The Communities Collaborating to Reconnect Youth (CCRY) network is a group of workforce and youth development professionals, working in communities across the country. As a network of leading professionals, CCRY has the capacity to provide empirically-based insight into successful workforce and youth development programs that lead to positive outcomes for out-of-school youth. In order to understand how CCRY can harness its current capacity to provide evidence on what type of programming is effective in producing positive outcomes for out-of-school youth, CCRY conducted a pilot research initiative. The pilot was conducted with agencies in three metropolitan areas in the Network: Baltimore (*Mayor's Office of Employment Development*), Hartford (*Our Piece of the Pie* and *Capital Workforce Partners*), and Philadelphia (*Philadelphia Youth Network*). These areas and agencies were chosen because they all have some research and evaluation capacity. The pilot research initiative involved the following steps:

1. Creating a shared understanding of the goals of the report to be provided by the initiative
2. Identifying what are the common data elements across agencies that would fulfill these goals
3. Obtaining the data elements identified
4. Data translation, and combining into a unified dataset
5. Data analysis of combined dataset to answer the goals of the report
6. Feedback on the research process

One of the main objectives identified by the group was to be able to outline a process of data extraction and compilation across various agencies to answer assorted research questions, such as demonstrated effectiveness. In addition, the group wanted the pilot to determine and document any demonstrated effectiveness from a combined dataset of participating agencies. To do so, 44 data elements were identified. These 44 elements were organized into three themes: demographics, program services (education, workforce, youth development, case management/follow-up/barriers), and outcomes.

The process of data translation and combining into a unified dataset required a significant investment in time (over 100 hours) and data manipulation expertise. The main barriers to unifying the data from each of the agencies in the pilot included understanding how each of the variables in the different communities matched up with each other, and consolidating activity records for a single youth.

The research initiative showed that there is sufficient data at some agencies in the CCRY network to be able to demonstrate effectiveness. Using the data from the three communities, statistically significant findings emerged including showing that time spent in math and remediation programs were related to workforce development outcomes such as completing job readiness training. The pilot also provided information on the demographics of youth (primarily African American with an almost even split between males and females), how they spent their time in various activities (larger amounts in college prep, reading and math remediation, and mentoring), and the kinds of outcomes achieved (majority completing a job readiness training or obtaining a vocational certification/advanced training certification). With sufficient resources, it would be possible to build on this pilot on a larger scale. These resources would include a project director with the necessary training and experience to design, implement, and report on this research project, a data specialist to assist in the data collection and manipulation, a statistician consultant, and other support resources for the staff such as office space, computers, travel, etc.

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