Seattle-King County Partnership to ReConnect Performance Partnership Pilot Evaluation Final Report

September 20, 2018

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The contents of this publication were developed under a grant from the U.S. Department of Education. However, the report content does not necessarily represent the policy of the Department of Education, does not imply endorsement by the Federal Government.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

First and foremost, thank you to the 21 young people who took the time to answer our questions about their paid internships (WEX) and ReOpp re-engagement experiences. Their lived experience is essential to improving our understanding of how to best engage youth to achieve their dreams.

Thank you also to the people of the Seattle-King County Partnership to ReConnect for their vision and partnership to co-create knowledge about how to best serve King County youth in ways that result in continuously improving their re-engagement in education and employment. The following individuals were the ones who were vital to the quality of this evaluation study. We could not have completed this project without your hard work.

Mario Bailey, King County Employment and Education Resources, ReConnect to Opportunity
Michael Davies, Workforce Development Council of Seattle-King County
Cruz Gallegos, Workforce Development Council of Seattle-King County
Jennifer Hill, King County Employment and Education Resources
Hannelore Makhani, King County Employment and Education Resources
Sean Morrin, Workforce Development Council of Seattle-King County
Nicole Yohalem, Community Center for Education Results

Finally, a big thank you to the ReOpp Peer Connectors who took the time to attempt a disconnected youth survey, which we knew was a long shot. We gave it our best attempt and learned some important lessons along the way.

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I. INTRODUCTION

A. Introduction and Study Overview

Performance Partnership Pilots for Disconnected Youth (P3 Pilot) aims to "test innovative, cost-effective, and outcome-focused strategies for improving results for disconnected youth" (referred to as Opportunity Youth[1] in this report) by giving flexibility in using discretionary federal funds.

The P3 Pilot program (SKC P3 Pilot) is led by the Seattle-King County Partnership to ReConnect (SKC). SKC is comprised of the Seattle-King County Workforce Development Council (WDC) in partnership with King County Employment and Education Resources (KCEER) and the Community Center for Education Results (CCER). The SKC P3 Pilot goals are to 1) develop best practices to service Opportunity Youth in Seattle-King County, 2) increase the high school and GED completion rates for Opportunity Youth served, and 3) take steps toward developing a system-wide shared database system. The third-party evaluation study, conducted by data2insight LLC, focused primarily on the first and second goals.

The SKC P3 Pilot is designed to increase the long-term education and employment success for all youth served by providing youth appropriate services at the right time for each individual based on self-identified goals. To achieve this aim, SKC strategically aligned and sequenced enrollment in a re-engagement program providing GED completion and basic case management services (funded primarily through the Washington State Open Doors dropout re-engagement system), and employment services and in-depth case management services (federally-funded services from WIOA, WIA, and RExO grant funds). This design was intended to solve two problems: 1) expiring services for youth, when the support is still needed, and 2) fragmentation among various programs and youth-

[1] Opportunity Youth are defined as young people ages 16 to 24 years, neither working nor in school, and who may be facing additional barriers to education and employment attainment.

serving systems. The SKC P3 Pilot intervention's key difference is the ordering of services where case managers can decide, based on their assessment and relationship with the youth, to enroll the youth first in GED completion services for up to 60 days before determining whether or not to further enroll the youth in employment and enhanced case management services. This solution is called the **'best-practice sequence of events'** and includes three steps:

1. Re-engage youth first in state-funded GED completion program and basic case management, and achieve some positive outcomes through re-engagement for up to 60 days;

2. Second, provide youth with access to federally-funded employment services and enhanced case management services as a next step to make progress towards achieving their employment and/or post-secondary education outcomes; and

3. Simultaneously provide youth with extensive support/wraparound services to aid in youth persistence and attainment of their long-term education and employment goals.

To make the best practice sequence of events possible, SKC identified eligibility restrictions that obstructed the coordination between state basic education funding (Open Doors) and federally-funded services (WIOA/WIA) needed to be removed. Traditionally, federally-funded enhanced case management and employment and education services have been available to people ages 16 to 24 years who are not attending school and facing at least one of these barriers 1) school dropout; 2) in the age of compulsory school attendance, but has not attended school for at least one quarter within the most recent school year; 3) recipient of a secondary school diploma or equivalent who is low income and either an English language learner or basic skills deficient (or is unable to compute or solve problems, read, write, or speak English at a level necessary to function on the job, in the family, or in society); 4) engaged in the juvenile or adult justice system; 5) homeless or a runaway; 6) in or aged out of foster care; 7) pregnant or parenting; 8) has a disability; and/or 9) low-income and requires additional support to complete an educational program or maintain employment.

The eligibility problem occurred when a youth who had dropped out of high school enrolled in state-funded basic case management and GED support services. At that point, the Opportunity Youth was considered ineligible for federally-funded services because they were considered, for purposes of federal funding, to be in school. Consequently, a youth could only access both state-funded basic re-engagement services and federally-funded enhanced re-engagement services if they were enrolled at the same time. The waiver for the P3 Pilot eliminates the eligibility barrier, making this best practice sequence of events available to King County Opportunity Youth. Furthermore, an additional waiver was requested to serve youth ages 16 to 24 years who have been convicted as an adult under federal or state law and served time as a juvenile.

This evaluation study is designed to determine whether this sequencing of events is a best practice that contributes to positive outcomes for Opportunity Youth. The purpose of the local third-party evaluation is two-fold:

1. Inform SKC program process and outcome improvement decisions and actions, and
2. Share the evaluation findings with the national P3 Pilot initiative stakeholders for the purpose of improving education and employment outcomes for youth across the United States.

Data2insight began the evaluation study with a focusing session in July 2016 by engaging program staff and key stakeholders in finalization of the P3 Pilot program's theory of change, formulation and prioritization of evaluation questions, creation of common understanding of the program and evaluation needs, building trust and communication between stakeholders and the evaluation team, and developing an explicit and testable logic model (see Appendix B).

B. Primary Research Questions

Hypothesis**: Case managers implementing the following sequence of services will result in improvement of Opportunity Youth education and employment outcomes.**

Question 1. **How does attainment of a GED or high school diploma by SKC P3 Pilot youth compare to those contemporaneously receiving only GED completion and basic case**

management services and to youth served historically after the first 9 months of enrollment in re-engagement services?

Question 2. **How does attainment of unsubsidized employment for SKC P3 Pilot youth compare to those contemporaneously receiving GED completion and basic case management services and other youth served historically after the first 9 months of enrollment in re-engagement services?**

C. Secondary Research Questions (see Appendix A for methods, findings, and conclusions)

Question 3. **What is the effect of the SKC P3 Pilot on youth education and employment milestones during the first 9 months of program enrollment compared to the youth contemporaneously receiving only GED completion and basic case management services and other youth served historically?**

Question 4. **Among the youth who complete a GED, how do post-secondary education outcomes differ for youth enrolled in the P3 Pilot program compared to Contemporaneous and Historical youth?**

II. PROGRAM AND COMPARISON PROGRAMMING

This study includes three groups: 1) an SKC P3 Pilot intervention group (Pilot youth), 2) a historical comparison group who enrolled in federally-funded education, employment, and enhanced case management services between 2013-15 (Historical youth), and 3) a contemporaneous comparison group enrolled only in the state-funded GED completion and basic case management services (Contemporaneous youth).

A. Description of Program

The SKC P3 Pilot youth began receiving GED completion, basic and enhanced case management, and additional WIOA employment and education services at three sites in King County in April 2016: 1) Learning Center North (LCN), located at Shoreline Community College; 2) Learning Center Seattle (SCC), located at Seattle Vocational Institute, and 3) YouthSource (YSR). LCN, and SCC serve youth who have not completed high school but who want to attain their GED and go on to college, technical training, and/or employment. YSR is a one-stop youth center, located at WorkSource Affiliate Tukwila, that offers an array of programs for young adults ages 16 to 24 who have dropped out of high school. These programs focus on education, employment, and leadership development. They also provide connections to youth programs, community resources for life stabilization, job readiness and placement services, and comprehensive case management.

Steps 1-8 in the process map outlined in Figure II.1 are pre-programming steps that some of the Pilot youth experienced. They are complementary to the SKC P3 Pilot program. The ReOpp program staff are responsible for guiding the youth through these steps so that youth are matched with a program intervention that meets them where they are in their life and is most likely to result in the youth persisting in the program. ReOpp is a program-neutral outreach strategy and team that connects Opportunity Youth to education and employment opportunities in King County. As seen in Figure II.1, ReOpp staff, called "peer connectors," engage with young people in a variety of ways. ReOpp

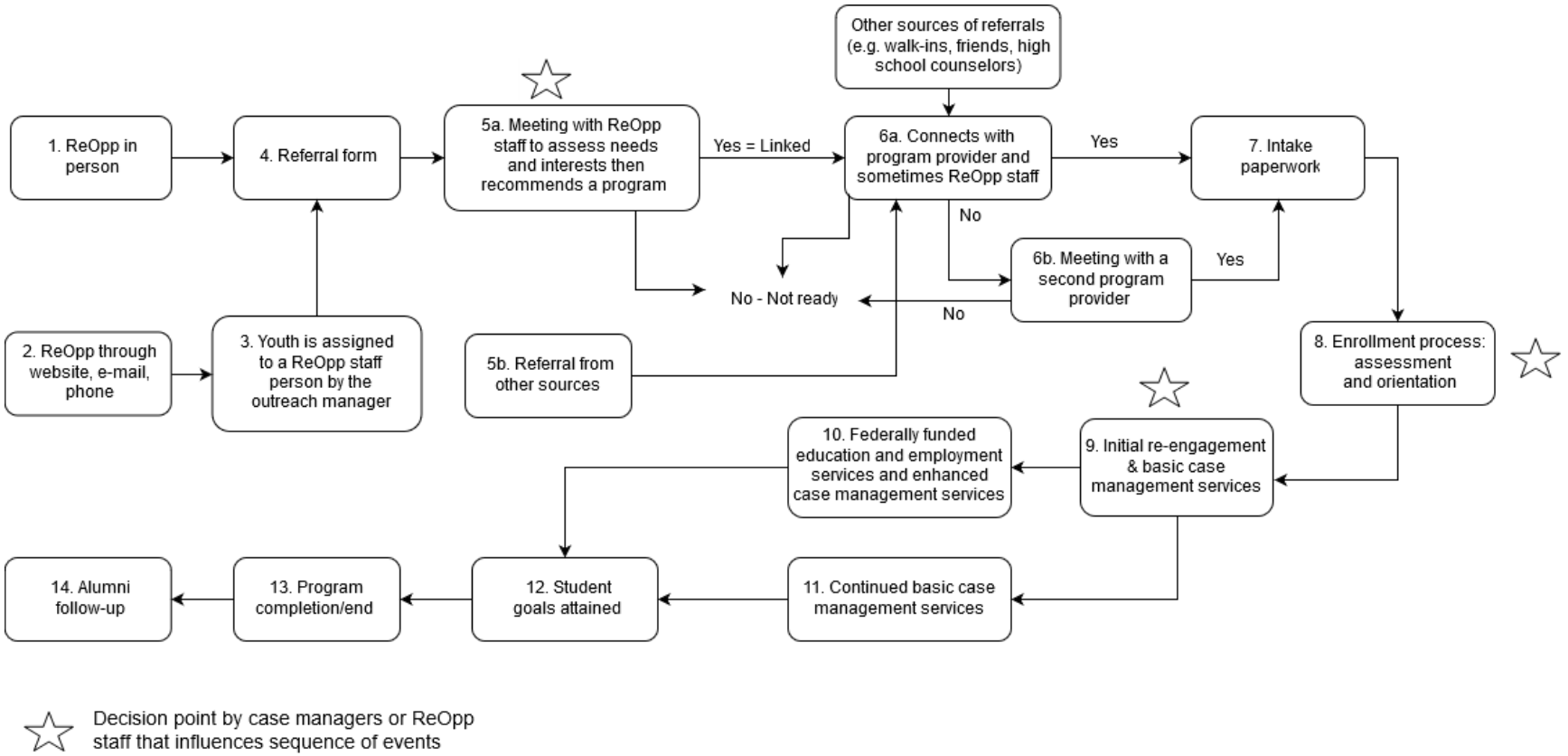
helps the youth complete a referral form to assess their needs and interests (step 5a). Based on that assessment, ReOpp recommends a re-engagement program and connects youth to identified services (step 6a). The youth can then move though program intake or discuss other opportunities with ReOpp. The evaluation study scope does not include evaluation of the ReOpp program. Nevertheless, we have documented this referral process because it is seen as a complement to the pilot program's best sequencing of services.

Once the youth is matched with re-engagement services and a case manager at YouthSource, Learning Center North, or Learning Center Seattle (step 9), they are able to focus their efforts for the next 60 days on completing a GED. At the conclusion of that time period, the case manager assesses whether or not the youth is ready for further education and employment services, enhanced case management, and whether those services are aligned with the youth's goals. Those youth, who the case manager determines will be best served by pilot programming, then begin receiving those services (step 10). The eligibility restrictions identified and removed by SKC through the P3 grant make this sequencing of events possible. Allowing for this 2-month window, to focus on GED completion, gives the youth and case manager time to get to know each other and to establish a spring board for next steps. SKC P3 Pilot youth may also benefit from any of the 14 WIOA program elements. These services included four that were added to the 10 WIA elements Historical youth had access to: 1) financial literacy education, 2) entrepreneurial skills training, 3) services that provide local labor market and employment information, and 4) activities that help youth transition to post-secondary education and training. Furthermore, youth will have the opportunity to take advantage of paid internships.

It is important to note that Pilot youth experiences compared to Contemporaneous youth may or may not appear different, depending on where the youth is in their re-engagement process. In both groups, the case manager tailors the services to optimize goal achievement for their client. For example, one Pilot youth and one Contemporaneous youth may both be working to attain their GED,

while another Contemporaneous youth may be working to enroll and complete a college course, while yet another Pilot youth is engaged in a paid internship.

Figure II.1 **SKC P3 Pilot Program Process Map**



B. Description of Counterfactual Condition

Historical comparison group

Historical youth in this study consists of youth enrolled in employment and enhanced case management services. The key difference between Pilot youth and Historical youth is that from 2013-15, case managers could not tailor the service sequence based on assessment of, and relationship with, the youth. Case managers were required to enroll the youth in both GED preparation and employment services simultaneously. In other words, case managers could not enroll the youth in employment and enhanced re-engagement services after the 60-day period of GED preparation and basic case management services. Furthermore, the Historical youth had access to 10 WIA program elements: 1) tutoring, study skills, and drop out prevention, 2) alternative secondary school offerings, 3) summer employment opporutnities linked to academic and occupational skills, 4) paid and unpaid work experience, 5) occupational skill training, 6) leadership development, 7) supportive services, 8) adult mentoring, 9) comprehensive guidance and counseling, 10) follow-up services after program exit. Like the Pilot and Contemporaneous youth, Historical youth could enroll in paid internships.

Contemporaneous comparison group

Contemporaneous youth received only GED preparation and basic case management services, while Pilot youth received both GED preparation and employment services, plus basic and enhanced case management services. However, Contemporaneous youth, like Historical and Pilot youth, could take advantage of paid internships. It is important to note that case managers assigned the youth to this comparison group (Step 9 in Figure II.1) because they deemed continuation in GED preparation and basic case management services to be the best sequencing of services for the individual youth, given their assessment of the youth's readiness and the youth's identified goals.

Table II.1. **Summary of Intervention and Comparison Group Services and Characteristics**

Service	Historical (7/1/13 - 6/1/15)	P3 Intervention (4/1/16 – 12/31/17)	Contemporaneous (4/1/16 – 12/31/17)
Outreach	Referral to program by case manager or school district Did not receive outreach services	May or may not have received ReOpp outreach services If ReOpp: Follow-up at 2, 4, 6, 8, and 12 weeks; and opportunity for second program, if first is not a good fit	May or may not have received ReOpp outreach services If ReOpp: Follow-up at 2, 4, 6, 8, and 12 weeks; and opportunity for second program, if first is not a good fit
GED completion support services?	Yes	Yes	Yes
Paid internships available?	Yes	Yes	Yes
Case management services?	Basic and/or enhanced	Basic and enhanced	Basic only
Additional employment and education services?	10 WIA program elements	14 WIOA program elements	None
Location	YouthSource, Learning Center North	YouthSource, Learning Center Seattle, Learning Center North	Learning Center North, YouthSource
Funding sources	WIA only or WIA + WA Office of Superintendent of Public Instruction (e.g., Open Doors, Contract Ed)	WA Office of Superintendent of Public Instruction (e.g., Open Doors, Contract Ed) and WIOA	WA Office of Superintendent of Public Instruction (e.g., Open Doors, Contract Ed)

III. EVALUATION DESIGN

A. Study Design

The primary evaluation questions require a comparison of the pilot youth education and employment outcomes with those of other groups. For those questions, the evaluation will use a quasi-experimental design (QED) using administrative data collected by KCEER.

Education and employment outcomes for **Pilot youth** enrolling in re-engagement services from 2016-17 were compared to 1) outcomes attained by **Historical youth** enrolled in re-engagement and case management services from 2013 to 2015, and 2) outcomes attained by **Contemporaneous youth** (during the same time period as the Pilot youth) who received only GED completion and basic case management services (no employment or enhanced case management services). KCEER shared administrative data for all three samples with the evaluation team for data analysis.

A1. **Sample Stratification and Weighting.** The validity of the QED approach depends on the degree to which samples are similar at baseline measurement. First, we observed that the pilot sample included older youth who had no counterparts in the comparison group. For this reason, we excluded eight youth from the Pilot group who were older than 21. The remaining youth in the analytic sample were stratified (divided into layers) based on three binary characteristics: gender (male/female), race (white/non-white), and self-reported barriers to education and employment (no barriers/at least one barrier). These barriers consisted of: 1) an individual subject to juvenile justice system, 2) a homeless individual, 3) an individual who is pregnant or parenting, 4) an individual with a disability, 5) an individual using drugs or alchohol, 6) an individual who lives apart from their parents (non-parental care), 7) an individual who is a refugee or immigrant, and 8) an individual from a dysfunctional family. Sample sizes within the resulting eight strata (2x2x2) were then equalized by weighting the youth in the historical and contemporaneous groups so that there were effectively the same number of youth for each treatment group within each strata. Stratification and weighting resulted in exact baseline

equivalence on all of the variables used to make the strata, and near equivalence on age. Age was entered as a covariate in the statistical models to adjust for remaining differences in mean age between the three groups. (Baseline data on employment status were not available.)

A2. **Study Limitations.** The study design has several important limitations that constrain our ability to derive program design recommendations or other policy-relevant inferences. For the comparison between pilot and historical groups, the differing time periods of participation and data collection allow the possibility of confounding by historical influences, such as:

- Differing state of the local economy in 2013 to 2015 compared to 2016 to 2017; and
- Changes in population demographics due to immigration, policy changes.

The inclusion of the Contemporaneous youth was intended, in part, to bolster the study design through avoidance of such differences in historical context. However, there are other potential confounding influences that could have caused, or obscured, differences in outcomes between Pilot youth and Contemporaneous youth. Most notably, youth entering the system during the contemporaneous period were intentionally screened into either the Pilot program or the Contemporaneous program based on which program was deemed by case managers to be most appropriate for each individual. In fact, this practice is a key component of the intervention, intended to allow case managers to provide youth with a sequencing of appropriate education and employment re-engagement services at the right time based on the case manager's assessment of youth readiness and goals. Thus, observed differences (or lack of differences) between outcomes in these two groups may be the result of differences (or lack of differences) in:

- Program implementation effectiveness;
- Screening and assignment process;
- Case manager effectiveness;
- Program delivery site (location); and
- Other factors correlated with assignment of youth to programs (e.g., disability status, drug or alcohol use, non-parental care, dysfunctional family).

Secondary evaluation questions 3 and 4 required further exploration of the Pilot youth and Comparison youth education and employment outcomes. To answer question 3, the same analytic sample, weighting, and stratification were used for data analysis. Thus, the limitations are the same in this case as for the primary inquiry. In question 4, the analytic sample consists of only youth in the pilot, historic and contemporaneous comparison groups who completed a GED. As a result, the analysis is limited to a descriptive statistical analysis of the post-secondary attainments in each of the three groups.

B. Sample Recruitment

Answers to the study questions relied on data that are collected by KCEER. KCEER reported that 100 Pilot youth were served, and they additionally provide comparative data for 333 Historical youth and 100 Contemporaneous youth. The 333 Historical youth correspond to the whole population of WIA or WIA and Open Doors funded youth enrolled between July 2013 and June 2015. The SKC P3 Pilot sample consists of 100 youth who enrolled on a rolling basis beginning in April 2016 for WIOA and Open Doors or other state-funded basic re-engagement services (trimmed to 92 youth in the analytic sample, after excluding eight youth older than age 21 at intake). The Contemporaneous youth consists of 100 Open Doors-only funded youth who enrolled on a rolling basis beginning in April 2016.

Table III.1. **Analytic samples**

Group	Unweighted Sample Size	Weighted Sample Size
Pilot youth	92	92
Historical youth	333	92
Contemporaneous youth	100	92

Note. All three groups were stratified on gender (male/female), race (white/non-white), and self-reported barriers to attainment of educational and employment outcomes (no barriers/at least one barrier). Then the comparison group data were weighted to yield the same effective sample sizes as the Pilot group within each stratum.

C. Data Collection

The sources of outcome and explanatory variable data for this study are forms filled out by case managers and youth at different stages of the enrollment and tracking processes for the various re-engagement and case management programs. Youth characteristics and self-reported barriers to education and employment were collected through an assessment prior to the formal enrollment process. Outcome attainment dates were collected on an ongoing basis using an attainment form.

To better understand the program and data collection instruments, data2insight facilitated a workshop with KCEER and WDC staff to create a process map (Figure II.1 on page 8) which outlines the paths a young person may take as they re-engage with education and employment. For this evaluation, data2insight is using data collected in steps 8 and 13. Step 9 depicts the screening and assignment of youth by a case manager to the Pilot or Contemporaneous comparison group, based on which program they determined to be the best fit for each individual youth. The process map shows the two paths that this evaluation study compared: the Pilot group process is captured in steps 9, 10, 12, 13, and 14 and the Contemporaneous comparison group process in steps 9, 11, 12, 13, and 14.

D. Outcomes for Analyses

The outcome variables for this study were selected from a pre-defined list of variables collected by KCEER from forms completed by youth and staff during enrollment and program participation. The outcome variable data collected was the same across groups.

Table III.2. **Outcome variables used for primary research questions***

Outcome	Description of outcome
Primary outcomes	
Attain GED or high school diploma	Binary variable of whether the youth completed a GED or high school diploma within 9 months of their start date.

Outcome	Description of outcome
Secure and retain unsubsidized employment for at least 45 days	Binary variable of whether the participant retained unsubsidized employment for at least 45 days within 9 months of start date.
Secondary outcomes	
Complete one high school credit	Binary variable of whether the youth completed one high school credit within 9 months of start date.
Attain high school skills test level gain	Binary variable of whether the youth completed a standardized assessment (CASAS) and made a math or reading knowledge gain within 9 months of start date.
Complete two GED tests	Binary variable of whether the youth completed two GED tests within 9 months of start date.
Attain college course readiness	Binary variable of whether the youth attained an assessment test score required to enter 100 level college courses within 9 months of start date.
Maintain college GPA of 2.0	Binary variable of whether the youth maintained his/her college GPA of 2.0 or better for one quarter within 9 months of start date. The variable serves as a proxy for college enrollment.
Complete job readiness training	Binary variable of whether the youth completed job readiness training within 9 months of start date.
Pass career education class	Binary variable of whether the youth passed the career education options class within 9 months of start date.
Complete paid internship	Binary variable of whether the youth successfully completed a paid internship within 9 months of start date.

* Data source for all variables: KCEER administrative data

Given the evaluation study's time constraints, progress toward education and employment goals were measured 9 months after the youths' formal enrollment date in GED preparation and basic case management services. This approach standardized the study time period for all intervention and comparison group youth.

E. Analytic Sample

As described above, the primary evaluation analytic sample included 92 Pilot youth, along with 333 Historical youth, and 100 Contemporaneous youth. The comparison groups were weighted (separately and within strata) so that the final weighted analytic sample compared the 92 Pilot youth

to a weighted sample of 92 Historical or 92 Contemporaneous comparison youth. This same weighted sample was used for analysis of both primary questions (comparing groups on attainment of primary education and employment outcomes), as well as for analyses related to the secondary question comparing groups on attainment of specific educational or employment milestones. Complete baseline and outcome data were available for all youth; no missing data were apparent. Please note that our data processing did not include review of the administrative data by case managers to verify administrative data accuracy. Thus, false positives and false negatives within the data set are possible. For example, there may be instances in which a youth had in fact attained an outcome and a corresponding date of attainment was not entered into the KCEER database or vice versa. This analytic sample was also used to answer secondary evaluation question 3.

To answer secondary evaluation question 4, the analytic sample included only youth who had completed a GED in the Pilot and comparison groups.

F. Baseline Equivalence

Given that case managers ultimately determined whether a youth enrolled in the Pilot program or Contemporaneous comparison group program based, in part, on their assessesment of each youth's readiness to commit to WIOA (see process map, Figure II.1 on page 8), the groups are systematically and intentionally non-equivalent, which introduces a selection bias threat to internal validity. In addition to this programatically determined systematic difference in perceived readiness for the WIOA program, we compared other key baseline characteristics of the Pilot youth, including gender and age, with those of the comparison groups.

The Pilot youth demographic characteristics initially differed from the comparison groups on race and number of self-reported barriers to education and employment: disability, drug and alcohol use, non-parental care, and dysfunctional family (see Table III.3). The Pilot youth and Historical youth

were approximately half female and half male. However, almost two-thirds of the Contemporaneous youth were male.

Stratification and weighting prior to further analysis (detailed in section A1) resulted in exact baseline equivalence on gender, race, and barriers to education and employment, and near equivalence on age (there were no youth older than 21 in either of the comparison groups). Because age was not used as a dimension for stratification, it was entered as a covariate in the statistical models to adjust for remaining differences in mean age between the three groups. Table III.3 displays the baseline characteristics of the initial samples, and Table III.4 displays the baseline characteristics of the final analytic samples.

Table III.3. **Baseline characteristics of the three initial samples**

	SKC P3 Pilot (*N*=100)	Historical (*N*=333)	Contemporaneous (*N*=100)
Average age at enrollment	18.8	18.6	18.3*
(standard deviation)	(1.95)	(1.33)	(1.21)
Percent female	54%	50%	34%**
(standard deviation)	(50%)	(50%)	(48%)
Race/ethnicity (percent of total)			
Black	18%	29%*	24%
White	45%	34%	35%
Hispanic	15%	15%	16%
Asian	9%	5%	6%
Native American	2%	3%	2%
Multi-race	10%	12%	13%
Pacific Islander	1%	2%	4%
Education level (percent of total)			
Out-of-School H.S. Dropout	100%	100%	100%
Self-report barriers to education and employment used for sensitivity analysis (percent of total)			
Disability	5%	20%**	21%**
Drug/alcohol use	2%	13%**	22%**
Non-parental care	14%	30%**	8%*
Dysfunctional family	22%	32%	45%**

* Comparison group is significantly different from Pilot group at $p < .05$.
** Comparison group is significantly different from Pilot group at $p < .01$.

Table III.4. **Baseline characteristics of the final analytic samples**

	SKC P3 Pilot	Historical	Contemporaneous
Average age at enrollment (standard deviation)	18.41 (1.49)	18.59 (.66)	18.35 (1.16)
Percent female (standard deviation)	53% (50%)	53% (26%)	53% (48%)
Race/ethnicity (percent of total)			
Black	20%	24%	21%
White	46%	46%	46%
Hispanic	13%	12%	12%
Asian	8%	4%	5%
Native American	2%	3%	3%
Multi-race	11%	11%	10%
Pacific Islander	1%	2%	3%
Education level (percent of total)			
Out-of-School H.S. Dropout	100%	100%	100%
One or more self-report barriers to education and employment (percent of total)	27%	27%	27%
Self-reported barriers to education and employment used for sensitivity analysis (percent of total)			
Disability	5%	11%*	13%
Drug/alcohol	2%	15%**	22%**
Non-parental care	13%	33%**	10%
Dysfunctional family	24%	26%	42%**

Note. *N* = 92 Pilot youth; the 333 Historical youth, and 100 Contemporaneous youth were weighted within strata so as to be equivalent to 92 youth in each of these comparison groups. Final samples were stratified and weighted based on race/ethnicity (White), percent female, and presence/absence of at least one barrier to education and employment, so these three variables were forced to be equal across the three treatment groups.

* Comparison group is significantly different from Pilot group at $p < .05$.

** Comparison group is significantly different from Pilot group at $p < .01$

G. Methods

Primary evaluation questions

The benchmark statistical models used for the primary research questions were weighted ANCOVA models with the education or employment outcomes predicted by two factors: group membership (with two levels, the P3 Pilot group versus one of the comparison groups), and strata (with eight levels representing the 2x2x2 stratification scheme). Age was included as a covariate to account for baseline differences in age that remained after stratification, and an interaction variable (group x strata) was also included. There was no missing data and therefore no need to use imputation or other techniques for dealing with missing data.

Because the stratification and weighting only partially accounted for pre-existing differences between groups, additional analyses addressed whether findings from the benchmark models were sensitive to inclusion of additional baseline demographic factors. Most notably, remaining baseline differences between the Pilot group and both comparison groups in the percentage of youth reporting drug and alcohol use were added as an additional factor in the ANCOVA models. This procedure was also used to examine model sensitivity to inclusion of disability, non-parental care, or dysfunctional family barriers. Details of the sensitivity analyses are provided in Appendix F.

Secondary evaluation questions

To answer Question 3, the evaluation study compared the education and employment milestones attained by Pilot youth with those attained by Historical and Contemporaneous youth. The same benchmark statistical model described for the primary research questions was used to answer the secondary research questions.

To answer Question 4, the evaluation study compared enrollment and retention in post-secondary education and training for Historical and Contemporaneous youth with those outcomes among Pilot youth who completed their GED within the first 9 months of enrollment. Because of the endogenous

nature of selection of a subsample based on completion of a GED, simple descriptive statistics for each of the three groups are presented, without tests of statistical significance between groups. It is important to note that because participation in a specific program may have influenced how many and which youth obtained a GED; this subgroup of the analytic sample has characteristics that differ in unknown ways from the main analytic sample.

IV. STUDY FINDINGS

A. Primary Evaluation Questions

Question 1. **How does attainment of a GED or high school diploma by SKC P3 Pilot youth compare to those contemporaneously receiving only GED completion and basic case management services and to youth served historically?**

In the benchmark analysis, a higher proportion of Pilot youth completed a GED or high school diploma within 9 months of enrollment compared to youth in both Contemporaneous and Historical youth. As displayed in Table IV.1, 68 percent of Pilot youth completed a GED or high school diploma within 9 months of enrollment. The weighted proportions of Historical and Contemporaneous youth who attained a GED or high school diploma within 9 months were 28 percent and 31 percent, respectively.

However, based on sensitivity analyses, this finding appears to be accounted for by differing profiles of pre-existing barriers to educational outcomes in the three groups. Notably, in the final analytic sample, only 2 percent of the P3 Pilot group were coded as having drug or alcohol problems at enrollment, compared to 22 percent of the Contemporaneous comparison group and 15 percent of the Historical comparison group. Once this factor was accounted for in the analytic model, there was no longer a significant difference between the P3 Pilot group and either of the comparison groups on completion of a GED or high school diploma.

Parallel sensitivity analyses were conducted with two other barriers to educational attainment: disability and non-parental care. When baseline differences in disability status were accounted for, there was no longer a significant difference between Pilot youth and the Contemporaneous youth on completion of a GED or high school diploma; there was still a significant difference between the Pilot youth and the Historical youth. Adjusting for baseline differences in rates of non-parental care did not affect the results. Detailed results of these analyses are included in Appendix F.

Table IV.1. **Attainment of High School Diploma or GED Within 9 Months of Enrollment**

	Pilot youth	Historical youth	Difference	Test statistic
Percent attaining GED or high school diploma	68%	40%	28%	$F_{(1,408)} = 35.48$ $p < .0001$
	Pilot youth	**Contemporaneous youth**	**Difference**	**Test statistic**
Percent attaining GED or high school diploma	68%	37%	31%	$F_{(1,175)} = 17.80$ $p < .0001$

Question 2. **How does attainment of unsubsidized employment for SKC P3 Pilot youth compare to those contemporaneously receiving only GED completion and basic case management services and other youth served historically?**

In the benchmark analysis, there was no difference in this rate of attainment between the Pilot and Historical youth. However, a higher proportion of Pilot youth attained unsubsidized employment within 9 months of enrollment compared to Contemporaneous youth. As displayed in Table IV.2, 29 percent of Pilot youth attained unsubsidized employment. The weighted proportions of youth who attained a GED or high school diploma in the Historical and Contemporaneous youth were 25 percent and 9 percent, respectively.

However, as with educational outcomes, based on sensitivity analyses, the finding for the Pilot and Contemporaneous youth appears to be accounted for by differing profiles of pre-existing barriers. In the analytic sample, only 2 percent of Pilot youth reported having a drug or alcohol use barrier at enrollment, compared to 22 percent of Contemporaneous youth. Once this factor was accounted for in the analytic model, there was no significant difference between Pilot, Historical, or Contemporaneous youth in terms of attaining unsubsidized employment.

Parallel sensitivity analyses were conducted with two other barriers to employment: disability and non-parental care. When baseline differences in disability status were accounted for, there was no significant difference between the Pilot, Historical, or Contemporaneous youth attainment of

unsubsidized employment. Adjusting for baseline differences in rates of non-parental care did not affect the benchmark results. A summary of these analyses is included in Appendix F.

Table IV.2. **Attainment of Unsubsidized Employment Within 9 Months of Enrollment**

	Pilot youth	Historical youth	Difference	Test statistic
Percent attaining unsubsidized employment	29%	25%	4%	$F_{(1,408)} = 0.46$ $p = .4974$
	Pilot youth	**Contemporaneous youth**	**Difference**	**Test statistic**
Percent attaining unsubsidized employment	29%	9%	20%	$F_{(1,175)} = 11.55$ $p = .0008$

B. Secondary Evaluation Questions

Question 3. **What is the effect of the SKC P3 Pilot on youth education and employment milestones during the first 9 months of program enrollment compared to the youth contemporaneously receiving only GED completion and basic case management services and other youth served historically?**

Educational Milestones

Compared to the Historical youth, after 9 months of program enrollment, the Pilot youth were significantly more likely to have attained college coursework readiness, and significantly less likely to have attained at least one level gain in high school math or reading. Pilot youth were significantly more likely to have completed two GED tests and showed college coursework readiness than Contemporaneous youth.

Table IV.3. **Attainment of Educational Milestones Within 9 Months of Enrollment**

	Pilot youth	Historical youth	Difference	Test statistic
Percent attaining high school skills test level gain	2%	34%	-32%	$F_{(1,408)} = 50.11$ $p < .0001$
Percent completing two GED tests	29%	23%	6%	$F_{(1,408)} = 2.54$ $p = .1114$

	Pilot youth	Historical youth	Difference	Test statistic
Percent attaining college course readiness	4%	3%	1%	$F_{(1,408)} = 4.29$ $p = .0389$
Percent attaining college GPA of 2.0	9%	10%	-1%	$F_{(1,408)} = 1.25$ $p = .2641$
	Pilot youth	**Contemporaneous youth**	**Difference**	**Test statistic**
Percent attaining high school skills test level gain	2%	4%	-2%	$F_{(1,175)} = 0.007$ $p = .9346$
Percent completing two GED tests	29%	0%	29%	$F_{(1,175)} = 32.45$ $p < .0001$
Percent attaining college course readiness	4%	0%	4%	$F_{(1,175)} = 9.07$ $p = .0030$
Percent attaining college GPA of 2.0	9%	0%	9%	$F_{(1,175)} = 2.58$ $p = .1103$

Note. High school skills test level gain = Gain at least one level in high school math or reading on state-sanctioned standardized test (CASAS) that is used to measure basic skills and educational growth.. College course readiness = attaining an assessment test score (COMPASS) required to enter 100 level college courses. College GPA of 2.0 = maintain a college GPA of 2.0 or better for 1 quarter.

Employment Milestones

Compared to the Contemporaneous youth, after 9 months of program enrollment, the Pilot youth were significantly more likely to have completed job readiness training.

Compared to the Historical comparison group, after 9 months of program enrollment, the Pilot youth were significantly less likely to have completed a career education class.

Table IV.4. **Attainment of Employment Milestones Within 9 Months of Enrollment**

	Pilot youth	Historical youth	Difference	Test statistic
Percent completing job readiness training	41%	49%	-8%	$F_{(1,408)} = 1.80$ $p = .1802$
Percent completing a career education class	11%	16%	-5%	$F_{(1,408)} = 5.93$ $p = .0153$
Percent completing paid internship	33%	25%	8%	$F_{(1,408)} = 0.12$ $p = .7298$

	Pilot youth	Contemporaneous youth	Difference	Test statistic
Percent completing job readiness training	41%	14%	27%	$F_{(1,175)} = 6.46$ $p = .0119$
Percent completing a career education class	11%	0%	11%	$F_{(1,175)} = 3.08$ $p = .0811$
Percent completing paid internship	33%	12%	21%	$F_{(1,175)} = 3.61$ $p = .0590$

Question 4. **Among the youth who complete a GED, how do post-secondary education outcomes differ for youth enrolled in the P3 Pilot program compared to outcomes for other youth served historically?**

We present descriptive information of the unweighted analytic sample data to answer this question in Table IV.5.

Table IV.5. **Attainment of Post-Secondary Educational Milestones Within 9 Months of Enrollment Among Youth Who Complete a GED**

	Pilot youth (*N*=58)	Historical youth (*N*=116)	Contemporaneous youth (*N*=39)
Transfer to a post-secondary educational institution	9% (5)	10% (11)	33% (13)
Transfer to an advanced training program	3% (2)	3% (3)	0%
Attained college GPA of 2.0	9% (5)	14% (16)	0%

Note. Percentages in this table are based on the raw sample, not stratified or weighted. College GPA 2.0 = the youth maintained a college GPA of 2.0 or better for one quarter.

V. DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION

A. Primary Evaluation Findings Discussion and Conclusions

The fact that Pilot youth completed their GED at higher rates than Contemporaneous and Historical youth and attained employment at a higher rate than Contemporaneous youth in the first 9 months of education re-engagement is only part of the story of the SKC P3 Pilot.

These findings suggest that the youth education and employment outcome differences at 9 months are accounted for by case manager assignment of youth to services based on case manager assessment of youth readiness and individual goals using the 'best practice sequence of events.' This finding is promising given that the SKC approach was designed to increase the long-term education and employment success for all youth served (whether in the Pilot or Contemporaneous group) by providing them appropriate services at the right time for each individual based on self-identified goals. Specifically, over half of the Pilot youth completed a GED in 9 months or less. Case management experience indicates that this is a rapid rate of attainment. Furthermore, the fact that the difference in educational and employment attainment across the Pilot and Contemporaneous groups is eliminated when accounting for youth drug and alcohol use actually supports the hypothesis of the best practice sequence of events model. This case management approach is grounded in the belief that if a youth is not ready for enhanced services, it is better to keep them in basic services to build a stronger foundation before pushing them to achieve more. It seems reasonable that if a youth is negatively impacted by drug and alcohol use, they would be less likely to be ready for enhanced services. In the pilot program, case managers apply their knowledge of youth readiness to each individual youth to whom they were providing support. Based on their initial engagement with the youth, and the youth's observed behavior in those first 60 days, the case manager can provide services that they deem the best fit for the youth. Given this model, it will be interesting to re-evaluate educational and employment outcomes at 18 months and again at 24 months for all three groups.

Furthermore, it would be interesting to compare the rate of achievement of goals that the youth set for themselves, whether those are education or employment goals. If this strategic sequencing of services approach based on best fit for the youth works, we would expect to see both Pilot and Contemporaneous youth attaining the education and employment goals they set for themselves at similar rates in 2 years' time.

Case manager assignment of youth again accounts for the differences in nine month outcomes between the Pilot and Historical groups. The Historical comparison group attained unsubsidized employment at about the same rate as the Pilot group, but in the initial analysis, they were less likely than the Pilot youth to attain a GED or high school diploma. This apparent difference was not seen once pre-existing drug and alcohol use (which, for the most part, only existed in Historical youth, not in Pilot youth) were taken into account. This lack of difference when accounting for drug and alcohol use is to be expected. The fact that fewer Pilot youth (2 percent) reported drug and alcohol use as a barrier to education and employment than the Historical group (15 percent) is by design. If youth were wrestling with drug and alcohol use, case managers would be less likely to assign them to the Pilot group, which is a more demanding program. Case managers would be more likely to instead assign youth to the Contemporaneous comparison group with basic case management and GED completion support services, so they would not be pushed to perform at a higher level before they were ready. Thus, in any group, we would expect to see youth with drug and alcohol use self-identified as a barrier underperform compared to those who do not experience that barrier in the short term.

The reason for the lack of difference in unsubsidized employment in the Pilot and Historical comparison groups is likely two-fold. First, typically we would not see the impact of employment re-engagement programs for 2 years (4), thus a comparison at 9 months is premature. Second, Historical youth, in many cases, received concurrent GED attainment support services and employment re-

engagement services, rather than sequentially in the case of Pilot youth. This would potentially give Historical youth more time to attain employment outcomes compared to Pilot youth.

The best practice sequence of events model appears to be promising for helping youth attain their short-term education and employment goals and should be further tested to determine if it effectively boosts Oppporunity Youth attainment of 24-month education and employment goals. When testing the best practice sequencing of events model going forward, it is important that the Pilot and Contemporaneous group outcomes are pooled together and compared as the treatment group to the Historical comparison group for an ultimate analysis of 24-month outcomes.

In order to obtain more credible and reliable evidence about the effectiveness of the model a future evaluation study answering the following questions is highly recommended.

1. What criteria are the best to determine youth readiness for enhanced engagement services?
2. What are the best case management strategies for expediting youth attainment of education and employment goals?
3. What are the elements of case management effectiveness that lead to higher rates of youth education and employment attainment?
4. How successful are both Pilot and Contemporaneous youth at achieving their education and employment goals after 24 months? How does this compare to Historical youth goal attainment at 24 months?

B. Secondary Evaluation Findings Discussion and Conclusions

The biggest difference in education milestones leading to attainment of the GED was that both comparison groups had larger percentages of high school skills test level gains than Pilot youth. However, the Pilot youth outperformed both comparison groups in GED attainment. This finding suggests that Pilot youth did not need to take high school skills tests, which measure gains in high school math and reading, prior to completing their GED. Thus, Pilot youth were able to move into GED testing more quickly than their peers in the other groups.

When looking at post-secondary education attainment of the 213 youth across the three groups who completed a GED in the first 9 months of enrollment, the most striking finding is the

13 Contemporaneous youth who transferred to a post-secondary institution. It would be interesting to conduct case studies of these youth and the five Pilot youth who transferred to college in order to gain insight into why and how these youth moved into post-secondary education within 9 months or program enrollment. Perhaps college transfer is more common for Contemporaneous youth because case managers deemed that post-secondary education would be a better next step than employment for these youth.

VI. REFERENCES

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VII. APPENDICES

Appendix A. Additional Secondary Question Evaluation Findings

Introduction

Question 5. **How have paid internships contributed to young people attaining educational and employment goals?**

Question 6. **What are the reasons why Linked youth do not persist through a re-engagement program?**

Question 7. **Which outreach strategies (e.g., youth word of mouth, social media, library, office hours, job fairs) are most successful at reconnecting youth to a re-engagement program? What are the 18-month educational and employment outcomes? What is the relationship between the outreach method and enrollment?**

Methods

To answer Question 5, a customized interview protocol was developed and administered to a purposeful sample of youth (*N*=10) including 6 female youth, 3 male youth, and 1 youth whose gender was unidentified. KCEER staff connected youth with the evaluation team. Interviews were conducted by a data2insight team member in person at the Youth Source site. Youth were consented and given a $40 gift card at the completion of the typically 60-minute interview to express appreciation for their time and input to the study. The interview protocol consisted of questions about the youth's paid internships and how those experiences impacted their educational and employment goals and achievement. A combination of deductive and inductive methods was employed to analyze the interview data. Deductive codes were identified for the initial analysis of the interview data. The next step in the analysis was to inductively derive themes, ideas, and concepts within each of the deductively coded segments of data. As additional codes and themes emerged, new codes were created to categorize these segments of data. New codes were added to maintain and update the qualitative codebook. Coded data were then organized and summarized. A written description of themes was generated, along with excerpts from interviews and survey responses, to illustrate these themes.

To answer questions 6 and 7, a customized interview protocol was developed and administered to a purposeful sample of 'Linked'[2] or re-engaged youth (*N*=11) ranging in age from 16 to 24 years old with the average age of 18.6 years. The sample included 8 male youth, 3 female youth, and one youth whose gender we were not able to identify. In terms of race and ethnicity, the youth identified as Black (*n*=3), Asian (*n*=2), Hispanic (*n*=2), multi-racial (*n*=2), White (*n*=1), and one youth's race/ethnicity was unidentified. The protocol consisted of questions about program persistence, barriers they overcame, effective outreach strategies, reasons for re-engaging with or disengaging with education and employment. Data analysis methods were the same as those employed to answer question 5.

Study Findings: Employment Milestones

Question 5. **How have paid internships contributed to young people attaining educational & employment goals?**

Prior to beginning a paid internship, six of the 10 youth interviewed had experienced barriers to employment including transportation difficulty and failure to pass a test, such as a drug test or local geography test, and lack of work experience. Most commonly, interviewees (*n*=4) mentioned lack of job experience as their primary barrier to employment. When searching for jobs independently, youth had been relying on general web searches (*n*=3), specific job search sites such as Snag-a-Job (*n*=2), and personal connections (*n*=2).

Youth learned about re-engagement program from family (*n*=4), friends (*n*=3), and their school (*n*=2). For those who learned about the program from a friend, two of the three had a friend who recommended the program based on their personal experience.

[2] A Linked youth is someone that a ReOpp staff person has connected with a program staff person from a program that they believe is a good fit with the youth's needs and goals.

Youth benefitted from support at each stage of reaching their employment goals: from providing information about job fairs and assisting with the job search process to providing the opportunity to get hands-on experience in careers of interest. Three youth identified exploring career options as one of the biggest benefits they gained from the program.

Youth described the program as flexible, free, and supportive. Half of interviewees praised the program for being surprisingly simple and straightforward, explaining:

> ***I like how fast the process was to getting into the job****… I'm just trying to get stuff done as soon as possible. I hate wasting days.*

> *I think that **the process itself was easy.** I think I learned quite a few things from it. I think that without the process, I wouldn't have been able to be so confident.*

Once enrolled, youth appreciated the support and guidance in the job application process such as interview practice (n=1) and training programs that resulted in certificates (n=2) to bolster their resume. The most frequently cited benefit of program support was resumé help (n=6), either writing a first resume or improving upon the resume they had been using. All of this preparation further benefitted youth by increasing their confidence and helping them feel better prepared for the job application process. The following quotes provide some examples to illustrate this process.

> *My resumé, I feel like was good, but **they just upgraded it 10 times more**.*

> *Writing my resume differently is definitely one skill that I have learned**. I basically learned how to write a very efficient resume**… so it's more clear, understandable.*

> *… he helped me with my resume. He set me up, gave me my CPR stuff. He set me up with a lot, like my cover letter. **I pretty much got a lot that I need for jobs.** And my food handlers card too. Which is nice that they fund that. And my CPR too. So now that I have that. **A lot of jobs look at me like, "Oh okay, you got this certificate. Okay, that's good."***

> *At first, they did help me make a resume. After the resume, it took maybe a couple weeks for them to actually get in touch with the owners of the shop. After that, the interview was set up, and then I just went to the interview. … I think I came in twice to do a pretend interview. It helped me get prepared for the interview. The whole process was just easy, and **I'm glad I didn't have to go through my first experience without being prepared.***

On the job, youth gained a variety of transferable skills such as operating office equipment or a cash register, as well as specific skills such as animal handling and software programs. Youth also

developed softer skills in professional dress and conduct, organization, and prioritization. Youth most frequently mentioned communication skills (*n*=5) as their biggest lesson learned on the job, followed by the importance of punctuality (*n*=3), and dependability (*n*=3).

Youth also gained a first taste of tangible, adult decision-making. Two youth mentioned the practical lessons they learned in budgeting with their first paychecks. Five youth mentioned that the program allowed them to experience work in their career goals or test out new work environments. This experience helped them learn which fields and skills will be a good long-term fit for them and can inform their choices in their career path or area of study. Four youth talked about their appreciation for being treated like an adult and taken seriously regarding their post-high school future, as illustrated below.

> *I just didn't know what I wanted to do, and I felt like I was wasting time if I was going to college. I know that's not the case, but it was just how I felt. I didn't know what I wanted to do. [I'm] being organized in my life right now, and just feeling okay with myself and comfortable, and just knowing what I want to do right now. I've told all my friends how much I love the whole Usource thing, how they helped me get a job, how they helped me do my school, and how it was always supportive and quick, and at a good pace for me; it was never too slow or too fast. They really work with you. I've referred to it all of my friends, if they ever weren't sure what they needed to do. I was like, "Go to YouthSource." **I'd recommend this to anyone who doesn't know what they want to do yet**, or they know that school's not working for them; and they might need to make money while they go to school or something.*
>
> *Being able to have the freedom of taking my lunch whenever I wanted to also **made me feel older and more in control of things**. Just little things, you know?*
>
> *The people involved in the program, the internship, **valued me as an intern and that they considered my time to have a positive or an influential impact**. That made me want to in turn reciprocate my best effort.*
>
> *Being at school teachers would just categorize me as "She talks too much." There would be my history. "She got suspended multiple times." I got treated like a kid there. Then **coming to you I got treated like a young adult** and talked to me about college. At YouthSource, getting spoken to about college made me mature about it. I still have a lot maturing to do, but it just made me think about it more and self-talk to myself: I really have to get on this. I really have to stop being childish.*

When asked to rate their placement on a scale of 1 to 5, where 1 was a poor match for them and 5 was an excellent match, youth most often rated their placement a 5 (*n*=6). The average rating across all 10 interviews was a 4.65. No youth rated their placement as anything less than a 4. In talking about

the skills and experience they gained through their internship, youth described their placement as a unique opportunity that closely matched their long-term goals. As the quotes below demonstrate, youth felt their paid internship allowed them to learn, grow, and have a glimpse at their educational and employment potential.

> ***The experiences I got from this workplace aren't like any that you could get anywhere else**. I'll talk to my friends about their job, and we compare what we've learned or what we get from where we work. They've been able to teach me more than what other places have to offer. They provided me with a nice work experience. They taught me a lot. They gave me opportunities to do things like train new people.*

> *I just feel [now] like I could do more, just going in to Maaco and seeing how I could just jump in… the owner was talking about I'm like a Michael Jordan of the being detailed and stuff like that. **I just feel like I'm more than what I was, I could do more than what I thought I could.** I'm more capable.*

> *[Getting an internship] was really easy here, and supportive here. I feel like it would have been different somewhere else. I feel like **it would have took a lot longer, and it probably wouldn't have been as perfect as a match** as it was. The people here really get to know you, and I feel like somewhere else they'd be like ... I don't know, maybe not as deep as here.*

> *Yeah, well the WEX program, and being an intern for the Port of Seattle, that was almost like the external realization that allowed me to feel as if wow, people are willing to help me engage. … It feels like somebody believes in me, so in turn that I reciprocate that, **I appreciate that belief in me, and I in turn would like to express my gratitude by putting in my best effort in** really taking the opportunity. Throughout the whole internship at the port, I just felt so just amazed by just how great an opportunity it was, and so I really met everybody I could and talked to as many people as I could.*

Question 6. **What are the reasons why Linked youth do not persist through a re-engagement program?**

Though interviewees (*N*=11) often described using both educational and employment support in the course of re-engagement, nine out of 11 interviewees stated their initial purpose for joining the program was interest in educational support, including earning a diploma/GED or developing English as a learned language. Two interviewees joined primarily to receive support in finding employment. One interviewee joined to receive both services. For example:

> *I was coming back from a bootcamp, and the transferring of the credits weren't going as we planned it to be. So, we had to make up credits when I got back. … **the credits didn't transfer right from Iowa to here. I had to make up classes, and that was just a struggle** to get through school, especially since I was having problems with my mom. So ended up not finishing, and I was planning to graduate that year but didn't happen.*

> *When I got involved with the Youth Source, Work Source, I was actually not going to school. I was working at Taco Bell, I was working full-time and I wasn't going to school because I needed to help out my mom with rent, utilities and home bills, payments and stuff.* ***I didn't decide I wanted to drop out of school, but I kinda just prioritized work*** *and then school kind of just got left in the mix.*

> *I was working at Jimmy John's part-time. I really hated working in a restaurant environment, so I quit and then finished school. Then I didn't want to do [college-level] school,* ***so my mom was like, "You have to have a job or something," so she sent me here.***

Linked youth described a number of reasons why they were struggling and sought help from a re-engagement program. The most common struggle that interviewees faced was transience, followed by family strife:

- Transcience: moving (*n*=5) and homelessness;
- Family strife: family conflict and tragedy (*n*=4), including death and deportation;
- Educational support needs (*n*=3) to accommodate language barriers and pace of schoolwork;
- Behavioral issues (*n*=3), such as fighting and expulsion/suspension;
- Childcare needs (*n*=2) and parenting;
- Financial hardship (*n*=2) and employment taking priority over school;
- Credit transfer challenges (*n*=1); and
- Transportation challenges (*n*=1).

> *We used to move almost every year basically, because we lived in apartments and our lease would give up, and we just want to find a better place. So,* ***I never really stayed at a stable place****, dealing with the foster care system and places to go.*

> *I was going to Dimmitt Middle School… that entire area, from 2nd to 7th grade. Then we moved to Tukwila.* ***New area, didn't know anybody, and instantly had problems with students****. I don't really talk to people, honestly. I stick to myself, keep my head down, and observe everything. And there was a girl who just constantly bothered me in 8th grade****. I got suspended one time, first time I ever got suspended, and it just messed everything up for me.*** *I stopped. I was like, "Okay, well, I don't even care anymore." Just got in trouble. I wasn't getting in trouble in school, but I wasn't doing my homework. My WASLs and OSPIs were high threes, low fours. All of my state testing was amazing. So, everybody was confused when my grades were horrible.*

> *I was living with my mom and my dad,* ***my dad got deported*** *[in] 2015 in November. … I had to like help my mom out with rent 'cause she couldn't do it on her own.*

To overcome these challenges, interviewees highlighted a number of ways in which re-engagement services helped them overcome these obstacles. The majority of interviewees (*n*=9)

described the benefits of re-engagement in terms that center on the type and quality of support they received from their case worker: engagement, involvement, and consistent contact. Most interviewees (*n*=7) also appreciated the additional motivation that their case managers provided by applying constructive pressure to push them to do more and keep progressing. For example:

> *They followed up with me. [My case worker] was really good at sending me texts and being like, "Hey, how's it going, how's your life going?" And I would touch bases with him, let him know how everything was going for me. … He signed me up with different people that will send me emails, and they'll be like, "Hey, you know, you qualify for financial aid," or "I want you [to] take a look at this scholarship," or "I want you to take a look at this job opportunity." **They just kept the ball going with me, kept me involved and tried to reach out**.*

> *It seems like they're very supportive. **They do a good job with checking up on me**, and making sure that I'm not just slacking, and I actually have the motivation, I do pretty good with support. … Most people just say, "Show up." If you don't, you don't. … [My case worker] is like, "What are you doing, where you at? Let's go. You get here."*

> *I wouldn't have gone myself. **He was calling me every single day**: "You need to get in class. What are you doing?" **That was the best thing that could actually happen for me** 'cause I know myself, I would've just gotten comfortable. I probably still wouldn't have my GED. But [my case worker] was calling me every day. And my teacher over there was calling me every day. They were both on my case at all times: "You need to be here. I don't care if you just pop in and take the test and leave, you need to be here."*

In addition to the primary benefit of fostering motivation, interviewees identified a number of other benefits they experienced in the re-engagement program:

- Resources (*n*=6): books, financial support, child care, transportation, identification, financial aid paperwork;
- Mentoring (*n*=9): tutoring, resume support, educational support, interview practice; and
- Networking (*n*=7): connecting to other opportunities, programs, and services.

Ten of the 11 youth described obstacles that prevented them from being successful in school or employment before becoming Linked and the importance of the case workers' support to helping them remove those obstacles. At the time of interview, six youth still felt that obstacles hindered their successful education and employment, and most had found a resolution to their obstacle through the help of their case worker and the services they received. For example, family turmoil and childcare needs both were mentioned by two interviewees as obstacles to education and employment before and during the re-engagement program. For childcare, program staff assisted with short stints of

childcare, allowing their client to attend a job interview or attend a class. One interviewee cited transportation as a challenge to staying engaged, but their case worker provided bus passes so they could continue working together. Two interviewees mentioned personal health concerns, including one injurious car accident. In this case, the case worker initiated a job search for a more accommodating, less physically-demanding position. Finally, two youth said the ability to remain motivated, despite setbacks, such as failed GED exams, was the biggest obstacle to their success. The additional encouragement and consistent contact from their case worker had proven effective in overcoming this challenge. This person commented,

> *I fell off the wagon because it was just so hard with me not getting my GED. I get very frustrated. When stuff gets too hard … I was just in the real world, dealing with other problems. But I also had a good person. I had [my case worker] by my side, always trying to [say] 'Don't give up. There's hope. We can do this.' So it was very helpful.*

Question 7. **Which outreach strategies (e.g., youth word of mouth, social media, library, office hours, job fairs) are most successful at reconnecting youth to a re-engagement program?**

Interviewees most frequently heard about the program through word-of-mouth from family (*n*=6), friends (including friends of the family) (*n*=5). Other ways interviewees learned about the program included from a community center, flier in the mail, juvenile court, and a school counselor.

When asked what avenues they would recommend for connecting with youth, interviewees indicated it was important to meet youth where they are. Interviewees most often mentioned media channels, especially social media (*n*=6). Word-of-mouth was the second most common recommendation, mentioned by five interviewees. Other recommendations included promotion in schools, through counselors or activity fairs, and fliers "on the street," in community centers, and corner stores and grocery stores.

Interviewees advised against promotion on radio, in newspapers, on Craigslist, or on television. They advised against these methods of contact because they did not expect the message would be seen by youth in need of services. However, given the number of youth who learned about the program

through family and/or friends, the message could still reach youth in need of services if it is seen by older relations who still access these sources of information. Representative quotes about outreach strategies from youth interviewed follow:

> *Nobody really listens to the radio anymore. They're always downloading music on their phone. … ads in newspaper or* ***anything that's a older route, is not really the way to go anymore****. Because stuff is picking up so much socially and internet-wise, that you have to keep up too.*

> *I feel like it's more of a word of mouth, because you see commercials like ITT Tech and you think they're kind of cheesy and they can't really help you, so I feel like if WorkSource did that, people would think it was cheesy too. … People don't like to pay attention to the stuff on the TV. … What helped me was that [my neighbor] was like, "Yeah, I work with this," so it made it more personal and it confirmed it, it made me more comfortable with it too, 'cause she knew what was going on at home. And I tried to connect a couple of people with [my neighbor] too, because they needed a job or they weren't going to school. So I was like, "Oh you know, contact this person on Facebook, tell her I sent you." And then they would just message her on Facebook. I know Facebook is a social media site but you can use it for so many things, you can be professional on it too.*

More than half of interviewees (n=6) specifically attributed their achievements to the re-engagement services they received. They credited their case worker with providing the extra support they needed to accomplish their goals and set new ones.

The following are quotes from youth interviewed about their goals and how re-engagement services helped them move toward those goals.

> *… since I found out about it, I've tried to be everybody else's motivation because I want them to want better for their self, just like [my case worker] wanted for me. It made me feel much better about myself. I'm doing things now I wasn't doing before, and* ***I feel like I'm finally someone my daughter can look up to****.*

> *My goal was always to get my high school diploma, and that's what I'm really going for … If there wasn't this program, I probably wouldn't even get it, I probably would just try to find ways to get into stuff without having a high school diploma, or a GED, if that's even gonna happen, but you probably ain't gonna get a good job.*

> *I'd say that if it wasn't for YouthSource reaching out to me,* ***I don't know if I would have graduated high school****. … they honestly did help me turn in that direction of, "Oh I know a school that can work with you and your schedule." And that was a success for me. Being here right now, I feel pretty successful, like I have someone that has my back.*

> *[My case worker has] mostly been helping me with my resume and cover letters, and learning how to conduct an interview. I haven't actually gotten a job from this program yet, but more places are actually taking the time to contact me.* ***Before they weren't even considering me, but now it's a little different.***

Every interviewee was able to speak to their goals for the future, whether educational or employment-related. Six individuals mentioned post-secondary goals, for areas of study such as social work (*n*=3), autobody repair, veterinary technician, and pastry chef. Other career goals included medical assistant, commercial pilot, and real estate agent.

Discussion and Conclusion: Secondary Evaluation Findings

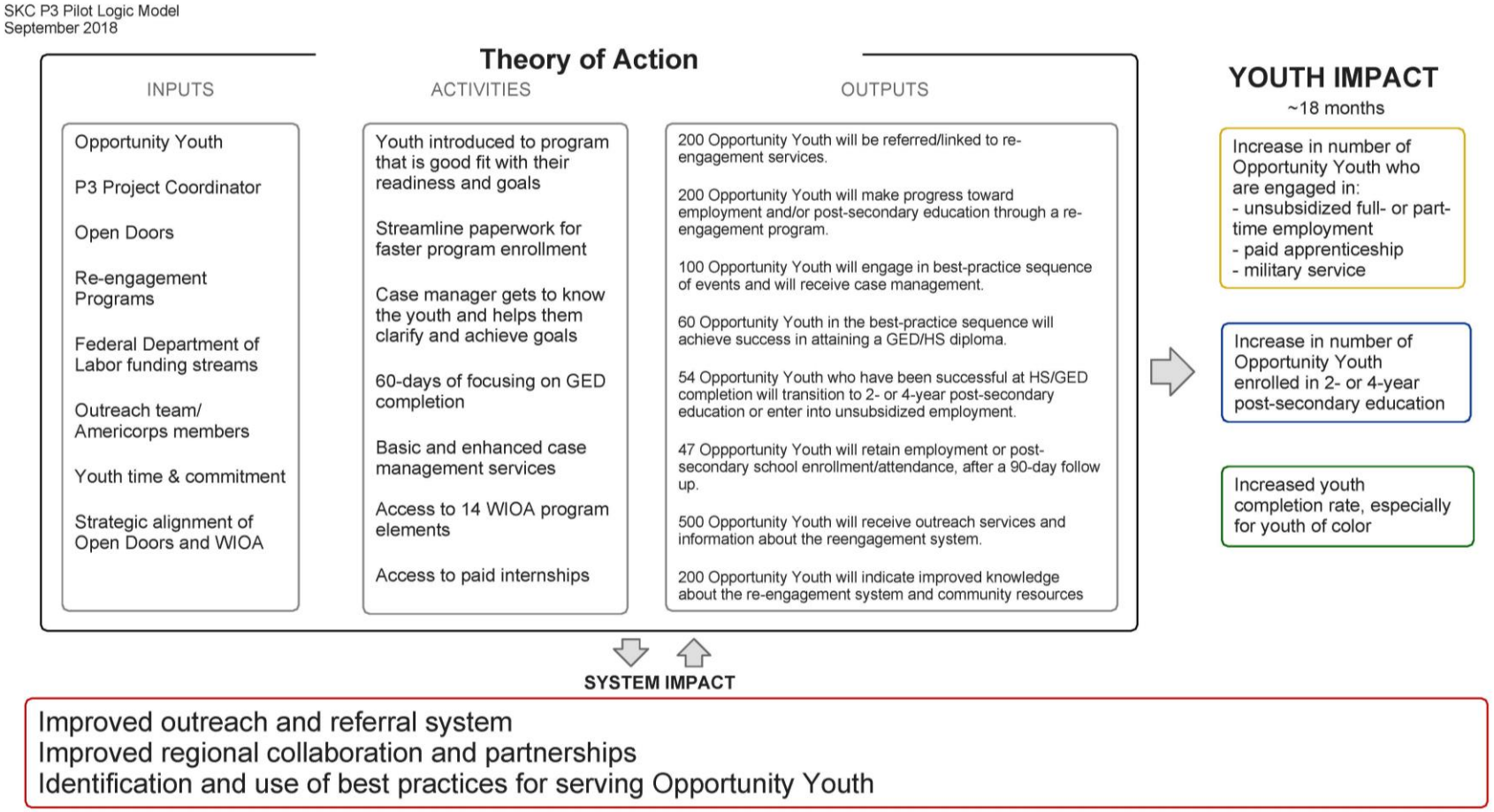
Pilot youth interviewed (*N*=10) who enrolled in paid internships most frequently mentioned resumé writing support as a valued benefit of the program. The support and guidance in the job application process including interview practice and training programs that resulted in certificates to bolster their resumé was also valued for improving their confidence and helping them feel better prepared for landing a job. The top three youth skill gains were communication, punctuality, and dependability. These soft skills are some of the most often mentioned by employers as needing improvement in the younger work force. This finding suggests that youth with paid internships were developing skills that will likely make them more competitive in the work place. Youth also mentioned that the paid internship gave them an opportunity to develop their adult decision-making skills. The youth appreciated the scaffolding and support provided by case managers, while also treating them as responsible adults. Nearly half of the youth indicated their work experience provided an opportunity to learn about fields and jobs that could be a good fit for them and informed their choices regarding education and career paths. Based on the input from youth and the fact that a third of Pilot youth participated in paid internships, it appears that this program element is an important part of the re-engagement program. It will be interesting to follow the youth who completed paid internships for the next 18-months to assess where they are in terms of achieving their education and employment goals.

Youth interviewed about their experiences with Re-Opp (*N*=12) indicated transcience and/or family strife (e.g., health issues, conflict, death, deportation) were the most common barriers to

education and employment re-engagement. This finding suggests that efforts to stabilize housing and provide support to families in crises could be upstream opportunities to reduce the number of disconnected youth in need of re-engagement services.

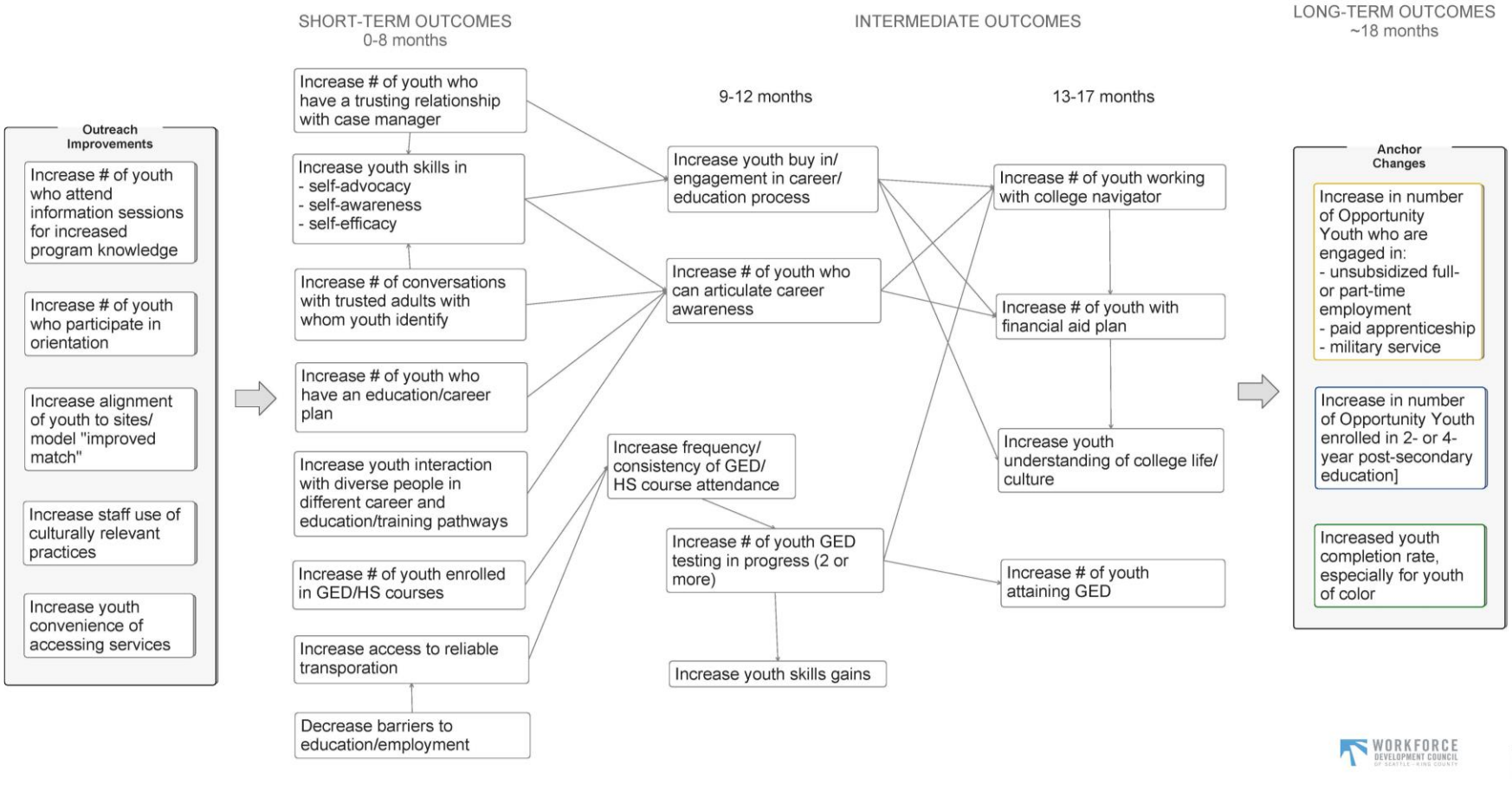
The primary way interviewed youth heard about the Pilot program was word-of-mouth from family, friends, or friends of the family. Other ways youth learned about the program included from a community center, flier in the mail, juvenile court, and a school counselor. They indicated it was important to meet youth where they are when conducting outreach. Media, especially social media, was seen as the most important opportunity for successfully engaging Opportunity Youth. Word-of-mouth was the second most common recommendation. Other recommendations included promotion in schools, through counselors or activity fairs, and fliers "on the street," in community centers, and corner stores. These findings suggest that the peer connector model used to re-engage youth is aligned with youth thinking. The peer connectors are meeting youth where they are in the community. It also appears, despite the ubiquitous nature of social media, that face-to-face connections with friends and family of youth in need of re-engagement continues to be one of the most powerful ways to re-engage youth. Future research could look at how these youth achieve their education and employment goals over the next two years to determine how, if at all, post-secondary education contributed to employment success.

Appendix B. Program logic model and education and employment goals



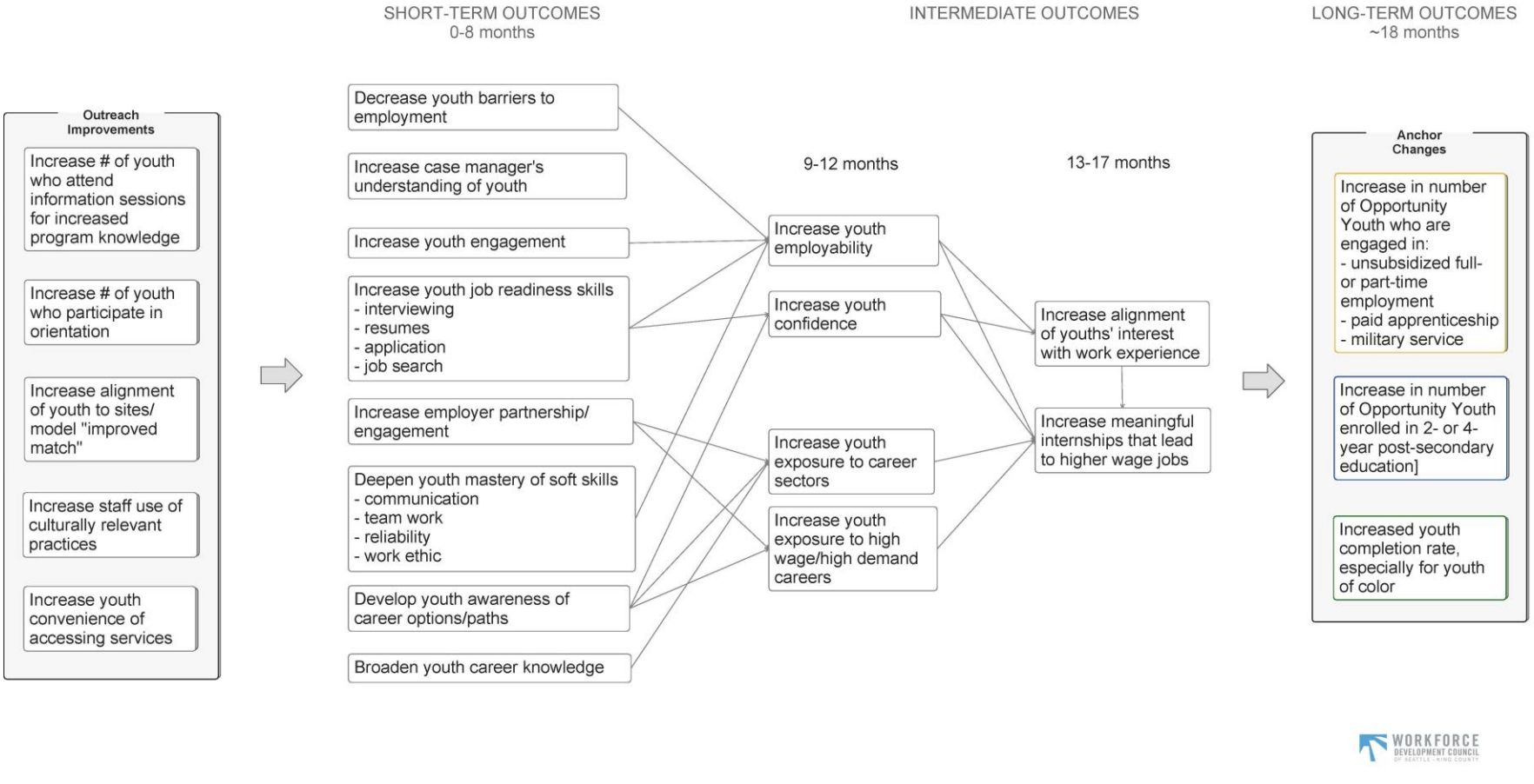
SKC P3 Pilot Theory of Change
September 2018

EDUCATION



SKC P3 Pilot Theory of Change
September 2018

EMPLOYMENT

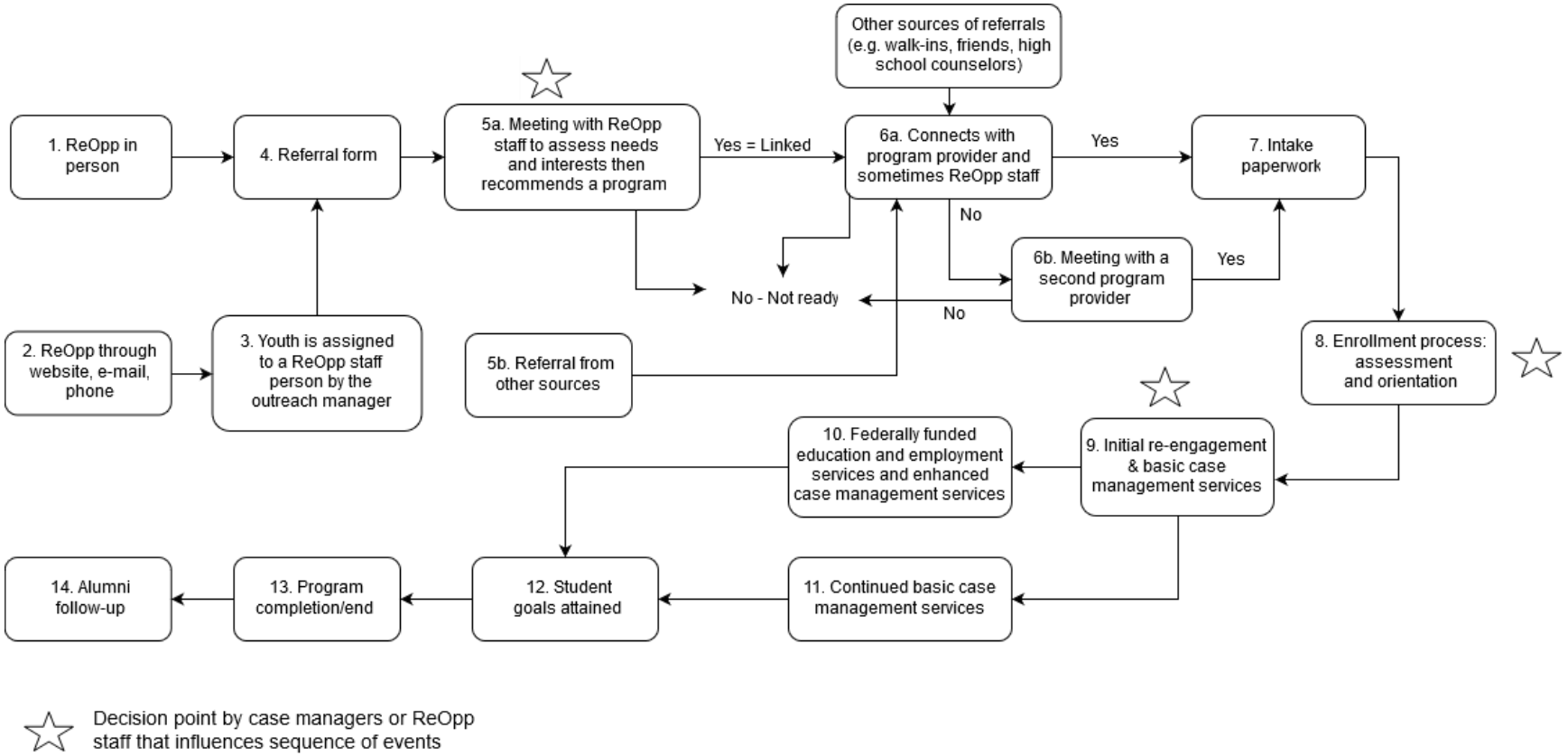


Seattle-King County Partnership to Reconnect P3 Pilot

Education & Employment Goals

Short-term (0-8 months)	Intermediate (9-12 months)	Intermediate (13-17 months)	Long-term (18+ months)
Education -1 HS Credit completed **Employment** -Enrolled in job readiness training	**Education** -Skills gains (CASAS) -GED testing in progress (2 or more) **Employment** -Job readiness training completed - Passed CEO/Career link orientation class	**Education** -GED or HS diploma completion -Assessment or COMPASS score needed to enter 100 level college courses **Employment** -Work-based internship (WEX) completed	**Education** -Maintain college GPA of 2.0 or better for 1 or 2 quarters -Earn two-year college transfer degree **Employment** -Unsubsidized full or part-time employment -Paid apprenticeship -Military service

Appendix C. SKC P3 Pilot enrollment process map and narrative



The following narrative describes the P3 Pilot program enrollment process and references the process map by assigning a number to each step that correlates with the same number in the process diagram.

Youth get in touch for the first time with Reconnect to Opportunity (ReOpp) by reaching out through their website, phone, or e-mail [2]. Sometimes, youth also get in touch in person for the first time during events or information sessions [1]. If youth contact ReOpp via ReOpp's website, e-mail, or phone, the Outreach Manager (Mario Bailey) assigns them to a member of the ReOpp Outreach Team (peer connectors) [3].

Once a young person has been assigned a contact person, they fill out the referral form, which contains information about their education/employment status and their education/employment aspirations. This form also captures how youth heard about ReOpp and how they got connected [4]. A ReOpp staff person meets one-on-one with a youth to complete the referral form to determine whether the youth is ready to enroll in a re-engagement program. If the youth is ready, the ReOpp staff person makes a program recommendation based on their assessment of the program they determine to best fit that individual's needs and circumstances [5a].

If a youth shows interest in the recommended program, a ReOpp staff person will schedule a meeting with the program provider [6a]. If the young person, after meeting with the provider, decides that the program is not a good fit, the ReOpp staff person may recommend an alternative program [6b]. If a youth decides not to enroll in a recommended program, his or her status will be changed to "Not Ready."

In addition to ReOpp, youth can get referred to re-engagement programs through other channels [5b]. In this case, the young person appears at a program location because they heard about it somehow. Program outreach strategies/efforts vary but can include: word of mouth, looking at a website, referral from school, Google, among others.

Once a young person decides they want to participate in a program, they and the outreach worker work together to complete the required paperwork. The paperwork varies between programs, but all youth fill out the intake form [7]. After the intake paperwork is completed, the youth starts the enrollment process. This process varies depending on the program. Enrollment always includes an assessment of the person's education/employment barriers and circumstances. Some youth may participate in an orientation before starting the program [8]. Other youth may receive orientation during the first days of program participation.

Youth are then assigned to an initial re-engagement and basic case management program funded by Washington State's Open Doors system [9]. Later, a case manager determines whether WIOA services are an appropriate fit for each individual enrolled in Open Doors [10] [11]. It is important to note that the decision of enrolling youth in WIOA is made by the case manager who assesses each youth's readiness to commit to a more demanding program like WIOA. Some factors that the case manager considers when making this decision are the individual's program attendance to date, the level of interest, motivation, and commitment to achieving long-term education and employment outcomes, their plans for the future, and capacity to complete the WIOA program. These factors are not formally captured because they vary for each case and are the result of a cultivated relationship between the youth and the case manager.

Whether youth are enrolled in Open Doors only or WIOA and Open Doors, King County collects information about attainments as they happen [12].

The youth's completion date [13] is determined when the participant has not received services in the youth program for 90 days, and no additional services are scheduled. At that point, the date of exit is applied retroactively to the last date of service.

Alumni follow-up services [14] are provided for at least 12 months after exiting the program to ensure continuity of services and progress towards the program outcomes. Follow-up services are

provided by the same case manager that provides active services and are based on the needs of the individual. As an example, if a youth exits the program in post-secondary education, the goal in follow-up is to ensure they stay-in-school and make progress towards their degree or certificate. Support services may be offered to ensure continued success in education/employment. Case managers check in monthly with youth.

Appendix D. Sensitivity analyses accounting for baseline differences in barriers to attainment

The benchmark statistical model was applied to stratified and weighted analytic samples in order to help control for baseline differences between the Pilot youth and the comparison groups. However, because this approach only partially accounted for pre-existing differences between groups, additional sensitivity analyses were conducted to determine whether findings from the benchmark analyses would remain stable after additional baseline factors were included in the statistical model. The table below shows changes in the estimated treatment effect when data on four pre-existing barriers to educational or employment attainment were each, in turn, added as factors in the ANCOVA models. The findings for the benchmark and sensitivity analyses are integrated in section IV.A of the report (study findings for the primary evaluation questions).

	Benchmark statistical model		Model including Drugs/Alcohol		Model including Disability		Model including Non-parental care		Model including Dysfunctional family	
	Effect Size	*p*-value	Effect Size	*p*-value	Effect Size	*p*-value	Effect Size	*p*-value	Effect Size	*p*-value
Pilot versus Contemporaneous										
Education Success	0.092	<0.001	0.001	0.661	0.017	0.091	0.033	0.019	0.091	<0.001
Employment Success	0.062	0.001	0.002	0.533	0.020	0.068	0.029	0.031	0.074	<0.001
Pilot versus Historical										
Education Success	0.080	<0.001	0.007	0.096	0.022	0.003	0.036	<0.001	0.057	<0.001
Employment Success	0.001	0.497	0.002	0.354	<0.001	0.907	0.009	0.054	0.003	0.267

Note. Effect sizes and *p*-values are for the treatment effect of being in the Pilot group vs. the comparison group. Effect size reported as partial eta squared values from ANCOVA analyses.

Appendix E. Paid internship program (WEX) interview protocol

Interview purpose

This interview is designed to help answer the following evaluation question:

Are young people who have paid internships (WEX) while in re-engagement programs more likely to persist and succeed in terms of education and/or employment outcomes than matched young people served historically who did and did not have paid internships?

Introduction script

Hi. My name is <interviewer name> and I am part of the data2insight evaluation team working to evaluate some education and employment programs. Please call me <first name>. I prefer <he/him; she/her; them/they> pronouns. What about you?

Review the consent/assent form and ask for the student to sign the consent.

If the student is under 18, consent will need to occur in advance of the interview.

Thank you for taking the time to talk with me today. Before we get started, I just want to take a few moments to review the purpose of the interview and how we will proceed today. I also will give you a chance to ask any questions you may have before we get started. Does that sound good? [If ok, proceed.]

I am interviewing young people who have participated in an internship to better understand how the internship program impacts the ways young people engage with education and jobs after completing an internship.

During this interview, I would like to ask you questions about your internship. As a reminder, your name will not be directly associated with what you share today as part of the evaluation data analysis and reporting.

I would like to record our interview in order to make sure that I do not miss any of your comments and to improve data analysis.

Do you have any questions for me before we get started?

Please feel free to speak freely. There are no right or wrong answers. We want you to tell your story and share your thoughts and opinions. Knowing more about your internship experience will help improve internships in the future. The staff that offer these internships want to learn! It is OK to indicate that some things did not work as expected, or did not happen. The goal is to learn about what works and what can be improved.

I am going to turn the recorder on now. Just so you know, when I turn on the recorder, I will ask you to give me your initials and I will ask again if I have permission to record, just so we have it on the record. [Turn on recorder.]

What are you initials?

Thank you. Do I have your permission to record this session? Ok, let's get started.

Interview questions

Pre-WEX

The education and employment program that you are a part of aims to prepare young people for education and career success. I would like to ask you a few questions about your experiences and thinking BEFORE your started your internship. Please reflect back to when you had not yet started the internship.

1. What were your career interests and goals before you started your internship?
2. What education interests and goals did you have before you started your internship?
3. In your opinion, what would you describe as your greatest education achievement prior to your internship? Work/career achievement prior to your internship?
4. Have you had other types of training prior to your internship?
    a. If yes, would you describe them? How was it similar or different from the internship training?
    b. If no, why do you think you have you not been involved in training programs before the internship?
5. Is this your first internship?
    a. If not, please describe your past experiences?
    b. What was most valuable about those experiences?
    c. What was most challenging about those experiences?
    d. Did you complete those internships? Why or why not? [prompt: supervisor, task, pay, etc.]
6. Looking back, what did you hope to get out of the internship before it started?

WEX experience

I would now like to ask you to reflect on your internship experience. I have a few questions about what the internship was like for you.

1. Which site were you engaged at?

a. YouthSource
b. Learning Center North
c. Learning Center Seattle

2. What company hosted you as an intern? What did you do in the internship? What was the best part? What was the part you liked least?
3. Describe your level of engagement in the internship and how that changed, if at all, over time during the internship? Were you most engaged at the beginning, middle, or end? Why?
4. Thinking over your internship experience so far, please describe a situation in which you felt totally engaged and into what you were doing.
5. Shifting gears, would you describe a situation in which you felt most unsure or uncomfortable?
6. What do/did you value most about the internship?

Post-WEX

7. To what extent did this internship match your education and career interests and goals?
   a. Great match
   b. Above average match
   c. Average match
   d. Below average match
   e. Hardly a match
8. What did you learn as a result of the internship?
9. What were the highlights of your internship experience? Why?
10. What were the greatest challenges of your internship? Why?
11. What would have made the internship better for you?
12. How did your internship influence, if at all, influence your plans/goals/interests for education and careers? Did your plans/goals/interests change? Why?
13. How has your confidence in your ability to be successful in post-high school education and careers changed, if at all, since completing the internship?
14. What skills, if any, have you developed as a result of the internship that will help you be more successful at achieving your post-high school education and career goals?
15. Did your internship result in a job offer or other type of career opportunity? Why or why not?
16. If you did not complete the internship, why not?

17. What are you planning to do next?
18. ***If time allows***: What are or will you tell your friends about the internship?

Closure script

Thank you for your time and sharing your experiences and thoughts with me. This information is very valuable. The program staff will use this information, along with answers to these questions from other young people, to reflect on how they can build on the strengths of the internship program and make improvements. I wish you all the best as you continue on your journey and in achieving the goals you have set for yourself.

In appreciation for your time and input, we would like to offer you a gift card of your choice.

Offer selection of gift cards.

Thank you again. Do I have any questions or comments you would like to share before we close?

Appendix F. Outreach interview protocol

Interview purpose

This interview is designed to help answer the following evaluation questions:

1. **What are the reasons why some Linked youth do not persist through a re-engagement program? At referral? At 1 month? At 2 months? At 3 months?**
2. **Which outreach strategies (e.g., youth work of mouth, social media, library, and office hours) are most effective in reconnecting youth to a re-engagement program? And longer term educational employment outcomes?**

Introduction script

Hi. My name is <interviewer name> and I am part of the data2insight evaluation team working to evaluate some education and employment programs. Please call me <first name>. I prefer <he/him; she/her; them/they> pronouns. What about you?

Thank you for taking the time to talk with me today. Before we get started, I just want to take a few moments to review the purpose of the interview and how we will proceed today. I also will give you a chance to ask any questions you may have before we get started. Does that sound good? [If ok, proceed.]

I am interviewing youth who have connected with the Reconnect to Opportunity or ReOpp program. The goal is to better understand how well ReOpp staff are engaging with youth and to identify opportunities for the program to better connect youth with education and employment opportunities.

During this interview, I would like to ask you questions about your experience with ReOpp. As a reminder, your name will not be associated with what you share today as part of the evaluation data analysis and reporting.

I would like to record our interview in order to make sure that I do not miss any of your comments and to improve data analysis.

Do you have any questions for me before we get started?

Please feel free to speak freely. There are no right or wrong answers. We want you to tell your story and share your thoughts and opinions. Knowing more about your experience will help ReOpp staff to do better in the future. They want to learn! It is OK to indicate that some things did not work as expected, or did not happen. The goal is to learn about what works and what can be improved.

I am going to turn the recorder on now. Just so you know, when I turn on the recorder, I will ask you to give me your initials and I will ask again if I have permission to record, just so we have it on the record. [Turn on recorder.]

What are you initials?

Thank you. Do I have your permission to record this session?

Ok, let's get started.

Interview questions

1. Would you tell me about what you were doing in terms of school or work before connecting with the ReOpp folks?
2. Thinking back, how did you connect with a ReOpp person? What that experience like?

   Identify which category is the best fit:
   - *Friends/Family*
   - *School/District*
   - *Juvenile Justice/Courts*
   - *Web/Social Media*
   - *Church/Faith*
   - *Community Organization*
   - *Other (please describe)*
3. What school or work opportunities did the ReOpp folks connect you with?
4. What opportunities are you taking advantage of now, if any? (If none, skip to Q6.)
5. What has been the best parts about the school and work opportunities you are a part of now? What has been the most challenging/difficult? (Skip to Q7 if they are still engaged.)

   Prompt for specific barrier they have had to overcome to engage in school or work opportunities.
6. Please describe why you did not follow up with or discontinue the school or work opportunity you were connected with? Would you like to reconnect with the folks at ReOpp to explore other opportunities? If so, what would you be interested in? If not, why not?

   Prompt to see if they were linked to other programs if fit was not right. Re-ask about persistence for each program.

   If they did not persist, ask when they stopped attending (i.e., after 1 week, after 1 month, etc.).

   Also ask if there was any particular event or reason for ceasing.

Prompt for the best way to contact if they are interested in reconnecting.

7. How are/were the opportunities that you were connected helpful in your life or helpful in achieving your goals?

   Prompt to explain why they see the programs as helpful or unhelpful.

8. What site are/were you engaged with?
   a. Youth Source
   b. Learning Center North
   c. Learning Center Seattle
9. How often do you get a chance to check in with your case manager? Do you meet in person, or talk on the phone? How do you get to the site? Is it easy to get there or a challenge?

   Prompt for living and transportation situation.

10. What was good and what not so good about how ReOpp connected you to school and work opportunities? Are there ways that the process could have been improved/better?
11. So, it sounds like you connected with ReOpp folks <this way—point to the correct item on the list from King County>. Is that right?

    Identify which category is the best fit:
    - *Friends/Family*
    - *School/District*
    - *Juvenile Justice/Courts*
    - *Web/Social Media*
    - *Church/Faith*
    - *Community Organization*
    - *Other (please describe)*

12. This is a list of the ways that people from ReOpp connect with youth. In your opinion, what are the best ways for ReOpp to connect with youth who could use help continuing their education and improving their employment situation?
    - *Friends/Family*
    - *School/District*
    - *Juvenile Justice/Courts*
    - *Web/Social Media*
    - *Church/Faith*
    - *Community Organization*
    - *Other*

13. In your opinion, what are the least effective ways to connect with youth? Are there other ways that you can think of that would help more youth get help with school and work success?

14. What, if anything, has surprised you, as a result of connecting with ReOpp folks and the opportunities that they have connected you with?

Is there anything else you would like to share with the ReOpp folks that could help them better connect with youth going forward and be more successful at matching youth with school and work opportunities that are a good fit for them?