

Research and Evaluation Notes

March 2022



To support the public workforce system's research and evaluation efforts, these notes share:

- Select research and evaluation initiatives, reports, and resources relevant to the nation's workforce development system, Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA) programs, and select populations; and
- Technical assistance efforts to support positive customer and program outcomes through research, evaluation, and evidence-based program design.

This issue highlights:

- An implementation report on the interventions used to address the opioid crisis through National Health Emergency grants;
- New resources from the Pathways to Work Evidence Clearinghouse (Pathways Clearinghouse) from the U.S Department of Health and Human Services, the Office of Planning, Research & Evaluation, in the Administration for Children & Families;
- A literature review on the role of navigators in the public workforce system; and
- A report from the National Skills Coalition about the uneven digital skills of workers and how these disparities affect economic mobility and business competitiveness.

SELECT READING

National Health Emergency Grants Implementation Study

In December 2021, ETA released the final report of the [Implementation Study of the National Health Emergency \(NHE\) Grants to Address the Opioid Crisis](#), which describes efforts to test innovative approaches to address the opioid crisis through employment and training services by six state workforce agencies. This release also includes a [Resource Guide](#), a Literature Review and four short briefs on specific models spotlighted as [Innovative Employment and Training Interventions to Address the Opioid Crisis](#).

The final report describes two models for delivering employment and training services to individuals: 1) providing employment services through American Job Centers (AJCs) (with adaptations to better serve the population) or 2) having workforce professionals provide services on-site at behavioral health facilities. Frontline AJC staff and administrators noted that individuals in recovery had complex needs and required more support than clients typically served at AJCs.

The report found that specific training for AJC staff on how to interact with people in recovery appeared promising and that the workforce system and behavioral health partners had different expectations, due to differences in culture, operations, and different approaches to "work readiness." The report and accompanying [Literature Review](#) note that research on employment and training services and opioid use disorder is still in its infancy. There is a need to build knowledge about what works, and for whom, as it relates to the effects on employment and earnings.

EVIDENCE IN ACTION

Pathways to Work Evidence Clearinghouse

New resources are available for workforce system program managers and policymakers who want reliable information built on a foundation of rigor, credibility, and accessibility. The [Pathways to Work Evidence Clearinghouse](#) identifies interventions and strategies that work for jobseekers to keep gainful employment; provides a knowledge base for those who allocate resources and evaluate programs; and helps practitioners, policymakers, and researchers access and understand evidence-based interventions on employment. A new [Guide](#) to the Pathways Clearinghouse explains how users can find, explore, and compare the effectiveness of the interventions. Each intervention receives a rating that ranges from well supported to not supported for earnings, employment, public benefit receipt, and education/training. A recently published [video](#) explains the systematic evidence review process behind the Pathways Clearinghouse. To date, this clearinghouse has rated more than [220 interventions](#) in 295 studies and provides a searchable feature to filter for interventions by population, outcome type, and others.

SPOTLIGHT

Upcoming Events:

- April 11-14, 2022
 - [National Association of Workforce Boards Forum 2022](#)
- June 1-3, 2022
 - [Research and Evaluation Conference on Self-Sufficiency 2022](#)

Navigators in Social Service Delivery Settings: A Review of the Literature with Relevance to Workforce Development Programs

In January 2022, the U.S. Department of Labor’s Chief Evaluation Office released a [literature review](#) on the role of navigators in the public workforce system. The review summarizes the findings on the use of navigators, their roles and responsibilities, and their impact on workforce development, education, and social services. In addition to a few causal studies, researchers also discuss qualitative implementation studies to understand how programs use navigators. The review describes the outcomes and impact attributed to these programs in the literature. Key findings include—

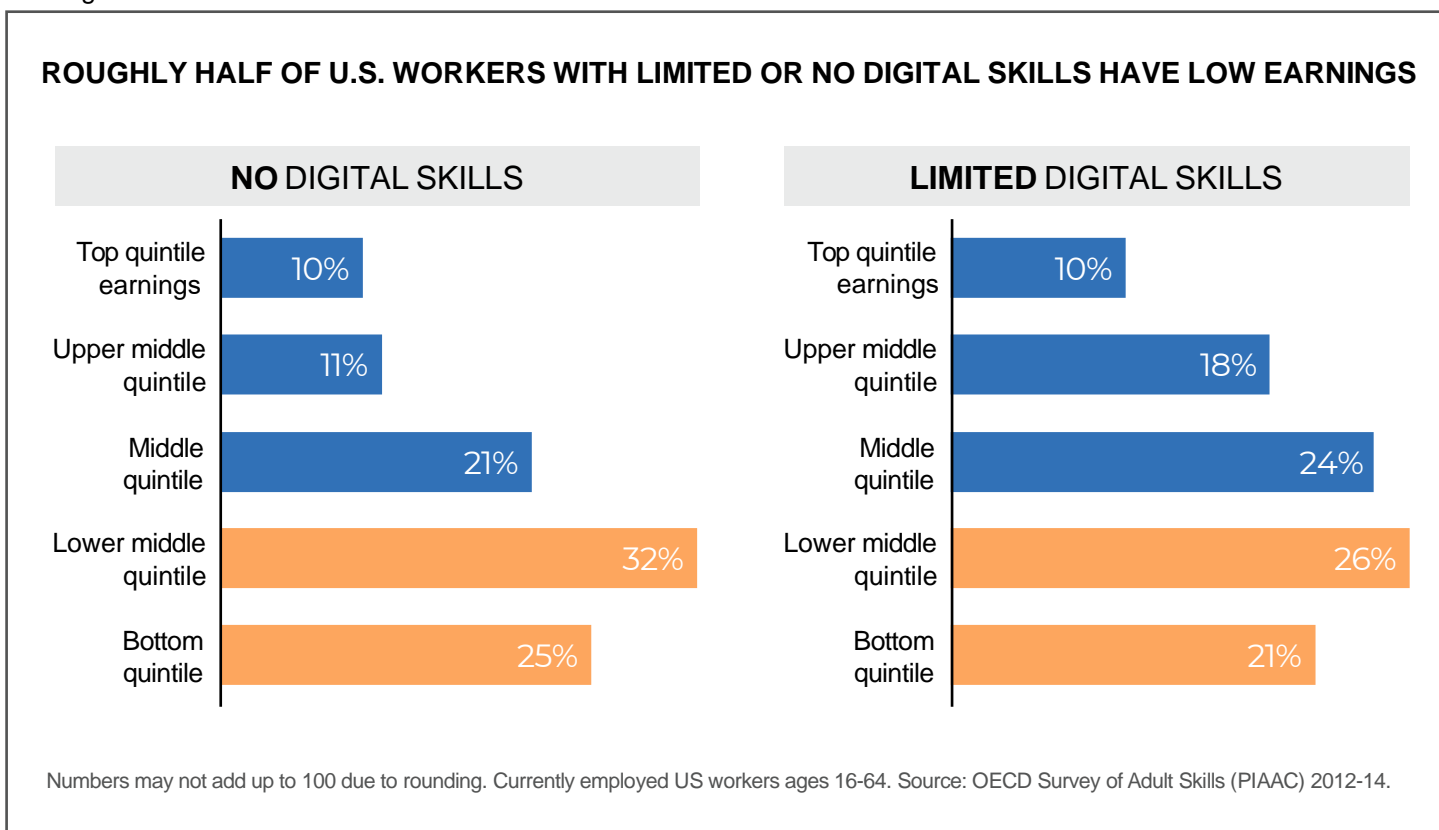
- Navigators’ responsibilities range from intensive case management to system-facing activities and the combination of activities varies depending on the program setting.
- Descriptive studies provided stakeholder assessments of the effectiveness of navigators or suggestive trends about their influence on program outcomes.
- Causal evaluations include features that go beyond the role of the navigator itself; however these studies provided evidence that navigator programs can be effective. The studies showed positive impacts for certain programs in some cases but mixed results in others.

Notably, the literature review found evidence based on causal studies that individuals in the treatment groups, who received more direct contact with navigators, fared better than control groups in postsecondary outcomes and employment, but there were no differences in earnings between groups.

RESEARCH IN LIVING COLOR

The New Landscape of Digital Literacy

This [report](#) uses data from a rigorously designed international assessment, the [Program for the International Assessment of Adult Competencies \(PIAAC\)](#), to analyze workers’ current level of digital skills, providing a breakdown of how skills differ among workers in major industries and occupations as well as digital skill gaps by demographic groups to include age, sex, and race. The findings describe how these gaps affect worker earnings and business competitiveness. The following graphic demonstrates that U.S. workers with limited or no digital skills are concentrated in the two lowest quintiles of earnings.



Source: The New Landscape of Digital Literacy, National Skills Coalition, May 2020

Share research and evaluation questions, suggestions, and resource needs with the Employment and Training Administration’s Office of Policy Development and Research at workforcepractices@dol.gov. Archived [Research and Evaluation Notes](#) are available at the [Evaluation and Research Hub](#) in WorkforceGPS.