ENGAGING OPPORTUNITY YOUTH:

Final Report for the Monterey County Youth Ambassadors for Peace Project

September 3, 2019
ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

The authors of this report would like to thank the staff of the Monterey County Economic Development Department and Workforce Development Board—in particular, Chris Donnelly, Ruben Trujillo, and Korey Woo—for their assistance with the evaluation of the Youth Ambassadors for Peace (YAP) program. The authors would also like to thank the YAP participants, outreach staff, and case managers for their insights into youth services and reflections on their successes and challenges over the course of the program. Without the contributions of these individuals, this report would not have been possible.

At SPR, the authors are grateful to Hannah Betesh for her thoughtful review of this report; Andrew Wiegand for his contributions and insights as primary investigator; Vinz Koller and Sukey Leshnick for their project leadership from the inception and during most of the evaluation activities; Mika Clark for her project management expertise; Hannah Diaz and Jennifer Henderson-Frakes for their insights concerning the initial site visits; Karen Jarsky for her expert editing; Robert Corning and Ann Kingsbury for their contract management expertise; and Savannah Rae for her data management, project support, and report production skills. All these individuals, and others, were instrumental in helping to bring this report and the evaluation to conclusion.

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This report was supported with federal funds under a grant awarded by the U.S. Department of Labor’s Employment and Training Administration. The content of this publication does not necessarily reflect the views of the policies of the U.S. Department of Labor; likewise, mention of trade names, commercial products, or organizations does not imply any endorsement of same by the U.S. government.

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This report summarizes findings on the implementation, outcomes, and costs of the Monterey County Youth Ambassadors for Peace (YAP) program, operated from 2014 to 2019 by the Monterey County Workforce Development Board (WDB), funded by a grant from the U.S. Department of Labor’s Workforce Innovation Fund (WIF). The YAP program offered an 18-month career-preparation experience designed to engage youth ages 16–24 who had been involved in or were at risk of involvement with gang activity or the criminal justice system, or who were academically truant. The program sought to address youth needs through case management, career pathways exploration, mentorship, and community service. Program services included assessment, work readiness training, life skills education, job shadowing, and referrals for vocational training.

As part of the WIF grant, the Monterey County WDB contracted with Social Policy Research Associates (SPR) to conduct a multi-year evaluation of the YAP program, to document program implementation as well as education, justice, and workforce outcomes of program participants. More specifically, the goal of the evaluation was to document the program’s model, its implementation, and its evolution over time, as well as participant-level outcomes. Early implementation findings were shared with Monterey County WDB through annual progress reports. This final report discusses the program’s implementation and outcomes, details the costs of implementing program services, provides lessons learned that may be useful to policymakers and practitioners, and suggests areas for future research.

The YAP Program

The YAP program offered a variety of services to help youth engage in positive behaviors and achieve their vocational goals. Services began with assessment and planning and continued on to training, case management, community service and engagement opportunities, and supportive services. Participants were able to earn incentives, listed in Exhibit ES-1, for completing program activities and reaching education or work milestones. The program was designed to enroll youth for 18 months, including 12 months of services and six months of alumni activities. The first year consisted of

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Exhibit ES-1: YAP Program Incentives</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Attended a job fair: $25</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Community service project (20 hours): $50</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Community service project (40 hours): $100</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Work readiness workshops (Phase 1): $100</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Work readiness workshops (Phase 2): $100</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>First unpaid internship: $100</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Second unpaid internship: $100</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Completion of Individual Training Account: $100</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Leadership and mentoring: $100</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Employment or enrolled in college: $100</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>High school diploma or equivalent: $200</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
work readiness workshops, community service and mentoring, and work-based learning (WBL) activities, with case management services provided for the full 18 months.

The full suite of services provided by the program, shown in Exhibit ES-2, was provided in flexible phases, tailored to the individual needs of participants. For example, youth could participate in community service projects prior to completing other program activities.

**Exhibit ES-2: YAP Program Services**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Service Category</th>
<th>Description</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Assessment and Service Planning</strong></td>
<td>Upon enrollment, each participant took a career and goal assessment, which helped inform the individual service strategy plan that case managers completed with them.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Work Readiness and Life Skills Training</strong></td>
<td>Covering 15 individual topics, these workshops focused on soft skills, including exploring career interests, job search and application advice, and education options. Workshops were also provided on personal financial management, resume creation, and completion of college financial aid forms.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Case Management Support</strong></td>
<td>Throughout the entirety of YAP participation, youth were paired with a case manager who guided them through the program components and provided regular contact and mentoring to help them achieve their individual goals.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Supportive Services</strong></td>
<td>Case managers referred participants to education, training, counseling, and support services based on individual needs.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Work-Based Learning Opportunities</strong></td>
<td>After youth completed work readiness workshops, they were connected to WBL with local employers—most commonly, job shadow placements. These placements allowed participants to gain 15–20 hours of first-hand insight in a career of choice.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Education Services</strong></td>
<td>YAP participants discussed education options with their case managers, including community colleges, four-year universities, and vocational training. They also visited local colleges and universities and received application assistance.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Community Service</strong></td>
<td>Community service projects offered an opportunity for youth to develop leadership skills and to give back to their communities. Activities included providing food and personal items to homeless people in the community and packing food boxes at a community food bank.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Mentorship</strong></td>
<td>Youth built positive relationships and developed leadership skills through mentoring younger children, and being mentored by program staff, community role models or professionals through an internship experience.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
YAP Participant Characteristics

Key characteristics of YAP participants included the following:

- **Most youth were male and under 18 years of age.** The youth in the evaluation sample ranged in age from 15 to 25 years at time of enrollment, with 57 percent under 18 years. Fifty-seven percent of participants were male.

- **Most youth lacked a high school diploma or equivalent credential at baseline.** At baseline, only 20 percent had completed high school or had achieved high school equivalency, such as a GED. Most (79 percent) had completed education through 11th grade at the time of enrollment.

- **Youth reported numerous barriers to participation in employment and educational activities.** Only 13 percent of participants were currently employed. Twelve percent reported being disabled, 7 percent were single parents or pregnant, 12 percent were dealing with substance abuse, and 13 percent had an incarcerated parent. A slightly larger minority (22 percent) reported enrollment in the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program. Additionally, 37 percent reported being English-language learners.

YAP Program Implementation Challenges and Successes

Program staff worked to lay the foundation of the YAP program during the first year of the grant; in the second year, during initial implementation of the program, they experienced difficulties that led to lower than expected enrollment numbers. Staff turnover had a significant impact on program operations, the recruitment of youth, and program implementation. Ultimately, the program hired a coordinator who provided the administrative leadership needed to implement the program. After regaining stable staffing during the final two years of the grant, enrollment numbers increased by more than 200 percent in a span of eight months, from July 2017 to March 2018.

Implementation Study Key Findings

- **The YAP program established new connections with community stakeholders.** The program developed and maintained relationships with key allies, such as schools and justice partners, to facilitate recruitment efforts. These connections were especially important for reaching the program’s targeted population.

- **Networking was the most effective recruitment strategy for the YAP program.** Identifying and developing relationships with community stakeholders who could market the program to targeted youth was especially important.

- **Establishing strong employer connections proved to be difficult.** The YAP program used its start-up phase to acquire supplemental funding for attractive work experience
components. However, it had challenges developing employment placements for both paid and unpaid WBL experiences.

• The YAP program primarily used an individual-level service delivery strategy, moving away from its original cohort model. Responding to the changing context and to safety concerns, many activities were conducted on an individual level, such as work readiness workshops, case management, and WBL opportunities.

YAP Participant Outcomes

SPR analyzed outcome data on 120 program participants. The analysis relied on program data (recorded by program staff in the CalJOBS database), participant surveys (gathered through an online tool), and administrative data from the California Department of Justice (DOJ).

Outcome Study Key Findings

• There was a significant, positive association between completing any program activity and receiving an incentive for obtaining employment or enrolling in college. For each additional program activity a youth completes, the odds of receiving an incentive for obtaining employment or enrolling in college increases by nine percent.

• YAP served youth with characteristics significantly associated with incarceration. The odds of a youth with an incarcerated parent being arrested was about three times higher than the odds of a youth without incarcerated parents being arrested.

• Most YAP participants (80 percent) were not found in DOJ records. Among the 24 YAP program participants who did match with DOJ records, 10 had multiple arrests, consisting of infractions, misdemeanors, and felonies. These offenses included crimes of substance abuse, property crimes, parole violations, and disobeying court orders, among others.

YAP Program Costs

SPR conducted an analysis to understand the costs of operating the YAP program, using data collected from program staff. Overall, the program utilized under half of its $3 million WIF grant on program expenditures, which are listed in Exhibit ES-3.
Exhibit ES-3: WIF Grant Expenditures as of March 31, 2019

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Cost category</th>
<th>WIF grant funds</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Staff labor costs (salary and fringe)</td>
<td>$955,641.60</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Materials and supplies</td>
<td>$ 143,429.98</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Support services</td>
<td>$ 63,558.23</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Overhead/administration</td>
<td>$61,294.51</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td><strong>$1,223,924.32</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Cost Study Key Findings**

- **The YAP program cost per participant was $7,329 in grant funds.** Overall, the program utilized under half of the WIF grant funding to serve approximately 70 percent of the participant goal. When leveraged funds are included, the average cost per participant was $7,436.

- **Staff salaries were the largest program cost.** Unsurprisingly given the program’s intensive service model, approximately 78 percent of grant funds were expended for staff salaries. The program employed two to four case managers and a full-time program coordinator, along with other leadership and administrative personnel.

- **The program utilized a small amount of its leveraged funding.** In September 2015, the Monterey County WDB received a $100,000 Workforce Accelerator Fund 2.0 grant from the California WDB to pay YAP participants’ wages while in subsidized employment opportunities. The program expended $14,486 of these funds on participant work experiences.

**Implications for Future Policy and Research**

The findings in this report contribute to the growing knowledge base on interventions for youth who are out of school and unemployed (sometimes called “disconnected” or “opportunity” youth) to reconnect with education or enter the job market. The findings may prove valuable in discussions around how best to design youth services authorized under the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA) to support individuals who live in gang-impacted communities. This is especially of interest since WIOA recently increased the emphasis within the public workforce system on engaging out-of-school youth, requiring local areas to expend a minimum of 75 percent of WIOA youth funds on this population.
I. INTRODUCTION

The Monterey County Youth Ambassadors for Peace (YAP) program was funded by a five-year grant from the U.S. Department of Labor’s (DOL) Workforce Innovation Fund (WIF) in October 2014. Administered by Monterey County Economic Development Department and the Workforce Development Board (WDB), this program offered an 18-month relationship-oriented leadership and career-preparation experience. The program was designed to engage youth ages 16–24 who had been involved in a gang or were at risk of gang membership, had been involved in the criminal justice system, or were academically truant. The program sought to address the needs of youth who were disconnected from education and employment (known as “opportunity” youth) as well as the larger community problem of gang violence through case management, career pathways exploration, mentorship, and community service. Program services included assessment, work readiness training, life skills education, job shadowing, and referrals for vocational training.

In the spring of 2015, the Monterey County WDB contracted with Social Policy Research Associates (SPR) to conduct an evaluation of the YAP program, as required by the WIF grant. The goal of the evaluation was to document the program’s model, its implementation, and its evolution over time, as well as participant-, partnership-, and system-level outcomes.

Background

There is a complex array of individual, peer, school, and community factors that cause young people to drop out of school, join a gang, and/or engage in criminal or delinquent activity. Youth who come from communities where drugs are readily available, unemployment is pervasive, and there are few positive social outlets are more likely to face multiple disadvantages and become engaged in illegal activity (Curry & Thomas, 1992). Research also clearly points to the relationship between poor academic achievement and delinquency. Youth who have low math and reading skills, learning disabilities, and/or a general lack of connectedness to school are much more likely to join a gang and to end up in the juvenile justice system (Gottfredson, 2013; Thornberry et al, 2003).

The percentage of youth without a high school diploma in Monterey County is higher than state or national averages, with almost 18 percent of those ages 18–24 lacking a high school diploma, compared to 12 percent for California and 13 percent nationwide (U.S. Census Bureau, 2017). This high dropout rate aligns with national trends around the dropout rate of communities heavily represented in Monterey County. Specifically, the county’s overall population is more than half Latino (58.8 percent), compared to the state average of 39.1 percent. According to the National Center for Education Statistics (NCES), the high school dropout rate for Latinos in the
United States is 8.6 percent, compared to 5.2 percent for Whites and 6.2 percent for African Americans (NCES, 2018a). Within Monterey County, academic achievement among youth, and particularly Latino youth, is below the state average. For example, in the 2016–2017 school year, only 7.6 percent of Latino high school graduates in Monterey County met California college entrance requirements, compared to 22.2 percent of White graduates (Education Data Partnership, 2019). The most recent comparable data for California as a whole (from the 2014–2015 school year) shows an average of 34.6 percent for Latino graduates and 49.7 percent for White graduates.

Low academic achievement also has negative consequences for success in the workforce. For example, in 2016, the median earnings of young adults with a bachelor's degree were 57 percent higher than those of young adult high school completers. In addition, the median earnings of young adult high school completers were 26 percent higher than those of young adults who did not complete high school. This pattern of higher earnings associated with higher levels of educational attainment holds for both male and female young adults as well as for White, Black, Latino, and Asian young adults (NCES, 2018b).

While unemployment rates have been trending down in the past five years—in Monterey County and California as a whole—unemployment in Monterey County (10.1 percent) remains higher than state (4.6 percent) and national (3.9 percent) averages (State of California Employment Development Department, 2019). California’s unemployment rate for 16-19-year-old youth remains above the national average. According to the Bureau of Labor Statistics (2019), in 2018 the U.S. unemployment rate for this age group was 12.9 percent, while in California it was 16.2 percent.

An additional challenge in Monterey County is the prevalence of youth violence and gang activity. There are more than 60 active gangs in the county who recruit vulnerable youth (County of Monterey, 2019) and over 500 gang-related incidents each year. According to the National Center for Health Statistics, in 2013 the homicide rate for youth and young adult homicide victims (ages 10–24) in Monterey County was 23.5 per 100,000, compared to a rate of 8.2 per 100,000 statewide. Monterey County had the highest youth homicide rate of any county in the state (Violence Policy Center, 2015).

The YAP Program

The YAP program was designed to redirect and (re)engage Monterey County youth ages 16–24 who had been involved in or were at risk of gang membership, had been involved in the criminal justice system, or were academically truant with education, workforce training, mentoring, and community service activities. The Monterey County Economic Development
Department and Workforce Development Board served as the grant recipient and administrative entity for the WIF grant, which provided most of the funding for YAP.

**YAP Theory of Change**

The YAP program was designed to enroll youth for 18 months, including 12 months of program activities and six months of follow-up activities. Youth were enrolled at three satellite locations throughout Monterey County: Silver Star Resource Center in Salinas, an alternative education center for youth struggling with chronic truancy and at-risk behavior; Greenfield City Hall in Greenfield; and the satellite America’s Job Center of California (AJCC) at the Monterey Bay Education, Science, and Technology (MBEST) Center in Marina. Each had a site-based case worker who focused on recruiting and working with YAP participants.

Aligned with WIF goals, the YAP program was designed to increase long-term employability through the delivery of synergistic, comprehensive services and collaboration between programs and partners. Program strategies and inputs, activities and outputs, and short- and long-term measurable outcomes are shown in the program’s logic model in Exhibit I-1 below. They include participant- and system-level outcomes as follows:

- **Participant-related outcomes**: As shown in the right upper column of the logic model, at the participant level, short- and long-term outcomes focused on goals such as increased engagement with education and training; development of workplace skills; engagement in positive relationships with adults (who mentored participants) and with peers (whom the participants mentored); and demonstration of socially acceptable attitudes and values.

- **System-related outcomes**: As shown in the right lower column of the logic model, system-level outcomes included strengthened partnerships leading to improved service delivery and more efficient use of resources.
Exhibit I-1: Monterey YAP Logic Model

**NEED/ASSUMPTIONS**
- Targeted youth are not adequately engaged in workforce development activities.
- Targeted youth are disconnected from the education system and have low rates of earning post-secondary degrees/credentials.
- Youth violence is high, almost all gang related.

**STRATEGIES & INPUTS**
- Community collaboration in the design and oversight of the project
- Comprehensive, coordinated, multi-functional case management
- Data-driven recruitment
- Delivery of services through regional hubs and cohorts
- Integrated data collection, management and analysis system
- On-going, personalized support of participants, also post-program
- Provision of real-time information about high-demand occupations in the regional labor market
- A supportive, meaningful, workplace experience
- Hands-on, project and community based activities with built-in cross-age mentoring experiences

**SERVICE DELIVERY & OUTPUTS**
- Comprehensive assessment and individualized plan
- 18-month Youth Ambassadors for Peace cohort learning program in regional hubs
- (Re)Connect with academic educational programs
- Career exploration and activities, including internships
- Occupational training and mentorship linked to career pathways
- Work readiness and life skills training
- Youth leadership and community engagement curriculum
- Community building with action research and restorative justice
- Youth mentoring training of participants for primary school students
- Alumni services and transition support

**INDIVIDUAL-LEVEL OUTCOMES**
- Short-term: Mastery of “soft skills”
- Earn credential or higher
- Participate in internship
- Complete action-based research
- Serve as mentor
- Engage with positive adults
- Long-term: Employed in target industry
- Higher earnings and jobs with benefits
- Strong civic engagement
- Avoid gang involvement
- Avoid criminal activities

**SYSTEM-LEVEL OUTCOMES**
- Short-term: Cooperation across services
- Integration of data management
- Improved service delivery
- More efficient use of resources
- Long-term: Cross-system services
- Blended and braided funding
- Improved public safety
- Positive attitudes towards youth
YAP Services

The YAP program aimed to provide the following services:

- **Assessments.** Each youth participant underwent a series of assessments, starting at intake, to ascertain their skills, work history, educational experience, and barriers to employment. Assessment data were collected from the program application and basic skills tests administered at intake. Results informed the development of an individual plan that summarized the youth’s needs and the services to address those needs.

- **Case management support.** Case managers provided youth with advice, encouragement, and guidance on education and career choices. They also connected youth to work-based learning (WBL) opportunities and coordinated various supportive services around housing, mental health, and substance abuse treatment, among others.

- **Work readiness and life skills training.** The YAP program provided training on appropriate workplace behavior, career planning (e.g., career exploration, education-to-occupation pathways), interviewing skills, and financial literacy. Youth received hands-on learning experiences through online programs (e.g., California Career Zone, Hands on Banking, College Board) and group learning activities.

- **Work-based learning.** Youth participated in up to two job shadowing experiences with local employers, each lasting 15–20 hours. For the first two years of program implementation, YAP youth had the opportunity to be placed in paid work experience activities, funded by a Workforce Accelerator Fund 2.0 (“Accelerator”) grant from the State of California WDB that ended in June 2016.

- **Community service.** Youth were expected to participate in 20–40 hours of community service while taking part in the program. This included activities such as mentoring homeless individuals and elderly community members on the use of email and Skype, tutoring younger children, participating as summer interns in local offices of elected government officials, serving as youth members of a local WDB, or volunteering at local nonprofit agencies.

- **Follow-up support.** Case managers worked with youth to provide ongoing support with job search assistance or enrollment in postsecondary education or military service.

**Incentives**

YAP participants earned financial incentives for active engagement and completion of program service components and milestones (e.g., workshops, community service projects, high school graduation). To further encourage current and future participants, in November 2017 the
Monterey County WDB received approval from DOL to increase the total incentive amount that each participant could earn from $650 to $1,075. Exhibit I-2 shows the incentive structure during the first year of program services and the increased fee structure for the last 18 months of the program. The program not only increased the total amount and the amounts for individual milestones, but also added milestones for education and training achievements.

**Exhibit I-2: YAP Youth Incentives**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>September 2016–October 2017</th>
<th>November 2017–March 2019</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Completion of work readiness workshops</td>
<td>$100</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Completion of work readiness workshops (Phase 1)</td>
<td>$100</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Completion of work readiness workshops (Phase 2)</td>
<td>$100</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Completion of 15 hours of job shadowing</td>
<td>$100</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Completion of first unpaid internship</td>
<td>$100</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Completion of another 15 hours of job shadowing</td>
<td>$100</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Completion of second unpaid internship</td>
<td>$100</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Completion of 40 hours of individual community service</td>
<td>$50</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Community service project (20 hours)</td>
<td>$50</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Participation in a community project</td>
<td>$100</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Community service project (40 hours)</td>
<td>$100</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Obtained full-time employment</td>
<td>$100</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Obtained unsubsidized employment or enrolled in college</td>
<td>$100</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Enrolled in college</td>
<td>$100</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Attended a job fair</td>
<td>$25</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Leadership development or mentoring</td>
<td>$100</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Completion of an Individual Training Account</td>
<td>$100</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Obtained a high school diploma or equivalent</td>
<td>$200</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total incentive amount possible</strong></td>
<td><strong>$650</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total incentive amount possible</strong></td>
<td><strong>$1,075</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Evaluation of the YAP Program**

The evaluation of the YAP program was designed to incorporate the lessons learned from previous research on vulnerable youth who are gang-involved or at risk of gang involvement. One goal of the evaluation was to help expand the existing knowledge base by describing the implementation of and outcomes achieved by a program for vulnerable youth that offered a relatively long-term intervention with a combination of career counseling, work experience, and mentoring.

A number of programs across the United States have provided opportunities for youth who are out of school and unemployed (sometimes called “disconnected” or “opportunity” youth) to reconnect with education or enter the job market. The programs vary in terms of services offered, providing education, training, employment, supportive services, or a combination of one or more. They also vary in size and scope of services, ranging from large, national programs, such as YouthBuild and the National Guard Youth ChalleNGe, to small, community-
based programs. Funding sources also vary, as some initiatives receive annual federal funding and others receive funds from state and local grants, foundations, and other sources. Often determined by these funding sources, some programs specifically target subpopulations of youth, including those with disabilities, living in foster care, or involved in the justice system. Youth without high school diplomas or high school equivalency test (HSET) credentials are typically overrepresented among these vulnerable populations.

As displayed in Exhibit I-3, over a decade of research has sought to document the effectiveness of these programs. These studies have focused on work training, education, or a combination of the two; they include evaluations using random assignment and non-experimental designs (e.g., implementation and/or outcomes studies). Some, such as the Los Angeles Reconnections Career Academy program and the Latino Coalition’s Reclamando Nuestro Futuro, have provided supportive services and youth leadership development opportunities as part of the program. The populations served across the programs include youth with various disadvantages, including economic status, educational attainment, and involvement with the justice system.

Some studies have found that youth receiving program services were substantially more likely than a control group to earn a high school equivalency or other credential, and some also found positive effects on employment or earnings. For example, the National Guard Youth ChalleNGe study found that program participants were more likely than control group members to obtain a high school diploma or equivalency credential, earn college credits, and be employed three years after random assignment. Moreover, they earned approximately 20 percent more than control group members. However, many of the program’s graduates reported facing challenges in reaching their education and employment goals after completing the program, such as not having strong family support, working in low-wage jobs, or beginning college but being unable to continue (Millenky et al, 2011).

Previous research also found that projects that provide opportunities for community engagement are particularly successful in preventing youth violence and promoting positive youth development (Millenky et al, 2011). Studies identified some common features of programs designed to promote positive youth development—including those designed to prevent substance abuse, delinquency, pregnancy, and dropping out of high school—such as opportunities for group membership, social skill building, understanding of social norms, and adult–youth relationships (Dryfoos, 1990). Also, previous research tends to support the efficacy of community engagement and intergenerational relationships in preventing youth violence (Zeldin, 2004).
## Exhibit I-3: Selected Evaluations of Programs for Disconnected Youth

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Evaluation (Dates)</th>
<th>Evaluation Design</th>
<th>Target Group</th>
<th>Program Model</th>
<th>Sample Size</th>
<th>Summary of Results</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Education and Training Programs</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>YouthBuild (2011–2018)</td>
<td>Random assignment impact study, implementation study, and cost study</td>
<td>Disadvantaged, out-of-school youth, ages 16–24, who dropped out before completing high school</td>
<td>Employment, education, and training, youth development, supportive, and transitional services</td>
<td>3,929 youth</td>
<td>Increased receipt of high school equivalency credential; increased enrollment in college; increased survey-reported employment rates, wages, and earnings</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>National Guard Youth ChalleNGe (2005–present)</td>
<td>Random assignment impact study and implementation study</td>
<td>Youth, ages 16–18, who dropped out before completing high school and are drug-free and not heavily involved with the justice system</td>
<td>Education, service to community, and other components in a quasi-military residential setting; 12-month post-residential mentoring program</td>
<td>3,000 youth</td>
<td>Early results show large increases in high school diploma or equivalency receipt and earned college credits, as well as gains in employment and earnings</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Job Corps (1994–2003)</td>
<td>Random assignment impact study and implementation study</td>
<td>Disadvantaged youth, ages 16–24</td>
<td>Employment, education, and training in a mostly residential setting</td>
<td>15,386 youth</td>
<td>Earnings and employment impacts in Years 3–4 of the study period (administrative data show impacts faded after Year 4); results appear stronger for older youth (ages 20–24)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Los Angeles Reconnections Career Academy program (2013-2015)</td>
<td>Random assignment impact study and implementation study</td>
<td>Chronically truant and dropout youth, ages 16 to 24</td>
<td>Education, training and employment services, case management and other supportive services</td>
<td>1,000 youth</td>
<td>Increased educational attainment and enrollment in post-secondary education</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Latino Coalition’s Reclamando Nuestro Futuro (Reclaiming Our Future) Program (2007–2009)</td>
<td>Implementation and outcome study</td>
<td>At-risk or adjudicated youth, ages 14–21; primarily Latino</td>
<td>Comprehensive services (education, job-readiness, and supportive services)</td>
<td>2,748 youth</td>
<td>Moderately increased employment, job training, and/or education outcomes; reduced recidivism rates</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**SOURCES:** Miller, Cummings, Millenky, Wiegand, & Long (2018); Millenky, Bloom, Muller-Ravett, & Broadus (2011); Schochet, Burghardt, & McConnell (2008); Bruno & Pistorino (2007); Geckeler et al. (2017); Monsma & Smidt (2009).
SPR’s evaluation aimed to build on this previous body of work and to measure outputs and outcomes from the program within the specific Monterey County community context. SPR staff have a history of providing technical assistance to the Monterey County workforce development and gang prevention agencies. This knowledge informed the evaluation framework, which included a focus on contextual factors and community partners (Monterey County Board of Supervisors, 2015). The evaluation consisted of three elements—an implementation study, an outcome study, and a cost study—and their associated research questions.

**Implementation Study**

This component documented the evolution and implementation of the YAP program, including its design and planning as well as key partnerships. Specific topics addressed in the implementation study included recruitment activities, service design, service delivery systems, project management and operations, and partnerships. The implementation study relied on qualitative data gathered during site visits. Research questions included:

- What contextual factors are important to understanding the design, implementation, and outcomes of the YAP program?
- What was the process of designing the program model? How did the grantee mobilize partners to participate in the program?
- What partnership models are effective in designing and implementing a program that aims to reduce youth involvement in crime and gangs?
- What partnerships and linkages are developed across the workforce investment system, educational system, justice system, and social service system?
- What partnership outcomes, as measured through implementation study interviews, have been achieved as a result of the grant (e.g., new partnerships, delivery and quality of services, strong cooperation between programs and funding streams, new recruitment strategies)?
- What implementation challenges has the YAP program experienced? What best practices have been learned through implementation of the program?

**Outcome Study**

The outcome study documented individual outcomes of YAP youth. For this component, we used pre- and post-program surveys—administered when participants enrolled in the program and after they exited, respectively—to document youth characteristics and the services they received. The outcome study also included an analysis of program data entered by staff into
CalJOBS, the online workforce system used by the state of California, and criminal justice data from the California Department of Justice (DOJ).

The following questions guided the outcome study:

- How is YAP participation associated with HSET and high school diploma attainment, credits received, and enrollment into postsecondary institutions?
- How is YAP participation associated with enrollment in and completion of other training activities, such as occupational skills training and certification?
- How is YAP participation associated with employment outcomes, such as entered employment, employment retention, and average earnings?
- Do any of these outcomes differ for key subgroups (e.g., age, race, ethnicity, gender)?
- What recidivism rates are observed among those participating in YAP? In what way do participants recidivate (e.g., new crimes versus parole violations)? What factors are associated with recidivism?
- What is the criminal offense rate among participants who were not previously involved with the juvenile justice system?
- Does the number of participants with self-professed gang associations decrease?

Cost Study

The cost analysis estimated the cost of operating the YAP program, including the cost per participant. For this study, we relied on data from WDB staff, including data on leveraged funds. The cost study was guided by the following questions:

- What does the program cost to operate?
- What are the costs by service category (e.g., education, training, case management, supportive services)?
- Was the program able to leverage other funds?
- What are the overall costs to operate the YAP program? What is the cost per participant served?
### Evaluation Data Sources

Exhibit I-4 summarizes and describes the data sources for the evaluation of the YAP program.

#### Exhibit I-4: Summary of Data Sources

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Data sources</th>
<th>Description</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Site visits</td>
<td>In October 2016, July 2017, March 2018, and April 2019, SPR conducted day-long site visits to the YAP program to learn about its operations, program model, services, and costs, as well as successes and challenges in implementing the program. These site visits included youth focus groups and interviews as well as staff and partner interviews.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Youth survey</td>
<td>SPR designed and administered a survey to capture information about YAP participant demographics, education, work experience, and involvement in gangs and the criminal justice system. The pre- and post-program surveys were designed to capture data when youth first enrolled and after they exited YAP, including those who successfully completed and those who exited before completion. The post-program survey also captured youth participation in YAP service activities.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Program data</td>
<td>The YAP program provided data on youth enrolled from April 2015 to March 2019. This information includes demographic data, school enrollment status, and service activities, as well as the number and amount of incentives received for each completed activity.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cost data</td>
<td>To analyze the expenses involved in operating the YAP program, SPR collected program cost data from Monterey County WDB staff as well as data pertaining to leveraged funds.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Administrative data</td>
<td>SPR accessed data on offenses, arrests, and convictions from the California DOJ data system.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Program documents</td>
<td>SPR conducted a review of relevant YAP program documents, such as the grant proposal to DOL, program curricula, outreach reports, and marketing materials.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Evaluation Limitations

The data collected during site visits and conversations with YAP staff provided rich information about the implementation experience of the program. However, this report has important limitations. First, the program experienced early challenges with start-up and staff turnover, which delayed the development of services and recruitment efforts, resulting in lower-than-planned-for enrollment in the program. For example, the original aim was to enroll youth in three satellite locations throughout Monterey County, but, during the first year of implementation, program services were delivered at only one site, in Salinas. In October 2016, two years after program implementation, the three different locations became fully operational.

Additionally, the outcomes analysis was hampered by a lack of survey responses, specifically with the follow-up survey. Also, administrative data were collected only for a small number of participants, and only from the California DOJ. The low match rate for program participants with justice system data may be related to the median age of participants (17 years old). The program drew heavily from high school students, who had had fewer years than older youth to be involved in the justice system. We had planned to collect data from local school districts and community colleges as well, but this was not possible due to limitations in the consent procedures.

Overview of the Report

The remainder of this report includes the following chapters:

- Chapter II describes program implementation and our analysis of lessons learned;
- Chapter III describes the participant outcomes achieved;
- Chapter IV reviews the costs of operating the YAP program; and
- Chapter V concludes the report with a synthesis of lessons learned from program implementation and the evaluation itself.

Additionally, to capture youth voices, a participant profile appears between each of the chapters. These profiles illustrate participants’ use of and perspective on YAP services, using data from CalJOBS, pre- and post-program surveys, and administrative data from the California DOJ.
When Victor entered the program, he was an unemployed 18-year-old who had left high school after completing the 11th grade. A Latino English-language learner, he took advantage of the opportunities the YAP program offered to enroll in an alternative high school program and complete high school equivalency classes. Victor’s goals were to gain employment and pass the HSET.

Victor participated in the program for 12 months, earning five incentives, including one for completing his high school equivalency and one for obtaining employment while in the program. He reported taking advantage of multiple YAP program services, including paid work experience and on-the-job training. He gave his case manager high marks, strongly agreeing that she cared about him as a person, connected him to needed services, and helped him make progress toward his career goals.

Two years after the program, Victor held a full-time job earning $15 per hour and reported continuing to take courses for college credit since leaving the program. He gave all program services high marks and shared that what he most appreciated about the program was “the different opportunities it offered.”
II. IMPLEMENTATION

The YAP program targeted youth with barriers—including academic truancy, gang involvement, or participation in the justice system—in effect targeting a special population in the workforce system. Implementation of the program began with a one-year start-up phase to establish the program’s foundation. Subsequently, the program underwent an initial implementation, characterized by site relocation, outreach challenges, and staffing changes, and it was not until the fourth year of the program’s five-year grant period that it achieved maturation.

This chapter examines the YAP program’s implementation in detail. This includes start-up of the program, locations, outreach and recruitment strategies, participant enrollment, and services and activities of the YAP program, as well successes and challenges. The implementation study relied on four site visits—one in each year of program implementation—phone calls with program staff, and additional documentation provided by the program.

Key Findings

- **The YAP program established new connections with community stakeholders.** The program developed and maintained relationships with key allies, such as schools and justice partners, to facilitate recruitment efforts. These connections were especially important for reaching the program’s targeted population.

- **Networking was the most effective recruitment strategy for the YAP program.** Identifying and developing relationships with community stakeholders, who could market the program to opportunity youth, was key.

- **Establishing strong employer connections proved to be difficult.** The YAP program used its start-up phase to acquire supplemental funding for attractive work experience components. However, it had challenges developing employment placements for both paid and unpaid WBL experiences.

- **The program primarily used an individual-level strategy to inform its service delivery and moved away from its original cohort model.** Responding to the changing context and safety concerns, many activities were conducted on an individual level, such as work readiness workshops, case management, and WBL opportunities.
Preparing for Implementation

The YAP program commenced with a 12-month start-up phase, from October 2014 to October 2015. During this first year, the focus was on identifying and hiring staff, developing policies and procedures for the program, and securing program sites. A priority was hiring a full-time program coordinator, with the intention of retaining the WDB executive director as the YAP program director. In the course of the start-up phase, the program also had to identify an evaluation team, purchase and develop program materials, define program activities and partner roles, and ensure that a program data management system was in place.

During this start-up phase, the program received a grant from the Workforce Accelerator Fund 1.0 (“Accelerator”), an initiative funded by the California WDB and the Employment Development Department, to run a youth employment and leadership pilot project from July 2014 to June 2015. During this pilot, the program planned to serve 40 youth on public assistance through internships and peer mentoring, and to generate relationships with employers and stakeholders. While the Accelerator pilot did not meet participant enrollment goals, the program was able to generate new partnerships and crystallize appropriate program services that influenced YAP. It identified that peer-to-peer mentor opportunities were limited and not appropriate for many of its targeted participants and adjusted its program model to include cross-age mentorship opportunities instead.

The WDB also used this grant to explore additional funding streams and referral points from stakeholders, including the Monterey County Department of Social Services, which allowed it to clarify appropriate partnerships and referral sources. For example, WDB staff realized that they would need to partner with agencies that could identify gang- or justice-involved youth, such as the Silver Star Resource Center, which became a YAP program site. Following their first Accelerator grant, the Monterey WDB applied for an additional Accelerator grant (2.0) from the California WDB and received $100,000 to provide subsidized work experiences for YAP program participants for one year (June 2015 to June 2016).

Overall, by the end of the start-up phase, the program was appropriately structured for the implementation of the YAP program. The WDB hired a full-time program coordinator, and engaged SPR to conduct an evaluation of the program and provide technical assistance to develop program policies and procedures, such as an outreach strategy. Additionally, while the grantee had planned to develop a database specifically for this grant, their statewide online workforce system, CalJOBS, was able to capture the information needed for the DOL grant. By leveraging their existing data management system, the grantee freed up approximately $174k in funds for additional participant incentives and staffing.
Program Locations

The YAP program had planned to operate from three regions of the county: south, west, and central. In 2015, it primarily operated from the Monterey County AJCC in the central part of the county. It eventually added the MBEST Center in Marina, located west of Salinas, in January 2016 (see Exhibit II-1). It explored different locations, including Rancho Cielo, a comprehensive center for disconnected youth, but had challenges with county approvals to be located at the site.

By the start of the third grant year (October 2016), the program had transitioned each of the three case managers to different sites in the county: the Silver Star Resource Center in Salinas, a resource center for youth developed in partnership with the probation and social service agencies; the MBEST Center in Marina, a satellite location of the AJCC; and the city of Greenfield’s Civic Center. At that time, it discontinued program services out of the AJCC in Salinas.

Each site maintained one of the three YAP case managers, who oversaw outreach and recruitment for their local area. While the program met its initial goal of reaching youth in diverse areas of the county, this meant that staff had to adapt their approach to serving areas with limited transportation and services. The MBEST Center and Greenfield’s Civic Center were in areas with limited public transportation options. For example, it would take approximately 35 minutes to drive from Greenfield to Salinas in a car but more than double that on a bus. Staff would often drive youth to program activities in a county car because of lack of transportation. Additionally, staff reported more employment opportunities in Salinas, the largest city in the county, than in Marina or Greenfield. The WDB is now considering closing the satellite AJCC in Marina due to its limited space and transit access.
Outreach and Recruitment

The YAP program engaged in many different strategies for outreach and recruitment, such as distributing pre-applications to youth and partners at local youth centers and continuation schools, leaving promotional materials at libraries, and creating linkages with justice partners and educational institutions. Moreover, the program hired a dedicated staff person to conduct outreach to community partners and tasked case managers with outreach and recruitment for their local area. Ultimately, the program found that networking was perhaps the most important recruitment strategy for the program. The key to YAP recruitment was to identify and create alliances with community stakeholders who shared similar goals and were willing to refer eligible youth to the program. This section describes early challenges to the YAP outreach and recruitment process, the program’s recruitment strategies, and the results of enrollment.

Early Challenges to Outreach and Recruitment

From the start, the program intended to conduct outreach to a cross-section of program partners. This strategy characterized much of its outreach plan throughout the life of the program. However, staff had early difficulties reaching youth who qualified for the program—namely, those who were involved with the juvenile justice system or gangs—for the following reasons:

- The program experienced significant staff transitions at the beginning of implementation. In the second grant year, the YAP program experienced high staff turnover in several staff positions—case manager, program coordinator, and outreach staff. For example, in 2016 the program experienced 100 percent turnover among case managers. Some positions were left vacant for several months and few staff members were available to conduct community outreach or market the program. See Exhibit II-2 on the next page for a timeline of staffing changes.

- The YAP program was not yet well known in the county. Referrals from partners were initially slow to trickle in, especially referrals of youth who were involved with the justice system. As noted above, the program did not have staff capacity to conduct community outreach. Additionally, the program was new and did not have the necessary buy-in from community stakeholders and programs—a problem that was likely hampered by staff transitions. The program would eventually build stronger relationships with referral sources in the second half of the program—January 2017 to March 2019—and staff reported receiving referrals well after enrollment ended in September 2019.

- The program model was not clear to frontline staff and they required significant technical assistance to launch the program. This assistance focused on illuminating recruitment strategies, presenting possible program partners and referral points, and clarifying the
program model, including the order of activities and anticipated inputs and outcomes. The program was able to solidify its model in early 2017, largely due to new program leadership.

Exhibit II-2: Implementation Timeline Showing Staffing Changes

Program Recruitment Strategies

The success of YAP’s outreach strategy increased as the program matured and staffing stabilized. The program addressed staffing challenges and, in October 2016, hired an experienced program coordinator who provided the program much-needed structure, administrative leadership, and stability. The program also began to develop a positive reputation among its community partners and referral sources. As a result, staff were able to increase community outreach activities. Between February 2017 and August 2018, when the program enrolled the most youth, case managers conducted 200 outreach activities, with most efforts focused on the central region. They identified youth applicants through a variety of methods, such as:

- **Attending community events** in which case managers shared program information with interested youth and connected with other local agencies to identify potential partners. For example, staff attended National Night Out, an event that promotes police and community connections as well as gang intervention summits.

- **Visiting local libraries** and leaving informational materials. YAP staff noted that, in some communities around Monterey County, local libraries are hubs of youth and family
activity. Outreach to these institutions decreased over time as other referral points became more active.

- **Presenting at local high schools**, reaching out to potentially interested youth and meeting school truancy officers. Key to this strategy was identifying a champion at the school, such as a teacher, who would let staff recruit in the classroom.

- **Approaching parents** in public spaces to share information. Staff described having the opportunity to discuss the YAP program with parents at events in libraries and local government spaces to conduct in-person outreach directly to parents.

- **Soliciting referrals from partners**. Staff discussed working with the Silver Star Resource Center, the Monterey County Office of Education Alternative Education Program, and the Monterey County Probation Department to receive referrals for youth who fit the program’s eligibility criteria. The Silver Star Resource Center, a key partner for YAP, is a multiagency center with onsite education, vocational and job training, counseling services, substance abuse treatment, and family support services. Like YAP, Silver Star targets at-risk and gang-involved youth. Programs at this site often co-enrolled youth, including into YAP, asserting that this offered youth more wraparound services. According to staff, this strategy resulted in over 160 youth referrals from local agencies in the second and third year of the program.

As the program became better known and forged new partnerships, staff primarily relied on partner referrals as the main recruitment strategy. This partner network understood YAP eligibility requirements (including the stipulation that youth must be justice-involved, impacted by gang activity, or truant), and referred youth who would benefit the most. Indeed, the program’s outreach data highlight schools and school districts, youth centers and youth programs, and justice partners (such as police and probation) as the organizations in which the YAP team focused much of their recruitment efforts. Exhibit II-3 illustrates their outreach efforts more widely—including efforts to establish job experiences—for the time period for which the program provided data on outreach efforts.
**Enrollment**

The program had planned two 18-month cycles of youth enrollment, dividing their enrollment among the three site locations. In each cycle, they planned for Marina and Greenfield to enroll approximately 30 youth and Salinas to enroll around 60 participants. The program planned to enroll a total of 240 youth during its two cycles. However, executing the two-cycle model proved to be unfeasible, largely due to early outreach and recruitment challenges as well as associated gradual enrollment. For instance, in March 2016, six months into implementation, the program reported a total of only 13 enrollments. Exhibit II-4 presents an enrollment timeline based on information collected from the program each spring and fall.

Accordingly, the program modified its enrollment strategy to a rolling admission practice, where it enrolled youth on a continuous basis throughout the grant period. By the third year of the grant, the program had enrolled 47 youth. During the fourth year, the program surpassed half of its enrollment goal, reporting 147 enrollments. Total enrollment reached 167 by the end enrollment in September 2018.

The program did not meet its enrollment goal of 240 youth for a few reasons:

- **Misunderstanding eligibility guidelines, which impacted youth eligible for the program.** Early in implementation, the program was following Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA) youth eligibility requirements, which provide very specific guidelines for youth receiving assistance with federal funds. In late 2016, after speaking with the WIF grant program officer, program staff determined that these requirements did not apply to YAP, and that the program could rely on its own program eligibility requirements.
• **Gradual and moderate referrals from program partners.** The program targeted a hard-to-reach population and acknowledged the need to have strong relationships with community sources that could refer eligible youth. The program worked to build these relationships throughout the grant period and achieved greater success by the third year, after staffing and programming had stabilized, but did not have these partnerships in place earlier on.

• **Leadership and staffing turnover.** As noted earlier, the program experienced significant leadership and staffing changes within the first half of the program, from October 2015 to December 2016. It lost two program coordinators, who were primarily in charge of coordinating recruitment efforts, as well as its first outreach staff person. The lead agency, Monterey County WDB, lost its executive director, who had largely spearheaded this effort during the first half of the grant.

Ultimately, by early 2017, YAP program staff obtained greater clarity around eligibility and performance requirements from their WIF grant officer and began following program eligibility guidelines set forth in the grant application. They also strengthened their relationships with referral sources and began to receive referrals of eligible youth who could benefit from the program. By early 2018, the program focused more on these community linkages to increase enrollment numbers and continued its outreach to different stakeholders, programs, and other community members to establish points of referral for the program.

Importantly, the case manager at the Silver Star Resource Center absorbed much of the caseload of youth co-located at the center so they could receive extra case management support from the YAP program. Generally, she maintained around 60 youth on her caseload. Research has found that successful co-location initiatives provide easier access to participants and create a “one-stop shop” for clients (Senior et al., 2011; Sloper, 2004). Indeed, this practice facilitated recruitment of youth in the program’s targeted population.

Other case managers experienced a harder time recruiting youth because of their locations. They were in towns with much smaller populations and, in the case of Greenfield, a much larger geographical area with limited transportation options. However, over time, case managers were gradually successful with their outreach efforts, leading to an increase in program enrollment. The Marina case manager worked with approximately 21 participants, on average, while in Greenfield the caseload averaged around 16. These numbers were lower than the anticipated caseload of 30 youth for the Marina and Greenfield locations, however.
Program Services

The YAP program model included a variety of services to help youth engage in positive behaviors, displayed in Exhibit II-5 below. These included occupational exploration, assessment of needs, community engagement opportunities, and supportive services. Youth graduated from the program when they completed the work readiness workshops, job shadowing activity, and community service. Following graduation, they could continue to receive case management support for six months. The program primarily used an individual-level strategy to provide services for youth and made several other modifications to services.

The following section describes the planned program model, the adjustments made to service delivery, and the number of participants as reported in the program’s management information system (MIS) data. While the program enrolled 167 youth, we present information only on participants who received services and consented to be part of the evaluation. Ultimately, data were available for a total of 120 youth. (See Chapter III for more information about the study population.)

Exhibit II-5 : Program Service Model

Assessment and Service Planning
Work Readiness and Life Skills Training
Case Management Support
Supportive Services
Work-Based Learning Opportunities
Education Services
Community Service
Mentorship

Assessment and Service Planning

Before enrolling in the YAP program, youth participated in a program orientation, which included a meeting with a case manager in either a one-on-one or small-group setting to learn about eligibility requirements and services. Once youth decided to enroll, they underwent an assessment of their skills and interests. The YAP program used an online assessment tool—the California Career Zone—to gauge youth goals and career options. The results informed the individual service strategy plan and guided initial discussions with case managers about goal setting, which took place individually with the youth participant or with parents present (if the

...
youth was underage and needed parental consent to enroll in the program). Youth labeled this process as providing a “backstory of their life.” Case managers described it as the beginning of a conversation in which youth shared personal details about their hopes for the future, family situations, and past criminal behavior or gang activity. Staff described the process as creating a “bank” of youth information. A total of 101 youth successfully completed an orientation and 99 completed an initial assessment out of the 120 youth in the study.

Research shows that continually assessing youth throughout their participation in the program is a promising practice; assessment can highlight areas of need or improvement at different stages of the program. For example, Dion et al. (2013), in a conceptual framework for services for at-risk youth, recommended that programs engage youth in continual assessments and service planning to identify additional needs or to match them with services or referrals that may arise during program participation. While the YAP program used a consistent assessment tool—the California Career Zone assesses interests, work importance, and skills—the program only assessed youth at the outset; it did not assess youth needs or protective and risk factors on an ongoing basis. Case managers evaluated youth needs and progress after the initial assessment through informal conversations, though they reported retaining initial assessment information to inform their interactions with youth and worked to find appropriate services when needs were identified during program participation.

Each youth participant also completed an individual service plan. Youth and case managers would work to write out short- and long-term career and education goals and available services related to them. According to case managers, a lot of coaching was necessary during this process. Youth often found it difficult to imagine themselves in higher-paying careers. Accordingly, case managers offered alternatives related to youth’s employment aspirations. For example, if a participant sought work as a laborer in the agricultural fields in the surrounding areas, the case manager would offer careers in machinery or engineering related to agriculture as possible career options. In total, 92 of the 120 youth developed individual service plans.

**Work Readiness and Life Skills Training**

Work readiness and life skills training workshops were at the heart of YAP program services. These workshops were computer-based, and youth completed them in individual or small-group settings with their case managers. Originally, it was envisioned that the workshops would be completed within a cohort model, in which the same group would take each workshop together. Due to scheduling conflicts and transportation issues, however, youth most often completed them independently with their case managers. Of the 120 youth, 91 participated in any workshop, and 79 received an incentive for completing work readiness workshops.
These workshops covered topics such as identifying career interests, filling out job applications, creating a strong resume, attending and succeeding in college, interviewing for jobs, understanding business etiquette, and learning how to work collaboratively.

The workshops were organized into two sections. In Phase 1, youth completed an interest and skills profiler; discussed career and lifestyle goals, the importance of work, and team building; and explored life and communication issues. After the first set of workshops was completed, youth had the opportunity to begin a job shadowing experience to gain exposure to the world of work. In Phase 2, workshops covered topics such as how to fill out a job application; how to create a resume; interviewing skills and etiquette; management of money, time, and online presence; and how to fill out the Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA). Workshops were self-paced and each lasted between 45 minutes and an hour.

Youth in focus groups reported that the real-world examples and commentary the case managers provided were important to making the workshops useful and relevant. They said the workshops covered topics they had not previously learned about, such as the importance of giving a strong handshake and dressing appropriately for a job interview. They also appreciated learning about money management, creating a personal budget, and writing a check. However, focus group participants did highlight some challenges and suggest improvements for the workshops:

- **The experience was sometimes isolating.** Interactions with other youth were limited, especially as the cohort model proved challenging to implement, and youth were completing workshops alone or in different orders. Youth described completing workshops individually in a room with other youth, but with little communication between them. This improved during the latter half of the grant cycle, when staff developed relationships with schools that allowed them to host workshops in a classroom setting with groups of youth after school.

- **Not all material was relevant or useful.** Youth in early focus groups did not find the order of the workshops particularly relevant to their lives. For instance, one found the information in the managing money module useful only after he had obtained employment and was receiving a steady income. They recommended that modules be pared down or that they include only information relevant to their current situations.
Indeed, in the last half of the grant cycle, the program tailored the order of workshops, especially given that youth completed them individually. In particular, staff switched the order of Phase 1 and 2 workshops, to first introduce youth to much-needed soft skills (originally the employment workshops came first). The order also became more flexible—for example, youth could participate in community service events even if they had not completed all workshops. This allowed newly enrolled youth to participate in a variety of activities that interested them.

**Case Management Support**

Case management was an integral component of the YAP program. Case managers provided one-on-one and group support to help youth overcome life challenges and barriers. The program primarily used an individual-level strategy to provide services for youth, though, if appropriate, case managers would involve family members or school or other community-level contacts. Case managers were responsible for:

- **Assessment.** As discussed above, case managers utilized online tools to assess youth interests and skills. They also worked with youth to set personal, education, and career goals during service planning.

- **Referrals and access to supportive services.** Case managers referred youth to services outside of the program’s scope, such as mental health and substance abuse treatment services. They also helped facilitate the program’s supportive services by assisting youth in their requests for transportation funds, tuition and book assistance, or other supports.

- **Encouragement and reassurance.** Case managers met with youth regularly, between weekly and monthly, as was appropriate for the youth and the location. For example, youth who participated in the program after school met every week. When they did not meet with youth, case managers were in touch through text messages and phone calls. In this role, they served as important mentors and provided much-needed encouragement.

- **Facilitating workshops and WBL opportunities.** Case managers delivered the work readiness workshops, helped youth identify education and vocational training programs, and connected them to WBL opportunities.

- **Outreach and recruitment.** The YAP program co-located case managers at three satellite locations throughout Monterey County to maximize their

“We are here to let them know that someone believes in them. They need to hear that.”

— YAP Case Manager
ability to recruit youth and develop linkages with employers and other local agencies. Each case manager developed partnerships and linkages appropriate to their site. For instance, the case manager located at the Silver Star Resource Center developed linkages with the programs co-located at the center. She participated in the center’s monthly roundtable where staff discussed client cases and referred youth to other programs at the center. The case manager in Marina connected with nearby schools, which increased the program’s school-age population; in Greenfield, the case manager developed connections with the city’s police department, probation office, and district attorney, which were located in the same facility.

- **Alumni services.** Case managers were required to keep in touch with youth for six months after program completion, through text messages, calls, or meetings. Case managers could assist youth with employment- or education-related needs. Youth who completed the program in March 2019 were not eligible for alumni services.

**Supportive Services**

YAP youth received supportive services directly through case managers or through referrals to local agencies. Services provided directly by the program included bus tokens, money for college textbooks or supplies, and uniforms associated with work or school (such as scrubs). According to program data, 24 youth received these types of monetary supportive services.

Youth were also referred to local agencies for drug counseling and behavioral health programs. Case managers described themselves as referral sources for these types of supportive services, and they were not able to provide intensive counseling themselves. Supportive services were not obligatory; youth could decide not to access them if they were opposed to it.

While the program provided supportive services to meet most youth needs, they struggled to address a prevalent need that staff became aware of during implementation: food insecurity. Staff relayed that youth attending YAP workshops and events were often hungry. The program was unable to procure food as a supportive service due to grant restrictions and unable to receive assistance from food banks because the WDB is not a nonprofit organization. Toward the end of the program, the coordinator was able to procure donated funds for food from a local attorney association.

**Work-Based Learning Opportunities**

Another key feature of the YAP program was the provision of WBL opportunities—paid work experience and career exploration through job shadowing.
Paid Work Experience

During the grant design phase, the YAP program had planned to provide paid work experience for all youth. The goal was to secure employer partners to host work experience sites and to place youth at sites that best matched their career interests. As described earlier, the program secured a one-year Accelerator grant to develop and implement this part of the program, with the hope that it would increase employment and re-employment opportunities for job seekers. However, the YAP program was unable to take full advantage of the Accelerator grant, both because early program staff were unable to recruit employers as host sites, and because very few YAP participants were enrolled while the funds were available. As a result, only four youth were able to take advantage of this program component. The experience was successful for at least one youth. While still in high school, he received a subsidized paid work experience at a local medical center and gained full-time employment shortly thereafter in the hospital’s warehouse.

Job Shadowing and Internships

The YAP program offered job shadowing experiences so that youth could gain exposure to the world of work and learn about workplace culture. All participants were required to complete 15 hours of job shadowing before they graduated from the program. They could select up to two employers to shadow and, upon completion of their 15 hours, receive a $100 incentive. Fourteen youth received an incentive related to completing 15 hours of job shadowing.

Employers that hosted job shadowing experiences included the Monterey County Sheriff’s Office, the local animal shelter (SPCA), and Goodwill Central Coast’s culinary arts training kitchen. Employers that hosted youth internships included Goodwill Central Coast, Soledad Cemetery, and Salinas United Business Association.

Youth appreciated the opportunity to learn about different careers through both types of opportunities; however, the program faced several challenges in procuring job shadowing sites:

- **Developing strong employer relationships.** Job shadow placements were directly based on participants’ career interests and goals. As such, YAP staff had to cultivate relationships with employers in fields that matched these interests, and this was a significant challenge. Staff reported that employers were being more selective, and local industry sectors, like agriculture, were experiencing large layoffs that rendered them too short-staffed to host shadowing experiences. There were also instances where partners did not completely comprehend the commitment. For instance, a solar company agreed to host youth but withdrew because they did not receive a grant that would have helped pay for staff time to supervise and train interns.

- **Liability insurance requirements.** Some employers were reluctant to host youth at their worksites due to concerns about liability. As a result, a subset—especially those in...
trades such as construction, plumbing, solar, and electrical—required the YAP program to carry liability insurance before youth could participate in job shadows at their sites. The program was unable to procure such insurance, however.

To ensure availability of placements despite these challenges, the program made an effort to reach agencies that could offer job shadowing activities. From February 2017 to August 2018 the program made 43 attempts to connect with employers and other organizations, such as the Salinas United Business Association, the Boys & Girls Clubs of America, the Salvation Army, the local chapter of the SPCA, and various local businesses (restaurants, automotive repair, beauty salons). Some youth were placed with the same employer since few employers participated in the WBL experiences.

**Job Placement**

The YAP program did not provide job placement services. Instead, case managers emphasized “self-placement,” which was consistent with their belief that “youth should learn to fish rather than staff fishing for them.” As such, case managers were actively assisting youth in preparing for self-placement through mock interviews, resume help, advice on how to dress for interviews, and so on. Some youth found employment on their own while enrolled in the program. Youth who found jobs were eligible to receive a program incentive of $100. By the end of the program, 47 youth received the incentive for obtaining unsubsidized employment or enrolling into college (which staff combined into a single incentive). It is worth noting that youth in focus groups said they entered the YAP program with the expectation that it would help them find employment by actively placing them into job opportunities.

“I just wanted to get employed, so I didn’t really think about the [incentives].”

— YAP Youth Participant

**Education Services**

A major priority for the YAP program was to re-engage youth in education. Therefore, education was discussed early in the program, especially for those who had yet to complete high school or who had not obtained a HSET credential. The YAP program encouraged students to re-enroll in high school or in an adult education program, as appropriate. Beyond secondary schooling, the program offered youth opportunities to explore postsecondary options. They did so by providing information about college, including community colleges in the area, and visits to local university campuses, as well as help filling out financial assistance forms, such as the FAFSA. The program also worked with youth who were interested in vocational training—for example, by helping to enroll youth in a certified nursing assistant training program at a private
college in the area. In total, 36 youth received an incentive related to obtaining a high school
diploma or HSET credential.

**College Counseling**
Case managers provided ongoing college counseling to help youth learn about options for
postsecondary education, such as vocational training, community colleges, and four-year
universities. Youth were encouraged to enroll in college or take college-level courses while in
the program, and they received a $100 incentive for doing so. Case managers noted that most
YAP youth did not believe that college was an option; they did not think they could afford it or
that they were qualified. To guide youth, case managers counseled them on the requirements
for college admissions and helped them fill out college and financial aid applications.

**College Visits**
YAP staff organized college campus field trips to give youth a sense of college life. Youth visited
Monterey Peninsula College, Stanford University, and local California State University campuses
for tours.

**Referrals for Skills Training**
Case managers referred youth to local programs to enroll in occupational training, such as for
culinary arts, forklift operation, and work as certified nursing assistants. Case managers
referred youth to a local pre-apprenticeship program that places young adults in internships in
various fields such as electronics, painting, and welding, though only one YAP participant
ultimately enrolled in this pre-apprenticeship program with the Laborers’ union. In the third
year of YAP, the program also developed a relationship
with Goodwill Central Coast, who worked with them to provide career exposure through job shadowing
experiences, and training through Individual Training
Accounts (ITAs). Three YAP youth participated in a three-
day, 15-hour job shadowing event and subsequently enrolled in the culinary training program at Goodwill,
which was paid for through ITAs. In addition, the YAP program funded certified nursing assistant and forklift
operation training through two other providers. However, because the Monterey County WDB
had limited ITA funds, these opportunities were only available to a small subset of youth.
Sixteen youth received an incentive for completing an ITA-funded training.

**Community Service**
YAP youth had the opportunity to participate in two forms of community service while in the
program: a team-based community project with other YAP youth, and individual community
service hours. During the last year of the program there was an increased focus on community service projects, as the new executive director for the Monterey WDB recognized these opportunities as essential leadership-building activities.

**Team-Based Community Project**

Youth had the option of participating in a group-designed community service activity sponsored by the program. The first community project, which largely characterized the team-based community projects executed throughout the program, was completed in 2016. Youth made giveaway bags for homeless individuals in the county and worked in groups to coordinate the project phases, fill bags with practical items, and distribute them at a local church and food pantry. The program partnered with a local alternative school, which donated a number of personal and practical items for the bags, such as shaving kits and tarps. YAP youth repeated this activity throughout the grant cycle and expanded drop-off sites to local parks, homeless shelters, government locations, and transportation hubs. The program also provided opportunities for youth to prepare food boxes at the local food bank. Out of the 120 youth in the evaluation, 49 participated in these leadership-building activities.

**Community Service Hours**

Youth also had the option to volunteer their time at a local human services agency. For example, they could volunteer at a senior residential program to socialize with residents or, as part of a different community service activity, could make holiday cards for deployed servicemembers. Upon completion of 40 hours of community service, they received a $100 incentive. Twenty-two youth received an incentive for completing 20 community service hours; five also received an incentive for 40 hours of community service.

**Mentorship**

Generally, mentorship is recognized as a promising youth intervention with positive effects on youth delinquency (Thornton, Craft, Dahlberg, Lynch, & Baer, 2002; Tolan, Henry, Schoeny, Lovegrove, & Nichols, 2014). The YAP program incorporated mentorship by giving youth opportunities to meet with members of the community, such as professional athletes and law enforcement officials, who walked them through their career trajectories during a presentation. These mentorship opportunities were provided in a small-group setting, usually in a meeting room at one of the program sites. The goal was primarily career exploration, and participants had one-time exposure to presenters. Within the study population, 27 youth participated in these adult mentoring meetings. Youth also received regular, one-on-one adult mentoring, primarily through the relationship that youth built with case managers.

The program envisioned a more formal peer-mentorship model, but early on realized that peer-to-peer mentorship would not be appropriate for their targeted population, due to safety
issues concerning gang- and justice-involved youth interactions. This concern was heightened considerably when, in May 2016, two participants passed away due to gang-related gun violence. Instead, the program developed a model of intergenerational mentorship. In this model, in a school setting, youth served as mentors to younger youth who were not involved in gangs. However, due to district-required immunizations and background checks, which the program could not require YAP youth to undergo, this program aspect ended.

Ultimately, the program initiated an eight-hour workshop, provided in two 4-hour segments at a YAP site, where YAP youth taught soft skills to younger youth they already knew without having to undergo background or immunization checks. First, YAP participants received four hours of training on life skills and mentoring. Then for the second half of the workshop, YAP participants brought a sibling or friend, ages 8–12, and led them in mentoring activities based on what they learned in the training session. Parents were also welcome at these events. YAP staff conducted this training 15 times in order to fulfill the mentorship portion of the program model. A total of 25 YAP participants participated in cross-age mentoring and a total of 31 youth received an incentive related to leadership development and mentoring more widely.

**Sustainability**

The YAP program ended enrollment in September 2018 and completed program services to all enrolled youth in March 2019. As of the last site visit in March 2019, there were no immediate plans to continue the program beyond that point. However, the WDB executive director reported that other youth services and programming remained available, such as the WIOA Title I Youth Program or a pre-apprenticeship initiative, and eligible youth could be served through this funding stream. The program also relayed that their WIOA youth providers were especially interested in incorporating some of the components of the YAP model, including the curriculum used in work readiness workshops. The executive director also highlighted the program’s networking strategy as something he would like to see WIOA youth programs incorporate.

**Implementation Successes**

Based on implementation study data, the program yielded the following successes:

- **The YAP program established new connections with community stakeholders.** The program developed and maintained relationships with key allies, such as schools and justice system partners, to facilitate recruitment efforts. These connections were especially important for reaching the program’s targeted population. The program’s most successful recruitment strategy centered around individualized and targeted efforts to reach key contacts through phone calls and presentations. Once the program
established buy-in, partners began to refer youth, and continued to refer youth to the WDB for services, even as the program ended.

- **The YAP program responded to many of its early challenges.** Staff turnover had major implications for the recruitment of youth and program implementation. Ultimately, the program hired a coordinator who provided the administrative leadership needed to implement the program. Enrollment numbers increased by more than 200 percent in a span of eight months, from July 2017 to March 2018, once this coordinator was in place.

- **The program fostered new strategies for the larger workforce system.** WDB staff reported that WIOA youth providers were looking to incorporate the work readiness curriculum into their own programming. The program also encouraged the WDB to promote its networking strategy of building strong community partnerships to better recruit from special populations.

- **The YAP program hired culturally competent staff.** Most program participants were Latino, and many were English-language learners (primarily Spanish speakers). Case managers, themselves Latinas and Spanish speakers, reported that many of the youth, and their parents, preferred to communicate in Spanish. The presence of bicultural and bilingual case managers allowed this flexibility.

**Lessons Learned**

While program staff had worked to lay the foundation of the YAP program during the first year of the grant, they experienced difficulties during initial implementation in Year 2, leading to lower-than-expected enrollment numbers. Following are some of the lessons learned during implementation:

- **Establishing referral relationships with key community service providers prior to the start of the program is crucial to recruitment of at-risk and gang-involved youth.** These relationships are more important than less-relational recruitment strategies, such as distributing promotional material, as these stakeholders are often gatekeepers to hard-to-reach populations.

- **Laying the groundwork for subsidized work experience is just as important as funding it.** Early on, the program acquired supplemental funding for an attractive program component—subsidized work experience. However, the Accelerator grant came too early in the program’s implementation, before a sizeable group of youth had been enrolled and adequately equipped to be in a workplace. As such, the grant went largely unused.
• **Employer partnerships are challenging to establish for youth work experience activities.** Job shadowing and other types of work experience opportunities are a great way for youth to gain insight and experience in real-world settings. However, developing these employer partnerships can be difficult, and the program had not developed key relationships prior to the start of enrollment. Rather than placing youth quickly, case managers had to develop these relationships first, while ensuring placements matched youth interests and career goals.

• **Changes to the program model may be necessary to tailor services to the specific needs of the target population.** The YAP program changed its mentorship model early on to accommodate safety concerns surrounding interactions between gang-involved youth. It also adapted its model to the changing context—slow enrollment and safety concerns—by moving to rolling admissions and dropping the cohort model.
Participant Profile

When he entered the program, Michael was an unemployed 23-year-old high school graduate; he was on probation with a record of five previous arrests. He had not participated in any postsecondary education or training programs, didn’t have clear career goals, and indicated that he needed assistance setting goals and accomplishing them. He had been involved in gang-related violence in the past, and had a parent who was incarcerated.

Michael participated in the program for the full 18 months, earning five separate incentives, including one for obtaining employment while in the program. He reported taking advantage of multiple YAP program services, including academic tutoring, vocational courses, and on-the-job training. He also reported receiving food assistance, support for avoiding gang involvement, and referrals to mental health and life skills training resources. He gave his case manager high marks on the survey, strongly agreeing that she cared about him as a person, connected him to needed services, and helped him make progress toward his career goals.

Two years after starting the program, while still on probation, he held a full-time job earning $13 per hour, and reported no further involvement with gangs or the justice system. On his post-program survey, he rated his overall experience with YAP highly, strongly agreeing that the program had helped him learn how to set goals and make plans to meet them, avoid dangerous or unhealthy situations, and be better able to handle problems. He shared, “They know how to talk to you and give you what you want, not just what you need. They help you with whatever you are going through.”

This participant profile is just one example of how a participant utilized YAP and assessed program services. It is based on data from CalJOBS, pre- and post-program surveys, and administrative data from California DOJ. It is not representative of the whole population served by the YAP program.
III. OUTCOMES

The goal of the YAP program was to improve opportunities for at-risk youth with activities promoting community engagement, education, and employment. The evaluation team utilized program data, participant surveys, and administrative data to conduct this outcome analysis. This chapter discusses programmatic outcomes, beginning with a discussion of data sources on YAP participants that were available to the SPR evaluation team, study limitations, and a description of the study population. This is followed by a discussion of outcome findings.

Key Findings

- **A significant, positive association was found between completing any program activity and receiving an incentive for obtaining employment or enrolling in college.** For each additional program activity a youth completes, the odds of receiving incentives for obtaining employment or enrolling in college increases by 9 percent.

- **YAP enrolled program participants with characteristics significantly associated with incarceration.** The odds of a youth with an incarcerated parent being arrested was about three times higher than the odds for a youth without incarcerated parents.

- **Most YAP participants (80 percent) were not found in DOJ records.** Among the 24 YAP program participants who did match with DOJ records, 10 had multiple arrests, consisting of infractions, misdemeanors, and felonies. These offenses included crimes of substance abuse, property crimes, parole violations, and disobeying court orders, among others.

Outcome Study Methodology

The YAP program was designed to help youth reconnect with school and discontinue engagement in illicit behavior. Staffing challenges, modifications to service delivery, and varying levels of engagement had implications for participants’ experiences and, ultimately, their outcomes. While the evaluation was not intended to describe the impacts of the program, it does include a description of their recidivism outcomes as reported in California DOJ data as well as education and employment outcomes as reported by the program.
**Participants**

Ultimately, the YAP program enrolled 167 youth. Only 133 of those participants chose to complete a consent process that allowed SPR to request data on their behalf. The YAP program was unable to provide service data on 13 of those participants, so the analysis presented in this chapter includes the remaining 120 youth who consented to participate in the evaluation and had any service activity during the program’s 36-month cycle.

**Data Sources**

The outcome study relied on three data sources:

- **Program MIS data.** This included baseline information about participants’ characteristics, services received, and incentives earned. These data were entered by staff into CalJOBS, the online workforce system used by the state of California or maintained in Excel spreadsheets.

- **Participant surveys.** Surveys were gathered through an online tool and included demographic information and customer satisfaction questions (see appendices E & F for survey tools). These were collected twice during the program: first at the start of program participation, and again at the end of the program. A total of 128 surveys were completed at program enrollment; only 11 were completed at program end.

- **Administrative data sources.** SPR received criminal justice data from the California DOJ for youth who consented to be part of the evaluation. Administrative data from DOJ were the primary source of arrest data for participants. SPR matched outcome study youth with DOJ data to obtain arrest history and explore recidivism rates (that is, rates at which an individual released from incarceration later commits another crime), as well as types of offenses and crimes among those arrested.

**Limitations**

The outcome study has several important limitations. First, as noted above, only 80 percent of youth in the program (133 out of 167) consented to take part in the evaluation; of these, an additional 13 were dropped from the study because of missing service information. Program staff reported that the loss of service information was caused by the staff turnover that occurred during the program’s first year of youth enrollment.

Second, only 20 percent of program participants matched with DOJ data. Among these 24 youth with a history of arrest, 10 had multiple arrests, consisting of infractions, misdemeanors, and felonies. These offenses included crimes of substance abuse, property crimes, parole violations, and disobeying court orders, among others. Initially, the team planned to supplement criminal justice information with self-reported data from participant surveys.
However, while the number of participant surveys at baseline was robust (89 percent response rate), the response rate for the post-program survey, where participants would have reported their outcomes, was very low (9 percent). Thus, surveys could not be used to assess program outcomes because the data were unreliable. Additionally, the evaluation team was unable to collect administrative data on education or employment outcomes from relevant state or local agencies, and therefore relied on education and employment outcomes recorded in program data and in CalJOBS, which may be less complete than data from state or local agency records would have been.

Third, due to low reporting at program baseline of race and ethnicity, these data were updated with DOJ administrative race and ethnicity data. The program’s small number of participants resulted in small cell sizes within smaller racial and ethnic categories, and so were grouped within the “other races” category to better identify differences across remaining groups.

**Study Participant Characteristics**

The YAP program staff provided baseline, self-reported data through the CalJOBS data system utilized by the program to track participants. Key characteristics of the youth in the evaluation sample, presented on the following page in Exhibits III-1 through III-4, include the following:

- **Most youth were male and under 18 years of age.** The youth in the evaluation sample ranged in age from 15 to 25 at time of enrollment, with 57 percent under 18 years old (Exhibit III-1). Fifty-seven percent of participants were male (Exhibit III-2).

- **Most youth lacked a high school diploma or equivalent credential at baseline.** Upon program enrollment, only 20 percent had completed high school or achieved high school equivalency such as a GED, and 79 percent had completed education through 11th grade (Exhibit III-3).

- **Youth reported numerous barriers to participation in employment and educational activities.** As shown in Exhibit III-1, only 13 percent of participants were currently employed, 12 percent reported being disabled, 7 percent were single parents or pregnant, 12 percent were dealing with substance abuse, and 13 percent had an incarcerated parent. A slightly larger minority (22 percent) reported enrollment in the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP). Additionally, 37 percent reported being English-language learners.

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1 One participant’s date of birth was misreported. In this case, SPR imputed age using the mean age of the final evaluative participants.
2 There was one missing observation for last level of education completed (N=119).
3 There was one missing observation for status of current employment (N=119).
• The program enrolled a diverse group of youth. Overall, 50 percent of participants were Latino, 36 percent were non-Hispanic White, 5 percent were Black, and 9 percent fell within another racial category (Exhibit III-4).

After improving missingness using three sources of data (YAP baseline program data, YAP baseline participant survey, DOJ data), nine participants were missing race/ethnicity (N=111).
Employment and Education Outcomes

SPR drew from program data to gain insight into the amount of program activities completed by participants as well as their education and employment accomplishments. YAP participants received financial incentives for active engagement in and completion of program milestones. Incentives also helped mark their achievement of goals, such as completing high school or obtaining employment.

Among the 120 youth in the study population, 85 received at least one incentive. These youth received an average of two incentives during the span of the program. Additionally, individual youth completed an average of 10 activities in the program, though some did not complete any activities, while others completed upwards of 30. Program activities include participation in program workshops, job shadowing or internships, and early career assessments.

Exhibit III-5 displays the total number of youth in the evaluation receiving an incentive for (a) obtaining a high school diploma or equivalent, or (b) being placed in an unsubsidized job or enrolling in further education. Thirty-one of the 120 participants in the study population (26 percent) received education incentives, and 47 (39 percent) received employment incentives. Twenty-two youth received both incentives.

Because the evaluation could not access administrative data on employment, earnings, or education (aside from records on incentive payments for certain milestones), SPR was unable to investigate whether particular program components were related to employment and educational outcomes. However, the availability of data indicating whether participants received incentives for education and employment is helpful in understanding more about YAP participants.

Key insights from the incentive data include:

- **Completing at least one program activity was not related to receiving incentives for education milestones.** All of the 31 youth who received incentives for obtaining a high school diploma or high school equivalency completed at least one program activity; of the 89 who did not receive incentives for education, 93 percent completed at least one program activity. Similarly, all 47 youth who received incentives for obtaining unsubsidized employment or enrolling in college completed at least one program activity.
activity; of the 73 who did not receive incentives for employment, 92 percent completed at least one program activity.

- **Completing any program activity was associated with receiving an incentive for enrolling in college or obtaining unsubsidized employment.** A significant, positive association\(^5\) (using simple logistic regression) was found between receiving an incentive for enrolling in college or obtaining unsubsidized employment and completing program activities (Exhibit III-6). When a youth completes one additional activity there is about a 9 percent increase in the odds of that youth receiving an employment incentive. Participants most frequently completed 12 program activities.

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**Exhibit III-6: Logistic Regression Model Predicting Receipt of Incentive for Enrolling in College or Obtaining Unsubsidized Employment**

While SPR has no data on participants who may have achieved employment but did not receive an incentive, findings from the incentive data do provide insight into the positive relationship that existed between the number of various program activities youth completed and receiving employment incentives. However, the employment incentive data are limited in that the incentive was also awarded to those who enrolled in college, and therefore it is not solely defined by gainful employment. No significant association was found between receiving education incentives and completing program activities.

\(^5\) (p<0.05)
Criminal Justice System Outcomes

As noted earlier in the chapter, SPR obtained individual-level DOJ arrest records and matched them with YAP program participants. The match rate for this data source was fairly low. Of the 120 youth included in the analysis for this chapter, only 24 (approximately 20 percent) were found in the DOJ arrest records. Notably, these data did not match baseline participant self-reports of having a history of being arrested. Moreover, DOJ data indicated a history of arrest for YAP participants who reported never having been arrested.

This does not necessarily call into question the quality of the program data, but rather allows the evaluation team to consider that at-risk youth may not be entirely truthful in reporting their involvement with the criminal justice system. This is perhaps not surprising, as youth with juvenile criminal records may be reluctant to share this information. Unfortunately, the limited post-program survey response rate did not allow for a comparison of pre- and post-program responses to questions concerning justice system involvement.

Of the 24 youth with DOJ arrest records—from before and after program participation—almost half were arrested for misdemeanors (46 percent) or infractions (3 percent), while 19 percent were arrested for felonies (Exhibit III-7). Nearly one-quarter (23 percent) were property crimes and 15 percent were drug crimes (Exhibit III-8).

Sixteen of these 24 youth were arrested before program enrollment. Fifteen of these 24 youth were arrested following enrollment, eight of which had never been involved with the justice system before participating in the YAP program. Only five (21 percent) of the 24 youth with DOJ records of arrests were ever convicted. While no associations were found between age of
participants and their involvement with the justice system, it is notable that about 63 percent of those arrested were under 18 years of age, slightly higher than the overall percentage of youth under 18 in the program.

Having an incarcerated parent was associated with having an arrest record.\(^6\) Exhibit III-9 visualizes the proportions of YAP program youth who were and were not arrested by whether they reported having an incarcerated parent at enrollment. It shows that a larger proportion of participants arrested had an incarcerated parent (41 percent). No other baseline participant data were found to be significantly associated with having an arrest record. Further, the data were not sufficient to analyze how the level of service participation might correlate with previous arrests.

To explore the relationship between arrests and having an incarcerated parent further, the evaluation team developed a bivariate model where being a youth without an incarcerated parent was used as a predictor for having no history of ever being arrested (Exhibit III-10). A significant, positive relationship was found, where the odds of a youth with an incarcerated parent being arrested was about three times higher than the odds for youth without incarcerated parents.\(^7\)

### Exhibit III-9: Youth History of Arrest and Incarcerated Parent

![Exhibit III-9: Youth History of Arrest and Incarcerated Parent](image)

**SOURCE:** California DOJ Criminal Offender Record Information

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**SOURCE:** CalJOBS and California DOJ Criminal Offender Record Information

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\(^6\) Baseline CalJOBS data (p<0.05).

\(^7\) (p<0.05)
Arrest records from DOJ provided further insight into recidivism and criminal offense rates. Recidivism rates also varied depending on gender: While only two young women in the program with a history of arrests had more than one offense, eight young men recidivated. As shown in Exhibit III-11, the recidivism rate for young men in the YAP program was over 40 percent higher than that for young women (62 percent vs. 18 percent, respectively).

While other demographics and corresponding DOJ data were not found to be associated with having been arrested, the evaluation team also explored associations of these predictors with having been arrested only after enrollment in YAP (to assess the usefulness of youth program participation), but no associations were found. Participant incentives during the program and the number of program activities youth participated in were not found to be significantly associated with having been arrested.

Summary

The findings in this chapter are consistent with the implementation findings described in the previous chapter. Ultimately, the program served mostly high-school-age youth who were male and Latino. While SPR could not conduct a more robust evaluation of the program’s education and employment outcomes, there was a significant association found between participating in a higher number of program activities and receiving an incentive for obtaining employment or enrolling into college. In other words, youth who completed a greater number of program activities had higher odds of achieving an incentive related to gaining unsubsidized employment or enrolling in postsecondary education. This could be because the program’s curriculum was geared toward work readiness (such as assessing career interests, resume development, and interview preparation) and college enrollment (such as college visits and assistance with filling out financial aid forms). Conversely, the program did not include components explicitly targeted at reducing youth arrests, and the evaluation did not find an association between
program services and arrests after program enrollment or any meaningful associations of these outcomes with age or other demographics. It is important to note, however, that due to the study’s significant data limitations, the evaluation team was limited in its ability to explore these outcomes, and results should be interpreted cautiously.
Participant Profile

When she entered the program, Angela was a 19-year-old unemployed high school graduate and mother of one child. She described herself as having difficulty standing up for herself and with setting goals and making plans to meet them. She also said she lacked an adult she was comfortable confiding in. She had not participated in any postsecondary education or training programs and did not have clear career goals. Although she had no criminal justice record or involvement with gang activity herself, she had a parent who was incarcerated.

Angela participated in YAP for 15 months, earning three incentives, including one for obtaining employment while in the program. She reported taking advantage of few program services, other than participating in community service, about which she felt positively. She gave her case manager poor marks, strongly disagreeing that the case manager cared about her as a person, connected her to needed services, or helped her make progress toward her career goals.

Two years after entering the program, Angela held a full-time job where she earned $14 per hour. She reported having received a college credential since completing YAP. Reflecting on her experience, she wrote, “I wanted to go back to school but received no help, only discouragement, and ended up going back on my own and graduating. My case worker doubted me through the whole thing.”

This participant profile is just one example of how a participant utilized YAP and assessed program services. It is based on data from CalJOBS, pre- and post-program surveys, and administrative data from California DOJ. It is not representative of the whole population served by the YAP program.
IV. Cost Study

This chapter describes the costs of operating the YAP program, explaining how the WDB allocated and used its WIF grant funds and leveraged resources. The WDB provided data for the analysis from its financial reporting system. This analysis is not a cost–benefit analysis, because (a) the evaluation team did not comprehensively examine the costs of the program from the perspective of various stakeholders, including opportunity costs, and (b) the evidence standard for this grant did not require measuring impacts on youth outcomes. The chapter instead reviews the overall budget and funding sources, provides detailed information on program costs, and, finally, provides an analysis of the cost per participant.

Key Findings

- **Cost per participant was $7,329 in WIF grant funds.** Overall, the program utilized under half of the WIF grant funding to serve approximately 70 percent of their participant goal. When leveraged funds are included, the average cost per participant was $7,436.

- **Staff salaries were the largest program cost.** Unsurprisingly given the program’s intensive service model, approximately 78 percent of grant funds were expended for staff salaries. The program employed two to four case managers and a full-time program coordinator, along with other leadership and administrative personnel.

- **The program utilized a small amount of its leveraged funding.** In September 2015, the Monterey County WDB received $100,000 in Accelerator funds from the California WDB to pay YAP youth participants’ wages while in subsidized employment opportunities. The program expended $14,486 of the Accelerator funds on participant work experiences.

YAP Program Budget

In the fall of 2014, the Monterey County WDB received a five-year, $3 million WIF grant to plan, design, and implement the YAP program. In addition to programmatic support, the WDB was responsible for monitoring the budget, reimbursing and approving program spending, and
reporting participant progress and outcomes to the DOL. The program served 167 youth (of their total goal of 240 youth) over a 36-month period.

In September 2015, the Monterey County WDB received a $100,000 Accelerator grant from the California WDB, which provided funding for subsidized work experience opportunities for YAP youth. Accelerator grants provide resources to innovative projects in California designed to help individuals—especially those with barriers to employment—find jobs and advance in careers.

**Data Sources**

To estimate the costs of operating and running the YAP program, SPR collected cost and expenditure data from the program administrators’ financial reporting system at each site visit and at the end of the project period. These data reflect all posted costs and expenditures through March 31, 2019. Program administrators reported on costs in the following categories:

- **Staff labor.** This category represents total labor costs, including salaries and fringe benefits, for staff involved in YAP program implementation.

- **Outside services.** This category represents direct costs paid to partners or outside providers for services provided to YAP youth.

- **Materials and supplies.** This category represents costs of materials and supplies (not including facility equipment) purchased for use in the YAP program, including educational training materials and other vocational training equipment or materials.

- **Support services.** This category represents costs toward rent, tuition, housing, driver’s license fees, participation incentives, and other supportive services for program youth.

- **Overhead/administration.** This category represents costs beyond staff labor that are charged for YAP implementation, such as for leasing the building or facility equipment.

**YAP Program Costs**

As shown in Exhibit IV-1, WDB had expended $1,223,924.32, or less than half of the $3 million DOL grant, as of March 31, 2019, when the program ended. Staff salaries accounted for approximately 78 percent of grant funds. The program employed two to four case managers and a full-time program coordinator, along with other leadership and administrative personnel who contributed to oversight and grant administration. The program used a small amount of grant funds for outside services to support the program. This does not include the evaluation required for all WIF grants by the Employment and Training Administration. Exhibit IV-1 displays costs by category in order of magnitude.
Exhibit IV-1: Program Costs as of March 31, 2019

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Cost category</th>
<th>DOL WIF grant</th>
<th>Accelerator grant</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Staff labor costs (salary and fringe)</td>
<td>$955,641.60</td>
<td>$ 2,369.88</td>
<td>$958,011.48</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Outside services*</td>
<td>$ 2,369.88</td>
<td>$14,486.19</td>
<td>$14,486.19</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Materials and supplies</td>
<td>$ 143,429.98</td>
<td>$143,429.98</td>
<td>$143,429.98</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Support services</td>
<td>$ 63,558.23</td>
<td>$ 958.53</td>
<td>$64,516.76</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Overhead/administration</td>
<td>$61,294.51</td>
<td>$ 61,294.51</td>
<td>$61,294.51</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td>$1,223,924.32</td>
<td>$17,814.60</td>
<td>$1,241,738.92</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Does not include cost of the grant-funded evaluation

As noted previously, the program received $100,000 in Accelerator funds from the California WDB for YAP youth participants’ wages while in subsidized employment opportunities. The program was not able to expend much of this funding before it expired, however. This was related to YAP still being in the early stages of implementation during the short period of the grant (September 2015 to June 2016). Only four youth participated in paid work experiences through the grant. When the Accelerator funding ended, more than $80,000 in unused funds was returned to the state.

The program spent five percent of the grant funds on support services for participants, such as incentives, transportation, housing assistance, and tuition. Of the total the program spent on support services, 58 percent was spent on incentives that individual participants could earn for completing phases of the program or on educational or employment attainment.

From May 2016 to April 2019, a total of $36,980 was disbursed to youth participants through the program’s incentive structure. This comes out to an average of $221 per participant. As detailed in Chapter II, participant incentives were increased in November 2017, from a possible total per participant of $650 to $1,075. Annual totals indicate that the most intensive period of service provision and attainment for youth participants was in 2018, when the program distributed $16,950 in incentives to participants. The second highest year was 2017, when the program distributed $9,500 in incentives to participants.

Exhibit IV-2 shows the number of participants who earned each type of incentive during the program, displayed by the incentive given most to the one given least often. It shows that 326 incentives were given over the course of the program—an average of two per participant.
Exhibit IV-2: Number of Youth Incentives Earned

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Incentive</th>
<th>Number Earned</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Completion of work readiness workshops (either phase)</td>
<td>134</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Obtained unsubsidized employment or enrolled in college</td>
<td>58</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Obtained a high school diploma or equivalent</td>
<td>36</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Leadership development or mentoring</td>
<td>31</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Community service project (20 hours)</td>
<td>22</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Completion of an Individual Training Account</td>
<td>17</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Attended a job fair</td>
<td>13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Completion of 15 hours of job shadowing</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Community service project (40 hours)</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>TOTAL</strong></td>
<td><strong>326</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Cost Per Participant

The evaluation team calculated the cost per participant using total program expenditures divided by total number of youth served. Exhibit IV-3 presents two estimates—one using only grant funds and another using all funding sources—in order to provide a comprehensive picture of costs per participant.

During the total grant period, the YAP program served 167 youth. As displayed in Exhibit IV-3, the program spent an average of $7,329 in grant funds per participant. When cost per participant includes leveraged funds, this estimate is slightly higher, at $7,436.

Exhibit IV-3: Expenditures and Cost per Participant as of March 31, 2019

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Expenditures</th>
<th>Youth served</th>
<th>Cost per participant</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Grant funds</td>
<td>$1,223,924.32</td>
<td>167</td>
<td>$7,328.89</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Grant and leveraged funds</td>
<td>$1,241,738.92</td>
<td>167</td>
<td>$7,435.56</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

When compared to the WIOA youth program, which in 2015 had a national average rate of $5,304 per participant served, the cost per YAP participant is relatively high (U.S. Department of Labor, 2017). However, these findings are likely due to YAP being a new program with higher
start-up and infrastructure costs that would not figure into the WIOA youth national average cost.

While we are unable to provide an estimate of the cost effectiveness of the YAP program, its costs are closer to other WIF programs that enrolled opportunity youth. For example, the evaluation of a WIF-funded program in Los Angeles—the Los Angeles Reconnections Career Academy (LARCA)—which was designed to address the education and employment needs of the city’s sizable out-of-school youth population, found that the average cost per participant was $9,563 without leveraged funds and $10,273 when including leveraged resources (Geckeler et al., 2017).

**Summary**

Overall, the program utilized less than half of the WIF grant funding to serve approximately 70 percent of the participant goal. When leveraged funds are included, the average cost per participant was $7,436. While this cost is higher than the average cost for WIOA youth services, it likely reflects the start-up costs associated with being a new program.
V. SYNTHESIS AND CONCLUSION

This final chapter seeks to draw conclusions about the implementation of the YAP program and to explore the significance of the study’s findings. First, it discusses the overall implementation successes achieved by the program as well as the challenges encountered. The chapter then reviews how lessons learned during implementation may apply to other programs like YAP. It also summarizes efforts to sustain and replicate the model and discusses how practitioners and policymakers might use the study’s findings to replicate it. Finally, the chapter addresses the implications of these findings for future efforts focused on interventions designed to help unemployed, out-of-school youth reconnect with education or enter the job market.

Summary of Grant Goals and Achievements

Youth Ambassadors for Peace aimed to provide an 18-month program that offered a relationship-oriented, hands-on leadership and career-preparation experience for 240 opportunity youth who had been involved in or were at risk of membership in a gang. This program attempted to address youth needs and the larger community problem of gang violence by weaving together recruitment, case management, training and youth development, reconnection with education, mentorship, and alumni services.

The program aimed for short- and long-term outcomes that would ultimately lead to a decrease in youth violence: increased engagement with education and training leading to earning credentials; development of workplace skills leading to employment with potential for higher earnings in targeted industries; engagement in positive relationships with adults and peers; demonstration of socially acceptable attitudes and values; and increased resiliency and community and civic engagement.

While there were initial implementation challenges, the last 18 months of the program featured stable staff and effective program coordination and outreach, resulting in a total program enrollment of 167. Most participants were 18 years old or younger, and many were referred by high school truancy staff and the Silver Start Resource Center. The YAP program was able to provide these youth targeted support for their completion of high school and development of career goals. Additionally, 20 percent of participants (24 individuals) were justice-involved youth who were able to access additional work preparation and support services through the program.

In response to youth needs and staff members’ increased expertise working with gang-involved youth, the program moved away from a group cohort service model to a more individualized approach, while maintaining all the components of program services and activities. While
survey data were inadequate to measure youth program satisfaction, the evaluation did find a significant positive association between completing program activities and receiving education and employment incentives. This finding may indicate that increased program dosage did lead to improved outcomes.

**Implementation Lessons Learned**

Unfortunately, the program experienced 100 percent staff turnover in the first year, including in the program coordinator role, which hampered the establishment of effective recruitment, clear eligibility requirements, and internal program procedures. Key lessons on these issues included the following:

- **Establishing referral relationships with key community service providers prior to the start of the program is crucial to recruitment of at-risk and gang-involved youth.** These relationships are more important than less-relational recruitment strategies, such as distributing promotional material, as these stakeholders are often gatekeepers to hard-to-reach populations.

- **Laying the groundwork for subsidized work experience is just as important as funding it.** Early on, the program acquired supplemental funding for an attractive program component—subsidized work experience. However, the Accelerator grant came too early in the program’s implementation, before a sizeable group of youth had been enrolled and adequately equipped to be in a workplace. As a result, the grant went largely unused.

- **Employer partnerships are challenging to establish for youth work experience activities.** Job shadowing and other types of work experience opportunities are a great way for youth to gain insight and experience in real-world settings. Developing these employer partnerships can be a difficult undertaking, however, and the YAP program had not done so prior to the start of enrollment. Rather than placing youth quickly in these experiences, case managers had to develop relationships first, while ensuring placements matched youth interests and career goals.

- **Changes to the program model may be necessary to tailor services to the specific needs of the target population.** The YAP program changed the mentorship model early on to accommodate safety concerns surrounding the interaction of gang-involved youth. It also adapted its model to the changing context—slow enrollment and safety concerns—by moving to rolling admissions and dropping the cohort model.
**Sustainability and Replicability**

While the YAP program itself will not continue in its WIF-funded format, WDB staff reported that their contracted WIOA youth providers were looking to incorporate the work readiness curriculum and case management into their own programming. Staff reflected that having a modular program that can be individualized for youth provides short-term accomplishments that keep youth engaged and motivated to continue to the next level of program services. Through their experience implementing YAP, the Economic Development Department staff gained expertise in reaching and providing services to gang-impacted, opportunity youth. As a result, a more intensive model of youth services may be more broadly implemented in the workforce development system in Monterey County.

**Implications for Workforce Policy and Future Research**

The findings in this report contribute to the growing knowledge base on interventions for youth who are out of school and unemployed to help them reconnect with education and/or enter the job market. The findings may prove valuable in discussions around how best to design youth services authorized under WIOA to support individuals who live in gang-impacted communities. This is especially of interest in light of the fact that WIOA recently increased the emphasis within the public workforce system on engaging out-of-school youth, requiring local areas to expend a minimum of 75 percent of WIOA youth funds on them.

This report also contributes to the body of research in this field and points to some possible questions for future research. Chapter I highlighted several evaluations of programs that informed the design of the YAP program and evaluation and that point to the value of increased and enhanced education, community engagement, adult–youth relationships, and employment services for out-of-school youth populations. Potential questions for future research, based on the findings in this report, include:

- What is the correct dosage and array of service activities for adolescents or young adults, particularly those who are in school versus those who are out of school?
- What type of employment-focused interventions are effective with gang-involved or justice-involved populations?
- How can the workforce system engage criminal justice partners to establish an effective youth-employment-focused intervention or prevention program?
- What strategies are useful for engaging employers in workforce programming targeting at-risk or justice-involved youth and young adults?

While the evaluation findings presented in this report are mostly descriptive, they do include promising practices and a significant, positive association between completing program
activities and obtaining employment or enrolling in college (as measured by incentives earned). The findings point to possible future research that could better identify service elements that help reconnect youth to education and employment and reduce their likelihood of criminal justice system involvement.
APPENDIX A: REFERENCES


