Los Angeles Performance Partnership Pilot (LAP3)

Formative Evaluation Report

Executive Summary

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City of Los Angeles
Workforce Development Board
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Executive Summary

The Los Angeles Performance Partnership Pilot (LAP3) Initiative represents a *profound change* for how youth services are delivered in Los Angeles City and County. In our view, this profound change is taking place at both the policy and operational levels. At the policy level, newly formed partnerships between City and County Agencies, the Federal government, and nonprofit and philanthropic organizations are creating novel ways to change policies and relationships to create a new, more collaborative way to serve disconnected youth. At the operational level, City of Los Angeles' YouthSource Centers (YSCs) – who operate WIOA youth services under contract with Economic and Workforce Development Department (EWDD) – are working to integrate their services with a wide array of County, City, and nonprofit organizations.

This formative evaluation report provides our insights and ideas about how implementation of the LAP3 model went in the first year of operation (i.e., July 1, 2016 to June 30, 2017). Essentially, this report seeks to accomplish six things:
1. Provide a basic description of the youth served in the first year of the program.
2. Describe the services received by both WIOA-enrolled youth and youth who were not formally enrolled in WIOA.
3. Provide an in-depth description of how the program was implemented at the four case study sites.
4. Identify best practices that have moved LAP3 towards its vision at the policy and operational levels.
5. Identify barriers and issues that emerged at the policy and operational levels that need to be overcome to more fully realize the LAP3 vision.
6. Make recommendations to improve the implementation of LAP3 in future years.

Who Was Served?
The data in CalJobs provides a profile of who was served in the first 12 months of LAP3 operations. The data indicate, 3,658 youth were served in the 2016-17 program year, compared to 2,765 in 2015-16 the year before LAP3, an increase of 32%. About 73% of participants were enrolled in WIOA, while the remaining 27% percent were non-WIOA clients. The number of clients in target groups remains small but shows a substantial increase from before the LAP3 model was implemented. For example, there were 110 foster youth (3.0% of all clients), compared to 62 (2.2% of all clients) in the previous year. We found 105 probation youth (2.9%), compared to 56 (2.0%) in the previous year. Records show 281 homeless youth (7.7% of all clients), compared to 111 (4.0%) in the previous year. Finally, there were six runaway youth (0.2%) compared to three (0.1%) in the previous year.

The Pupil Service and Attendance (PSA) Counselors at each site keep an independent tally of the youth they counsel. Using their tally, we estimated the degree to which CalJobs undercounted the number of youth actually served by the LAP3 intervention. PSA Counselors saw 5,241 youth for intakes during year one, but only 3,658 youth were entered into CalJobs by the YSCs, an undercount of 30.2%.

Services Received

All WIOA-enrolled clients and most non-WIOA clients received an assessment and developed some type of service plan. After those first two steps, the services received diverged greatly. WIOA-enrolled clients received much more intensive training and education. Specifically, 80% of WIOA clients got some kind of pre-employment training and over 60% got basic skills training, compared to less than 1% and 4.5 %, respectively, for non-WIOA clients. Twenty-four percent of WIOA youth got "tutoring or study skills training" compared to less than 1% of non-WIOA clients. Similarly, 16% of WIOA youth got occupation skills training compared to none, for non-WIOA youth.

About 41% of WIOA youth got either a paid internship or paid work experience, compared to essentially none of the non-WIOA clients. It is important to note though, that the number and variety of services that non-WIOA clients are eligible to receive from P3 partners is restricted, relative to their WIOA-funded counterparts. At the beginning of P3, partner agencies were offered access to the CalJobs system and were offered training in how to use it. From our field work, however, we learned that many partners never received CalJobs training, and few, if any, partners actually entered any data into the system. YSCs created a paper form to facilitate referrals, utilized in the field. Yet, it seems then that most of the services that non-WIOA youth may have received from partners were unrecorded.

Program Implementation

In reviewing our detailed case studies, we found seven salient program characteristics that allowed us to understand how effectively each site implemented the LAP3 model.
    1. Commitment to the LAP3 Model
We found a range of commitment levels to the P3 model. Commitment levels were affected by a few factors, including:
- the managers' understanding of the model and how it differed from past practice,
- the agency's history and relationship with the city
- the YSC's role within its own, larger organization, and the experience of the agency's leadership had an effect on commitment.

2. Volume of Clients

A goal of LAP3 was to reach more youth with more services. In examining the number of youth served in year one, we were able to rate each site objectively on the volume of youth served.

3. Volume of Special Populations

A second aspect of service volume was the number of youth in the special populations (i.e., foster, probation, homeless, and out-of-school youth). It is interesting to note that the YSC most committed to the P3 model did the most to reach these special populations and record them in CalJobs.

4. Fidelity of Implementation

In our field work, we assessed the degree to which each site actually implemented the LAP3 model as designed. While each site's implementation varied from the model to some degree (see the details in our full case studies), many variations were employed to improve the performance of the model. Here, we also found that if the YSC was committed to the LAP3 model, the center was more likely to stick with the model and implement it.

5. Service Intensity

Aside from the number of youth served, we were also interested in the number of services that youth received. Again, we found that the number of services provided for both WIOA and non-WIOA youth varied greatly across the sites. Service intensity did not seem to be related to commitment to the LAP3 model, as three of the four sites delivered a high volume of services per youth.

6. Services under the WSC Roof

We observed that when YSCs had more services under the same roof, services were better coordinated, and the youth were more likely to receive a service. Each site had a unique set of opportunities and constraints with regard to the availability of various on-site services.

7. Collaboration with Partners

Fostering collaboration with a wide range of partner agencies to increase youth's access to services remains a key goal of P3. We rated the sites on how closely they collaborated with partners (note, site names are pseudonyms, as anonymity was promised during data collection). Again, we found a range of performance. The YSCs entered LAP3 with different sized networks of collaborators. YSCs that were part of larger, multi-purpose agencies had built-in collaborators. All of the YSCs agreed that regional meetings had helped them find collaborators and build relationships for future referrals. We found a wide variation in the size and effectiveness of the YSC's networks of collaborators.

Overall Effectiveness of LAP3 Implementation

Finally, as part of our overall assessment of the case studies, we looked at how effectively each site implemented the LAP3 model. As Table E-1 below shows, only one YSC was rated as high, one medium, and two low in implementation effectiveness. These results suggest that during its first year, the LAP3 Initiative did drive change in the YSCs but the change

varied from site to site. Further, these results suggest some elements that supported or hindered the implementation of the new model.

Table E-1. Summary Characteristics across Sites

Program Characteristic	City Center: City run center with large modern facility, long time contractor.	Palm: Center run by large religious non-profit, with many related social services, long time city contractor.	Valley Center: Center run by large regional non-profit, relatively recent contractor.	Edwards Community College: Center run by local community college, center is on campus and a relatively new contractor.
Commitment to P3 Model	High	Low	High	Low
Volume of Clients	High	High	Medium	Medium to High
Volume of Special Populations	High	Low	Low	Low
Fidelity of Execution	High	Medium	Medium	Low
Service Intensity	High	High	Medium	High
Services Under the Roof	High	Medium	Medium to Low	Low
Collaboration with Partners	High	High	Medium	Low
Overall Effectiveness of P3 Implementation	High	Low	Medium	Low

In short, there seem to be two key factors driving the effectiveness of P3 implementation:
- The organization's commitment to the P3 model, and
- Strength of the YSCs network of partner agencies.

We classified each YSC studied as "committed" or "less committed", then rated their network of partners as "strong" or "limited". This produced the 2x2 figure you see below. One YSC fell into each of the four possible conditions, as the figure shows. We then added the effectiveness of implementation based on the case analysis summarized before. As Table E-2 shows, City YSC (committed with strong network) was highly effective at implementing the model, while Palm YSC, (strong network, but not committed), had low effectiveness. Valley YSC (committed but limited network) was rated as having medium effectiveness. Finally, Edwards Community College (less committed and limited network) was rated as low in implementation effectiveness.

Table E-2. Case Study YSCs by Combination of Key Factors

	Committed	**Less Committed**
Strong Network	High Effectiveness (City YSC)	Low Effectiveness (PALM YSC)
Limited Network	Medium Effectiveness (Valley)	Low Effectiveness (Edwards Community College)

In Figure 1 below, we elaborate on the key factor model above to try to create a theory of action for LAP3. The idea is to identify the dynamics that lead YSCs to commit to the LAP3 model and build a strong network. Then to show how these two factors, commitment and network strength, lead to positive outcomes. The goal of the "theory of action" is to provide insights into how to strengthen the LAP3 model in the future and help YSCs continue to improve their LAP3 implementation.

Commitment comes from three factors:
- Understanding the LAP3 model, without first understanding the model, YSCs do not commit,
- Belief that the model will add value to the services they deliver, if YSCs do not perceive value added, they will not engage in the extra effort that the model entails,
- Engaging with regional meetings builds commitment to the LAP3 model, generates motivation and provides new and innovative ideas.

YSCs' strength of network is driven by four factors:
- Being active in regional meetings creates an opportunity to expand and strengthen the network of partners,
- Partners who are physically under the roof of the YSC become much more closely linked to the YSC,
- YSC connection to the City is related to the center's willingness to build partnerships with other City and County agencies.
- YSCs with existing strong ties to partners at the start of the LAP3 process were more likely to have a strong network.

Finally, we found that if the YSCs have a strong commitment to the LAP3 model and a strong network they were motivated and able to achieve the specific outcomes that LAP3 seeks. Specifically, committed YSCs with strong networks reach more youth in the special populations and reach more non-WIOA youth. These centers also make more effective referrals and provide higher quality services. Finally, YSCs who are both committed to the model and have a strong network are more likely to show fidelity to the model, which simply means they work hard to implement LAP3 along the lines that are intended.

Figure 1. LAP3 Theory of Action
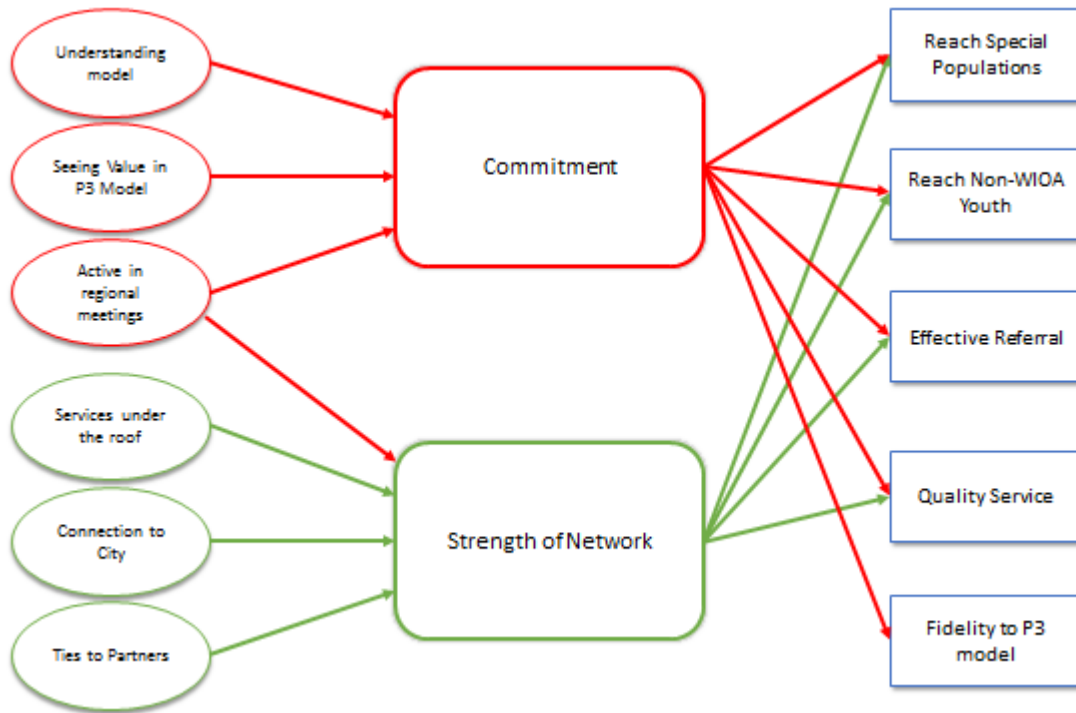
This analysis was used to generate the conclusions and recommendations.

Best Practices at the Policy and Operational Levels

At the policy level, we observe a number of best practices that are moving the LAP3 initiative forward. A major accomplishment is engaging relevant agencies in a dialogue about disconnected youth, through a number of key activities including:

- Shared strategic planning process, which engages many partner agencies
- Creating and supporting regional meetings where a range of governmental and nonprofit agencies come together to find new ways to serve disconnected youth
- A number of governance committees that engage a range of stakeholders in building the LAP3 project

The city has also consistently sought waivers to federal and state regulations that keep agencies from cooperating and reaching disconnected youth. The LAP3 project disseminated valuable information to many agencies and nonprofit groups in the City and County, most notably a series of research papers on the status of LA Youth in the labor market and education. By building on the LAP3 grant, the project leaders have been able to attract additional resources to support serving disconnected youth. Finally, we observe that long-term infrastructure is being built to support innovation and cooperation to serve disconnected youth.

At the operational level, we note a number of best practices which support the LAP3 vision. Within each region of the city, YouthSource Centers (YSCs) are meeting regularly with partners to find ways to coordinate and improve service delivery. These meetings create communication among partners which simply had not happened before. Results of regional meeting are shared through various online venues which have been initiated in the regions. PSA counselors who are LAUSD employees are expanding their roles within the YSCs to better serve disconnected youth. A mental health screening tool has been developed and is used in some YSCs to assess youth when they first enter the program. Cross training sessions between YSC staff and County agencies have helped to coordinate services.

Unplanned innovations have also emerged as the new model is implemented. Some YSCs have sped up the enrollment process by conducting one-on-one information sessions on demand rather than make youth wait for a scheduled session. On initial contact a number of centers are "triaging youth" to identify immediate problems such as homelessness or mental health issues rather than make youth wait for a full formal assessment. A short referral form has been created to ease referrals among partner agencies.

Barriers and Issues at the Policy and Operational Level

We observe three significant issues at the policy level. First, LAP3 may not be reaching all the target groups in significant numbers. This appears to be largely due to the YSCs continuing to focus on WIOA eligible participants and not reaching out to other populations because of incentives in their contracts to enroll WIOA eligible clients. In fact, by comparing the number of LAP3 clients entered into Cal Jobs with the number of clients seen by LAUSD PSA counselors we estimate the actual number of youth touched by the YSCs is under counted by 30.2%. Second, as with all change initiatives, sustaining partners' commitment and enthusiasm for remaking the system over an extended period of time may be a challenge. Finally, tracking and measuring the impact of LAP3 over time requires changes in the CalJobs data system and how it is used. While some progress has been made, more is needed to achieve the goals of LAP3.

Other barriers and issues have emerged at the operational level. A significant issue is that contractors have not fully "bought into" the LAP3 Innovation. The most obvious evidence for this is that half the centers have not enrolled any non-WIOA clients into the CalJobs system. In interviews many YSC staff and directors report that they do not see LAP3 as a significant change in the system. YSC staff are quick to note that they did not receive any additional resources to serve non-WIOA clients. This relates to the issue that many staff in the YSCs have limited understanding of the LAP3 vision and purpose. We note that most training for YSC operators has focused on the mechanics and rules of the change and little

attention has been paid to a change in vision. We note that contractors' participation in the current strategic planning process has been limited.

Many new partnerships have emerged in LAP3, but it appears that the depth and quality of the partnerships varies substantially between regions. All participants see the regional meetings with partners as valuable, but we observe the quality of the meetings is uneven. Some are well planned and productive, but others are not.

Conclusions

In this section, we bring together our analysis of the four case studies, the CalJobs data, and our observations about P3 implementation to draw conclusions about the first year of P3 implementation. We divide the conclusions into two sections: (1) P3's Year 1 accomplishments, and (2) the challenges that emerged as the P3 model was implemented.

Accomplishments at the Policy Level
1. Relevant agencies from the City, County, and non-profit sectors are more engaged with each other around the problem of disconnected youth more than ever before.
2. The identification and award of waivers has added flexibility to the system and the discussion about waivers has helped identify barriers to serving disconnected youth.
3. The LAP3 initiative has attracted new resources to YSCs.

Accomplishments at the Operational Level
1. If more agencies are located under the roof of the YSC, collaboration is more likely to happen and be more effective.
2. Regional meetings served as catalysts for creating collaboration among an array of partners.
3. The LAP3 model is reaching more youth than the previous YSC model.
4. Through trial and error, YSCs have found ways to speed up the intake process and keep youth engaged.
5. The Youth Ambassador Program shows promise in reaching hard-to-reach disconnected youth.

Challenges at the Policy Level
1. The LAP3 vision has been launched but is still not broadly understood by all partner agencies, including many YSC staff and managers. Commitment to the model is limited in some YSCs.
2. Partnerships have been identified and initial collaboration is underway, but stronger, more permanent collaborations still need to be developed.
3. Goals are needed for services to non-WIOA youth that YSCs and their partners share.

Challenges at the Operational Level

1. Only a limited number of youth in the target populations of probation, foster, homeless and runaway have been reached.
2. Partners are not using the CalJobs data system to share information. Even YSC contractors are not entering all youth served or recording all services delivered.
3. Partnerships are uneven across the system.
4. Use of mental health screening protocol appears to be very limited.

Recommendations

The LAP3 is still a dynamic and emerging innovation. Much has been accomplished in the first year, while a number of challenges have emerged. The new LAP3 strategic plan[1] addresses many of the challenges identified in our conclusions. Here we present our recommendations for moving LAP3 forward.

1. Develop and disseminate best practices that have emerged in LAP3.
2. Take regional meetings to the next level to develop strong networks within each region, by providing professional facilitation and encouraging YSC staff to attend.
3. Redesign the intake process to retain more participants and make referrals (especially mental health) more effective.
4. Bring in more youth from target groups by setting specific goals for the system and individual YSCs.
5. Use the mental health assessment and record it administration as an activity.
6. Standardize the referral system and add follow-up steps to make sure the youth is served.
7. Build more effective reciprocal partnerships with County and City agencies. Link people formally across agencies and build strong relationships that will facilitate collaboration.
8. Help YSCs develop internal TQM systems for continuous improvement.
9. Increase services for non-WIOA youth, by co-locating more partners in YSCs and seeking special funding for target groups.

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[1] *Los Angeles Performance Partnership Pilot (LAP3) 2017-20 Strategic Plan Serving Disconnected Youth: Improving Education, Employment, Housing and Well-being for Los Angeles Disconnected Youth.* July 1, 2017 available at: http://clkrep.lacity.org/onlinedocs/2017/17-0737_misc_06-26-2017.pdf