



Evaluation of Cookie Cart

Parent Perspectives and Follow-up Employment Outcomes for Youth Participating in a First-time Job Experience

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Introduction

Overview of the Cookie Cart program

Cookie Cart is a nonprofit employment program that offers young people age 15 through 18 an opportunity to build life, interpersonal, leadership, and transferable job skills through training and employment at commercial bakeries with retail stores. The program provides a first paid job experience for participants and helps them develop the skills necessary to transition to traditional employment.

Cookie Cart has served youth living in or near North Minneapolis since 1988. Since 2018, Cookie Cart has been operating a brand new commercial bakery with a retail store in Saint Paul's East Side to broaden service to youth. These are areas that have high rates of unemployment, where youth frequently have to compete with adults for jobs. In addition, student achievement and graduation rates in schools in these areas are substantially lower than in other metro area schools.

The goal of programming is that participating youth gain or strengthen resources, skills, or knowledge in five core outcome areas. The core outcome areas are:

- Employment readiness
- Interpersonal communication
- Goal orientation
- Critical thinking
- Connectedness to new communities

At the foundation of Cookie Cart's programming is a logic model based on youth development research by Search Institute, The Forum for Youth Investment, David P. Weikart Center for Youth Program Quality, U.S. Department of Labor's Pathways to Careers, and Ignite Afterschool. Cookie Cart's logic model can be found in the Appendix.

Cookie Cart's model

Based on the five core outcome areas, Cookie Cart has developed five programs. Each of these programs are offered after school and during the summer. All youth begin by working in the bakery and participate in programs as they are offered. The programs are broken into three components: experiential learning, classroom learning, and credentialed learning.

Experiential learning

- **Bakery Program** teaches youth to prepare, package, and sell cookies.
- **Customer Service Training** teaches youth interpersonal communications, professionalism, and sales.

Classroom learning

- **Career Readiness Program** teaches youth how to prepare resumes, practice job interviewing, explore career opportunities, and learn job search skills.
- **Financial Literacy workshops** cover the essential building blocks of personal finance: budgeting and saving, checking accounts, and personal credit.

Credentialed learning

- **National Career Readiness Certificates and ServSafe** are both nationally recognized credentials to verify to prospective employers that teens have the skills to be successful employees.

Cookie Cart's Board of Directors chartered a Youth Program Committee to monitor program quality, effectiveness, and completion. Comprised of board members, senior staff, and community members, the group works to identify community trends that influence the needs of youth, gaps in community services, and program resources. They recommend program strategy and direction, and work annually with Wilder Research to examine program quality and impact.

Study methods

Since 2007, Cookie Cart has been working with Wilder Research to evaluate the effectiveness of its programming. In 2016, Cookie Cart partnered with the Sundance Family Foundation in a larger research study with 14 other Youth Social Entrepreneurship (YSE) programs in the Twin Cities. In fall 2016, Cookie Cart began implementing two common evaluation instruments used by the programs participating in the study – a Work Readiness assessment completed by staff and a Youth Retrospective Survey. Wilder Research reported these results separately as part of the YSE evaluation in February 2018.

This report focusses on two additional data sources: parent feedback and employment data from the Minnesota Department of Employment and Economic Development (DEED).

Retrospective parent survey

Similar to the retrospective youth survey, parents of Cookie Cart youth were asked to complete a retrospective pre-post survey in summer 2018. Parent surveys focused on four of the five core outcomes: *interpersonal communication, critical thinking, goal orientation, and connectedness to new communities*. Parents rated each item twice: once about how they felt before their teen entered the program, and once about their current perceptions. The survey also allowed parents to express in their own words what effect the Cookie Cart employment experience has had on their teen.

The parent survey was completed by telephone interview by a Cookie Cart volunteer between July and August 2018. Previous experience shows that this method is a more effective approach toward higher participation rates. Of the 73 eligible parents, 33 completed interviews for a response rate of 45 percent. Each parent participant received a gift card thanking them for their time.

This year's parent survey response rate increased by 27 percentage points over the last administration (2016 rate was 18%). Staff reported that parents seem to be more informed about the Cookie Cart program than in previous years. The incentive may also have contributed to the increased participation. According to staff, there currently is not much opportunity for parent involvement in the program apart from graduation celebrations. This may be due to the youth's responsibility for managing their work schedule and participation.

Survey data were sent to Wilder Research for review and analysis.

Figure 1 shows the number of parents who were eligible to participate in the survey and the number who completed surveys during the current evaluation.

1. Number of parents completing surveys, 2018

Survey participants	Number participated	Number of parents eligible
Parents	33	73

DEED employment data

Cookie Cart requested data from the Minnesota Department of Employment and Economic Development (DEED) to identify wage, earnings, and hours worked for Cookie Cart participants.

Using DEED data, this report includes an analysis of the preliminary employment outcomes for youth who had successfully “completed” Cookie Cart training, which—for the purpose of this study—was defined as regular participation lasting at least three months and program exit between 2012 and 2017.

The sections that follow summarize the results of surveys completed by parents between July and August 2018, and the results of the analysis of DEED employment data. This is the eleventh year of the Cookie Cart evaluation.

Results of interviews with parents

Parents who completed a survey included those whose teens had participated in the employment program in Minneapolis and Saint Paul continuously for at least 60 hours, and had not completed the survey during previous evaluations.

Parents of eligible teens were asked to evaluate their teen's growth in the employment program by answering the same skill development questions asked of their teens related to the core outcome areas:

- Interpersonal communication and critical thinking
- Goal orientation and financial skills
- Connectedness to new communities

Interpersonal communication and critical thinking

Parents were asked about their agreement or disagreement with statements related to each interpersonal communication and critical thinking skill. In all skill areas, more parents at post-test agreed that their teen had that skill. The largest area of growth in the percentage of parents showing agreement from retro-pre to post ratings was in feeling comfortable speaking in front of groups, and having skills and experience needed to be a mentor (an 18 percentage point increase from retro-pre to post; Figure 2).

2. Parent ratings of youth's interpersonal communication and critical thinking skills, retro-pre/post change

	Percentage agreeing or strongly agreeing	
	Retro-pre ratings N=23-30	Post ratings N=29-33
Interpersonal communication and critical thinking skills		
My teen thinks it is important to listen to and value the opinions of others.	91%	97%
My teen has the skills and experiences needed to be a mentor for other youth.	79%	97%
My teen can handle stressful situations.	85%	100%
My teen knows how to get along with other young people.	82%	100%
My teen feels comfortable speaking in front of a group of people.	70%	88%
My teen is able to do something different when things are not working.	82%	100%

Note. Parents rated items on a 4-point scale from strongly disagree to strongly agree.

Additionally, results were analyzed to determine if parents of youth with more Cookie Cart experience (measured by hours worked) had differing outcomes from retro-pre to post. This analysis included two parent groups: 1) those with youth who worked at Cookie Cart for 300 or fewer hours, and 2) those with youth who worked over 300 hours. Wilder Research staff chose the threshold of 300 hours to represent the median number of hours worked by youth represented in the analysis (about half of youth were above the 300 hour threshold).

Cookie Cart set a target goal for each outcome area. However, this target goal was based on a previous survey scale representing parent perceptions of their youth “improving” in various areas. To match with the Sundance evaluation, the new scale represented parents agreement with statements. Based on the new scale, more parents “agreed” or “strongly agreed” that their teen had skills related to interpersonal communication and critical thinking skills:

The target goal (65%) for parents agreeing with statements regarding their teen’s interpersonal communication and critical thinking skills was exceeded for each group:

- Parents of youth who worked 300 or fewer hours agreed or strongly agreed that their teen showed change from retro-pre to post (86% of parents retro-pre to 96% of parents post).
- Parents of youth who worked over 300 hours agreed or strongly agreed that their teen showed change from retro-pre to post (76% of parents retro-pre to 98% of parents post).

Of the groups that worked 300 or fewer hours, the largest area of growth in the percentage of parents showing agreement from retro-pre to post ratings is in three skill areas: the ability to do something different when things are not working, knowing how to get along with other young people, and the ability to handle stressful situations (a 12 and 18 percentage point increase from retro-pre to post). For parents whose teen worked over 300 hours, there was stronger agreement from retro-pre to post on all items. The area that had a smaller increase in the percentage who agreed was in thinking it is important to listen to and value the opinions of others (a 6 percentage point increase from retro-pre to post for both groups of parents; Figure 3).

3. Parent ratings of youth's interpersonal communication and critical thinking skills by number of hours worked at Cookie Cart, retro-pre/post

Interpersonal communication and critical thinking skills	Percentage agreeing or strongly agreeing					
	Retro-pre ratings ≤ 300 hours worked N=13-16	Post ratings ≤ 300 hours worked N=14-17	Difference in percentage points retro-pre to post	Retro-pre ratings > 300 hours worked N=10-15	Post ratings > 300 hours worked N=15-16	Difference in percentage points retro-pre to post
My teen thinks it is important to listen to and value the opinions of others.	94%	100%	+6	88%	94%	+6
My teen has the skills and experiences needed to be a mentor for other youth.	88%	94%	+6	69%	100%	+31
My teen can handle stressful situations.	82%	100%	+18	88%	100%	+12
My teen knows how to get along with other young people.	88%	100%	+12	75%	100%	+25
My teen feels comfortable speaking in front of a group of people.	76%	82%	+6	63%	94%	+31
My teen is able to do something different when things are not working.	88%	100%	+12	75%	100%	+25
Number of parents who rated all skills	N=17*	N=17*		N=16*	N=16*	
Target goal set by Cookie Cart	65%	65%		65%	65%	
Agreement that youth had skills in 2 or more areas, parent report.	86%	96%		76%	98%	

* Parents needed to have rated each item to be included in the analysis of each target goal.

Goal orientation and financial skills

Most parents were in agreement that their youth have goal orientation and financial skills. Identifying future goals and knowing how to set and work toward goals were skill areas that had the largest area of growth in the percentage of parents showing agreement from retro-pre to post (a 21 and 24 percentage point increase from retro-pre to post).

Considerable differences were found between retro-pre and post parent ratings of financial skills. Financial skills include teen's knowledge of how to use a bank, and their knowing how to manage money wisely (a 33 and 39 percentage point increase from retro-pre to post; Figure 4).

4. Parent ratings of youth's goal orientation and financial skills, retro-pre/post

Goal orientation and financial skills	Percentage agreeing or strongly agreeing	
	Retro-pre ratings N=18-30	Post ratings N=31-33
My teen feels supported in pursuing their personal goals.	91%	100%
My teen has identified future goals for his/herself.	79%	100%
My teen knows how to set goals and work towards them.	76%	100%
My teen knows how to use a bank, budget and save money.	55%	94%
My teen knows how to manage his/her money wisely.	61%	94%

The target goal of 75 percent for goal orientation and financial skills was exceeded for each parent group:

- Parents of youth who worked 300 or fewer hours agreed or strongly agreed that their teen showed change from retro-pre to post (79% of parents retro-pre to 98% of parents post).
- Parents of youth who worked over 300 hours agreed or strongly agreed that their teen showed change from retro-pre to post (65% of parents retro-pre to 98% of parents post).

Of the parents of youth who worked 300 or fewer hours, there were considerable differences between retro-pre and post ratings for two skills, knowing how to manage money wisely, and knowing how to bank, budget and save money (a 29 and 40 percentage point increase from retro-pre to post).

There were also considerable differences between retro-pre and post parent ratings of youth who worked over 300 hours for all but one of the skills. My teen has identified future goals, knows how to set and work towards goals, knows how to manage money wisely, and knows how to use a bank, budget and save money are the skills with the greatest area of growth in percentage of parents showing agreement from retro-pre to post ratings show a 31 to 50 percentage point increase. Figure 5.

5. Parent ratings of youth's goal orientation and financial skills by number of hours worked at Cookie Cart, retro-pre/post

Goal orientation and financial skills	Percentage agreeing or strongly agreeing					
	Retro-pre ratings ≤ 300 hours worked N=10-16	Post ratings ≤ 300 hours worked N=15-17	Difference in percentage points retro-pre to post	Retro-pre ratings > 300 hours worked N=7-15	Post ratings > 300 hours worked N=15-16	Difference in percentage points retro-pre to post
My teen feels supported in pursuing their personal goals	88%	100%	+12	94%	100%	+6
My teen has identified future goals for his/herself.	88%	100%	+12	67%	100%	+33
My teen knows how to set goals and work towards them.	94%	100%	+6	56%	100%	+44
My teen knows how to manage his/her money wisely.	59%	94%	+35	63%	94%	+31
My teen knows how to use a bank, budget and save money.	65%	94%	+29	44%	94%	+50
Number of parents who rated all skills	N=17*	N=17*		N=16*	N=16*	
Target goal set by Cookie Cart	75%	75%		75%	75%	
Agreement that youth had skills in 2 or more areas; parent report	79%	98%		65%	98%	

* Parents needed to have rated each item to be included in the analysis of each target goal.

Connectedness to new communities

Parent participants agreed or strongly agreed that their teen has the skills needed to connect to communities.

There were considerable differences between retro-pre and post parent ratings for all skills except, my teen has people to depend on for help, and my teen has someone to talk to when there is a problem (which started at a high level of agreement at retro-pre). Those skills with the greatest area of growth in the percentage of parents showing agreement from retro-pre to post ratings show an 18 to 30 percentage point increase. Figure 6.

6. Parent ratings of youth's connectedness to new communities and social emotional skills, retro-pre/post

Connectedness to new communities and social emotional skills	Percentage agreeing or strongly agreeing	
	Retro-pre ratings Parents N=22-32	Post ratings Parents N=32-33
My teen is confident.	67%	97%
My teen is willing to stand up for what is right.	82%	100%
There are people in my teen's life he/she can depend on when he/she needs help.	97%	100%
My teen feels like he/she is part of a community.	79%	100%
My teen believes young people can make a difference in the community.	79%	100%
When my teen has a problem there is an adult that he/she can talk to.	94%	100%
My teen knows what he/she can do to help make the community a better place.	79%	100%

The target goal of 65 percent for connectedness to new communities was exceeded for each parent group:

- Parents of youth who worked 300 or fewer hours agreed or strongly agreed that their teen showed change from retro-pre to post (88% of parents retro-pre to 99% of parents post).
- Parents of youth who worked over 300 hours agreed or strongly agreed that their teen showed change from retro-pre to post (76% of parents retro-pre to 100% of parents post).

Of the groups that worked 300 or fewer hours, the largest area of growth in the percentage of parents showing agreement from retro-pre to post is in the following areas: my teen is willing to stand up for what is right, feels like a part of the community, feels young people can make a difference in the community, and knows what to do to help make the community a better place (a 12 and 18 percentage point increase from retro-pre to post).

Greater changes are shown between retro-pre and post parent ratings of youth who worked over 300 hours for all but two skills. My teen is willing to stand up for what is right, believes young people can make a difference in the community, feels like part of a community, knows what to do to help make the community a better place, and is confident, show the greatest growth in percentage of parents showing agreement from retro-pre to post ratings (a 25 to 44 percentage point increase from retro-pre to post).

Similarly, large differences were seen between parent ratings of youth who worked 300 or fewer hours, and youth who worked over 300 hours retro-pre to post, for all but two of the five skills. My teen is willing to stand up for what is right, and is confident are the top two skills with the greatest area of growth in percentage of parents showing agreement from retro-pre to post ratings show a 12 and 24 percentage point increase. Figure 7.

7. Parent ratings of youth's connectedness to new communities and social emotional skills by number of hours worked at Cookie Cart, retro-pre/post

Connectedness to new communities and social emotional skills	Percentage agreeing or strongly agreeing					
	Retro-pre ratings ≤ 300 hours worked N=13-16	Post ratings ≤ 300 hours worked N=16-17	Difference in percentage points from retro-pre to post	Retro-pre ratings > 300 hours worked N=9-16	Post ratings > 300 hours worked N=16	Difference in percentage points from retro-pre to post
My teen is confident.	76%	94%	+18	56%	100%	+44
My teen is willing to stand up for what is right.	88%	100%	+12	75%	100%	+25
There are people in my teen's life he/she can depend on when he/she needs help.	94%	100%	+6	100%	100%	0
My teen feels like he/she is part of a community.	88%	100%	+12	69%	100%	+31
My teen believes young people can make a difference in the community.	88%	100%	+12	69%	100%	+31
When my teen has a problem there is an adult that he/she can talk to.	94%	100%	+6	94%	100%	+6

7. Parent ratings of youth's connectedness to new communities and social emotional skills by number of hours worked at Cookie Cart, retro-pre/post (continued)

Connectedness to new communities and social emotional skills	Percentage agreeing or strongly agreeing					
	Retro-pre ratings ≤ 300 hours worked N=13-16	Post ratings ≤ 300 hours worked N=16-17	Difference in percentage points from retro-pre to post	Retro-pre ratings > 300 hours worked N=9-16	Post ratings > 300 hours worked N=16	Difference in percentage points from retro-pre to post
My teen knows what he/she can do to help make the community a better place.	88%	100%	+12	69%	100%	+31
Number of parents who rated all skills	N=17*	N=17*		N=16*	N=16*	
Target goal set by Cookie Cart	65%	65%		65%	65%	
Agreement that youth had skills in 3 or more areas; parent report.	88%	99%		76%	100%	

* Parents needed to have rated each item to be included in the analysis of each target goal.

Parent's perceptions of Cookie Cart experience

Participating parents were asked, "How has Cookie Cart impacted your teen's life?" Twenty-six parents offered how their teens have been effected by the experience. Parents who said there was an effect were asked to describe those effects in their own words. See the Appendix for the full list of comments.

Below is a sample of parent comments grouped by theme:

Gained confidence/growth

She was shy and less confident in herself before Cookie Cart. Through her work experience and the leadership skills and opportunities she has been given at Cookie Cart, she is much more confident in her abilities.

He has more confidence in himself. He is able to express himself more clearly, and he is making his own money and that is making him independent.

She has been able to expand on her leadership and skills and she is more confident and more outspoken.

Learned responsibility

He became more mature and responsible.

Financially responsible, stronger person, overall, more responsible and has learned consequences.

She learned better time management.

Managing and budgeting money

Cookie Cart has taught her managing and budgeting skills.

She has made growth in many areas, and knows how to manage her money a little better.

She has a new sense of money and budgeting.

Leadership

Through her work experience, leadership skills and opportunities she has been given at Cookie Cart, she feels proud of what she's accomplished and has taken on a leadership role.

Cookie Cart has helped my teen to develop work experience, leadership skills and multiple workshops. That has given her lifelong quality people skills.

Other

She is striving toward her future goals with the tools she has learned working at Cookie Cart.

He's much more experienced now and knows about work ethic now.

She has stayed an honor roll student and maintained working.

My teen is always happy to go to work.

Recommendations for improvement

Parents also offered in their own words what they would change about their teen's Cookie Cart experience. As a complement to their positive views about the Cookie Cart program, those parents (13) who answered the question suggested enhancing their teen's current work or program experience, providing more work hours, engaging and talking to parents, and considering the age limit teens can work.

Parent comments are illustrated below:

My daughter is really interested in pushing a career in pastry and baking after high school, and I wish there was a way for her to get a more in-depth experience with baking at Cookie Cart.

My son still doesn't know how to use a bank account or how to save. Teach him faster.

Find a way to not cut your employed staff when you have to give jobs to summer programs. Fit them in your budget and give them the same hours as the summer programs.

More responsibility [for youth].

More hours [for youth].

Have parents more involved.

The age limit a teen can work.

Other parent comments were not recommendations but were approvals for what Cookie Cart is doing for teens through their program.

I love what Cookie Cart is doing for inner city youth. They are encouraging our youth to be independent, skillful, and wise about their future.

Cookie Cart is very helpful for teens.

Really, you are all doing a good job!

Recommending Cookie Cart to friends

When asked if they would recommend Cookie Cart to their friends, nearly all (97%) of the participating parents said they would.

DEED employment analysis

As in previous years, Cookie Cart staff worked with Wilder Research to examine employment success of youth participants after they graduate from Cookie Cart’s programming. This included an analysis of employment data collected by the Minnesota Department of Employment and Economic Development (DEED).

Cookie Cart requested data from the Minnesota Department of Employment and Economic Development (DEED) to identify wage, earnings, and hours worked for Cookie Cart “graduates,” which, for the purpose of this summary, are considered to be those who participated in Cookie Cart programming for at least three months and who exited the program between 2012 and 2017.

This report notes differences between demographic groups. In lieu of statistical testing, practical differences are noted in the report. For example, differences of 10 or more percentage points are noted when comparing rates, \$0.25 or more when comparing wages, and \$1,000 or more when comparing annual earnings. Differences between racial groups are not noted due to the large differences in sample sizes between the groups.

Comparisons across years should be made with caution, as each year contains a different set of students whose varying characteristics, employment decisions, and other factors may have impacted averages in each year. Graduates are grouped based on their exit date to reflect the greatest amount of data available. For example, students who graduated prior to January 2016 are included in the Quarter 1, Year 1, and Year 2 analysis, but not the Year 3 analysis, as they exited the program fewer than three years prior to the data pull. As such, “increases” or “decreases” in employment over time should be interpreted with caution.

Likewise, use caution when comparing hourly earnings to previous reports. Previous reports included participants who exited between 2011 and 2015, a period of essentially no growth in the minimum wage and a slow recovery from the Great Recession. Meanwhile, this report includes employment data from 2015 to 2017, when Minnesota’s minimum wage increased from \$9.00 to \$9.65 and when employment became relatively more available.

Of students who graduated from the program before October 2017, slightly under two-thirds were female (62%) and were age 17 or older when they were hired by Cookie Cart (61%). Most participants identified as African American (71%).

8. Employment analysis: Demographics of youth participants

Participants demographics	Quarter 1 Exited before 9/30/2017	Year 1 Exited before 12/31/2017	Year 2 Exited before 12/31/2016	Year 3 Exited before 12/31/2015
All youth	338	336	245	185
Female	62%	62%	64%	61%
Male	38%	38%	36%	39%
16 and younger at hire	39%	39%	39%	36%
17 and older at hire	61%	61%	61%	64%
American Indian	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
African immigrant	5%	5%	N/A	N/A
Asian	14%	14%	17%	18%
African American	71%	71%	71%	68%
Multiracial	7%	7%	7%	8%
White	4%	4%	5%	7%

Notes. Percentages exclude missing data (i.e., reflect the valid percent for each variable). Race data are missing for one participant; age data are missing for 115 participants. Data for American Indian participants are suppressed due to small numbers (n<10) to protect participant privacy; African immigrant participant data are not available for Years 2 and 3.

Employment

Employment rates increased steadily following program exit. Here, employment means that the graduate was working during at least one quarter in the given period. During the year prior to being hired by Cookie Cart, 20 percent of participants had been employed. At the end of their first quarter after program completion, 44 percent of graduates were employed; of those employed, 17 percent were employed by Cookie Cart. Overall employment increased to 67 percent by the end of the first year, then increased to 73 percent by the end of the second year, and increased to 79 percent at the end of the third year. For comparison, this is higher than the percentage of working-age adults employed in the Near North community of Minneapolis (64%) during 2012-2016.

Employment rates varied slightly by demographics. Young women were more likely to be employed than young men prior to being hired by Cookie Cart (49% vs. 36%) and during Year 1 (71% vs. 61%), but these differences disappeared by Year 2 (72% vs. 73%) and Year 3 (73% vs. 79%). There were no substantial differences based on age.

Continuous employment

A participant is said to be “continuously employed” if they earned at least one dollar during each quarter of the year. Given that Cookie Cart graduates may be continuing in high school or college after completing the program, continuous employment may not be a goal for all program graduates. One year after exit, 27 percent of graduates were continuously employed. Two years after exit, the proportion rose to 29 percent, increasing to 36 percent three years after exit. Continuous employment rates did not vary substantially by gender except in Year 1, in which 32 percent of young women were continuously employed, compared to 18 percent of young men. Continuous employment rates were slightly higher for graduates who were age 17 or older when Cookie Cart hired them, at 33 percent, 32 percent, and 39 percent, respectively.

Employment industry

DEED provides industry data for Quarter 1 and Year 1; employment sector data were unavailable for Year 2 and Year 3. During the first quarter and first year following program exit, many participants worked in retail or wholesale trades or accommodation or food service. Some students held jobs in both sectors. Of those employed during the first quarter, 54 percent of employed participants worked in food service – including employment by Cookie Cart – and 24 percent worked in retail. By the end of the first year, the percentage of graduates working in food service decreased to 44 percent, and the percentage working in retail increased to 45 percent. This could suggest that, as students left food service work at Cookie Cart, their skills were transferable to other sectors. During Quarter 1, young women more often held jobs in both food service and retail than young men; during Year 1, a greater proportion of young women held jobs in retail than young men, but there were no large differences in food service. Younger participants (age 16 and younger at hire) more frequently held jobs in food service during Quarter 1 and Year 1, and many of them were employed by Cookie Cart.

Median earnings and hours

As a whole, median earnings, median wages, and median hours worked by Cookie Cart participants increased annually. Some of these changes could be due to the increase in the minimum wage during the period, and the fact that minimum wage requirements differ for adults and minors.

Median wages

Median wages and earnings increased over the three year period, likely due to a combination of the increase in the minimum wage and an increase in skills. Prior to working with Cookie Cart, graduates earned a median wage of \$7.82 per hour. One year after graduation, this increased to \$9.62 per hour, then to \$9.96 and \$11.00 for the second and third years, respectively.

Wages and earnings were slightly higher for young women than for young men in earlier years, but these differences decreased in later years. Prior to exiting Cookie Cart and during Year 1, young women earned \$0.25 and \$0.26 per hour, respectively, more than young men (\$7.92 and \$9.68 for young women, vs. \$7.67 and \$9.42 for young men). These differences decreased in Years 2 and 3, to \$0.13 and \$0.15 per hour (\$9.99 and \$11.07 for young women vs. \$9.86 and \$10.92 for young men).

Likely due in part to their age, median wages were generally higher for graduates who were age 17 or older when they began working with Cookie Cart, particularly in Year 2 and 3. Though wages were similar prior to engaging with Cookie Cart (\$7.33 for 16 and younger vs. \$7.43 for 17 and older) and in Year 1 (\$9.33 vs. \$9.13), older graduates were earning more than younger graduates in Year 2 (\$9.70 vs. \$9.96) and Year 3 (\$10.46 vs. \$11.39).

Median earnings

Median annual earnings increased significantly for participants. Prior to working with Cookie Cart, median earnings for participants totaled \$1,323. In the first year following exit, median earnings more than doubled to \$3,415. Between Year 1 and Year 3, earnings doubled again to \$6,852.

As in the analysis of median wages, there were some differences by demographic group. With respect to gender, young women and young men earned close to the same amount (within \$1,000) across all years except Year 3, when young women earned a median of \$7,623 compared to \$4,780 for young men. Compared to younger graduates, those who were age 17 or older at hire tended to earn about \$2,000 more annually during Year 1, Year 2, and Year 3.

Median hours

In general, the number of hours worked increased over time. However, hours estimates should be interpreted with caution, as hours reported by employers are difficult to verify. Prior to program entry, participants worked a median of 158.5 hours. This doubled in Year 1 (361 hours), and continued to increase gradually in Year 2 (432 hours) and Year 3 (551 hours). In general, older graduates (17 or older at hire) worked more hours than younger graduates (16 or younger at hire) between Year 1 and Year 3. Young men and women worked a similar number of hours prior to working with Cookie Cart and during Year 1, but young men worked more during Year 2 (140 hours more), while young women worked more during Year 3 (144.5 hours more).

The employment outcomes aspect of the evaluation is still in the early stages of development and will be used by Cookie Cart staff to better understand the relationship between skill building and employability. It is intended to be used to continue program refinements and determine strategic direction.

Conclusions and issues to consider

As in previous evaluation years, parent survey results and long-term employment outcomes for program graduates continue to suggest that youth are benefitting greatly from Cookie Cart's hands-on programming, caring staff, and work environment that help youth gain confidence, learn responsibility, become socially and emotionally strengthened, and develop leadership skills needed to prepare them to find future jobs.

She is striving toward her future goals with the tools she has learned working at Cookie Cart.
- Parent

Through her work experience and the leadership skills and opportunities she has been given at Cookie Cart, she is much more confident in her abilities.
- Parent

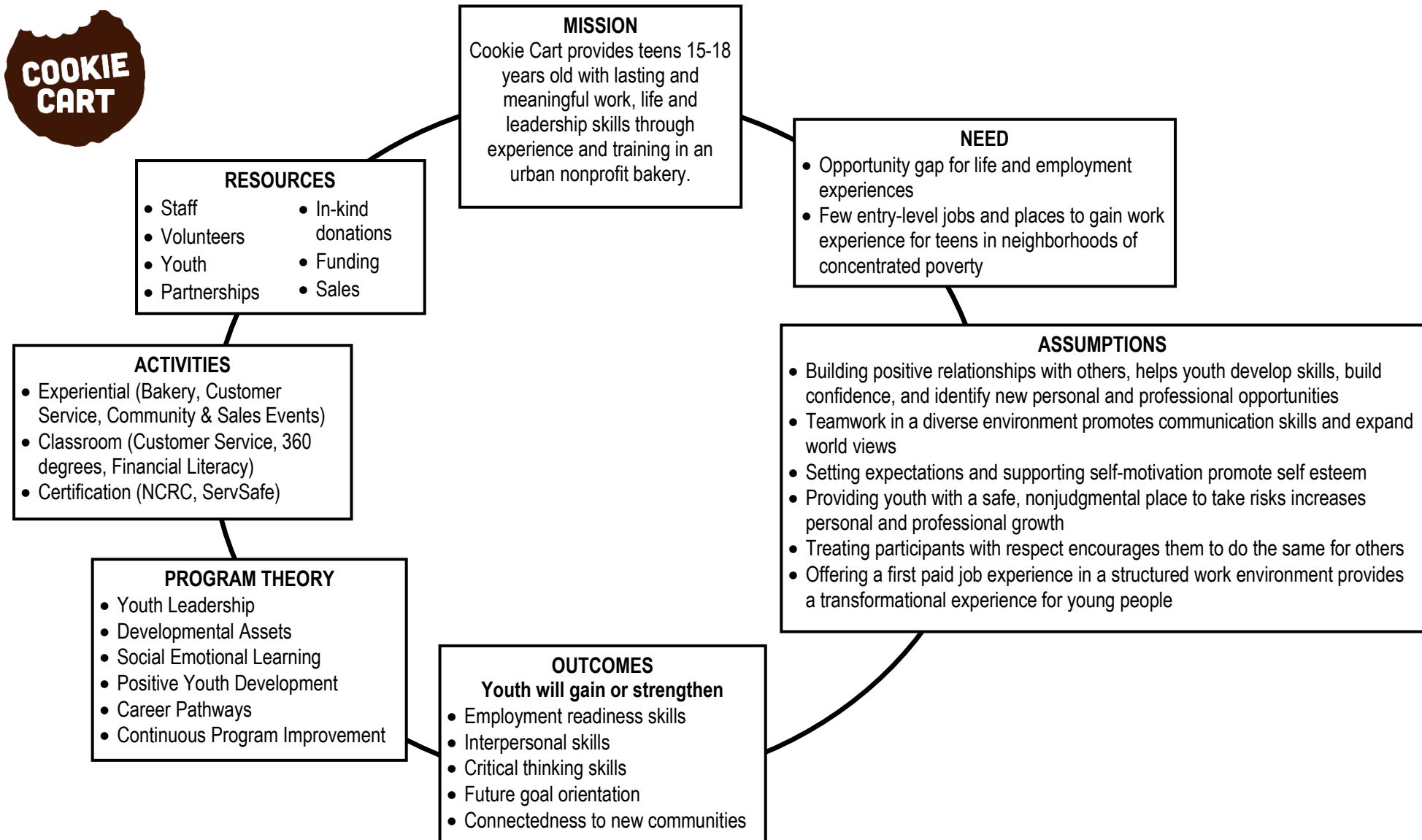
Consistent with the previous evaluation year, parent findings show that Cookie Cart provides skill development, socialization, and leadership opportunities that inspire youth participants to think about and plan for their future, and prepare them to find future jobs. At post-test, the vast majority of parents agreed that their children had gained numerous skills participating in Cookie Cart.

In addition, long-term employment outcomes achieved by Cookie Cart participants are promising. The analysis of DEED data shows that median earnings increased significantly for participants. Prior to working with Cookie Cart, median earnings for participants totaled \$1,323. In the first year following exit, median earnings more than doubled to \$3,415. Between Year 1 and Year 3, earnings doubled again to \$6,852. However, earnings data should be interpreted within the full context of economic conditions, including increases in the minimum wage in Minnesota.

On the whole, these results coupled with the analysis of staff and youth ratings show the strength of the Cookie Cart model. The program can use this information to better understand various nuances of the model including length of and intensity of participation (using the 300 hours worked threshold), increasing parent involvement, and continuing to explore the program's impact on participants' lives. To this end, it may be helpful to conduct an alumni survey to measure long-term outcomes as well as perceptions of program impact.

Appendix

Cookie Cart Logic Model



Parent open-ended responses, by question

A1 How has your teen changed as a result of Cookie Cart, or how has Cookie Cart impacted his/her life?

Gaining confidence for growth

She was shy and less confident in herself before Cookie Cart. Through her work experience and the leadership skills and opportunities she has been given at Cookie Cart, she is much more confident in her abilities.

He has more confidence in himself. He is able to express himself more clearly, and he is making his own money and that is making him independent.

She has confidence in herself, and she is growing every day.

She has been able to expand on her leadership and skills and she is more confident and more outspoken.

My son can articulate his wants and needs. He has improved his decision making ability.

Knowing she has a job she feels more confident within herself.

Working for Cookie Cart she has been able to become more comfortable in her communication skills as well.

Learning and demonstrating responsibility

He became more mature and responsible.

She is more grown and mature.

She has grown and become more of a professional.

Financially responsible, stronger person, overall, more responsible, and has learned consequences.

She has more responsibility with the results of Cookie Cart.

She has learned better time management.

Managing and budgeting money

Cookie Cart has taught her managing and budgeting skills

She has made growth in many areas, and knows how to manage her money a little better.

She has a new sense of money and budgeting.

She has learned skills in budgeting.

My daughter is able to budget her money really well.

She had the opportunity to learn how to manage money.

Developing leadership skills

Through her work experience and the leadership skills and opportunities she has been given at Cookie Cart, she feels proud of what she's accomplished, and has taken on a leadership role.

Cookie Cart has helped my teen to develop work experience, leadership skills and multiple workshops. That has given her lifelong quality people skills

Cookie cart has taught her team building skills.

She has been able to interact with more people in the community.

Relationships with mentors that take an interest in her being successful in life.

A1. How has your teen changed as a result of Cookie Cart, or how has Cookie Cart impacted his/her life? (continued)

Other

She is striving toward her future goals with the tools she has learned working at Cookie Cart.

He's much more experienced now and knows about work ethic now.

She has stayed an honor roll student and maintained working.

It impacted her very strongly. It's given her a lot of motivation to find ideal jobs or find what she's passionate about.

More independent and creative.

My teen is always happy to go to work.

A2. What is one thing you would change about Cookie Cart?

Enhancing youth's work or program experience

My daughter is really interested in pushing a career in pastry and baking after high school, and I wish there was a way for her to get a more in-depth experience with baking at Cookie Cart.

My son still doesn't know how to use a bank account or how to save. Teach him faster.

More responsibility [for youth].

Provide more hours

Find a way to not cut your employed staff when you have to give jobs to summer programs. Fit them in your budget and give them the same hours as the summer programs.

The age limit a teen can work

Parent engagement

Have parents more involved.

Talking to parents more.

Parents should receive free cookies when their child works.

Miscellaneous

Answering phones.

Make healthier options.

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