in this regard precisely because their prior employment and earnings histories are either lacking or difficult to determine. Quasi-experimental impacts are presented only for those groups/providers for which adequate matching could be performed.

Potential comparison group members were drawn from two sources: individuals who either registered to look for employment using the state's *WorkinTexas* program or who received "core" services under the Workforce Investment Act (such as job-matching or resume development). Thus, the comparison group selected as described below is not a "no-services," but rather a "low-intensity services" group. The resulting impact estimates thus reflect the incremental value of the community's investments in workforce services. For providers that are primarily providing job search assistance and short-term training services (e.g., Austin Academy, Austin Area Urban League, Gateway, Goodwill), impact estimates are likely to be biased downward even more so than expected, in that comparison group members may have received similar services. For providers like Capital IDEA that are providing longer-term, intensive skill

¹⁶ For example, see Greenberg et al. (2006); Hollenbeck and Huang (2006); and Card et al. (2009).

investments, the estimated impacts will be conservative estimates of the incremental value of local workforce investments over and above low-intensity services already available through *WorkinTexas* or WIA “core” services provided through Workforce Solutions Career Centers.

Workforce services participants were matched on a one-to-one basis with potential comparison group members using a method known as propensity score matching. Matching was done by selecting for each participant the one comparison group member judged most similar. Matching was done without replacement, with a caliper of .01 to remove the least similar matches.

Researchers were able to access matching variables for most participants in locally-funded workforce services. Exact matches carried out included: county of residence; year of entry into the program; and whether or not individuals had recently experienced an earnings dip of 20% or more. Distance matches were also carried out on up to 16 variables by treating them as numeric and including them in the overall multivariate distance measurement. These variables included: age (for those participants with a recorded birth date); gender; race/ethnicity (White, Black, Hispanic); time since first earnings; employed at entry; percent of time employed over four (4) years prior to program entry; average quarterly earnings over four (4) years prior to program entry; percent of time in any workforce development service in the year immediately prior to program entry (matched according to service intensity: high for training programs, and low for job placement services); any prior participation in Project RIO; any UI claims filed in the year prior to program entry; any UI benefits received in the year prior to program entry; and whether the individual’s earnings history qualified for UI if he/she were to lose a job. For those experiencing a recent earnings dip, the time since the earnings dip and the percent of earnings represented by the dip were also included in the matching process.

The adequacy of each comparison group for the quasi-experimental impacts analysis was judged by performing t-tests. These tests compared treatment and comparison groups on the same 19 dimensions. If the groups were statistically different at $p < .01$ on two or more dimensions, the comparison was considered inadequate. Table A-1 provides the results of these tests.

Table A-1. Summary of Differences between Treatment and Selected Comparison Groups, by Provider

	Austin Area Urban League	American Youth Works	Ascend Center for Learning	Capital IDEA	Skillpoint - Gateway	Goodwill	Workforce Solutions - REM
Age							
Average earnings, 4 years prior							
Maximum earnings dip in prior 2 years, percent	**						
Employed at entry							
White			**				
Black							
Hispanic			**				
Race unknown							
Gender, male				**			
Eligible for UI based on work history							
Percent of time employed, 4 years prior							
Any prior participation in Project RIO							**
Time since first observed earnings, quarters	**						
Any UI benefits in prior year	**						**
Any UI claims in prior year	**						
Any high-intensity workforce development in prior year							
Percent of time in high-intensity workforce development in prior year							
Any low-intensity workforce development in prior year			**				**
Percent of time in low-intensity workforce development in prior year							
Pass or fail test for adequacy of comparison group	FAIL	PASS	FAIL	PASS	PASS	PASS	FAIL

Note: **=significantly different at p<.01, - =test could not be computed

For those providers that failed two or more of these tests, a year-by-year analysis was conducted to determine if some cohorts had adequate comparison groups, allowing researchers to continue with the impact analysis with only those cohorts that pass. These results are shown in Table A-2.

Table A-2. Summary of Differences between Treatment and Selected Comparison Groups, by Provider and Year, for those that Failed the Overall Tests

	Austin Area Urban League				Ascend Center for Learning				Workforce Solutions - REM			
	2009	2010	2011	2012	2009	2010	2011	2012	2009	2010	2011	2012
Age									-			
Average earnings, 4 years prior												
Maximum earnings dip in prior 2 years, percent												
Employed at entry												
White					**	**		**				
Black												
Hispanic					**	**		**				
Race unknown												
Gender, male												
Eligible for UI based on work history												
Percent of time employed, 4 years prior												
Any prior participation in Project RIO				-						**	**	**
Time since first observed earnings, quarters												
Any UI benefits in prior year	**									**		
Any UI claims in prior year	**									**		
Any high-intensity workforce development in prior year							-					
Percent of time in high-intensity workforce development in prior year							-					
Any low-intensity workforce development in prior year					**				**	**	**	
Percent of time in low-intensity workforce development in prior year												
Pass or fail test for adequacy of comparison group	FAIL	PASS	PASS	PASS	FAIL	FAIL	PASS	FAIL	PASS	FAIL	FAIL	PASS

Note: **=significantly different at p<.01, - =test could not be computed