Helping low-wage workers advance

Year 3 results for Families Forward

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Summary

The McKnight Foundation, through grants to 17 different organizations and partnerships across Minnesota since September 2001, has invested in field-testing a wide range of approaches to promoting self-sufficiency for low-wage workers through improved access to education and training.

The Families Forward initiative focused on people who were already working but who, with additional training or support, could increase their wages, job stability, and future earning prospects. Two converging trends made this effort particularly timely: (1) the documented difficulties faced by low-wage parents in accessing the training needed to move into jobs that could support their families; and (2) the anticipated shortage of qualified workers in Minnesota as the skills needed by businesses increase and the Baby Boom generation moves toward retirement.

Families Forward grantees were asked to:

- Direct their efforts toward low-income workers (in most programs, parents).
- Include employers in designing and carrying out the project.
- Make use of public workforce development systems.
- Focus on short-term training that is practical for working families.
- Provide family supports to help participants remain and advance in their jobs.

While the programs vary widely, groups of them share common features in how they identify and serve participants. These four main clusters of programs are shown in the box on page 3. Overall, however, despite programs' many unique features, the general similarities in participants and desired outcomes for the initiative lead to what amounts to different recipes for the same dish: enhanced employment potential for underdeveloped workers.

The McKnight Foundation contracted with Wilder Research to evaluate the effectiveness of the Families Forward initiative. This third year summary outlines key findings about participants, their experiences combining training with work and family responsibilities, and their job outcomes at 9 and 24 months after enrollment. It also highlights some clear findings about what it takes for providers to offer skill development programs that meet the needs of workers and employers.

FOUR BASIC "CLUSTERS" OF FAMILIES FORWARD PROJECTS	
Individualized (focus on the individual worker)	HIRED West Central (Year 1) Communities Investing in Families Women Achieving New Directions (WAND)
Sectoral – higher support (focus on an industry sector; more intensive support addresses personal and family barriers)	East Metro Health Careers Institute Goodwill/Easter Seals International Institute West Central (Year 2) Women Venture
Sectoral - lower support (focus on an industry sector; support is mainly work-focused)	Anoka County MN-BUILD Workforce Development, Inc. Teamworks
Employer-based (focus on the employer; workers typically served on the job site; support is mainly work-focused)	Dakota County Hennepin Technical College Southern Minnesota Initiative Foundation Stearns-Benton
Not classified This program is employer-based in its identification of participants through their employer, and individualized in its tailoring of services uniquely for each participant.	Capital City Properties (Family Services Employee Resources/ Employer Services, Inc.)
Note: *These categories bring out important insights about program design, but also oversimplify the variation among programs. Some programs could be classified differently depending on what aspects of the program are emphasized in the groupings, or adjustments in program features over time.*	

Starting points and program experiences

Demographics and work background. Looking at all Families Forward participants as a whole:

- Two-thirds are women, most are in their 20s and 30s, and fewer than half are non-Hispanic Whites.
- Nearly three-quarters have at least a high school education, and more than one-third have prior job training experience.
- Nearly half of participants were living at or below poverty when they enrolled.
- Two-thirds were working when they enrolled, and just under half were employed full-time.
- Wages averaged $10.02 per hour at enrollment.

Some demographics vary noticeably among the different types of Families Forward programs. Moving from the employer-based, lower-support programs to the individualized, higher-support programs, an increasing share of the participants are female, younger, and poor.

Potential employment barriers. The most common problems for those entering the program (from a list participants were asked about) are poverty-level income, low availability of social support, and lack of reliable transportation. In addition, 30 percent of Families Forward participants had experienced at least one crisis-level problem (homelessness, domestic violence, or serious health problems for themselves or a family member that prevented work for at least two weeks) in the six months before they enrolled.

Readiness for training. In the estimation of program leaders, about one in three participants have personal and family situations that are not very stable, even with the level of support that the program is able to provide. Around one in five enter the programs with vague or unrealistic goals, and around one in six are estimated to have somewhat or severely limited motivation or potential to advance.

Knowledge of soft skills (workplace norms and expectations). Less than one-quarter of participants entered the program with attitudes that would indicate a lack of soft skills. (Sample questions include whether it would be a serious problem to be late for work by five minutes or to take longer breaks without permission.)

Program completion. Most participants who successfully enrolled were able to complete all program requirements. At the time of the three-month follow-up interview, 93 percent were either still receiving services or had completed all program expectations.

Services received and unmet needs for service. Participants' reports of unmet needs suggest that programs are reasonably sensitive to differences in levels of need and do much to meet those needs, with similar amounts of need remaining unmet in each type of program. (Find more details in the box on page 5.)

Types of services received in the first three months, and reports of unmet need

	Percent who received this type of service	Percent who reported unmet need
Assessment Career aptitude, English language skills, academic skills or learning ability, computer skills, specific job skills, access to training if assessment shows a need	79%	39%
Training Soft skills (workplace norms and expectations), computer skills, job-specific skills, English language skills	69%	31%
Employment support services Job placement, resolving problems on the job, mentoring on the job, help to purchase equipment or supplies for a job or training	59%	29%
Basic financial help Training tuition assistance; information about medical insurance, Earned Income Tax Credit, or other financial assistance; help with budgeting or money management	20%	45%
Personal and family support and case management Help figuring out what support is needed to get or keep a job; case management (regular check-in to see what support is needed); help with child care needs or problems; obtaining or filling out applications; help with housing; personal or family counseling; help with transportation; dealing with family violence.	57%	36%

Source: *Wilder survey of participants.*

Balancing work, parenting, and training

Most participants do not seem to have serious conflicts between their work and family responsibilities. Nearly two-fifths (39%) of participants who completed the nine-month follow-up survey said there is nothing about their job that makes it hard for them to be the kind of parent they want to be. On the other hand, 28 percent reported conflicts related to the number or schedule of the hours they work and 28 percent said they do not have enough time for themselves and/or their family. Participants reported their jobs helped them with their parenting mainly by providing income (40%), personal growth and improved attitudes (25%), having enough time or flexibility with the job (22%), and learning new skills at work, including social skills, English, or health care (18%).

Most participants report that participation in Families Forward was not burdensome in managing their family and work responsibilities, and many commented on helpful effects.

However, combining work with training appears to be a greater challenge. There is a fair amount of flow into and out of employment during training and just before or after training. Of those who were employed while in training, most (except in the employer-based programs) were not working full-time. While one-third of employed participants said they did not have any problems going to training and working at the same time, others mentioned problems related to schedule conflict and coordination (37%), fatigue and stress (15%), lack of time for self or family (14%), and trouble meeting the schedule or responsibilities of the program (11%).

While the time crunch makes it hard to work and participate in training, those who stop working or cut back their hours to facilitate a balance must find a way to make ends meet. In addition, any job cutbacks to accommodate intensive training may show up in evaluation results as a decline in income during the first year of a longer program, which should be considered when interpreting short-term results.

What results might we expect for the same workers without Families Forward?

With no formal comparison group, we cannot say how much of the observed results are due to the efforts of the programs. However, national research on skills training for low-income workers found, even during the economic boom before 2001, that "for most, reaching a family wage takes much longer than anyone originally estimated," and cited prior research that found "it takes three years or more for parents with any employment challenge in their background to approach financial security through work."

More specifically, from state, regional, and national studies, we would expect that low-wage workers without access to special programs would see only very slow and modest growth in employment and wages in Minnesota in the early 2000s (in the range of 0 to 6 percent in two years). We would also expect steady or falling use of employer-based medical benefits.

Job outcomes after nine months

For all participants employed at intake (incumbent workers):

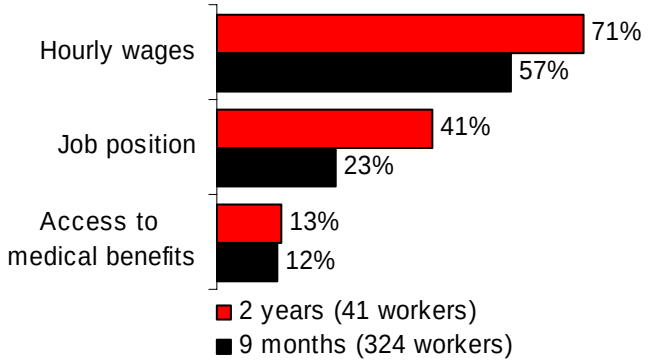
- 88 percent were still employed nine months later.
- 20 percent reported their current job was a step up from where they had started.
- 49 percent reported they were earning higher hourly wages than at intake.

Their improvements in wages and benefits in the first nine months are considerably better than those experienced by entry-level workers in Minnesota overall in recent years. Participants employed both at intake and nine months later experienced, on average:

- 5.3 percent increase in average wages, from $11.21 in the quarter before starting to $11.80 a year later, an average increase of $0.59 per hour. (Wage Detail records for 382 participants)
- 54 percent reported they were working the same number of hours, 30 percent were working more hours, and 16 percent were working fewer hours. (Wilder survey)
- 1.5 percent increase in average hours per week, from 30.8 to 31.2 hours, an average increase of 0.5 hours per week. (Wage Detail records)
- 6.8 percent increase in monthly income from wages, from $1,495 to $1,596 per month, an average increase of $102 per month. (Wage Detail records)
- The proportion receiving health care benefits rose from 58 percent at intake to 70 percent at follow-up. (Wilder survey)

Better jobs at 9 and 24 months

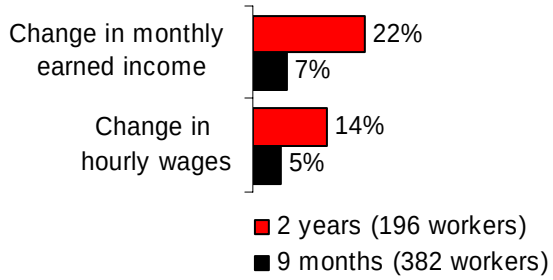
Of participants employed at both intake and follow-up, percent whose employment improved.



Source: *Wilder survey.*

Better earnings at 9 and 24 months

Average percent change among participants employed at both intake and follow-up.



Source: *Wage Detail data.*

On nearly every measure of job quality, participants in the employer-based programs are doing the best nine months after enrolling. More are working full-time, they have higher wages, and more have health or dental insurance and paid vacation. Only in the availability of paid sick time did a different cluster (sectoral-higher support) come out higher.

However, looking at improvement from the starting point to nine months later, participants in the sectoral-higher support programs fared best on most measures. More of them got a better job and better wages, and in both cases most said this was due to the program. They also show greater increases in availability of health care and dental benefits, and of paid sick and vacation time.

Participants in the individualized programs had the highest reports of getting a better job (although they did not as often attribute this to the program). Participants in employer-based programs were most likely to still be employed, although they were least likely to have a better job or better wages. In addition, participants in employer-based programs appear to have lost ground in nearly all benefits, while participants in other programs were more likely to be improving in this respect.

In statistical tests, few results were significantly linked to participants' levels of need for support in overcoming barriers. There is some indication that participants with high need were most likely to improve their wages and those with low need were least likely to do so – that is, it appears possible that the training provided by programs may be making the most difference to those with the most needs.

For the one-third of Families Forward participants who were not working when they entered the program, nearly two-thirds were working after nine months, and more than

half said Families Forward helped them get their jobs. They averaged 25 hours of work per week, at an average hourly wage of $11.31.

Indications of longer-term results: Two-year follow-up

Not all job outcomes expected as a result of Families Forward programs are likely to be evident within the first nine months, and some expected outcomes go beyond employment hours, wages, and benefits. The following two-year results are promising but should be considered preliminary due to the small sample sizes available at this time.

For all participants employed at intake (incumbent workers):

- 77 percent employed two years later
- 32 percent in "step-up" jobs
- 55 percent earning higher hourly wages (Wilder survey)

For participants employed at both intake and two years later:

- 14.4 percent increase in average wages
- 6.5 percent increase in average hours
- 21.8 percent increase in average monthly income from wages. (Wage Detail records for 135 early participants)

How much difference has Families Forward made for participants?

At the nine-month follow-up, 45 to 50 percent reported the program had made a big difference on getting a better job now, doing better in their current job, and taking care of their family; and about one-quarter of participants reported the program had made no difference. For the other two questions (confidence to try new things, and getting a better job in the future), 62 to 66 percent reported a big difference and only 13 to 15 percent reported no difference.

Overall, participants' responses after two years show that these first impressions of program benefits have been maintained over time. Furthermore, most participants (89%) who completed the 24-month follow-up interview said that the program encouraged them to get motivated and to think they could do something new or something more. We consider this promising, because it indicate that the programs have had lasting effects on the "dreams" of participants, a factor that program leaders have consistently stressed as important for success in job retention and advancement.

What works: serving low-wage workers

The variation in Families Forward programs and their participants illustrates the range of skill training programs and needs that currently exist in Minnesota. This great variety can be confusing to "customers," including workers looking for skill enhancement and employers looking to increase the productivity of their workers or to find new employees with the right skills. The customer's dilemma is not merely to find a training program, but to choose from the many available programs.

In matching customers to suitable programs, Families Forward has shown that it is important to be aware of four different factors that some low-wage incumbent workers may need for job advancement:

- **Dreams:** A vision of their higher potential, and a conviction that it is realistically possible to achieve it.
- **Skills:** A chance to learn and practice new skills to qualify for higher level work.
- **Opportunities:** Employers willing to hire them, to invest in their skills, and to provide opportunities to move up.
- **Convergence:** A way to ensure that all three of the above elements not only happen, but happen together.

Some of the key insights Families Forward grantees have learned about effective work with participants:

- Recruit and engage participants by getting them to believe in the value, purpose, and feasibility of the program.
- Understand the local job market and motivate participants by offering training for jobs known to have openings.
- Broaden the focus from hard skills (technical) training to also include greater attention to soft skills and support services.
- Provide one-on-one attention, especially for job retention and advancement. Group-based peer support can also be valuable.
- Provide transportation help. Lack of reliable transportation is a debilitating barrier, especially for rural low-income workers.

What works: working with employers

To meet needs of employers as well as participants, grantees have found the following practices effective:

- In selecting employers to work with, look for larger employers with many entry-level jobs, internal advancement potential, and the capacity to sustain training costs.
- Identify or develop a "champion" of the project within the firm, who has time and influence to devote to the project.
- Increase buy-in by involving employers with as many aspects of the program as possible (such as planning, event hosting, marketing).
- At the same time, make the arrangements as convenient for the employer as possible, working around production schedules.
- Be prepared to work at clarifying the model and the partner responsibilities.
- Be constantly aware of employers' focus on their own bottom line.

Role of the Governor's Workforce Development Council

The McKnight Foundation contracted with the Governor's Workforce Development Council staff to assist programs in carrying out their plans. Besides increasing effectiveness within individual sites and through grantee learning events, they have also taken insights from Families Forward back to the public workforce development system.

Their web site **(www.gwdc.org/families-forward.htm)** presents in greater detail what has been learned from this initiative about operating skill development programs.

Conclusions: key insights from Year 3

It's working. Families Forward grantees and participants in the last three years have created not only new dreams, skills, and opportunities for over 1,000 low-income Minnesota workers, but have also given rise to insights that can help to increase such opportunities for others.

Overall, participants are achieving higher average wages, hours, and benefits than when they began their programs. Participants in employer-based programs began with the highest levels of wages, hours, and benefits, and have maintained that position at the nine-month follow-up period, but participants in groups who started at lower levels have closed part of the gap by rising further.

Some models stand out. Improvement in average wages, hours, and benefits is notably higher and more consistent among participants in the sectoral-higher support programs that provide a high level of personal support while targeting a specific industry sector that offers potential for advancement. This success does not appear to have been accomplished at the cost of accepting only clients with fewer barriers.

At the same time, programs in other clusters have also demonstrated some notable successes. It would be a mistake to concentrate future efforts too exclusively on the sectoral-higher support strategy and overlook the value of other models for specific niches. These include the individualized programs that have demonstrated a strong potential for serving participants in rural parts of the state, where the concentration of industry may be too low to be able to focus on a single industry sector.

Sectoral-lower support and employer-based programs appear to have greater success where there exists an identifiable and relatively homogeneous pool of low-income workers, along with an employer or identifiable pool of employers in need of workers with specific skills for which the available workers can be trained in a relatively short period of time.

"Soft skills" problems are not always clear-cut. While employers often report a shortage of soft skills, a very high proportion of Families Forward participants show a good grasp of soft skill concepts when they enter the program. Although knowing the right answers is not the same as habitually practicing them, it is also possible that what employers perceive as a lack of soft skills is due to other causes, such as problems with child care, transportation, and family crises. Another factor for some could be a need for certain soft skills on the part of employers and supervisors.

Hallmarks of successful programs:

- Strong training programs and strong relationships with employers are both essential. Neither alone appears to be sufficient.
- Programs with highest success rates are ones which by design incorporate the needs of both employers and individual workers, balancing both sets of interests.
- Most of the most successful programs appear to deliver fairly intensive support, in an ongoing relationship that conveys psychological as well as concrete support.
- All the most successful programs include not only training and support services, but also employment services to identify, obtain, and retain jobs.

- The most successful programs include more than one industry sector, and so are less seriously affected by unexpected downturns in a single industry.

- All the programs with especially strong results are operated by organizations with energetic, entrepreneurial leaders.

- Support services are important, but resources are limited for helping low-income workers meet a complex mix of personal and family challenges.

Very few programs in this initiative have actually been able to test a purely *incumbent* worker training model. Except in the employer-based cluster, all programs included people who did not work throughout the training. For parents with limited job skills and personal resources, there is a tough dilemma between succeeding in intensive training and providing for a family in the meantime.

Matching program models to participant and employer needs

Programs in the Families Forward initiative are designed to help workers who were "stuck" at some point and unlikely to progress to greater skills and opportunities without help. On the whole, the grantees appear to have succeeded well in matching programs to the participants best suited to take advantage of them.

- **Individualized programs** are serving participants with significant personal, family, and skill development needs that often cannot be addressed in group settings.

- **Sectoral programs** are serving people with slightly more developed aspirations who are able, through a shared location and occupational focus, to be served in group settings.

- **Employer-based programs** are suited for participants with demonstrated success at entering and staying in the labor market but limited chance of advancing within it.

Forging relationships with employers

Like workforce participants, employers begin with different attitudes, resources, and backgrounds. Workforce programs need to help employers develop interest and motivation (dreams), and make the case that those dreams are realistically attainable; they must transmit specific content knowledge (hard skills) – that is, educate employers about effective ways of promoting the development of low-skilled workers; they must promote greater flexibility and communication skills with entry-level workers from previously underrepresented groups (soft skills).

The experiences of Families Forward programs point to a real strength of operating workforce programs from a truly intermediary position (serving not only workers but also employers). For the most part, programs with a main focus on serving the needs of individual participants have developed fewer stable, long-term relationships with employers. Programs with a main focus on serving the needs of employers, again for the most part, have had less leverage for changing employment practices to make the most of workers' skills. Nevertheless, about half of grantees report they have seen some employers change their views and come to see more value and potential in their entry-level and non-traditional workers.

Nearly all grantees have increased the degree to which they function as intermediaries. With help from the Governor's Workforce Development Council, many grantees (most of whom are nonprofit, educational, or philanthropic organizations) have made strides in learning to understand and communicate with the for-profit culture. They often act as interpreters of needs, goals, and behaviors between employers and workers.

Looking ahead: impact on workforce services

The work of the Governor's Workforce Development Council has been significantly informed by the interaction of its staff with Families Forward grantees, and by the involvement of grantee staff in the Council. Through the GWDC, other key state agency leaders are demonstrating increased awareness of the need for skill development (in addition to rapid workforce attachment) as an important goal for state attention. The Families Forward initiative appears to be contributing both to the direction of this movement, and to its pace.

In light of continuing shortages in public budgets at the state and local levels, it will be difficult to secure new funding for any public programs. However, three years of experience with Families Forward programs has provided strong evidence that the investment in skill development that meets needs of workers and employers produces results with valuable public benefits, including higher individual (taxable) incomes and stronger, more competitive businesses.

Furthermore, the needs for such skill development are increasing as the economy recovers from the recent recession. Expert observers foresee continuing needs among Minnesota businesses and workers for basic and advanced skills in the next five years. The evidence from the Families Forward initiative is that service providers will need resources to offer effective workforce programs, and employers and workers will need supports to make use of them.

In the absence of new public funding, grantees that have most thoroughly adopted the intermediary role appear to be best positioned to secure and combine the variety of public and private funds needed to continue the work piloted under the Families Forward grants.

Effects of McKnight funding. As a result of the grants, program leaders report that new services have been introduced for regions or specific populations that previously lacked training opportunities, and that existing training programs have been strengthened. Grantees require additional resources to maintain most of these services and improvements, so many of them may not be sustained beyond the grant period without new sources of funding.

However, grantees also widely cite the value of new relationships that the initiative promoted – not only among grantees, but also with Minnesota State Colleges and Universities, adult basic education consortia, WorkForce Centers, employers, and the Governor's Workforce Development Council. These relationships are likely to carry over into any future work.

Recommendations

Based on the findings of this evaluation, the following actions would help to promote skill development in ways that have been shown to increase self-sufficiency for low-wage workers and their families, and are likely to also promote the competitive positions of businesses:

1. Recognize and promote the role that intermediary organizations play in meeting needs of workers and employers simultaneously.

Private intermediaries, unlike public agencies, can best provide the agility required in any economy that is prone to rapid change. Intermediaries in the Families Forward initiative have demonstrated a growing capacity to communicate with and promote the alignment of the other partners needed to succeed. Further work is needed to:

- Help employers understand and make the most of intermediary organizations.
- Develop a better and more widely shared understanding of how the private intermediary role might best complement public workforce institutions.
- Help the Minnesota State Colleges and Universities system play a greater role by adjusting its planning and use of resources around the varied needs of adult and part-time students, and by working with community partners to address gaps in preparation among potential students.

- Continue to identify opportunities and strategies in the PreK-12 education system to address educational disparities and to develop the basic skills that are the foundation for later job success. Also address capacity for adult basic education and English as a second language, where current shortfalls are holding back the potential of willing workers and their employers.

2. Create incentives to employers to provide assessment and skills training for their own new or incumbent workers.

Explore ways to develop or incubate local or regional consortia of employers to pool the costs, risks, and benefits of sectoral training. Such consortia help promote regional economic development as well as avoid the disincentives that individual employers face in offering training on their own (risking that other employers will hire the trained workers away from them).

3. Align resources to develop better partnership between policy-makers and service providers.

In Families Forward, the Governor's Workforce Development Council helped bridge gaps in communication between state-level policy-makers and front-line workforce service organizations. These connections have improved local practices and state-level planning and responsiveness. In related work, the state Department of Employment and Economic Development is leading a push to strive for balance between consistent, clear vision and policy at the state level, and flexibility at the local level in carrying out that policy. This flexibility (including greater local choice in the use of funds) is needed to promote responsiveness to local variations and changing economic conditions.

4. Rework current public policies to better address needs of incumbent workers for skill development.

Opportunities for change that would benefit both workers and employers:

Increase the share of workforce investment funding that is allocated for skill development. The recent emphasis on rapid workforce attachment, and declining funds for skill development, are likely to contribute to skill shortages at the entry level as the economy enters a new expansion. Skill training, especially for entry-level workers, will be increasingly important for employers seeking to increase productivity as the economy improves.

When planning and funding training programs for low-income workers, **recognize the need for support services to enable them to effectively participate**. This includes broader availability of the work supports that help low-wage workers make ends meet (such as child care assistance, public health care coverage, and Earned Income Tax

Credits). Programs could better help entry-level, low-skilled workers benefit from hard-skills training by also including:

- **Modest stipends for living expenses** while workers take short leaves from jobs to concentrate on programs that offer the intensity required for significant learning.
- **Assessments and vocational counseling** to help match workers to programs that will work for them.
- **Soft skills training** along with hard skills, to ensure that participants will be able to apply their training effectively.
- **Job placement and retention supports**, meeting needs of both workers and employers, to ensure that trained workers successfully adapt to their new positions and that their supervisors can effectively support and make the most of their skills.

It is also important to recognize the length of time needed to change long-standing ways of doing things. This principle applies to **participants** in training who have limited prior exposure to employment. It applies to **employers** who face intense competition and narrow profit margins and have limited tolerance for the risks involved in new business practices. It applies to **local service providers** trying new service strategies and for **regional and state organizations** with changing service priorities and funding. It will be important to keep expectations realistic, and to provide stable, consistent resources that can be depended on for the length of time required to make lasting change.

Background

The Families Forward initiative

This document is a progress report on the third year of the Families Forward initiative, which was launched in September 2001 by The McKnight Foundation. Through awards to 17 grantees (shown in the map on page 23), the Foundation seeks to explore ways to improve the access of low-income incumbent workers to the kinds of education and training that will help them to improve their jobs, earnings, and ability to support their families.

Two converging trends made this effort particularly timely: (1) the documented difficulties faced by low-wage parents in accessing the training needed to move into jobs that could support their families; and (2) the anticipated shortage of qualified workers in Minnesota as the skills needed by businesses increase and the Baby Boom generation moves toward retirement.

Two-year grants were made to 10 initial sites in September 2001, one more in February 2002, and six more in September 2002. In addition to targeting low-income working parents, grantees were expected to include employers in the design and implementation of the project, make use of public workforce development systems, focus on short-term training that is practical for working families, and provide family supports to help participants remain and advance in their jobs. The grantees are approaching this work in a wide variety of ways. Two grantees are teaming up to jointly serve a subset of their participants (while each independently serving some of their own). This combined effort is referred to in this report as an 18th program.

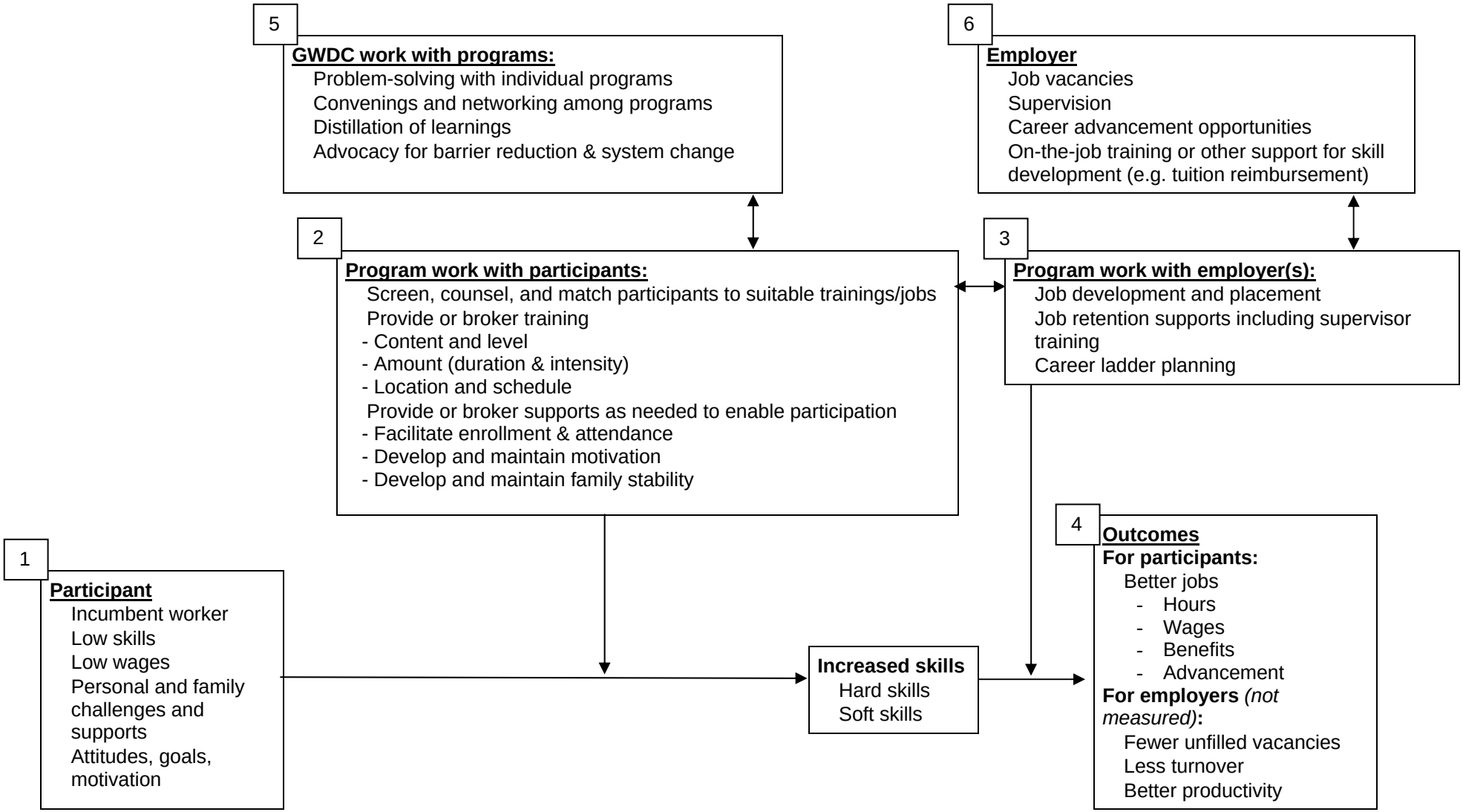
Organization and activities of the project

As part of the initiative, The McKnight Foundation also funded the Governor's Workforce Development Council to provide assistance to grantees. This public entity, which operates as the state-level Workforce Investment Board under the federal Workforce Investment Act (1998), includes representatives of business, labor, education, nonprofits, and the state legislature. Its role is to oversee and coordinate efforts to promote workforce skill development in a way that promotes the economic health of the state. Under the Families Forward grant, staff of this agency provide three main forms of help to Families Forward grantees: consulting and technical assistance to help them answer questions and solve problems encountered in the administration of their programs; connecting them to each other for mutual support, networking, and information sharing; and bringing issues raised in their experiences to a larger forum, so that those responsible for statewide systems can learn from the grantees' experience and adjust their operations to be more responsive and/or effective.

The diagram on the next page represents a schematic overview of the Families Forward initiative. It shows the main relationships between participants, grantees' programs, employers, and the Governor's Workforce Development Council, as well as the main activities of each and the expected outcomes. Not all of the activities shown in the diagram are expected to be implemented in all of the programs, and the relative emphasis on different components varies widely among programs. Further information about individual programs and their goals, partners, and activities can be found at the Governor's Workforce Development Council website (www.gwdc.org/families-forward.htm) and in the appendix of the second year evaluation report.[1]

[1] *Training low-income workers for self-sufficiency: Learning from the McKnight Families Forward initiative after two years* (Wilder Research, December 2003)*:* Available on the Internet at http://www.mcknight.org/cfc/lab.aspx or http://www.wilder.org/research/reports.html?summary=1169

1. Schematic diagram of the main components of the Families Forward initiative



Project evaluation

The McKnight Foundation contracted with Wilder Research Center to examine the effectiveness of the different projects funded under the initiative. The evaluation addresses four main research questions:

1. (a) What are some key characteristics of the participants served by the Families Forward initiative?
   (b) What are some key characteristics of the programs being delivered by the grantees?
   (c) What, if any, is the connection between the two?
2. Do Families Forward participants get better jobs after participation?
3. What kinds of program adjustments are grantees making, and why?
4. What use are sites making of the problem-solving, brokering, and networking services offered by the Governor's Workforce Development Council? What results, if any, can be ascribed to these services?

Organization of this report

This evaluation includes quantitative individual-level data on characteristics of participants at intake (box 1 in the preceding diagram) and participants' job outcomes nine and 24 months later (box 4). It includes some quantitative, individual-level data about participants' reasons for enrolling, services received and services needed but not received, and degree of difficulty combining work, family, and training (box 2). The evaluation also includes quantitative and qualitative program-level data about program goals, organization, and services, and qualitative data about program operations including challenges, changes, and learnings (box 2). The program-level data includes some information about the involvement of employers in the planning or operations of the program, as well as employment services provided to participants that may involve working with employers (box 3 and box 6). Finally, the evaluation includes overall and program-level information about the activities of the Governor's Workforce Development Council to support program activities and learnings (box 5).

This third year progress report has the following main components:

- It first reports findings from the program-level analysis of the challenges, accomplishments, and lessons learned to date about the operation of skill development programs for low-skilled incumbent workers. This section is based mainly on key informant interviews with site leaders and staff of the Governor's Workforce Development Council.

- Second, it describes participants' characteristics, their level of need, and their experiences with the program, based mainly on intake forms and follow-up interviews.

- Third, based on participants' self-reports and state-collected Wage Detail records, it describes participants' employment outcomes nine months after entering the program, including employment status and job type, as well as wage and income changes from intake to follow-up. Results are reported by program groupings (clusters). Where they appear to be significant, we also discuss differences by participants' characteristics or the match between the program and the participant's individual needs.

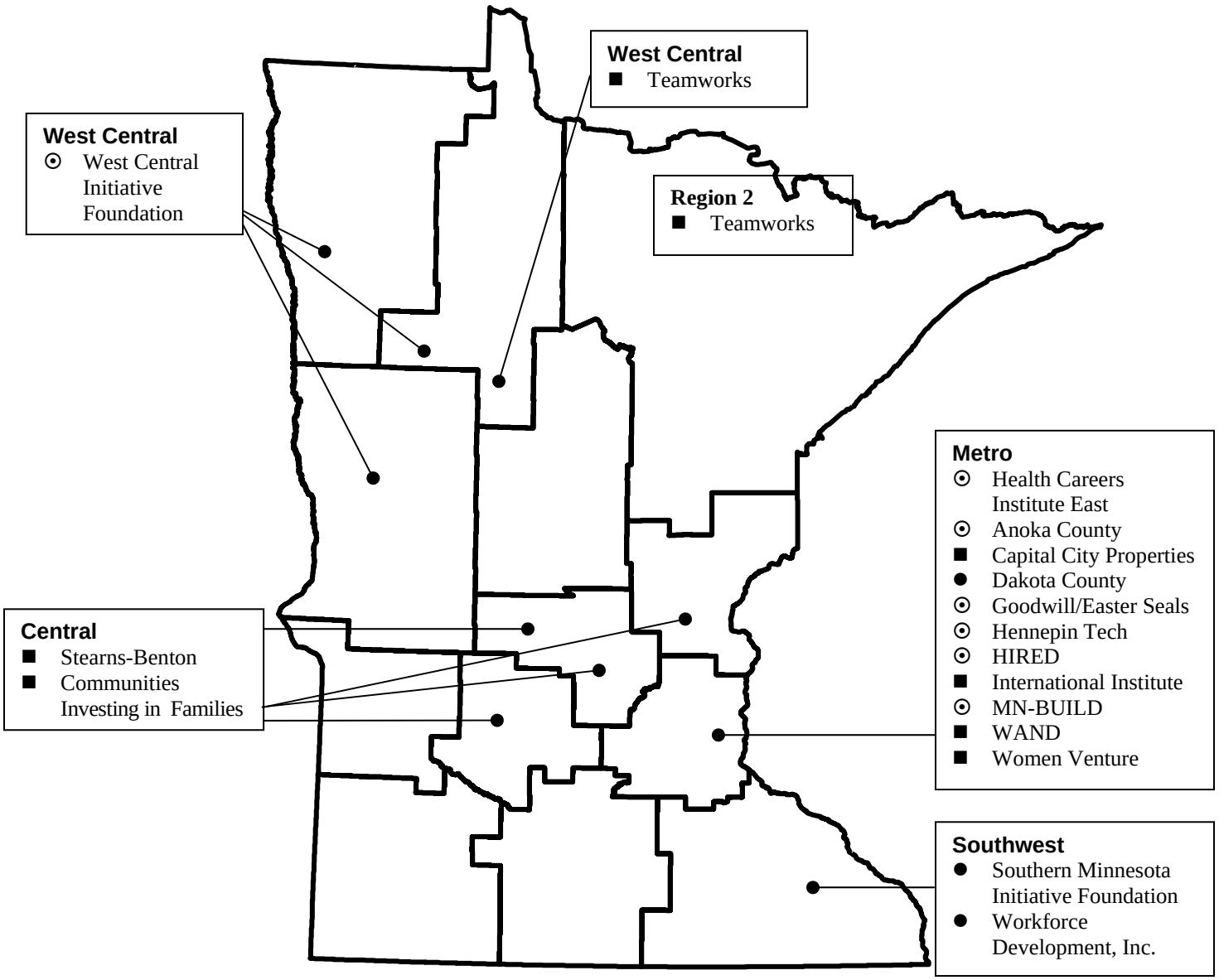
- Fourth, we describe the information available to date on longer-term outcomes for participants, both in terms of their attitudes and motivation and also by examining preliminary indications of longer-term employment outcomes for a small group of early participants.

- Fifth, to correct for the simplification that occurs in grouping programs into clusters, we present a summary of key data about participants on a program-by-program level. We also draw on the program-level findings to form conclusions about the implications of some of the patterns observed.

- Sixth, we describe the use that grantees have made of the technical assistance provided by the Governor's Workforce Development Council, and the evidence for the impact of this work on program operations.

- Finally, this report synthesizes these findings in a discussion section that includes conclusions about the operation of incumbent worker programs for low-skilled workers and recommendations for future program, funding, and policy directions.

2. Families Forward project sites by economic development regions



Methods

The evaluation design combines quantitative and qualitative measures, some of which have been modified over the course of the project based on new learning and new information needs. Primary data sources for this third-year progress report are:

- **Intake data for each participant**

  To the extent possible, these forms are completed by program staff (sometimes by participants themselves) for every Families Forward participant and are submitted, with participants' consent, to Wilder Research Center. They provide background on participants at the time of intake, including demographic information; educational and work history; current employment status including wages, hours, benefits, job title, and monthly household income; and English language facility. The 1,078 participants included in this report represent all those enrolled since the beginning of the initiative whose intake forms were received at Wilder through the end of July 2004.

  We do not know the number of participants who did not give consent for inclusion in the study, but from conversations with program staff we believe the number is small. The greatest loss of data is from early participants in one employer-based program. Our ability to document participant characteristics and outcomes is therefore likely to be less than fully representative of this site in particular, and of employer-based programs in general, than for the balance of the initiative. In addition, this evaluation does not include data on participants in one program, which is piloting a unique approach and had delays in beginning enrollments.

- **Follow-up phone interviews with participants three months after intake**

  Three-month follow-up interviews have been conducted by telephone from Wilder Research Center, using two different instruments. The first, in use from December 2001 through the end of November 2002, focused mainly on job status three months after beginning the program. Data from this survey, collected from 238 participants in Round 1 sites, are not relevant to this report.

  Data in this report are based on the new three-month follow-up interview, which began in March 2003 and continues to be administered. It asks about entry into the program and current program status, as well as personal and family barriers relating to work or training that participants may have experienced just prior to enrollment. It also asked detailed questions about training and support services that participants may have received or needed from the program. Data were available for this report from 454 participants in 18 programs who were interviewed through July 2004. The

response rate was 74 percent. The participants who have completed this interview are 42 percent of all participants in the evaluation records, ranging from 31 percent of participants in the employer-based cluster to 45 percent of participants in the sectoral-higher support cluster. Because it was introduced more than a year after the initiative began, the new three-month follow-up interview does not represent participants in the first year of Round 1 programs.

- **Follow-up phone interviews with participants nine months after intake**

  The nine-month follow-up interview is also conducted by telephone from Wilder Research Center. It asks about current program status and current employment status, including any changes in employer, position, wages, hours, and benefits, and whether the respondent attributes any improvements to their participation in the Families Forward program. Participants are also asked three open-ended questions about work-family balance and whether the program makes it easier or more difficult to maintain this balance, and some open- and closed-ended questions about combining work and training. They are also asked to respond to several closed-ended questions about the program's impact on their family and work responsibilities and what difference the program has made in their expectations for their future. More general perceptions of the program's positive and negative aspects are examined through responses to several open-ended questions. Data reported here come from 620 interviews done between June 2002 and July 2004 with participants from 17 sites. This represents a response rate of 73 percent.

- **Follow-up phone interviews with participants 24 months after intake**

  The longest-term follow-up measure for outcomes conducted by Wilder is a 24-month follow-up interview. As with other follow-up interviews, this interview is conducted by telephone and asks about current program status and current employment status. Additional questions ask about work-family balance issues and any difficulties that might have been experienced as a result of adding training to existing responsibilities, There are also both closed- and open-ended questions about the participant's perceptions of the value and impact of the program. Data reported here come from 94 interviews completed in June and July 2004 out of a sample of 256 participants who were eligible for such interviews during this time period. Because of the short time frame for interviewing and the greater difficulty of reaching participants who have been out of contact with Wilder and (for some) the programs for over a year, the response rate for this instrument is only 37 percent for the group reported here. However, more of the eligible respondents have since been successfully interviewed. The response rate will be higher in the 2005 report, when there has been more time to locate respondents. Results at this time must be viewed as preliminary because of the small number of

participants who responded as well as the likely sampling bias that is due to including only those who were easiest to contact.

- **Aggregate data from the Minnesota Department of Employment and Economic Development's Wage Detail records**

  In the second year progress report, we noted some unreliability in participants' self-reported wage and hours data that limited our ability to describe the magnitude of outcomes related to income improvement. To complement the self-reported data, this progress report also includes employer-reported hours and wage data. Staff at the Minnesota Department of Employment and Economic Development (DEED) were able to match names and identification numbers (last four digits of Social Security Number) for 690 participants (85%) of the 812 participants who have been in the program for at least one full year, and to provide baseline and follow-up data on wages and hours for these participants. The data were retrieved for 90 percent of participants in the individualized and sectoral clusters, and 56 percent of those in the employer-based cluster. To preserve the confidentiality of Wage Detail records, only aggregate information was provided to Wilder Research Center, so detailed cross-tabulations with other evaluation data were not possible.

- **In-depth telephone interviews with site leaders in 2004**

  Using a structured interview form including a mix of closed-ended and open-ended questions, Wilder staff interviewed program leaders by telephone during July 2004 (Round 1 sites whose grant has been continued), July and August 2004 (Round 1 sites whose grant has ended), and August and September 2004 (Round 2 sites). The emphasis in this research activity was to collect information that could be compared across programs about changes in the program model or outcome expectations for their participants; characteristics of participants (to the extent that program leaders were able to estimate them) and how participants' applications were screened; any insights that program leaders had on the kinds of participants for whom their model was most and least effective; challenges, barriers, and accomplishments in the operation of the programs; any services, relationships, or effects on other agencies or practices that were sustained beyond the grant period; anticipated needs of employers and low-wage workers for incumbent worker training in the next five years; and experiences with and perceptions of the services they received from staff of the Governor's Workforce Development Council. Interviews were conducted with all 17 grantees, representing all 18 programs. Because of turnover of key staff in some sites, data from some questions are missing for some programs.

- **Key informant interviews with staff of the Governor's Workforce Development Council**

  In August 2004, research staff held group discussions with staff of the Governor's Workforce Development Council in order to learn their perspectives on program operations, challenges, and accomplishments, as well as GWDC's own activities and how they saw their resources being used by the grantees.

- **Structured observation at selected grantee events convened by the Governor's Workforce Development Council**

  Wilder staff attended all four of the theme-related convenings organized by GWDC between November 2003 and August 2004 and used a structured observation tool to collect information about grantees' attendance, interest, and reactions. Points of observation also included evidence of interactions between representatives of different sites and comments that indicated use (or potential use) of information from convenings in program operations.

Model: Elements of success for workforce development

Despite many differences, all the Families Forward grantees are testing service delivery models to help low-income workers gain skills to qualify them to earn more in order to better support their families. To help examine how grantees match service strategies to participants' needs and what they are learning from doing this work, this report incorporates the following hypothesis:[2]

To advance in their employment level and earnings, low-wage incumbent workers need:

- **Dreams:** A vision of their higher potential, and a conviction that it is realistically possible for them to achieve it.

  This element includes such participant attributes as motivation and attitude, as well as the work that programs do to help participants identify suitable career paths.

- **Skills:** A chance to learn and practice new skills to qualify for higher-level work.

  This element includes basic academic skills (such as reading, writing, and calculating), work skills called "hard skills" that are specific to a particular job or occupation (such as machine tool operation, patient care, or construction skills), and

[2] This hypothesis was formulated by staff of the Governor's Workforce Development Council and jointly developed with McKnight and Wilder staff. Interestingly, it matches very closely with a model that has since been published as one of the *conclusions* of a study in another skills learning area (science education): *Engagement, Capacity and Continuity: A Trilogy For Student Success*, by Eric J. Jolly, Patricia B. Campbell, and Lesley Perlman, September 2004 (http://www.smm.org/ecc/ecc_paper.pdf).

the more transferable "soft skills" that contribute to consistent and on-time attendance and effective performance on the job (such as basic organization and life management skills, communication, and teamwork). It also includes English language skills, especially (but not only) for those who do not speak English as a native language.

- **Opportunities:** Employers who are willing to hire them, to invest in their skills, and to provide opportunities for job advancement.

  This element includes job openings for those who are not already employed, on-the-job training and support for employees' own personal investment in skill-building, and the availability of higher-paid positions for employees who have demonstrated increased in competence.

- **Convergence:** A way to ensure that all three of the above elements not only happen, but happen together.

  This element includes support services that help link motivated workers to skill training opportunities they could not otherwise access, provide or link participants to supports (such as child care, housing assistance, or counseling) to help them successfully complete the program, link trained participants to employers, or educate employers about effective ways to help encourage their entry-level employees to be as productive as possible.

Different programs include emphases on different parts of this model, reflecting their varying contexts, purposes, and mix of participants. In this report, we apply this model chiefly in our analysis of programs' approaches to the planning and delivery of services.

Cluster analysis

The large number of sites and relatively small number of participants per site make it unrealistic to attempt an evaluation that links individual programs to participants' outcomes. However, four clusters of sites can be described based on their main approaches to recruiting and training participants. Using information provided by grantees in site visits and surveys of site leaders, supplemented with information from participants in the follow-up interviews, research staff have classified 17 programs as described below. In some cases, programs could be classified in either of two different clusters depending on relative weighting of different features or adjustments made in program strategies. One site, whose participants are not included in this evaluation, was not classified. In addition, two grantees have teamed together to offer services jointly to a subset of their participants; this combined program has been classified for analysis as an 18th "site."

- **Individualized cluster:** Participants are identified one by one and served according to individual needs and interests; training opportunities are not restricted to certain pre-determined strands or sectors.
    - HIRED
    - West Central (Year 1)
    - Communities Investing in Families
    - Women Achieving New Directions (WAND)
- **Sectoral clusters:** Training and employment opportunities are focused in specific industry sectors; participants enter the program individually (i.e. not through employers) and enroll in training programs designed to meet needs of identified industry sectors.

  This group is subdivided according to the balance of focus on specific work-related training vs. attention to supports to reduce training and employment barriers.

- **Sectoral-lower support cluster**: Some assistance is typically provided to help participants stay in the program and/or job, but most program effort is focused on addressing participants' education and training needs and solving work-related (rather than personal) problems.
    - Anoka
    - MN-BUILD
    - Workforce Development, Inc.
    - Teamworks
- **Sectoral-higher support cluster:** Considerable assistance is provided to help participants resolve personal and family barriers to program participation, work readiness, and/or job retention.
    - Health Careers Institute East
    - Goodwill/Easter Seals
    - International Institute
    - Teamworks / West Central
    - West Central (Years 2-3)[3]
    - Women Venture

[3] In the West Central program, the model for recruiting participants and linking them with training opportunities changed substantially from the first to the second year of the grant. Therefore, participants who entered the program in the first year are categorized as being in the individualized cluster and participants who entered this program in the second and third years are categorized as being in the sectoral-higher support cluster.

- **Employer-based cluster:** Participants are identified through employers and served through employers, based on existing job status.
    - Dakota
    - Hennepin Technical College
    - Southern Minnesota Initiative Foundation
    - Stearns-Benton

The unclassified program is operated by Capital City Properties, in conjunction with Family Services Employee Resources and Employer Services, Inc. It includes aspects of employer-based programs, in that participants are identified and served through employers, as well as aspects of individualized programs, in that participants are identified and served one by one based on unique individual circumstances, rather than by addressing common training needs of many people as a group.

These clusters do not capture the full range of variation among programs. For example, the programs that directly target the needs of English language learners are found both in the employer-based cluster and in the sectoral clusters. Also, while sectoral-higher support and individualized programs are more likely than employer-based and sectoral-lower support programs to identify and train participants in groups, the latter clusters exhibit a range of approaches, especially in the degree to which the delivery of support services is individualized. This range of variation is more fully described later in this report in terms of both program strategies and participants' characteristics.

Analysis of participant-to-program match

The range of variation in the initiative's program types and in characteristics and needs of participants illustrates the range of programs and needs that currently exist in Minnesota. The great variety is confusing to "customers," including workers looking for skill enhancement and employers looking for programs to help them increase the skills of their workers or to find new employees who are trained for jobs they have available. The customer's dilemma is not merely to find a training program at all, but to choose from the many available programs the one that will best suit his or her needs.

In this third year of the Families Forward initiative, we have examined outcomes for participants compared to their self-reported levels of need for support services. Our hope in this analysis was to see whether the match between these needs and the services available might be related to job outcomes. If so, sorting customers into programs according to knowledge of support needs and support services might be a helpful way of matching participants to programs to promote effective use of resources and maximize outcomes.

As a measure of participants' level of need, we used information from the new three-month follow-up survey to classify participants based on selected personal and family challenges – which are also common employment barriers – during the six months preceding their entry into the program. This measure allowed us to classify 42 percent of all participants in the evaluation records to date[4] into roughly even thirds that we characterize as having high, medium, or low levels of need, based on the number and types of self-reported personal and employment barriers they experienced in the six months prior to enrollment. Since the classification of programs into clusters is based in part on the amount of support service offered to help participants with participation or job retention, we hypothesized that the participant's level of need might be a useful method for matching programs and participants.

Participants with "high needs" were those who had experienced one or more of three crisis-level needs during the six months prior to starting the program, including:

- Homelessness
- Domestic violence
- Serious health problems that prevented them from working for at least two weeks

Participants with "low needs" were those who had experienced none of these crisis-level problems, and none or one of a list of nine other employment barriers that can also be potential sources of personal and family instability, including:

- Unreliable child care
- Unreliable transportation
- Problems with credit
- Problems from a criminal record or DUI (driving under the influence of alcohol or drugs)
- Health problems that interfered with work but did not entirely prevent it
- Problems with chemical dependency
- A household income at or below the federal poverty line
- Low social support (measured by four or fewer positive responses on a scale of six items)

[4] These 42 percent are those who have completed the new three-month follow-up survey, which includes 74 percent of those entering the program after December 2002.

- More than one prior experience of discrimination in the workplace

Participants were classified as having "medium needs" if they had no crisis-level problems but had two or more of these more moderate problems in the six months prior to starting the program.

The levels-of-need classification is limited by its inability to incorporate unmeasured factors, such as motivation or soft skills, that are cited by many program leaders as important for the quality of the participant-to-program match.

Challenges and lessons learned for operating programs

This section concerns the experiences of programs in the third year of Families Forward. Based on in-depth interviews with program leaders and staff of the GWDC, it describes the program models as they were at the start of the third year of the initiative, the changes they have made over the course of the past year, and what program leaders have learned about what it takes to work effectively with participants, employers, and other players in the workforce development system.

Program structures at the start of the third year

As described earlier, this evaluation classifies programs into four model types, based on their main approaches to recruiting and training participants (pages 29-30). The second year evaluation report included detailed descriptions of each program's purposes, operational partners, and main activities. The reader is referred to these for review: the detail there reveals the extent of variation that is hidden when they are grouped into clusters. Furthermore, the programs' purposes have not changed since the 2003 report. This report will describe changes in program operations since the last report, and reasons for the changes, but these changes tend to reflect flexibility in how to accomplish their work rather than major changes in the work itself.

All programs but two (WAND and Capital City) include training in job-specific "hard skills," with total hours of training ranging from 16 (Dakota) to 2,880 (Anoka, estimated average). Employer-based programs tend to include fewer total hours, with a range from 16 in Dakota's program to 30 in Southern Minnesota Initiative Foundation's program. Sectoral programs are mostly in the range of 150 to 200 total hours, although the Nursing Assistant program at International Institute offers 300 total hours of training. Individualized programs are harder to put numbers to, but they are more likely to include enrollment in one or more semesters of community college courses, and hence to add up to higher total training hours.

Most program leaders report that the training lasts for less than three months. This is true for all employer-based programs and all the sectoral programs except Anoka. The programs that direct many participants into college courses (Anoka, West Central in its first year, and Communities Investing in Families) describe their durations as variable or long. East Metro Health Careers Institute, though offering training through college courses, describes the duration as three months, the approximate length of one semester.

Programs also vary in the different kinds of trainings offered. In addition to specific job skills, all except Communities Investing in Families reported in 2003 that they also provide soft skills training. Most reported that all participants receive this training; Anoka and Allina reported that a few would receive it. Three of the four employer-based programs provide English-language training to all participants. A few other programs make it available to some as needed, but not as the core element of the program. Basic academic skills training such as reading or math also tend to be offered by some programs to those who are found to need such skill development.

There is significant variation among programs in the nature of the managing organization. Nonprofits are the leaders in just over half (nine) of the programs, with public entities (counties and/or local WorkForce Centers) managing four, philanthropic organizations managing two (counting the West Central/Teamworks partnership as a separate program), and a public community college leading one. There is some sorting by cluster in this respect: the nonprofits manage most of the individualized and sectoral programs, but none of the employer-based programs. The public and philanthropic organizations, in addition to their concentration in the employer-based programs, are also each represented in two of the other three clusters.

In addition to variations in program management, there is also a striking range in the extent to which lead organizations plan, oversee, and provide services by themselves or in conjunction with other organizations. Ten of the 17 report that they consider at least one educational institution (community college, private technical institute, adult basic education consortium) as a partner in their operations, and nine report that such institutions help to provide services to their grantees. These partnerships and service associations are not typical to any particular cluster or clusters, but rather are spread evenly among the clusters. The density of nonprofit involvement appears to be strongly related to the importance of support services in a program. Nearly all individualized and sectoral programs include or are led by nonprofits, while only one employer-based program mentioned a nonprofit partner. Furthermore, the number of such partners is significantly higher in the sectoral-higher support cluster than in the individualized cluster, which in turn is somewhat higher than in the sectoral-lower support cluster.

Thirteen programs report that employers or business associations are partners in their program, and eight report that they have an agreement with at least one business to train their employees, or for the firm to hire the workers the program trains; at least two more programs do not have any formal arrangement of this sort, but have close relationships with employers who can be relied on to be interested in their trainees. The programs with close relationships with employers are spread across all program types, although they naturally concentrate especially in the employer-based cluster.

Modifications made in the third year

In what was either their second or third year in the Families Forward initiative, the modifications that grantees made can be generally understood as adjustments, with few instances of program operations being significantly revamped. The notable exceptions to this generalization are the partnership formed by MN-BUILD and Women Venture to address separate enrollment concerns, and the refocusing of Capital City's model from a portable EAP (Employee Assistance Program) for employees from multiple employers to an expanded EAP for one employer designed to follow participating workers should they happen to leave.

Recruitment, intake, and assessment

The majority of changes in recruitment, intake, and assessment that grantees made in the third year were part of attempts to either expand enrollment or focus enrollment in response to new market conditions. The former was more evident for programs involved in the construction industry, in which entry-level positions became much scarcer over the course of the initiative. The latter was more evident for health care projects, largely as a response to the job market for entry-level positions becoming far more competitive, compelling programs to focus more on training participants for higher levels of employment within the industry. A handful of grantees also deliberately enrolled participants viewed as more ready to take advantage of training, which implies fewer barriers.

Two sectoral-higher support programs have implemented additional assessment measures in order to better understand the assets and barriers of their participants. Both programs' changes in assessment came as a result of their work with GWDC: one with a new assessment tool acquired at a GWDC convening, the other through for-fee assistance addressing recruitment concerns.

Multiple metro area grantees noted that, while not the result of deliberate effort on their part, enrollment by immigrants and people of color was on the rise.

Training

Excepting the transfer of the Women Venture's hard skills training component to MN-BUILD, the data suggest that grantees have relatively high confidence that participants are attaining the hard skills necessary to attain the desired job outcomes. This is evident from the general lack of modifications made by grantees to their hard skills training methods. However, the training targeted towards specific job positions has been affected by changes in the job market: for instance, with far fewer jobs available for bricklayers, phlebotomists, and CNAs, programs have adapted the frequency and focus of training offered to match the new economic reality.

On the other hand, several grantees in the individualized and sectoral clusters took steps to enhance or intensify their soft skills training. In a competitive job market, grantees have noted that the bar is raised for the competencies required of their participants to attain the desired job outcomes. Consequently, some grantees that were already providing soft skills training modified the content conveyed to participants in order to address the apparent gaps in their employability, in ways ranging from training in workplace conflict management to encouraging dreams.

Gaps in soft skills have been noted especially for those with the least experience in the American workforce, including both immigrants and younger workers.

Support services

Some programs in the individualized and sectoral higher support clusters have expanded the support services they provide to participants, or made more concerted attempts to expand the supports available to participants by connecting them with community resources. Changes in opportunities provided within the program itself all fall under the general umbrella of supportive personal relationships: programs have taken steps to expand personal counseling, peer support groups, and mentorship services. As for community resources, some grantees report making more use of community mentorship programs, childcare services, and the resources available at WorkForce Centers.

Relationships with employers

While many grantees reported that they have sought to cultivate relationships with employers, and that the relationships they have with employers at present have deepened and strengthened, the form of relationships between programs and employers has largely remained the same. However, some programs with established employers have moved towards relocating some services to the job sites in order to expand efficiency or utilization.

What grantees have learned along the way

Over the three years of the Families Forward initiative, grantees have taken many different paths towards supporting the convergence of dreams, skills, and opportunities for low-income workers, and there are several criteria one can use to differentiate between them. As noted above, all participating grantees offer a different mix of hard skills training, soft skills training, and support services. The methods they employ to recruit, assess, and relate to participants also differ. The programs' target populations vary both in terms of the key participant characteristics selected for (e.g. immigrant

status, gender, employment status) and the specificity of focus (i.e. selective versus inclusive enrollment).

However, it can also be argued that the variation among participating programs in Families Forward belies other fundamental similarities. As can be illustrated by the "Schematic diagram of the main components of the Families Forward Initiative" (page 20), the general similarities in the characteristics of participants and desired outcomes inherent to this initiative, together with a relatively common understanding of employability in our culture, lead to what amounts to different recipes for the same dish: enhanced employment potential for underdeveloped workers.

While it is clear that not all programs are equally effective, the successes programs have had can be understood as functions of the strengths of their relationships. Naturally, the strength of the program model is important. However, the effectiveness of the model depends on the quality of the program's relationships with those who purchase its product or service (in this case with employers who hire or promote program participants) and those who can help the program accomplish its work (such as program partners or other service providers). Consequently, the most salient principle expressed by grantees is that the best way to ensure success is to cultivate healthy relationships; which for these programs includes strong relationships and basic competencies in relating with low-income workers, employers, and other players in the workforce development system.

Best practices in serving program participants

The data collected in the third year of the initiative suggest that grantees were no longer surprised by the nature of challenges that confronted them in serving low-income workers, but that many continued to adjust services in response to the depth and complexity of participant needs. As noted previously, a central dilemma for many Families Forward programs is the tension between wanting to serve those with the greatest needs while people with fewer barriers are more likely to take advantage of and be more successful in responding to opportunities to work for advancement. Grantees consistently expressed the idea that motivated, well-supported participants with good life management skills and flexible schedules were better equipped to take advantage of training opportunities. Participants with more barriers or starting from positions of greater disadvantage typically required longer periods of service and more intensity of effort. Out of the context of this central dilemma, the experiences of grantees reinforce how important it is for low-income workers across the spectrum of need to get the hard and soft skills they lack in order to have success in the workforce, and the necessity of support services when the workers' barriers would otherwise significantly impede their ability to take advantage of a training opportunity.

In general, most of the adjustments made by grantees come as a result of increasing the focus on a holistic approach, with more attention to soft skills and support services. What follows is a summary of what grantees have reported as important lessons learned in the following areas: getting started with participants, skills, support services, and more general best practices.

Getting started with participants

In general, grantees' concerns with successfully engaging participants in training centered around getting participants to believe in the value, purpose, and feasibility of the program (i.e., establishing dreams).

Several grantees expressed the importance of educating low-income workers about the feasibility of participating in training, which carries with it two critically important points: first, that some outreach and marketing is necessary in order to get potential participants to become open to the possibility of participating in training; second, that program participation really needs to be feasible for low-income workers in order for that case to be made.

The fact that all programs reported structuring the intake process to select motivated participants indicates that even programs that focus explicitly on developing the dreams of their participants and supporting low-income workers with serious barriers to successful job outcomes try to screen out people who do not demonstrate some basic level of functioning and intention to take the program seriously. This can be understood as a continuation of the finding noted elsewhere that many program staff structure the training relationship with a more supportive version of workplace norms in mind. Another implication is that there is a significant proportion of low-income workers who are effectively beyond the reach of programs like Families Forward at any given time.

Given the difficulty that can be involved in getting or keeping participants motivated, some grantees stressed the importance of training them for existing jobs. This requires a detailed awareness of the local job market, and can be aided by a program's relationships with employers. However, several grantees reported that in what has been a tight job market in many industries, low-income workers were resistant to looking beyond retaining their current jobs. Some grantees who confronted this problem indicated a belief that, with training in appropriate soft skills, some low-income workers can be helped to make a case with their employers to gain their support for further development and advancement.

Beyond the relationships directly between grantees and employers, it is also worth noting that for the participants themselves incumbent worker training happens in the context of employment, whether or not their present employers are involved in their training. Some

participants have, or can attain, the advantages of a supportive employer, which range from a willingness to fund or subsidize, to granting flexibility in order for employees to participate in training, to expressing an interest in an employee's development. Some programs with emphases on support services have indicated that the potential for support from employers is often underestimated by low-income workers, and a combination of encouragement for the participant and the employer can unlock that potential. When present, grantees report that interest from employers in their employees' advancement is a great asset for low-income workers. If the participant does not perceive this interest as supportive, however, it may not be helpful. In the Capital City program, where supervisors refer poorly-functioning employees to the program for help with their problems, the service provider has been struggling to obtain enough trust and buy-in from the referred employees to conduct adequate assessments, let alone provide services.

Skills

It is generally taking longer than programs had expected for participants to reach the intended outcomes, in many cases due to unanticipated gaps in basic skills and soft skills.

First, several grantees mentioned the importance of training programs focused on basic skills, including ABE, GED programs, and ESL in getting low-income workers the basic competencies necessary to benefit from more advanced training. Beyond selling the kinds of training that they themselves provide, programs have consistently highlighted the significant value for low-income workers in developing basic skills and attaining transferable credentials. The details of these opportunities highlighted by programs generally vary on the basis of a program's specific focus, with programs alternately focused on the importance of training that provides basic skills (e.g. ABE), advanced skills (e.g. community and technical college programs), and training that is expressly responsive to specific employers or industry sectors. Some programs expressed a belief that their participants would have been better able to take advantage of their training program with a higher base skills level. However, several grantees also expressed concern that other training programs available in the area, including those for basic skills, are often made inaccessible to low-income workers by long waiting lists, high financial costs, inflexible schedules, and a lack of support services. Generally, grantees believe that these barriers have become more severe since the initiative began.

Second, in keeping with the adjustments programs have made in the third year to their soft skills curricula, most of the lessons grantees reported learning around training issues concerned participants' soft skills. Grantees repeatedly stressed the significance of soft skills training in getting participants to have appropriate expectations about the workplace. In particular, sectoral programs highlighted the importance of ensuring that participants

are brought to understand the full reality of working in industries such as health care and construction.

In terms of other relevant soft skills, grantees report that conflict management and other matters of interpersonal relations in the office environment have emerged as soft skills gaps for immigrants. This concern is especially relevant given that several grantees reported increased enrollment by immigrants, largely independent of any deliberate change in recruitment strategy. Without experience serving immigrant low-income workers, grantees have found it difficult to communicate the goals of the program to them, and in making training programs effective for new Americans.

Support services, and prominent barriers of special concern

Programs providing support services have found that the following methods are especially effective in serving low-income workers with high personal barriers to workplace success:

- Peer support (as a way to keep participants motivated while they look for a job) and one-on-one attention (as a key for job retention and advancement) both have benefits for low-income workers.

- Individualized and sectoral-higher support programs stressed the importance of building support systems that participants lack and working incrementally – training in small steps, and rewarding small successes.

- Individualized programs report increased use of community resources as a way to extend the kinds and levels of supports they can provide themselves. In doing this, a detailed knowledge of the resources available for participants is important so that programs can make appropriate and specific referrals.

- Some grantees believe that participants are more likely to take advantage of services if they are located at the job site itself.

Programs that provide high levels of support services report the following challenges in providing adequate supports to specific populations:

- As noted previously, lack of reliable transportation continues to be a debilitating barrier if left unaddressed, especially for rural low-income workers.

- Establishing dreams and support systems is a pressing challenge for those who have experienced generational poverty.

- For participants who do not find employment immediately after completing the program, some grantees report that keeping them motivated requires energy and deliberate attention by the program.

Organizational assets

Overall, grantees across the clusters stressed the following organizational attributes and aptitudes in serving low-income workers:

- Staff stability
- A skill set match between staff on the ground and the specific population served (e.g. cultural competence for serving growing immigrant service populations)
- Flexibility in responding to participants' needs, especially in response to the time constraints of workers in low-income families
- Organizational flexibility in responding to changes in the local economy

Best practices in working with employers

The programs of the Families Forward Initiative interact with employers in a number of different ways:

- For individualized programs and other programs with job placement and retention components, programs often work with participants' supervisors to work out issues that may arise, or in order to develop receptivity to supporting individual participant's training needs.
- Some programs contract directly with employers to provide specified training services, in which some employers identify the participants themselves.
- Several programs have business advisory councils to help prioritize skill training needs and shape curricula. Businesses on these councils may also be important resources for job placements for program graduates.
- Other programs have more informal relationships and understandings with employers established through regional events, or as a consequence of an established public reputation for service delivery.

Even if a hypothetical program operated completely without contact between program staff and employers, program staff are compelled to take the local economic climate into account in order to move participants towards successful employment. The bottom line for workforce intermediaries is whether there is a market for their product, which in most

cases can be considered workers with certain skills and abilities enhanced by the program. This model-to-market match is affected by all characteristics of the regional economy, including the composition of the local workforce, industries, and education and training system.

Accordingly, most grantees express a belief that cultivating relationships with employers is crucial to the success of their programs. Their characterizations of how employers operate are generally unified on a few key points:

- Employers need and want skilled, productive workers
- Barring a pronounced workforce shortage affecting their business specifically, most employers will continue their current hiring, training, and retention practices
- Most employers will not volunteer to bear the costs of worker development alone

Furthermore, engaging with employers involves confronting a dynamic similar to the one noted above for engaging participants: just as most programs must avoid extremes of over- and under-preparedness among applicants and thus seek to serve participants with surmountable barriers to successful job outcomes, they must also seek employers in need of help but whose needs are not too great to serve effectively. Many employers of low-income workers are either wholly unreceptive to the prospects of worker investment or already have supportive work environments and career ladders in place. It is not surprising, therefore, that Families Forward grantees have generally encountered more difficulty than expected in developing relationships with employers.

However, it is important to note that by virtue of the different work they do, workforce development programs can be expected to have different opinions than employers about what employers need. The data suggest that Families Forward grantees are more conscious than employers are of the forecasts of a worker shortage, and the general need for (and economic value in) developing a skilled workforce. Consequently, grantees express urgency in developing low-income workers, and especially non-traditional workers such as immigrants, in terms that convey a sense that most employers do not presently share these same concerns.

Out of this general context of different organizational perspectives, however, all Families Forward programs report positive growth in their relationships with employers. The data suggest that it takes organizational aptitude to maintain and strengthen relationships with employers, and that programs of all model types have developed that aptitude over the course of the initiative. The process of building and maintaining functional relationships with employers takes real time and effort that cannot be short-cut: time to develop an effective business case and clearly describe the goals of the program; time at the front end

to develop an understanding of the business, build trust, and reach a clear understanding of what the relationship will entail; and time throughout the operation of the program to nurture the relationship and troubleshoot. This work essentially requires workforce service providers, who are typically public or nonprofit organizations, to become conversant with the entirely different culture in which for-profit organizations operate.

Grantees highlight the following factors and strategies as crucial to successfully relating to employers:

- In selecting employers to work with, look for larger employers with many entry-level jobs, internal advancement potential, and the capacity to sustain training costs
- Identify or develop a "champion" of the project within the firm, with sufficient influence within the business, and enough time available to devote to the project
- Try to embody the following virtues: honesty, flexibility, availability, creativity, and responsiveness
- Increase buy-in by employers by getting employers involved with as many aspects of program execution as possible (i.e. planning, event hosting, marketing)
- In the manufacturing industry especially, work around production schedules, which entails making training schedules more flexible
- Make the arrangements as convenient for the employer as possible: this would include the balance of responsibilities, scheduling, and the location of program services.
- Be prepared to work at clarifying model and partner responsibilities
- Be constantly aware of employers' focus on their own bottom line

In addition, grantees report that the following barriers to highly functioning relationships are to be expected in working with employers.

- Even employers who see the positive business results of investing in their employees (i.e. higher retention rates, increased productivity) may not be willing to do so if they will bear all of the costs up front.
- Multiple grantees mention encountering resistance on the part of employers to incorporating soft skills training and support services into training programs. This may be due to traditional understandings of the relevant content of on-the-job training and the conceptual distinction of personal and business concerns. However, one

grantee with a program focusing on customer service employment experienced nearly the opposite, and was prompted by their business partners to pilot a new program for ethnic minority soft skills training. We hypothesize that business partners were able to see the value of such training because soft skills can be reframed as the specifically job-relevant "hard skills" in customer service jobs.

- According to multiple grantees, employers can have unrealistic expectations for the timeframe in which results can be seen. However, some grantees were successful in finding employers that were willing to accept some short-term training costs in a mutually acceptable time frame, even in the midst of a difficult economic climate.

Despite the difficulties of nurturing relationships with employers in a challenging economic climate, grantees report significant gains in their connections with local employers. About half of the grantees mention that employers have come to view them as resources, and have come to view entry-level or non-traditional workers in a more positive light. Several others report that employers with whom the formal business arrangement has ended are continuing to carry out the training programs instituted by the grantees, or have made other lasting changes as a result of the initial arrangement (for example, an employer committed to developing its own workforce rather than continually recruiting new workers). In some cases, grantees report that the relationship begun with the Families Forward grant will continue, with employer contributions or other funding, beyond the grant period, either with the same employer or with new ones. Several grantees report that positive relationships with employers have yielded their own organization a demonstrable understanding of a specific industry, which in turn becomes an asset that can inform new relationships with other employers in that industry.

How to relate to peer organizations

The experiences of Families Forward grantees have demonstrated the following values of establishing relationships with other service providers.

- **Extension of available support services:** With relationships and understandings with other local service providers (e.g. child care services, public supports, mentoring programs), the ability of a program to promote the development of participants is extended beyond the competencies of (and resources available to) that program.

- **Coping mechanism in challenging economic climate:** In a competitive and tumultuous funding environment, establishing relationships with other service providers and developing a collaborative model can be an effective way to build and maintain a presence in the field, and to focus on specific core competencies of the organization.

- **System change in a local sense**: Multiple programs that involve partnerships with WorkForce Centers, community colleges, and technical colleges report that the programs, practices, and priorities within other training systems have been influenced by exposure to a Families Forward program. For example, two grantees report improved communication between technical colleges and local WorkForce Centers, or the adoption of key assessment tools by the WorkForce Center.

- **Peer support**: As evidenced by the perceived benefits of collegial support by some of the attendees of GWDC convenings, training and supporting low-income workers is taxing work, and having colleagues can enhance a broader sense of purpose.

While there are often clear benefits to connecting with peer organizations, there are pitfalls involved as well. As with relationships with employers, establishing formal collaborations with other service providers can make a program vulnerable to being impacted by the financial and operational health of another organization. In particular, working with organizations that are part of hierarchical structures, and consequently have limited control over their own financial destiny (such as local affiliates of larger organizations or local programs in the public sector), can lead to abrupt changes in the financial outlook of the partnership.

Effects of McKnight funding

As a result of the grants, program leaders report that new services have been introduced for regions or specific populations that previously lacked training opportunities, and that existing training programs have been strengthened. Grantees require additional funding not only to introduce but also to maintain most of these services and improvements, so many may not be sustained beyond the grant period unless new sources of funding are found. However, grantees also widely cited the value of new relationships that the initiative promoted – not only among grantees, but also with MnSCU, adult basic education consortia, WorkForce Centers, employers, and GWDC – and these relationships are likely to carry over into any future workforce programs that grantees are able to continue.

Grantees are about evenly mixed in their opinions on whether or not workforce policy has been affected by the initiative, or is likely to be. Several grantees cited effects on local and regional economic development or planning that are likely to have continuing effects. These include not only the ripple effects of programs' specific employer and worker development but also some greater awareness by decision-makers of the plight of families who depend on low-wage work, and the importance of worker training.

At the state level, several grantees feel that GWDC's involvement in the Families Forward initiative has shaped the work that GWDC does in state policy development, and

that (as one grantee expressed it) "Families Forward has changed the character of the debate [about] what it will take in the area of workforce development for Minnesota to stay globally competitive."

Effects of technical assistance provided through the Governor's Workforce Development Council

In addition to sponsoring the activities of the grantees, The McKnight Foundation also contracted with the Governor's Workforce Development Council (GWDC) staff to assist programs in carrying out their plans. Over the three years of their involvement with Families Forward, GWDC staff have affected the initiative on three different levels:

Individual sites. Through site-specific assistance, provided directly by GWDC staff or brokered by GWDC through other consultants, they have helped sites address implementation and sustainability challenges. With their help sites have addressed issues internal to program operations as well as made connections to other partners and resources.

The initiative as a whole. GWDC has also convened grantees. Through overall and more topically-focused events, these convenings have provided not only specific content knowledge, but also fostered networking and sharing of implementation challenges and learnings among the leaders and staff of different programs.

Minnesota's workforce development system overall. GWDC staff have incorporated the learnings of Families Forward into their work with the Governor's Workforce Development Council and its working committees, and have brought staff from a number of Families Forward programs into active participation on these committees.

They have also developed products to make available to a wider audience what has been learned from this initiative about effective workforce development. The GWDC web site **(www.gwdc.org/families-forward.htm)** presents, in greater detail, key findings and case studies about operating skill development programs.

Program experiences and outcomes for participants

This section presents information collected from participants about:

- Their characteristics and needs at the time they began the program,
- Their experiences while in the program, including the kinds of services received and how these affected their ability to also work and care for their families, and
- Their job outcomes nine months after beginning the programs.

This information offers some insights into the kinds of considerations that may affect low-income incumbent workers' access to training programs, as well as their successful participation in and completion of these programs. It also offers insights into some of the challenges that low-income workers encounter while trying to juggle training in addition to work and family.

The third part of this section presents findings about immediate employment outcomes for participants within nine months after beginning their programs. These outcomes should not be interpreted as the full accomplishments of the Families Forward programs, however. Nine months is a short period of time in which to see increases in hours, wages, or benefits based on skills training.

The final part of this section presents preliminary information about longer-term outcomes, based on two main sources: findings from a small set (N=94) of the earliest participants who have now completed a 24-month follow-up survey, and wage and hour data for a 24-month follow-up period from Wage Detail records. Also in this section, as an additional measure of longer-term outcomes, are participants' responses to a set of questions asked both at nine months and at 24 months, about five ways in which the program affected them, including giving them confidence to try new things and helping them get a better job in the future.

Participants' characteristics at intake

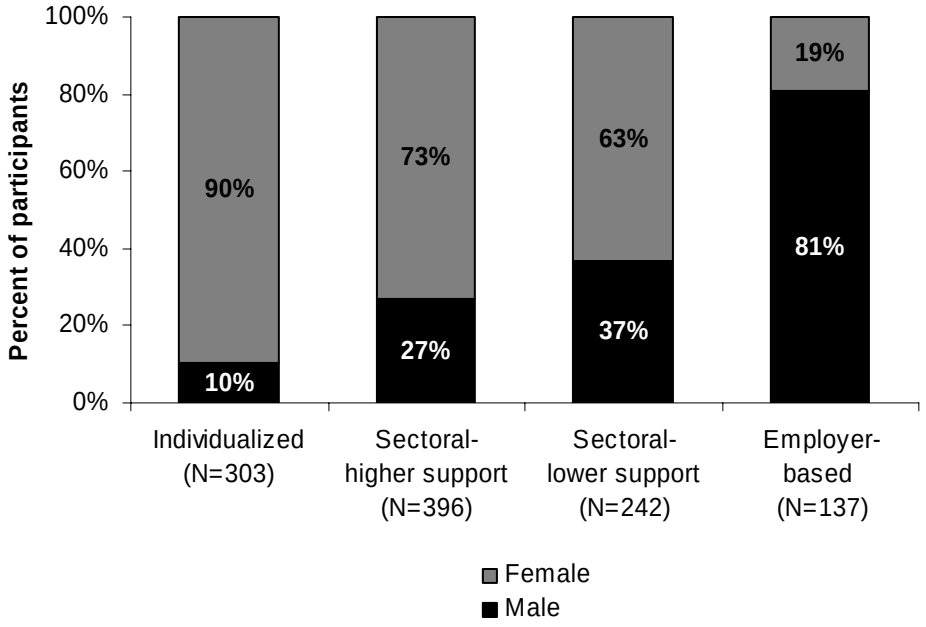
Detailed profiles of participant characteristics are included with this report, aggregated at three different levels: overall initiative, cluster, and individual program (including, where appropriate, subdivisions of programs within a single grantee site). In this section we briefly present selected demographic characteristics at the cluster level. The following section presents additional information, collected from participants' self-reports in the three-month follow-up interview, that illuminates some of the participants' challenges to maintaining stable family and work lives during the six months prior to enrollment, and

discusses how these challenges might affect program enrollment, participation, and success.

Two-thirds of participants are women

Overall, about one-third (31%) of participants are men and two-thirds (69%) are women. The proportion ranges from 10 percent male in the individualized cluster to 81 percent male in the employer-based cluster. About one-third (36%) of all participants are married, ranging from 17 percent in individualized programs to 60 percent in the employer-based cluster. Nearly all (94%) have dependent children, including 95 to 100 percent in the sectoral and individualized clusters and 64 percent in the employer-based cluster. On average, those who have children have just over two.

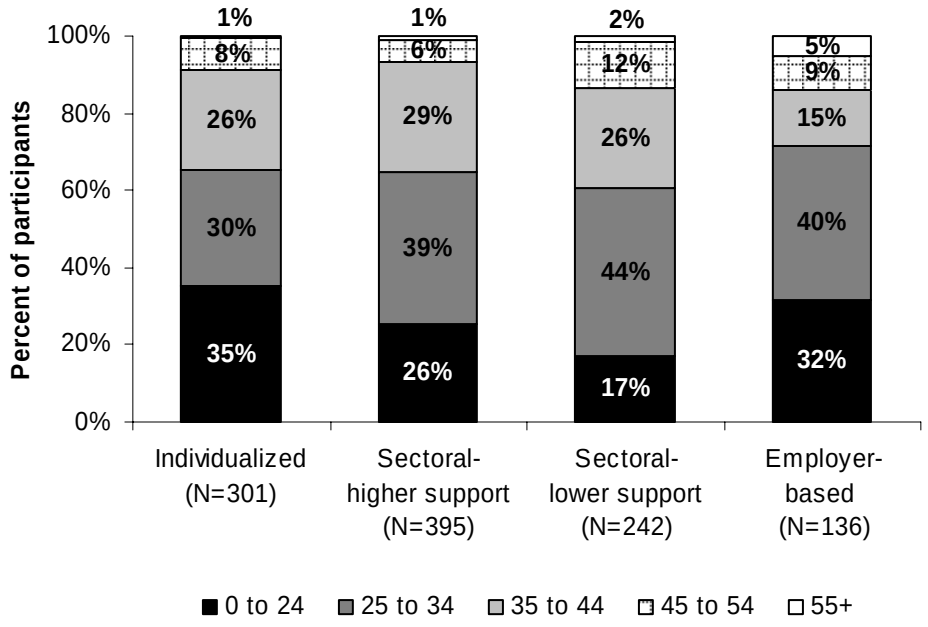
3. Participants' characteristics at intake: gender



Most participants are in their 20s and 30s

About one-quarter (27%) were 24 or younger (ranging from 35% in the individualized cluster and 32% in the employer-based cluster to 17% in the sectoral-lower support cluster). Thirty-eight percent were 25 to 34 years old and 26 percent were 35 to 44 years old. Only 10 percent were 45 or older.

4. Participants' characteristics at intake: age

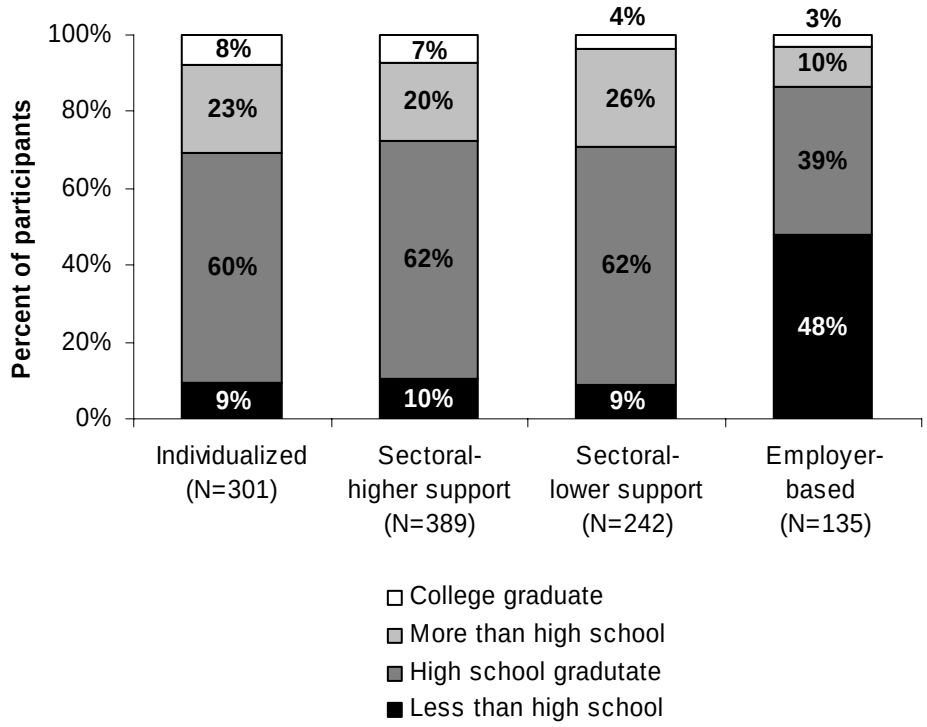


Nearly three-quarters of participants have at least a high school education

About three-quarters (73%) of participants entered the program with a high school diploma or equivalent (GED). This proportion ranges from 69 percent in the individualized cluster, to 72 to 73 percent in the sectoral clusters, and 87 percent in the employer-based cluster. Many of the employer-based programs focused on training immigrants in English language skills, which is reflected in the fact that 48 percent of participants in this cluster had less than a high school education, compared to only 9 to 10 percent of participants in the other clusters. Reflecting this same concentration of language-training programs in the employer-based cluster, while 80 to 95 percent of participants in the individualized and sectoral clusters spoke English as their primary language, only 24 percent of participants in the employer-based cluster did.[5]

[5] This proportion would be even lower if we had data for all the participants in the Hennepin Technical College programs, where the primary target population was English language learners.

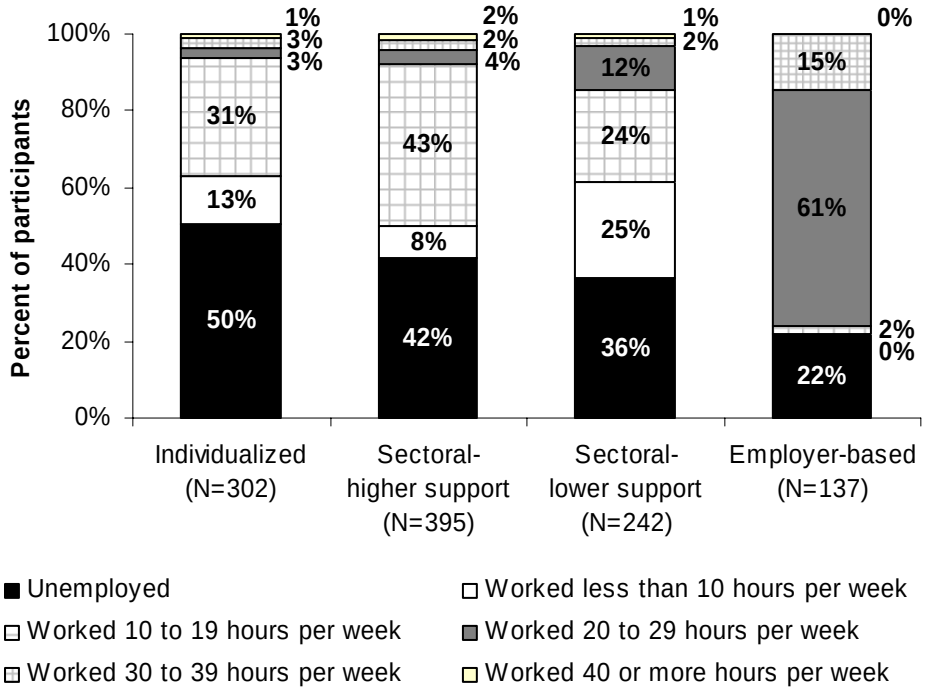
5. Participants' characteristics at intake: education level



Fewer than half of all participants are non-Hispanic Whites

There were similarly large variations in the racial composition of participants by cluster. White participants made up 50 percent of participants in the individualized cluster (reflecting the mainly rural locations of these programs), but only 22 percent in the employer-based cluster. Other than for employer-based programs that focus on language training, there appears to be little intrinsic connection between the program model and the race of participants. The variation in racial composition appears to be linked mainly to the program's location (resulting in more African American participants in the Twin Cities metro area) or the existence of a specific opportunity to work with a particular group of people (resulting in a program specifically for American Indian casino workers in northwestern Minnesota).

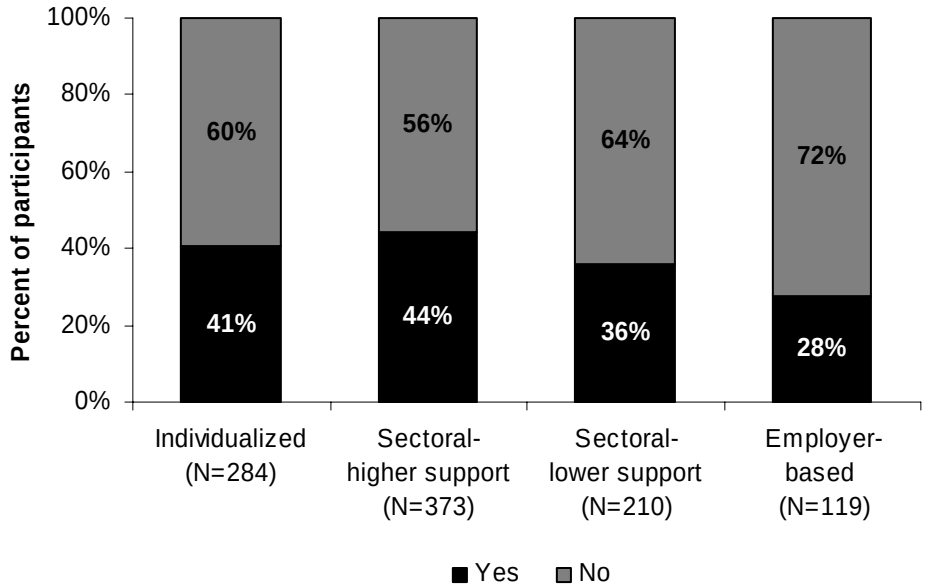
6. Participants' characteristics at intake: employment status and hours



More than one-third have prior job training

A sizable minority of participants report that they have previously been in job training programs. The proportion with prior job training history ranges from 28 percent in the employer-based cluster to 44 percent in the sectoral-higher support cluster, with an overall average of 39 percent.

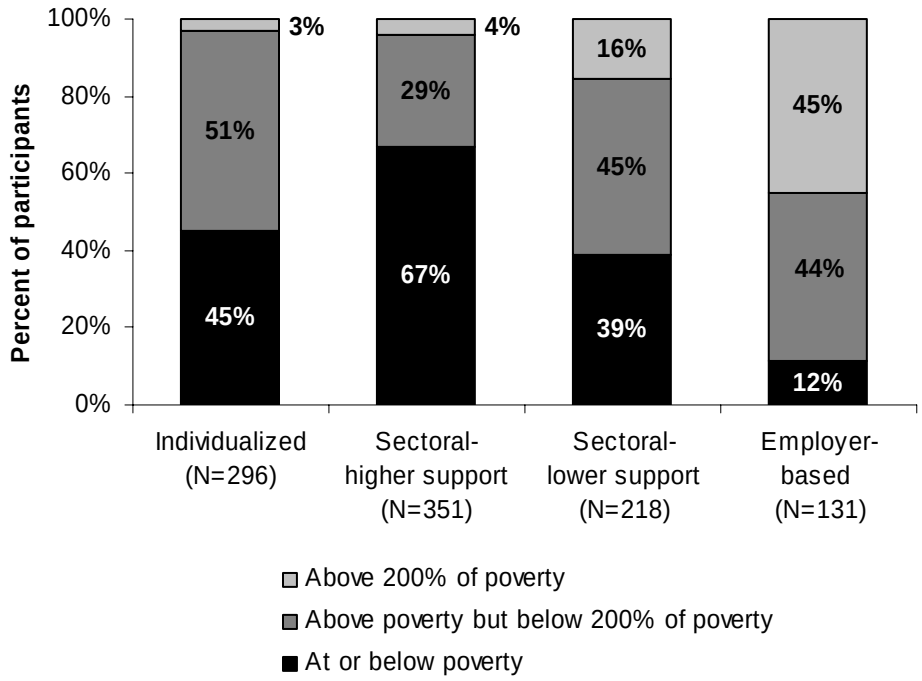
7. Participants' characteristics at intake: prior participation in job training



Nearly half of participants were living at or below poverty when they started

Roughly half (47%) of participants reported household monthly incomes at or below the poverty line at the time of intake. This proportion varied greatly by program and cluster, with 67 percent of participants in the sectoral-higher support programs in poverty, 45 percent of those in individualized programs, 39 percent of those in sectoral-lower support programs, and only 11 percent of those in employer-based programs.

8. Participants' characteristics at intake: household income level

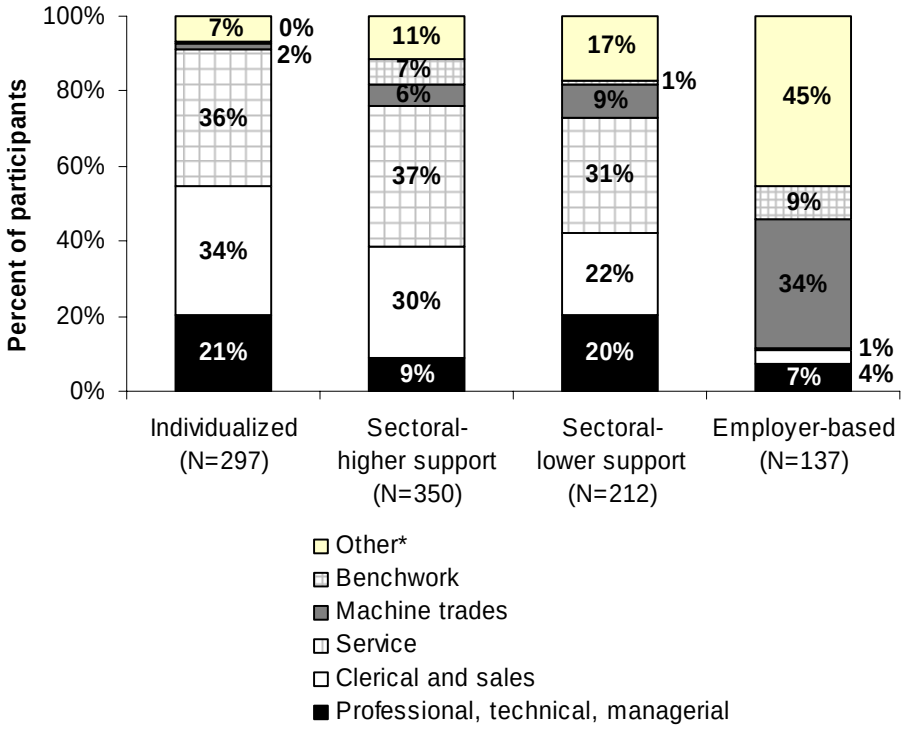


Two-thirds of participants were working when they started

About two-thirds (69%) were employed at the time they started the program. Eight percent had never been employed (none in the employer-based or individualized clusters, 5 percent in the sectoral-lower support cluster, and 10 percent in the sectoral-higher support cluster). Of those who were employed at intake, 8 percent were working more than one job. The industry sector in which participants were employed varied by cluster, with a concentration in the individualized and sectoral clusters in service, clerical and sales, and professional and technical fields,[6] while the employer-based cluster was mainly represented in machine trades, processing, and miscellaneous occupations.

[6] Job titles given by participants that are included in this classification include "assistant manager," "sanitation," and a variety of program assistants and educational and nursing aides.

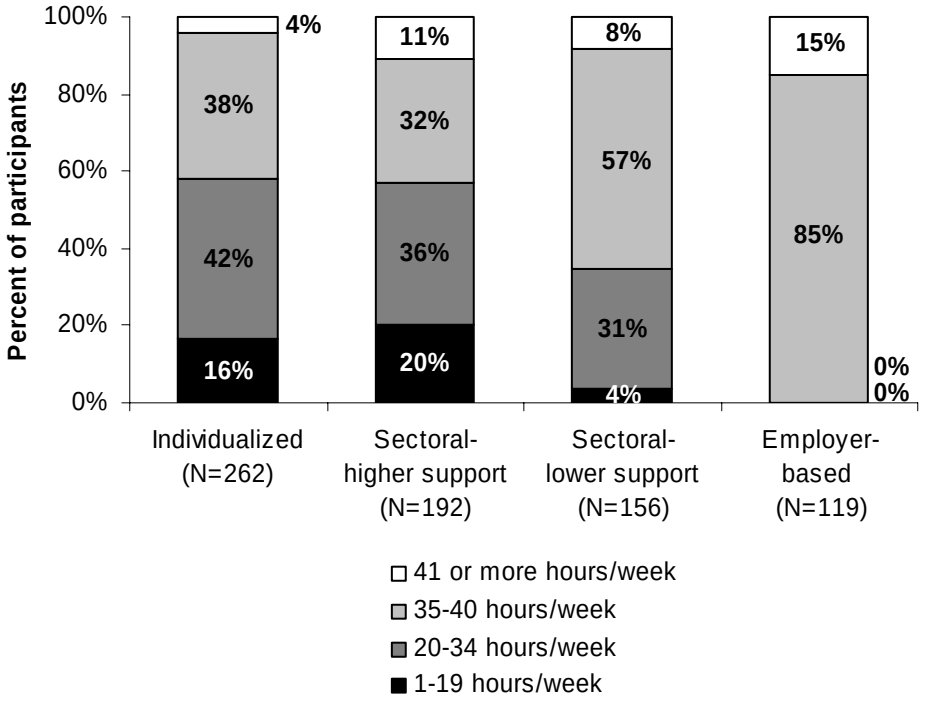
9. Participants' characteristics at intake: occupational category (for participants who were employed at intake)



Most participants were not employed full-time

Based on participants' self-reports, of those who were employed at intake, only 57 percent worked full-time (35 or more hours per week). Including only hours in the main job, the proportion is 54 percent. Including all jobs, 12 percent worked fewer than 20 hours per week, and another 31 percent worked 20 to 34 hours per week. Included in the 57 percent working full-time are 9 percent who were working 41 or more hours in a typical week.

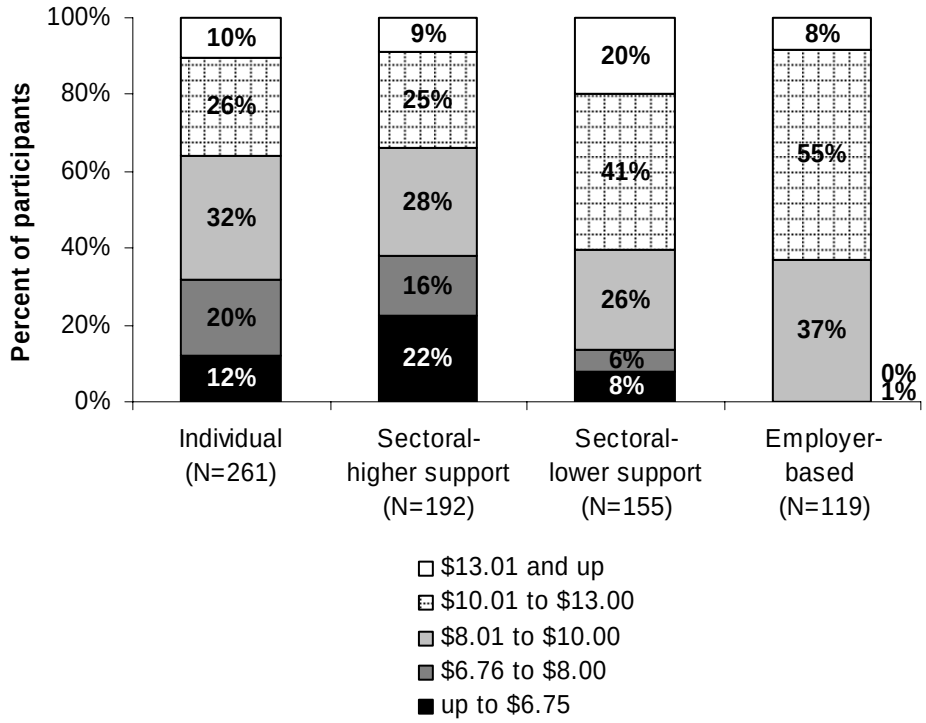
10. Participants' characteristics at intake: hours worked per week in all jobs (for participants who were employed at intake)



Wages of employed participants averaged $10.02 per hour at intake

Participants' self-reported hourly wages, at the time they began their programs, were similarly varied across the four clusters. On average, those in the individualized and sectoral-higher support clusters had the lowest starting hourly wages, with 64 and 66 percent, respectively, earning $10.00 per hour or less. Those in the sectoral-lower support and employer-based clusters were much less likely to be making $10.00 per hour or less (39 and 37%, respectively) and in the employer-based cluster there were no participants earning less than $8.00 per hour. See Figure 11.

11. Participants' characteristics at intake: hourly wages (for participants who were employed at intake)



Challenges in training, work, and parenting

In the three-month follow-up interview, participants are asked to report on 11 different personal, family, and employment barriers that they might have experienced during the six months before starting the program. These are summarized into three levels of need, as described above in the *Methods* section (page 31). In addition to these barriers, data collected in the follow-up interviews also include information about other issues that program leaders might need to consider in order to make their programs attractive and accessible to participants who have limited time and resources. These include quantitative data about participants' prior experiences with discrimination in the workplace as well as qualitative data about participants' reasons for quitting the program, and challenges in combining work, parenting, and training. There is also some self-reported information about participants' knowledge of some key soft skills (workplace norms and employer expectations for reliability and behavior) that may also relate to reliability in attending and completing program activities.

This information can help to shed light on some considerations that may affect participants' program enrollment and participation or, more generally, their successful workforce participation.

Personal and family challenges: support needs and crises

Personal and family challenges and crises appear to be a significant barrier for a large proportion of participants. These challenges could affect participants' ability or motivation to seek employment as well as their ability or motivation to participate in program activities.

Overall, in the six months before enrollment, 16 percent of participants experienced homelessness, 5 percent experienced domestic violence, and 12 percent experienced serious health problems or had someone else in their family who experienced serious health problems which prevented them from working for two weeks or more. Taken together, 30 percent of participants had experienced at least one of these crisis-level needs.

Of the other nine problems (described on pages 31-32), the most common were:

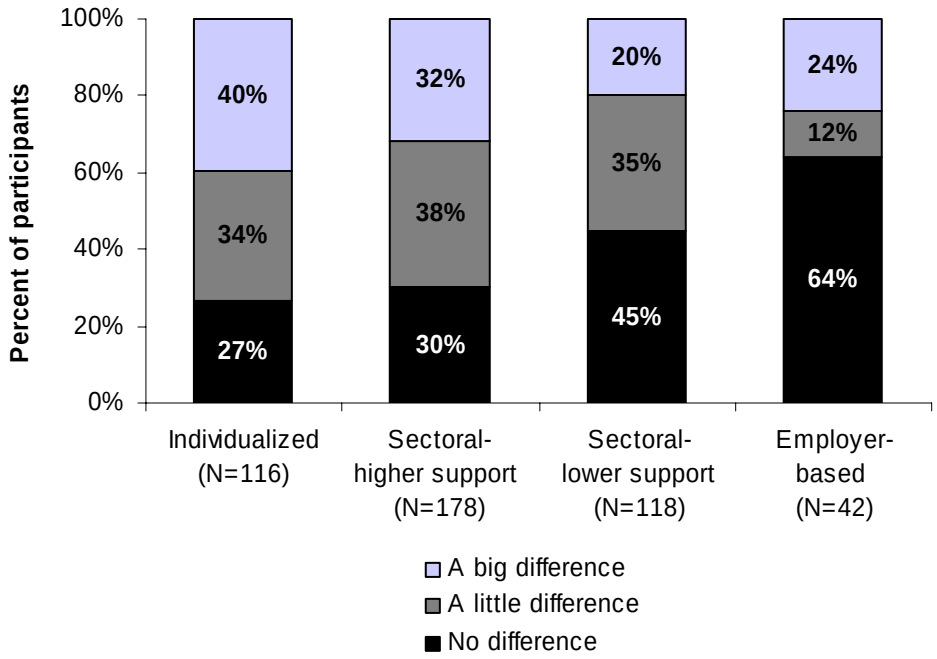
- Household income at or below the poverty level (43%)
- Low availability of social support (38%)
- Lack of reliable transportation (33%)
- Problems with credit that made it hard to get a job, a car, or housing (29%)
- Health problems for themselves or a family member that interfered with their work, school, or daily living, but did not entirely prevent working for as much as two weeks (21%)
- Lack of reliable child care (22%)
- Two or more experiences of work-related discrimination on the basis of race or ethnicity, gender, national origin, or religion (18%)

Five percent or less reported problems with a substance abuse or with criminal history (including a record of driving under the influence) that made it hard to get a job, a driver's license, or housing.

In general, participants from the individualized and sectoral-higher support clusters experienced higher rates of these problems and participants from the employer-based cluster experienced the lowest rates of these problems. Figure 12 below shows how the four clusters compare in the distribution of these challenges, aggregated into the three levels described on pages 31-32. The figure shows a clear trend from lower needs among participants in employer-based programs to highest needs in the individualized programs. However, this cluster-level aggregation masks large program-level variations in participants' support needs, especially among the sectoral-higher support programs.

(These program level variations are shown later in Figure 40, Summary of participant data by program, pages 105-107.)

12. Participants' levels of need and crisis



Upon closer examination, marital status was found to be related to participants' levels of need for support. Married participants were more likely to be categorized as having a low level of need compared to non-married participants (45% vs. 31%, respectively). Less than one-quarter (24%) of married participants were categorized as having crisis-level need compared to over one-third (34%) of non-married participants.

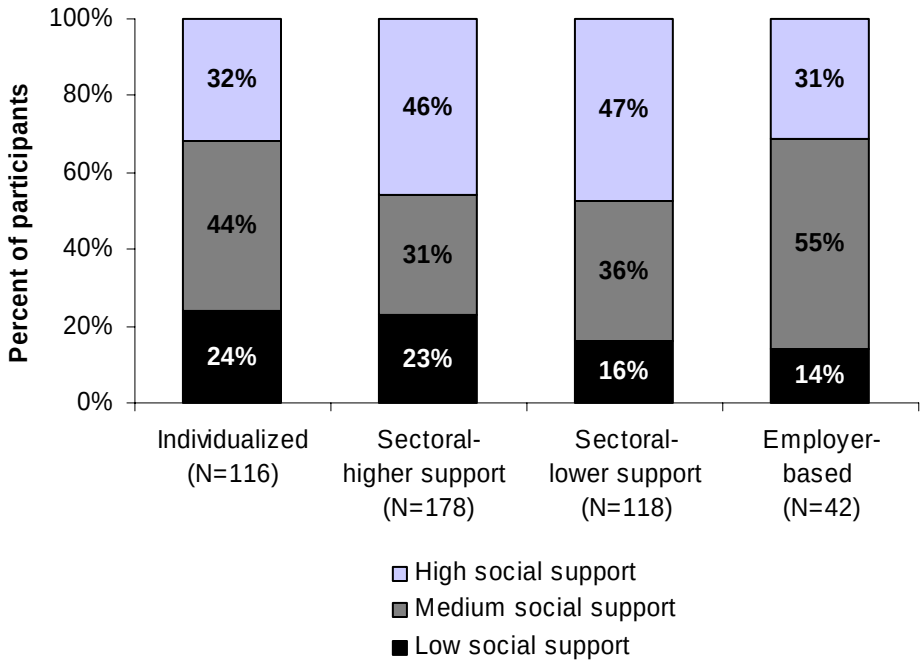
These findings indicate a significant need for support services to address participants' basic needs related to gaps in child care and transportation, credit problems, chemical dependency, and physical and mental health problems among approximately one-third of the participants in the program. Participants in the individualized and sectoral-higher support clusters and those who are unmarried are more likely to have crisis-level support needs. Participants' pre-existing needs, unless addressed through program support services, are likely to interfere with successful program enrollment and, furthermore, with program completion and career advancement.

Participants' social support

Social support during the six months before enrollment was assessed in the three-month follow-up interview by asking participants six questions about the availability of someone to provide such kinds of help as running errands if needed, giving encouragement and reassurance, watching a child for a few hours, being available to talk about an important personal problem, helping to care for you if you were confined to bed for several weeks, or providing some kind of small, immediate help (such as lending $10 or providing a ride to the doctor). Respondents were classified as having "low social support" if they reported that there was someone they could "probably" count on to help them with four or fewer of these things. Most participants have a fairly significant amount of informal social support. Nearly two-thirds (62%) report that they can rely on someone for five or more of these kinds of help, and only one-fifth (21%) of participants can reliably count on being able to get help with two or fewer of these things.

In general, participants in the individualized cluster were more likely to report having emotional support and less likely to report having concrete assistance compared to participants in the other clusters. Conversely, participants in the employer-based cluster were less likely to report having emotional assistance and more likely to report having concrete assistance compared to participants in the other clusters.

13. Participants' overall levels of social support



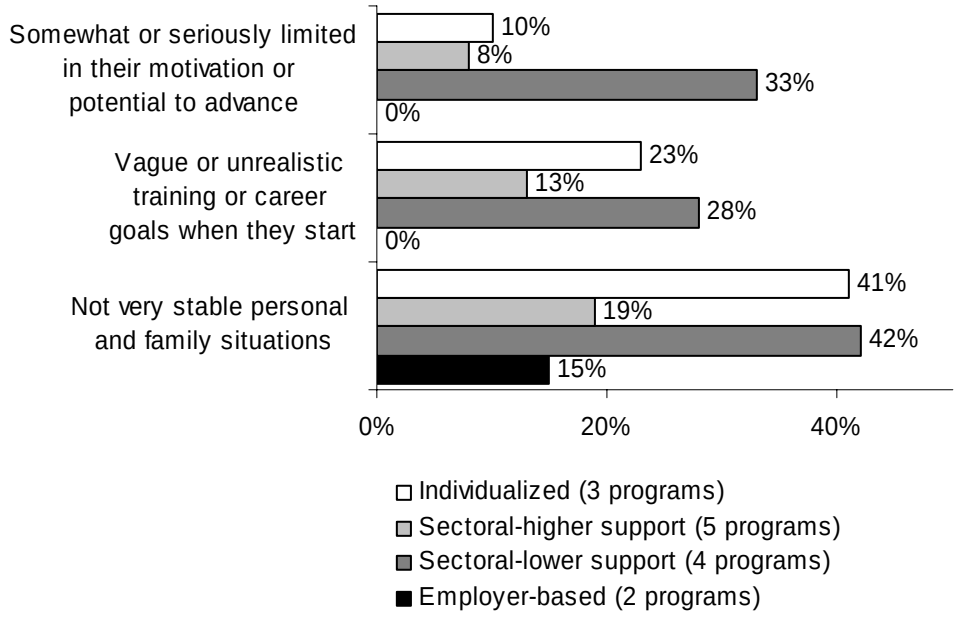
Program staff's estimates of participants' readiness for training

In the first two years of the program, program leaders repeatedly emphasized the importance of certain characteristics of participants, both for success in the program itself and for success in maintaining and advancing in their employment. Some of these characteristics were not captured in any evaluation instrument and are not amenable to collection through self-reports in surveys. These characteristics included having clear and realistic goals and being strongly motivated. Many program leaders also commented on their discovery that the individuals they were working with required more time and resources than anticipated just to achieve or maintain personal and family stability, and that accomplishing the immediate program goals often had to take lower priority for a period of time while this prerequisite of stability was achieved.

To more systematically investigate the extent of these issues and the degree to which they might affect the various programs in the initiative, the 2004 survey of program leaders included three questions asking them to describe their participants on measures of personal and family stability, realism of goals, and levels of motivation and potential, using standardized response categories. Program leaders gave a wide range of responses to these questions. Some offered very precise figures that reflected case-by-case determinations of each participant individually, while others offered much more general estimates, sometimes with qualifications that cannot be represented in a numerical summary. Some program leaders, including two in the employer-based cluster, did not feel that they knew enough about their participants to give good estimates. Such programs are not included in the aggregated estimates at all, and the figures that are included should be interpreted as rough estimates. Figure 14 below shows the results, aggregated by cluster.

The Appendix includes a full description of the response categories that were given to site leaders for grouping participants. The constructs being assessed do not have commonly agreed-upon definitions and are subject to individual judgment that may vary considerably. Thus, while some of the variation among programs and clusters may represent genuine variation among groups of participants, some is also likely to represent variation among program leaders in (for example) what they consider to be "high motivation" or what visible signs they used to determine it.

14. Program leaders' estimates of percent of participants with low levels of stability, goals, and motivation and potential at intake



Experiences with discrimination in the workplace

The findings from the current evaluation period indicate that discrimination by employers has not been a significant problem for most participants, although about one-third of participants report they have experienced discrimination that for some could potentially impact their ability or motivation to obtain employment or move up in future jobs. Female participants, those who are non-White, and (in some cases) those who are not U.S. citizens were somewhat more likely to report having experienced discrimination by employers compared to participants who are male, White, and U.S. citizens. Very few participants reported discrimination by their supervisors or employers in the job they had immediately before they started the program. However, slightly more participants reported having ever experienced discrimination in any job. When asked about any job they had ever had, participants reported that:

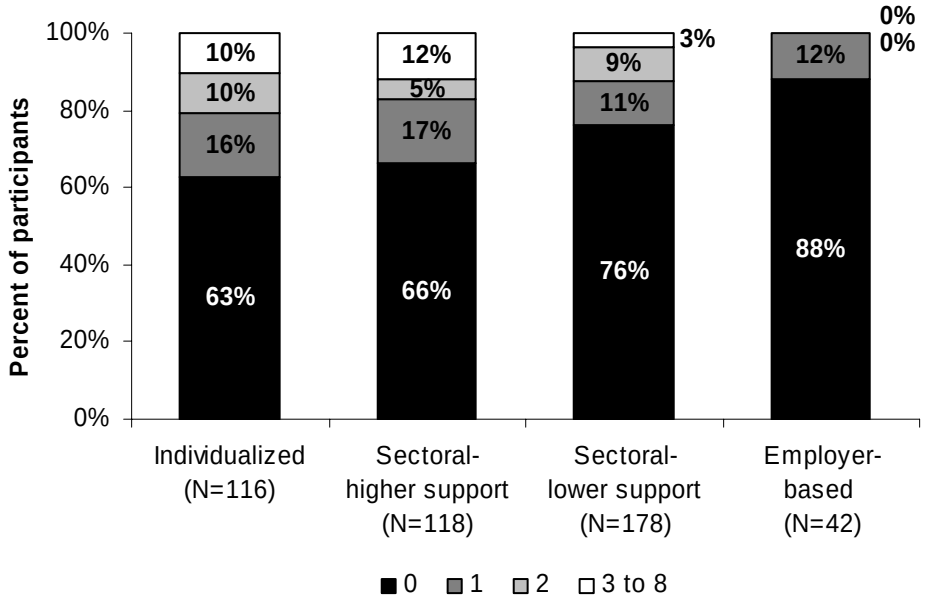
- Seven percent of non-White participants compared to 1 percent of White participants said they had ever been unfairly fired because of their race or ethnicity. Twenty-one percent of non-White participants, compared to 12 percent of White participants, reported that others had ever received promotions or pay raises faster because of their race or ethnicity.

- Less than 3 percent of participants said they had ever been discriminated against in a job because of their religion.

- Six percent of men and 19 percent of women said they had been slower to receive promotions or raises because of their gender. One percent of men and 5 percent of women reported being unfairly fired because of their gender.

- Ten percent of participants who are U.S. citizens, compared to 9 percent of participants who are not U.S. citizens, said they had been slower to receive pay raises or promotions because of their national origin. By contrast, 2 percent of citizens and 6 percent of non-citizens reported ever being unfairly fired because of their national origin.

15. Number of kinds of discrimination experienced in any job ever



Overall, 32 percent of participants reported ever experiencing job-related discrimination based on their race or ethnicity, national origin, religion, or gender. Only 3 percent reported four or more such experiences. These rates compare favorably to some other recent studies with low-income populations. The Michigan Women's Employment Study found that 14 percent of their sample of urban welfare recipients reported four or more experiences of discrimination, when given a comparable set of the same number of questions asking about discrimination based on race, sex, or welfare status. Nearly half

of the participants in the Michigan study reported at least one such experience of discrimination.[7]

Nevertheless, the finding that close to one-third of Families Forward participants report prior experiences with discrimination indicates that program leaders and staff cannot overlook the need to be intentional about reducing possible bias and increasing cultural competence in their programs' design, recruitment, and operation. They may also need to provide support to some participants to overcome bias-related barriers in employment.

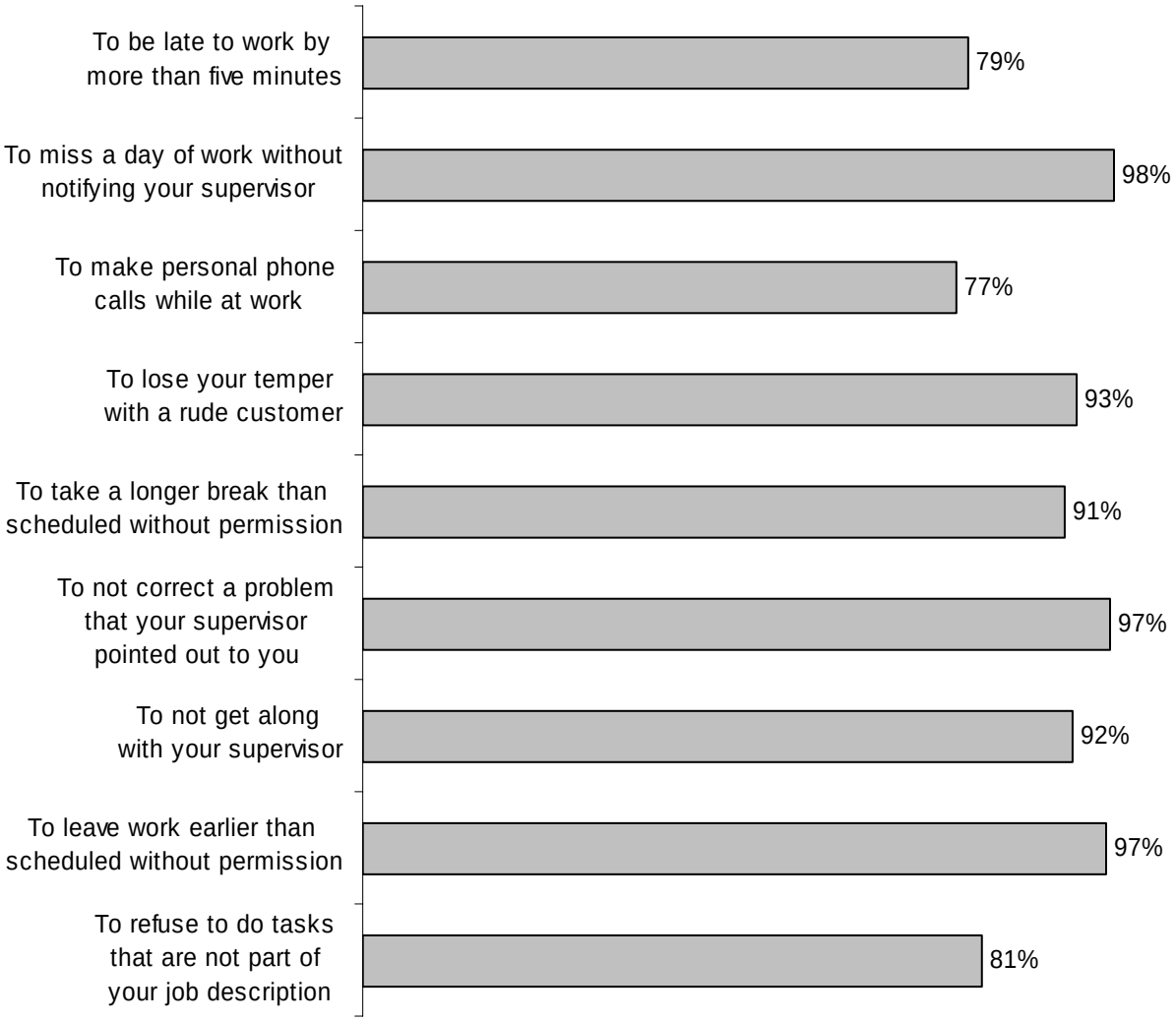
Participants' knowledge of soft skills (workplace norms and expectations)

At the time of three-month follow-up, participants were asked about their attitudes toward work *during the six months before they started the program*. For example, participants were asked if they thought it would be a serious problem to be late for work by five minutes or to take longer breaks than scheduled without permission. Less than one-quarter of participants reported attitudes that are consistent with lack of soft skills. There is no consistent pattern to indicate that participants in any one cluster had higher or lower soft skills during the six months before starting the program. See Figure 16.

[7] Danziger, S., et al. (2000). *Barriers to the employment of welfare recipients.* Ann Arbor: University of Michigan, Poverty Research and Training Center.

16. Participants' self-reported soft skills during the six months before starting the program

Percent reporting the named behavior "would be a serious thing."



Although these findings suggest that participants had fairly high knowledge about soft skills before entering the program, caution should be used when interpreting these results. It is likely that participants' desire to respond in a way that is consistent with societal standards may have caused some participants to (consciously or subconsciously) over-estimate their own pre-program employment soft skills. In addition, the already described levels of serious personal and family needs may interfere with respondents' ability to follow through on the work expectations that they know are important. Based on this and other evidence, such as their pre-program employment histories and the attitudes and reliability levels that program leaders describe of some of their participants,

we suspect participants' actual performance on the above items, whether in program activities or in the workplace, may sometimes be less than their self-report describes.

Evidence from the survey of site leaders suggests that service providers and employers continue to see a high need for additional work in helping participants develop their "soft skills." We do not have data to document what aspect of soft skills training is most needed: whether it is the knowledge of workplace norms that is needed, or the motivation to apply this knowledge consistently in the workplace, or communication and teamwork with a more diverse set of peers than people are previously accustomed to, or support in concrete ways to make it possible to fulfill their employment obligations.

Program completion and attrition

Most participants who were successfully enrolled were able to complete all program requirements rather than dropping out, although at the time of the three-month follow-up interview, participants in the employer-based cluster were more likely to report having dropped out before completing the program (22% compared to an overall rate of 7%). Reasons for leaving the program were most often related to participants' situations at home, including 55 percent who reported child care or transportation problems or their own health problems. Issues related to the program were given as reasons for dropping out by 23 percent, workplace issues were cited by 10 percent, and the remaining 13 percent reported that they dropped out because they moved or took a new job.

Services received while in the program and remaining unmet needs for service

In the three-month follow-up survey, participants were asked about the services they received while in the program. A standard list of 25 services is used for all participants, although not all programs undertake to provide all of these services. For each of the 25 services, participants who did not receive it were also asked if they had needed it during those three months since enrolling in the program.

It is difficult for respondents to reconstruct their service experiences or accurately attribute each service they can remember to its source. Nonetheless, participants' responses to these questions allow us to create a general picture that is useful for comparing services received and needed among programs and participants. In addition, to the extent that participants received a needed service (such as help with transportation), it may not matter greatly for the participant's success in a program whether the program itself provided the service. Also, to the extent that participants reported unmet needs for service, it may be helpful for programs to consider the kinds of challenges their participants face that might be affecting their participation or access to better jobs.

For purposes of analysis, these 25 services were grouped into five main categories, as shown in the list on the following page. Numbers in parentheses indicate first the overall percentage who report receiving each kind of service, and second the percentage reporting they needed but did not receive it.

Assessment (79% received at least one, 39% needed at least one that was not received)

- Career aptitude (42%, 11%)
- English language skills (38%, 7%)
- Academic skills or learning ability (48%, 8%)
- Computer skills (24%, 22%)
- Specific job skills (35%, 17%)
- Help to identify or get into an appropriate training opportunity (50%, 17%)

Training (69% received, 31% needed)

- Soft skills (the actual wording used was: "a program or training to help you learn basic job expectations like getting to work on time, keeping your temper on the job, or working with your supervisor") (43%, 4%)
- Skills training to operate a computer (27%, 24%)
- Job-specific training, such as how to run a machine, or how to perform a specific task required for the job (45%, 9%)
- Training to speak English as a second language (16%, 5%)

Employment support services (59% received, 29% needed)

- Job placement (25%, 16%)
- Help to resolve problems on the job (26%, 6%)
- Help from a mentor to learn how to do a job (31%, 8%)
- Help to purchase equipment or supplies needed for a job or for training (28%, 14%)

Basic financial help (20% received, 45% needed)

- Help to pay tuition during training (45%, 10%)

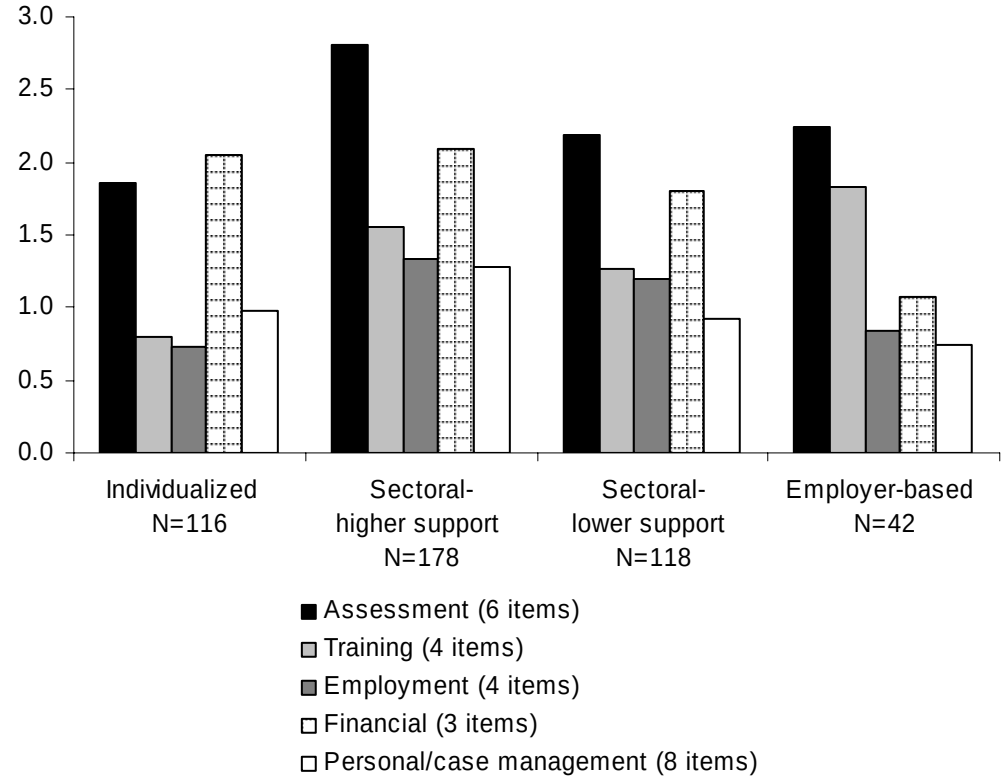
- Information about medical insurance, Earned Income Tax Credit, or other sources of financial assistance (40%, 20%)
- Help with budgeting or money management (25%, 24%)

Personal and family support and case management services (57% received, 36% needed)

- Working with someone to decide what kinds of help or support is needed to be able to obtain or retain a job (40%, 12%)
- Case management (actual wording: "services designed to check in with you on a regular basis to see whether or not there is any kind of help or support that you need") (33%, 21%)
- Help with child care needs or problems (21%, 16%)
- Help with obtaining or filling out applications (21%, 7%)
- Help with housing (14%, 15%)
- Personal or family counseling or some other type of emotional support (19%, 11%)
- Help with transportation (24%, 12%)
- Help dealing with family violence 5%, 3%)

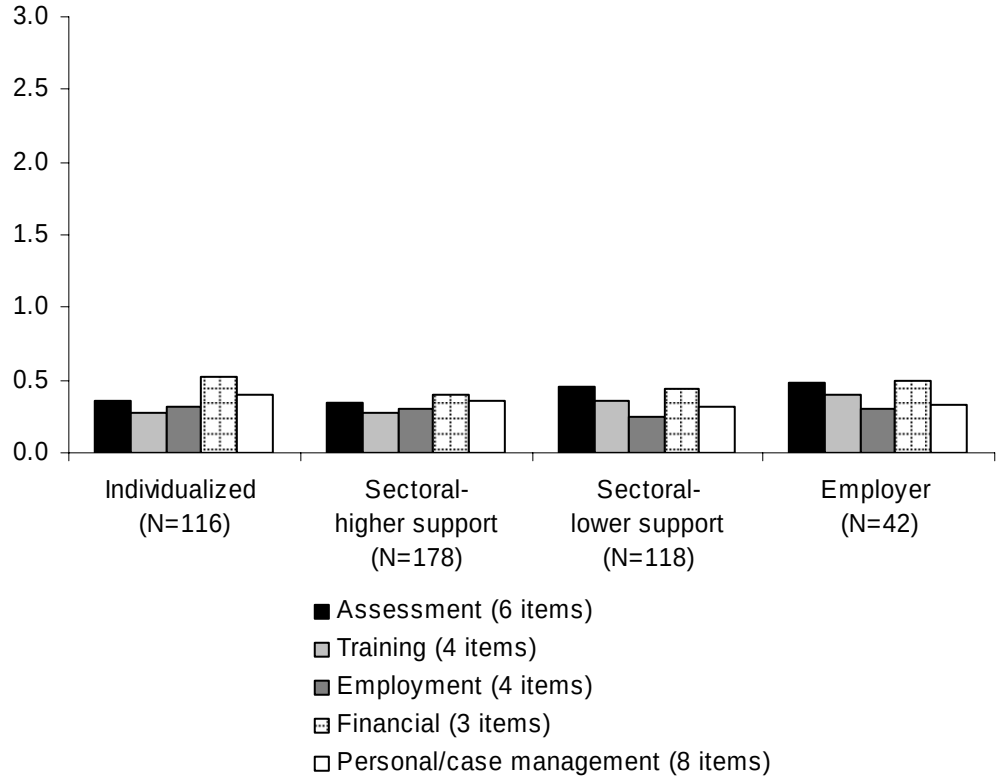
There were significant differences among programs in the average number of services that their participants reported receiving during their first three months after intake and in the relative emphasis on different kinds of services. Participants in the individualized and sectoral-higher support programs, on average, reported receiving more financial and material supports. Participants in the sectoral clusters reported receiving more employment supports. Participants in the sectoral-higher support cluster reported receiving more personal and case management support services. Participants in the employer-based cluster reported receiving more different kinds of training services. Participants in the sectoral-higher support cluster were most likely to report receiving assessments and, on average, received more kinds of assessments. See Figure 17.

17. Average number of services received by participants in three months after enrollment



In participants' reports of unmet needs, the differences among clusters were not as significant. This suggests that programs are reasonably sensitive to differences in participants' levels of need and do much to meet those needs, with approximately similar amounts of need remaining unmet. However, there remain some differences among the clusters in the kinds of unmet needs reported by participants. Participants in individualized and employer-based programs were most likely to report remaining needs for financial support services; those in sectoral-lower support and employer-based programs were most likely to report unmet needs for assessments; and those in individualized programs were most likely to report unmet needs for personal support services. See Figure 18.

18. Mean number of services reported as needed but not received in three months



Meeting parenting responsibilities while working and in training

On a simple self-report measure of work-family conflict, nearly two-fifths (39%) of participants who completed the nine-month follow-up interview indicated that there is nothing about their job that makes it hard for them to be the kind of parent they want to be. On the other hand, 28 percent of participants said the number or schedule of the hours they work makes it difficult for them to be the kind of parent they want to be and 28 percent said they do not have enough time for themselves and/or their family. Other ways in which their job interferes with their parenting, mentioned by less than 10 percent of participants each, include: problems in the job itself (stress, inconsistencies, or instability of employment), insufficient income, problems with work support and benefits (health care coverage, child care, or transportation), and other problems.

When participants were asked what, if anything, about their job helps them to be the kind of parent they want to be, the most common responses were related to the financial benefits of earning an income (40%). Other frequently mentioned comments were related to personal growth and improved attitudes (25%), having enough time, or enough

flexibility with the job (22%), and learning new skills at work, including social skills, English, or health care (18%). Other ways in which their job helps them to be the kind of parent they want to be, mentioned by less than 10 percent of participants each, include: the presence of work supports or benefits, the quality of the job itself, including stability or potential for advancement, children can go with parents to the workplace, the job is helpful to the family in unspecified ways, and the job provides structure. (Note: Participants were allowed to provide up to three responses so totals do not add up to 100%.) Of the 428 participants who answered this question, 8 percent said that nothing helps them to be a better parent and 6 percent said they do not have children living in their household.

Similarly, participants were asked how the program made it harder or easier for them to do both their work and parenting well. Overall, 21 percent of participants reported that the program had no effect on their ability to parent and do their work well. Remaining comments were far more likely to mention helpful effects of the program than unhelpful effects. The most frequently mentioned ways in which the program made it easier for them to parent and do their work well were: help to find or become more secure in a job (20%), personal growth, including improved goals, attitudes, organization, and communication (18%), and financial help, including paying for classes and help with transportation (12%). Other ways in which the program made it easier for participants to both do their work and parent well, mentioned by less than 10 percent of participants each, include: help with parenting support or skills (including child care help and skills in nutrition, parenting, and health care), helping to make their current job better, flexibility of the program, gaining experience, provision of counseling or emotional support, help getting training or education, and other unspecified reasons. The most frequently mentioned way in which the program made it harder for participants to parent and do their work well was the demands or expectations of the program (8%).

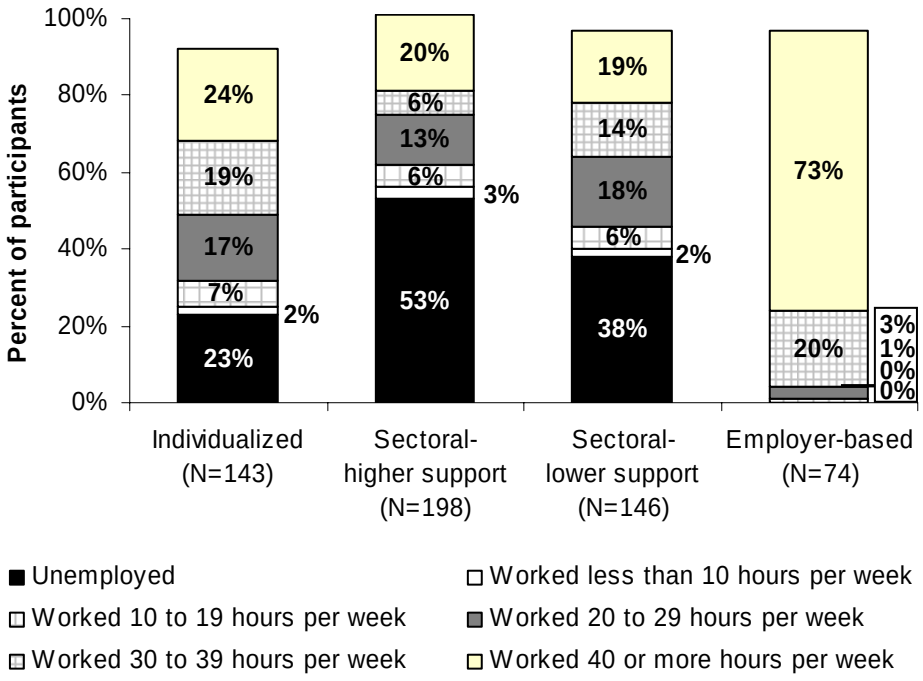
Combining work with training

Several separate items in the evaluation point to a certain amount of flow into and out of employment during training, or during people's participation in a program before or after training. The patterns are different in the different clusters. In employer-based programs, while a few participants reported in the follow-up interviews that they were no longer with their initial employers, these people reported that they had left their employers for reasons unrelated to the program. In the other clusters, the higher the proportion of participants who were employed at intake, the higher the proportion who left their jobs to concentrate on their training. Thus in the individualized cluster, where 87 percent were employed at intake, 9 percent reported in the nine-month follow-up interview that they had left their employer in connection with participating in (or finishing) their training, and only 69 percent reported that they had been employed at the time they had been in the program. In the sectoral-lower support cluster, 64 percent were employed at intake,

6 percent reported they left their employer in connection with the program, and 60 percent reported being employed while training. In the sectoral-higher support program, only 48 percent were employed at intake; fewer than 1 percent left a job in connection with the program, and about that same small proportion evidently took jobs during training, because 50 percent reported having been employed while in the program.

The number of hours that participants reported working per week while in training also varies by cluster. Three-quarters of participants in the employer-based cluster reported working 40 or more hours per week while in training compared to one-fifth of participants in the sectoral-high support cluster and one-third of participants in the sectoral-low support and individualized clusters.[8] See Figure 19.

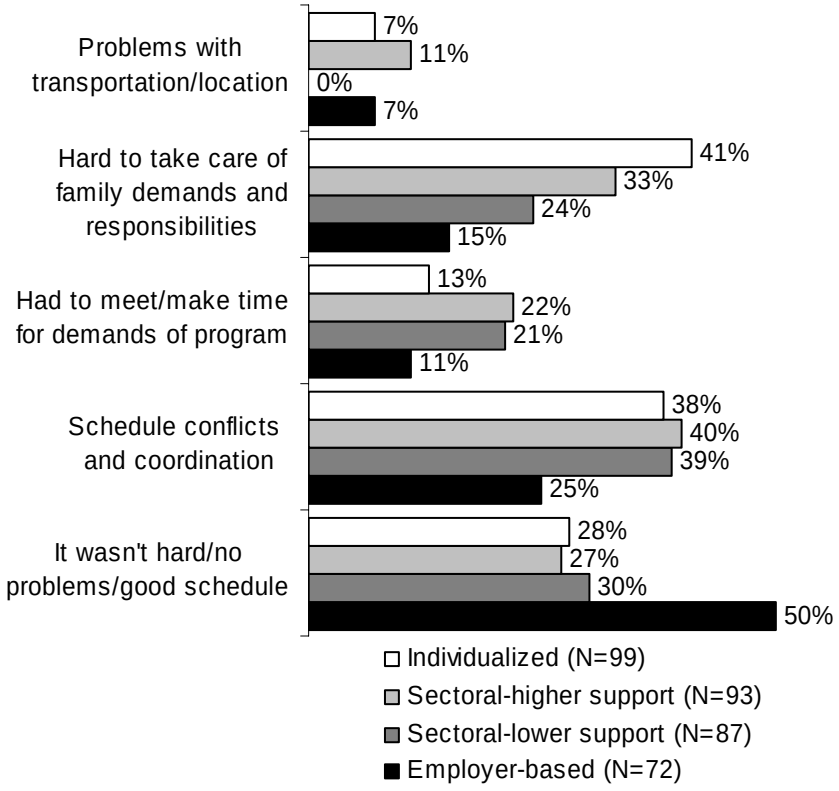
19. Participants' employment status and number of work hours per week during training (at the time of the nine-month follow-up)



[8] It is not possible to use Wage Detail data for this information, due to the unique timing of different individuals' training programs. We therefore rely on participants' self-reported information about work hours during training. By grouping responses into ranges we can overcome some of the limitations to its reliability.

When asked what was hardest about going to training and working at the same time (of those participants who were employed during training), the most common answers were related to schedule conflict and coordination (37%), fatigue and stress (15%), lacking time for self or family (14%), and trouble meeting the schedule or responsibilities of the program (11%). Fewer participants mentioned lack of transportation (5%) or problems meeting the demands of work and earning enough money (5%) when asked about the hardest part of going to training and working a job at the same time. On the other hand, one-third of participants overall said they did not have any problems going to training and working at the same time. This response was given by half (50%) of the participants in the employer-based cluster, and 28 to 30 percent in the other clusters. See Figure 20.

20. Hardest part about going to training and working at the same time (based on nine-month follow-up interviews)*

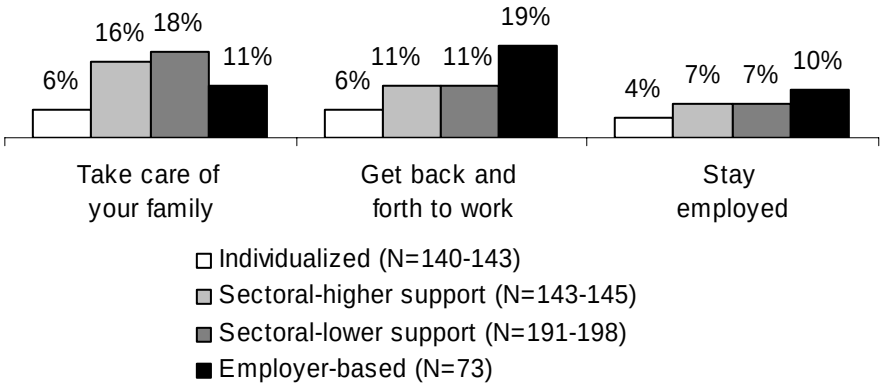


***Note.** Participants were allowed to provide up to three responses, so totals do not add up to 100 percent. Only participants who were employed during training were asked this question.*

Despite the stresses of adding more demands on their time, participants generally reported that they were able to handle the additional responsibilities of participating in their programs. Of participants who were employed at intake, only two percent (N=7) reported in the three-month interview that they had left their jobs because of the program. All of them reported that this helped them concentrate on their school or training. By the nine-month point, 5 percent of respondents who had been working at intake reported that they had left their jobs in connection with starting or finishing their classes or training.

In the nine-month interview, participants were asked if their participation in the program had made it more difficult for them to take care of their family, get back and forth to work, and to stay employed. Less than one-fifth of participants in all of the clusters said "yes" to any of these items. Participants in the individualized cluster were least likely to report having difficulty managing their other responsibilities while participating in the program. See Figure 21.

21. Participants' ratings of the difficulty of participating in the program and meeting other life responsibilities: Did participation in this program make it more difficult to…

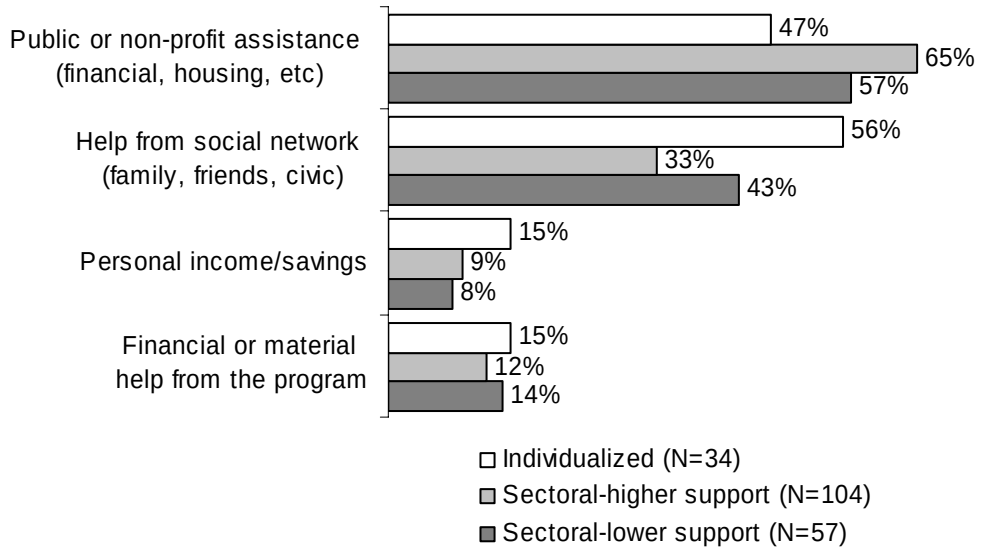


At the time of the nine-month follow-up, over half of the participants in the sectoral and individualized clusters and nearly two-thirds of participants in the employer-based cluster said there were things about the program that made it easier to work and participate in training at the same time. (The interview did not ask participants to describe what kinds of help this involved.)

Making ends meet while in training (for participants who were not working)

While competing time demands make it hard to work and participate in training simultaneously, those who choose to stop working to concentrate on training are faced with the difficulty of meeting their living expenses without earnings from a job. The participants who were not employed during training were asked what made it possible for them to meet their living expenses during the time they were in the program. The most common responses were: assistance from public or non-profit sources (including unemployment benefits, welfare, housing subsidies, and food shelves) and assistance from informal personal and community sources (including child support payments, living with or receiving money from family, and help from their tribe or church). Respondents from the sectoral clusters were more likely to rely on formal sources of support than informal sources. Respondents from the individualized cluster were slightly more likely to report reliance on informal sources. See Figure 22.

22. Sources of income while in training*



****Note.** Participants were allowed to provide up to three responses, so totals do not add up to 100 percent. Only participants who were not employed during training were asked this question.*

Employment outcomes after nine months

As previously mentioned, nine months is a short period of time in which to observe outcomes from job training. At present, this is the longest follow-up for which we have evidence from a large enough sample of participants to report with confidence. However, this section is followed by a presentation of the preliminary results for a small number of the earliest participants, for whom two-year follow-up results are currently available.

Outcomes that might be expected without intervention

It is impractical to use an experimental design in the evaluation of an initiative such as Families Forward, which is intended to stimulate innovation. Therefore, in the absence of a control group to whom participants can be compared, we cannot say that the observed outcomes were caused by the efforts of the programs. However, some evidence about the recent trends in employment, wages, and benefits of low-income workers more generally can provide a useful comparison, and help to estimate what participants' employment and wage progression might likely have been had they not participated in Families Forward.

Current economic conditions have slowed employment and advancement opportunities for all workers, including those like Families Forward participants who are at the lower end of the skills and wage distribution. Under any kind of economic conditions, employment and wage growth is likely to take longer than a single year. The Jobs Initiative of the Annie E. Casey, which like Families Forward focused on helping poor families improve their economic stability through skills training, found even during the economic boom before 2001 that "For most, reaching a family wage takes much longer than anyone originally estimated,"[9] and cited prior research that found "it takes three years or more for parents with any employment challenge in their background to approach financial security through work."[10]

On top of these general considerations, specific economic conditions in Minnesota since the beginning of the Families Forward initiative are helpful in interpreting the success program participants report in finding jobs or moving up to better ones. In its twice-annual survey of job vacancies, the Minnesota Department of Employment and Economic Development found that the number of vacancies has fallen in each year in nearly every

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[9] Iversen, R.R. (2002). *Moving up is a steep climb: Parents' work and children's welfare in the Annie E. Casey Foundation's Jobs Initiative (Overview).* Baltimore, MD: Annie E. Casey Foundation. Downloaded from the Internet July 19, 2002, from http://www.aecf.org/jobsinitiative/ethnography/overview.pdf

[10] Herr, T.& Halpern, R. (1994). *Lessons from Project Match for welfare reform.* Chicago: Erikson Institute (cited by Iversen, p.7).

industry sector and occupational group since 2000. This includes the health care sector in which many Families Forward programs are operating. In a sign of hope, fourth quarter vacancies in 2003 showed an increase in three other sectors in which some Families Forward programs are focused: manufacturing, finance and insurance, and construction.[11] Additionally, when jobs are broken down by occupational group instead of industry sector, health care support also showed an increase in job vacancies in 2003.

Data from the Department of Employment and Economic Development on hourly wages is somewhat less current, the most recent published information (March 2004) being an analysis of annual trends from 2000 to 2002. These show that wages for entry-level workers (those at the 20th percentile in the wage distribution) in "low-wage industries" rose as much as 3.15 percent annually in agriculture, forestry, fishing and hunting, or as little as a *decrease* of 0.53 percent annually in administrative, support and waste services. Wages for entry-level workers in other industry sectors were also modest: in health care and social assistance they rose by 1.46 percent annually during this two-year period, in construction by 1.46 percent, and in manufacturing by 2.62 percent. Decomposition by year shows that most of this growth was between 2000 and 2001, with much more modest growth (especially at the lower end of the wage distribution) from 2001 to 2002. This difference reflects the effects of the recession that began (according to the National Bureau of Economic Research) in March 2001. The recession officially ended in November 2001, but it has been followed by a sluggish recovery.[12]

A study by the Urban Institute[13] has examined trends in employer-sponsored health insurance between 1999 and 2002. The study includes a separate examination for people who, comparable to most Families Forward participants, are living at or below 200 percent of the federal poverty level. The study found that between 1999 and 2002 there was a drop of 2.2 percentage points in the proportion of the non-elderly population with employer-sponsored insurance coverage. The drop for those below 200 percent of poverty was more than twice a great, at 4.6 percentage points (equivalent to a 12% decrease). About one-quarter of this drop in coverage (26%) was found to be due to changes in employment, another quarter (24%) was due to changes in the rates at which insurance was offered by employers, and about half (48%) was due to changes in take-up by those to whom it was offered. (A small proportion, 2%, was due to other factors.) The decrease in take-up rates, as well as in coverage, was greatest for dependent children. Furthermore, there was a shift in the share of employment from larger employers to

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11 Senf, D. (2004, June). "Job vacancy trends." *Minnesota Economic TRENDS.*

12 Blumberg, L.J., & Holahan, J. (2004). "Work, offers, and take-up: Decomposing the source of recent declines in employer-sponsored insurance." *Health Policy Online*, No. 9. Downloaded from the Internet May 27, 2004, from www.urban.org/UploadedPDF/1000645_healthpolicyonline_no9.pdf

13 *Idem.*

smaller ones, who are less likely to offer insurance coverage to begin with and whose offer rates fell during this period.

While the Urban Institute study is only applicable through 2002, more recent data from the Kaiser Family Foundation finds that the cost of employer-sponsored coverage continued to rise sharply from 2002 to 2003, affecting both employers' ability to offer coverage and the costs of such offers to employees.[14]

Less information is available to compare the availability of other major job-related benefits, particularly sick and vacation time. A 2002 survey of a nationally-representative sample of families[15] found that 80 percent of working parents had access to some kind of paid leave. The proportions were lower for women (76%) than for men (84%), lower for those with the youngest children, and lower for single parents (74%) than for married parents (82%). The differences were particularly striking when income levels were compared. Only 46 percent of those with incomes below poverty had access to any paid leave, compared to 84 percent of those at 200 percent of poverty or higher. Those working for smaller employers were also less likely to receive paid leave than those working for larger employers: among those working for firms of under 25 employees, only 72 percent had any paid leave, compared to 90 percent of those working for firms of 500 or more employees.

Closer to home, a survey of employers in South Central Minnesota in the third quarter of 2003 found that 88 percent of firms offered paid vacation, but only 51 percent offered paid sick time. These figures do not allow us to determine what proportion of *employees* are offered these benefits. For example, larger firms were more likely to offer paid time off than were smaller firms, and firms were much less likely to offer paid time off to part-time workers than to full-time workers. Furthermore, firms in the manufacturing and health care sectors (among others) were more likely to offer paid time off than were firms in leisure and hospitality or services.[16]

Considering this evidence about trends for low-wage workers in the U.S. and Minnesota in general in the early years of the 2000s, we would anticipate that low-wage workers without access to special programs would have experienced only very slow and modest growth in employment and wages in Minnesota in the early 2000s, in the range of 0 to 3 percent in a single year, or 0 to 6 percent in two years. We would also expect them to

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[14] Tietema, A. (2004, June). "Regional Spotlight: South Central Minnesota: Employee Benefits in South Central Minnesota." *Minnesota Employment Review*, June 2004, pp. 14-15.

[15] Phillips, K.R. (2004). *Getting time off: Access to leave among working parents* (New Federalism policy brief No. B-57). Washington, D.C.: The Urban Institute.

[16] Tietema, *op.cit.*

have seen steady or falling rates of employer-sponsored health care, and to have chosen steady or lower rates of using such coverage ("take-up") because of the increased costs to employees in premiums and co-pays.[17]

Data sources used in this section

There are well-known limitations to the accuracy of self-reported data on work hours, wages, and income. We regard program participants as reasonably reliable reporters of whether or not their hours and wages have increased since beginning the program, and present our survey findings on those outcomes here. However, we sought an alternative source for actual numbers of hours worked and actual wages earned. We were able to obtain data on hours and wages from the state's Wage Detail records (provided to us in aggregate form by the Department of Employment and Economic Development or DEED, to preserve anonymity). These data show hours and wages averaged over groups of participants and also averaged over three months of time (quarters). By comparing the quarter before participants began their programs with the quarter one year later, we can obtain group results on hours and wages that correspond reasonably closely with our survey data from the nine-month follow-up interviews. We also have two-year follow-up data from the Wage Detail records to complement survey data from our 24-month follow-up interviews.

Participants who were not employed at intake

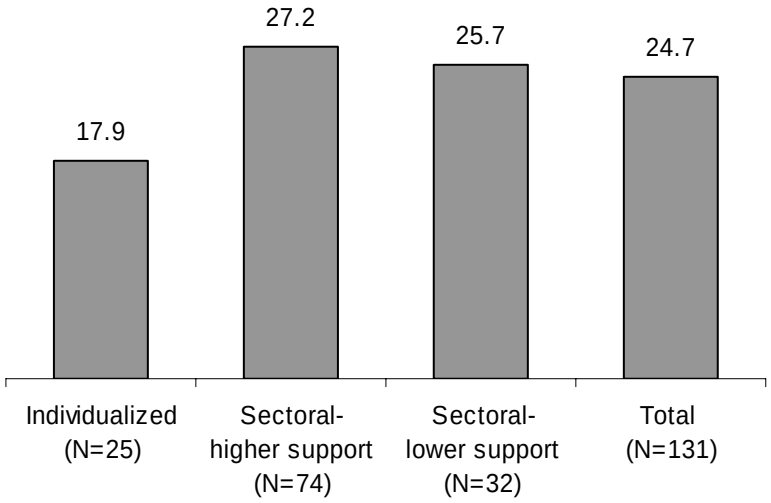
Of the participants who were not employed at intake, nearly two-thirds (64%) were employed at the time of their nine-month follow-up interview. The rate of employment among this group at the time of the nine-month follow-up interview does not vary by cluster. (Note: There are no participants from the employer-based cluster who are in this group, i.e., all of these participants were employed at intake.) The vast majority (95%) of those participants who were not employed at intake but were employed at the time of their nine-month follow-up interview have only one job. When asked if their participation in the program helped them to get their current job, 71 percent of participants from the sectoral-lower support cluster, 61 percent of participants from the sectoral-higher support cluster, and 44 percent of participants from the individualized cluster said "yes."

Administrative data from the Minnesota Department of Employment and Economic Development were available for 131 participants who were not employed at intake but

[17] This review of results that might be expected in the absence of intervention describes wage and benefit changes expected within jobs, but not changes that might occur for individuals changing jobs; and it describes expected results for all low-income workers, not just those who are motivated to enroll in a program to improve their skills and opportunities. In these two respects it probably slightly underestimates the job changes likely for workers comparable to those in the Families Forward initiative.

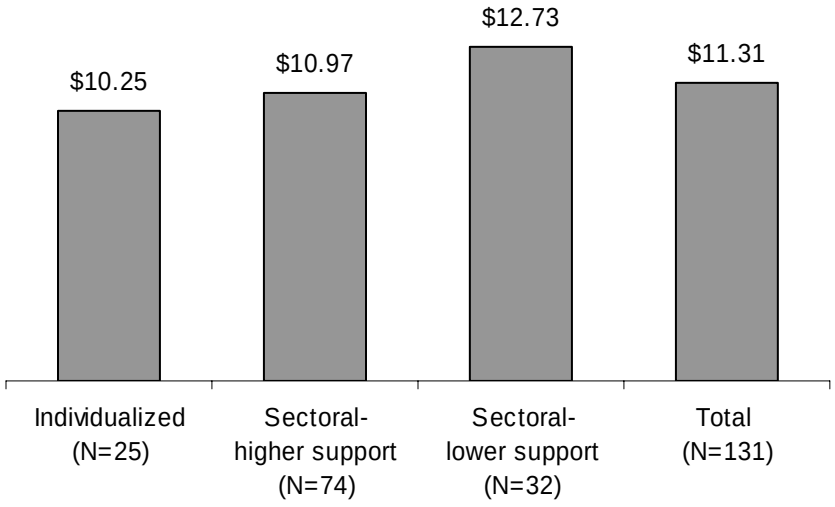
were employed at one year following baseline (i.e., participants' baseline data was gathered from the quarter previous to which they enrolled in the program so one year follow-up data represents participants who have been in the program for nine months up to one year). These data indicate that participants who were not employed at intake but who are employed at one year post-enrollment were working an average of 24.7 hours per week, although this varies significantly by cluster. See Figure 23.

23. Number of hours worked per week for participants who were unemployed at intake and employed at one year after baseline (DEED data)



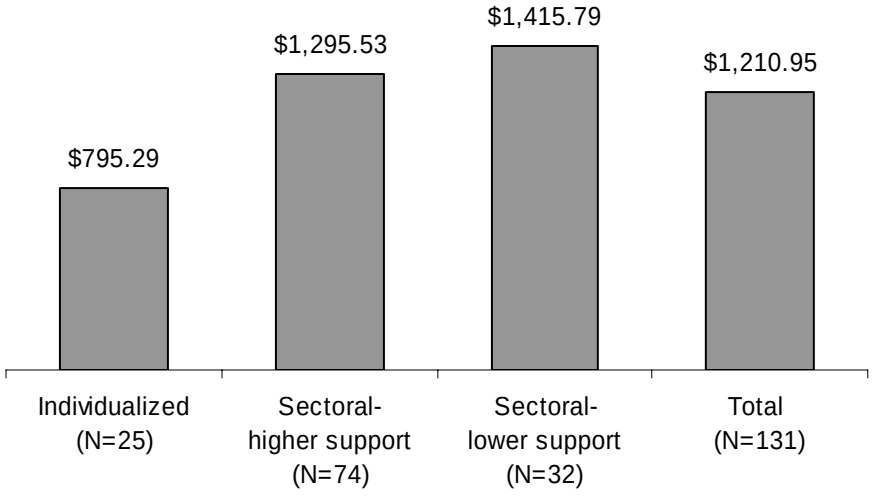
Department of Employment and Economic Development data from the same 131 participants indicates they had an average hourly wage of $11.31. The average hourly wage also varies by cluster, with participants in the sectoral-lower support cluster experiencing the highest average wages at one year post-enrollment. See Figure 24.

24. Hourly wages of participants who were unemployed at intake and employed at one year after baseline (DEED data)



Of the 131 participants who were unemployed at intake and employed one year following baseline, their average monthly income at one year was $1,210.95. Participants from the individualized cluster had the lowest average monthly incomes and participants from the sectoral-lower support cluster had the highest average monthly incomes, according to the Department of Employment and Economic Development Wage Detail data. See Figure 25.

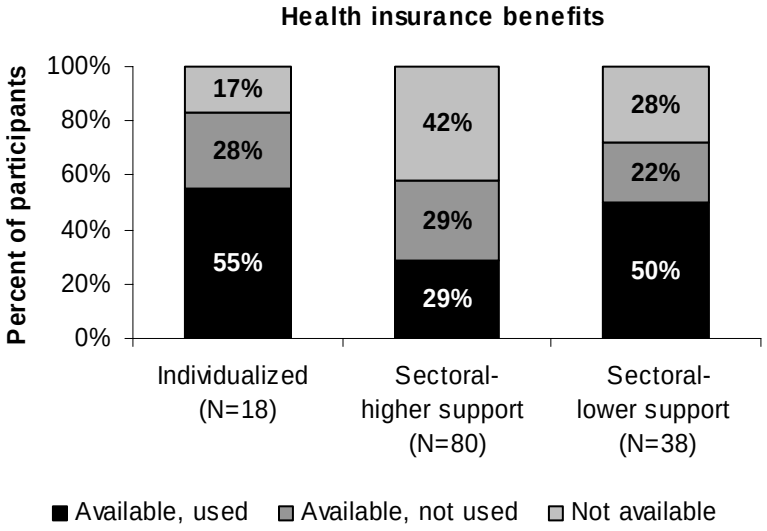
25. Monthly income of participants who were unemployed at intake and employed at nine-month follow-up

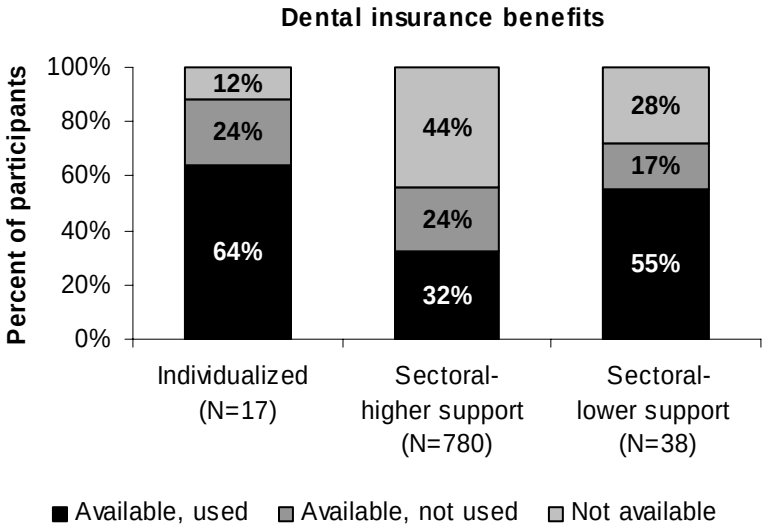


Participants who were not employed at intake but who were employed at the time of their nine-month follow-up interview were asked if they are offered benefits such as health and

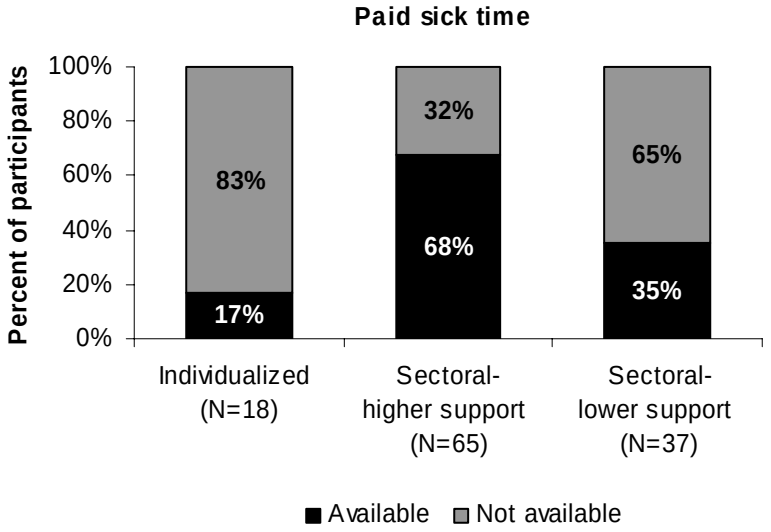
dental insurance; paid leave for illness, vacation, or parental leave; and retirement plan benefits. Participants who indicated that the benefit is offered by their employer were also asked if they have opted to use the benefit. In general, between half and two-thirds of participants are offered these benefits. Over half of the participants who are offered health and dental insurance have opted to use the benefit, whereas only 36 percent of those who are offered a retirement plan use this benefit. Availability of these benefits is significantly related to cluster; participants in the sectoral-higher support cluster are most likely to be offered these benefits and participants in the individualized cluster are least likely to be offered these benefits. (Note: Participants were not asked if they utilize their paid sick time, vacation time, or parental leave because it is assumed that these benefits are utilized as needed by the participants.) See Figure 26.

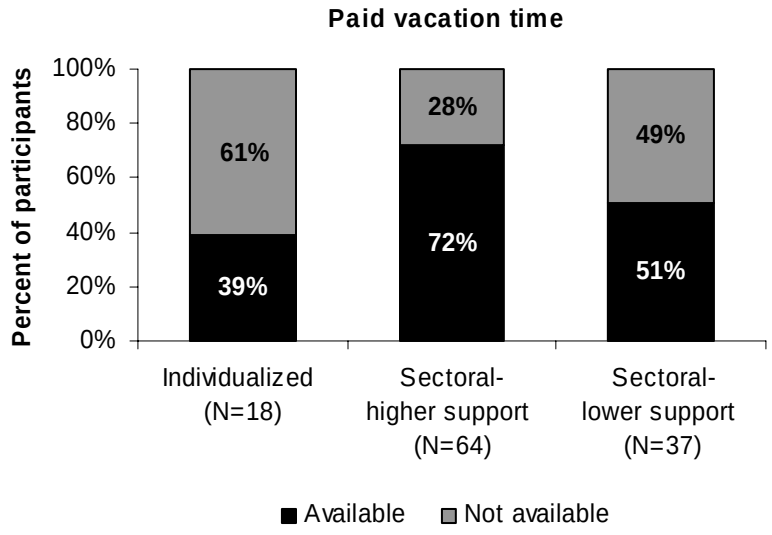
26. Benefits offered and utilized by participants who were unemployed at intake and employed at nine-month follow-up*





26. Benefits offered and utilized by participants who were unemployed at intake and employed at nine-month follow-up (continued)





Summary of findings for participants who were not employed at intake

Nearly two-thirds of participants who were unemployed at intake were employed nine months later, and over half of these individuals report that their participation in Families Forward helped them get their jobs. On average, those who had jobs worked 25 hours per week (averaged over a full quarter) at $11.31 per hour.

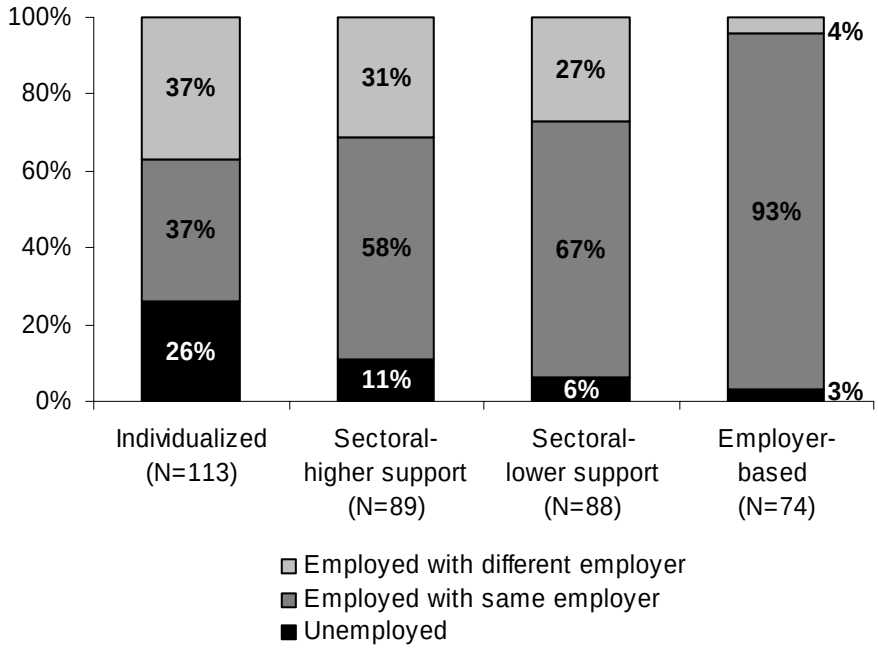
On average, participants in sectoral programs were in jobs with more hours, higher wages, and better benefits than participants in individualized programs.

These outcomes do not appear to be related to participants' level of need (summarized into three categories).

Participants who were employed at intake (incumbent workers)

Of the 364 participants who were employed at intake and who completed a nine-month follow-up interview, 89 percent were still employed, over two-thirds (70%) of whom were still with the same employer. Participants from the individualized cluster were significantly less likely to be employed, and less likely to be with the same employer if they were employed, at the time of their nine-month follow-up interview compared to participants from the other three clusters. Nearly all participants from the employer-based cluster were employed with the same employer as when they started the program. See Figure 27. Most of the participants who were employed at intake and at the time of their nine-month follow-up interview (89%) have one job and 11 percent have two jobs.

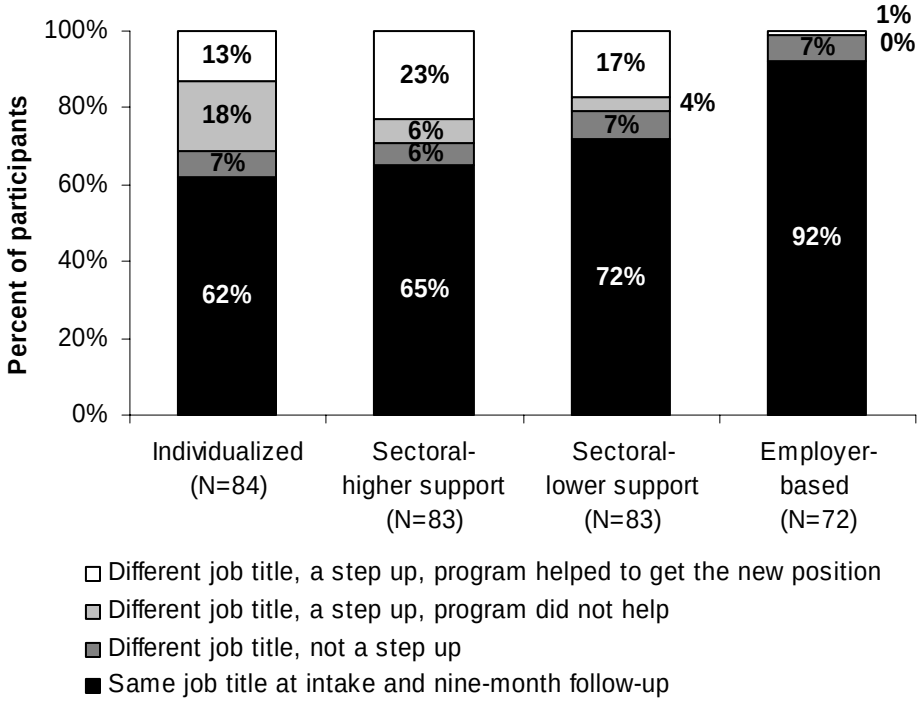
27. Employment status and employer at nine-month follow-up for participants who were employed at intake



The most frequently mentioned reason participants gave for leaving their previous employer (of those who were employed at intake and unemployed or employed by a different employer at nine-month follow-up) was that their work contract expired (N=36, of whom N=21 were from the individualized cluster). Presumably, these participants were in temporary jobs at the time of intake. Other reasons for being unemployed or having a different employer, mentioned by between 10 and 20 participants each, include: to go back to school, unspecified personal reasons, finding a better job, wage improvements, and improved schedule or hours. Less than 10 participants each mentioned things like language barriers, transportation problems, or work-related injuries.

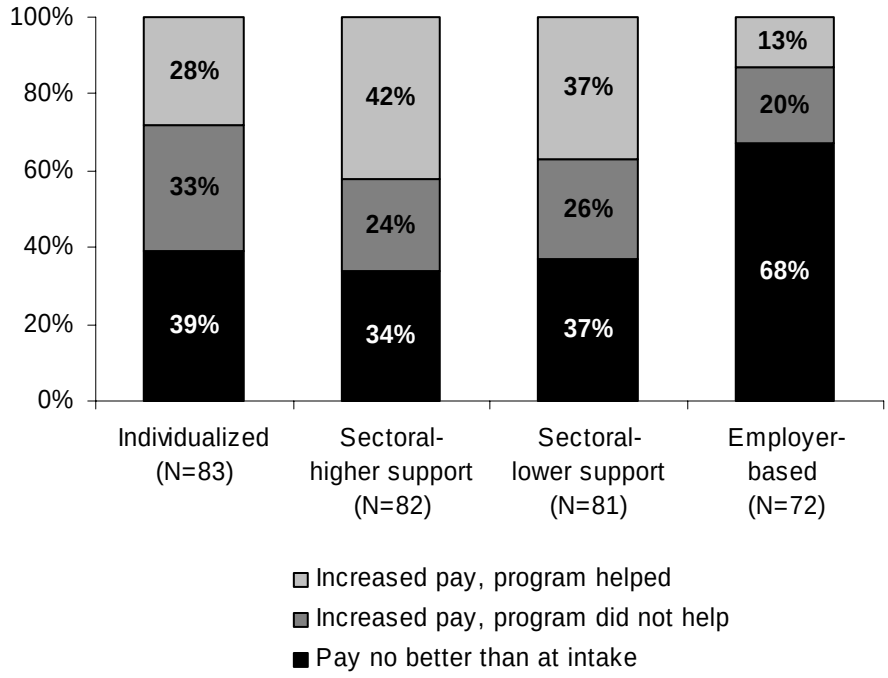
Furthermore, of the participants who were employed at intake and at the time of their nine-month follow-up (either with the same or a different employer), 71 percent have the same job title they had at intake and 24 percent have a different job title. Of those who have a different job title, 76 percent said their new job is a step up from the job they had when they started the program. Finally, of those who have a new job that is a step up from their previous job, 66 percent said their participation in the program helped them to get the new position. See Figure 28.

28. Percent of participants with changes in job title and status at nine months: for participants who were employed at intake and nine-month follow-up



Of those participants who were employed at intake and at the time of their nine-month follow-up interview, nearly half said their hourly wage had not changed during that time period, about one-third said their pay was higher and that it was due to their participation in the program, and about one-quarter said their pay was higher but that it was not due to their program participation. Participants from the sectoral-higher support cluster were most likely to report an increase in their hourly wages from intake to nine-month follow-up. Participants in the employer-based cluster were least likely to report increased pay from intake to nine-month follow-up; however, participants in this cluster were most likely to attribute their increased pay to their participation in the program. See Figure 29.

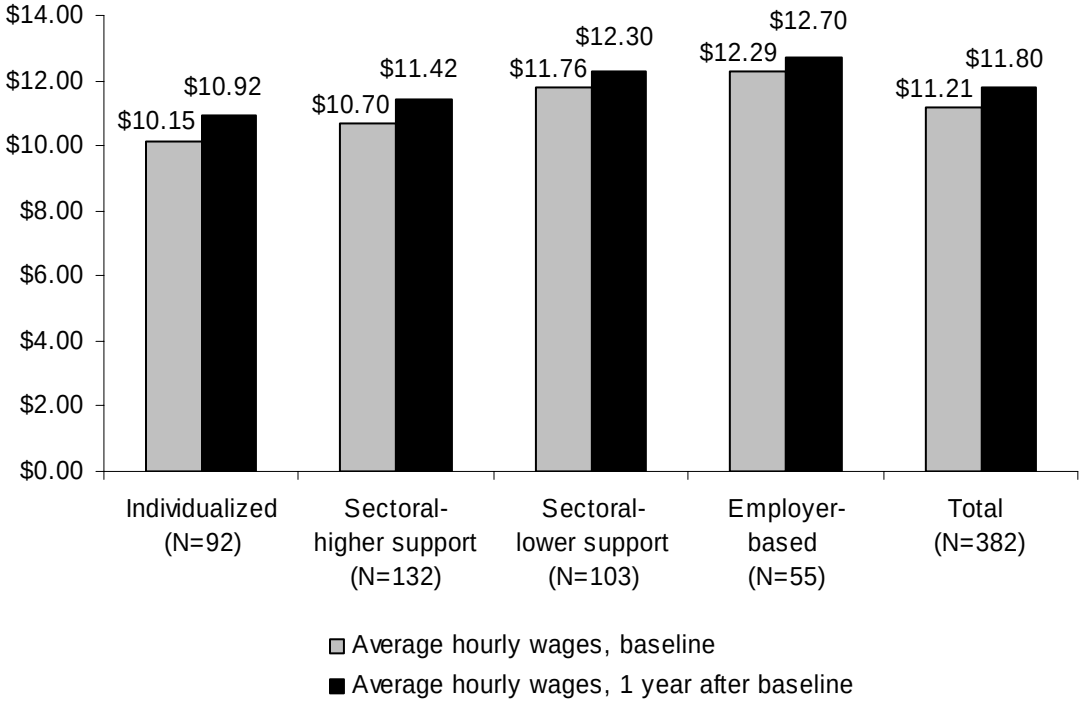
29. Percent of participants who had higher wages and program impact on hourly wage for participants who were employed both at intake and nine-month follow-up



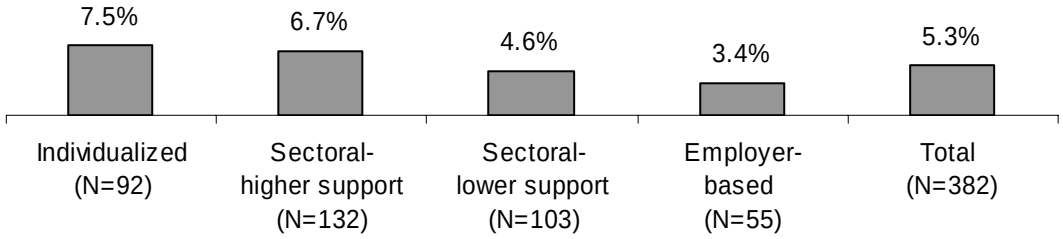
Across all clusters, Department of Employment and Economic Development Wage Detail data indicates that participants who were employed at intake and at one year after baseline experienced increases in their average hourly wages. The average hourly wage of participants who were employed at intake and one year after baseline (according to DEED Wage Detail data) was $11.21 at baseline and $11.80 during the quarter one year after baseline; the average hourly wage increase was $0.59. Participants in the employer-based cluster earned over $12.00 per hour, on average, at baseline and one year after baseline; participants in the sectoral-lower support cluster earned, on average, $11.76 at baseline and $12.30 at one year after baseline; participants in the sectoral-higher support cluster earned, on average, $10.70 at baseline and $11.42 per hour at one year after

baseline; and participants in the individualized cluster earned, on average, $10.15 per hour at baseline and $10.92 per hour at one year after baseline. Participants in the individualized cluster experienced the highest average wage increase at $0.77 per hour. See Figure 30.

30. Change in hourly wages of participants who were employed at intake and one year after baseline (DEED data)

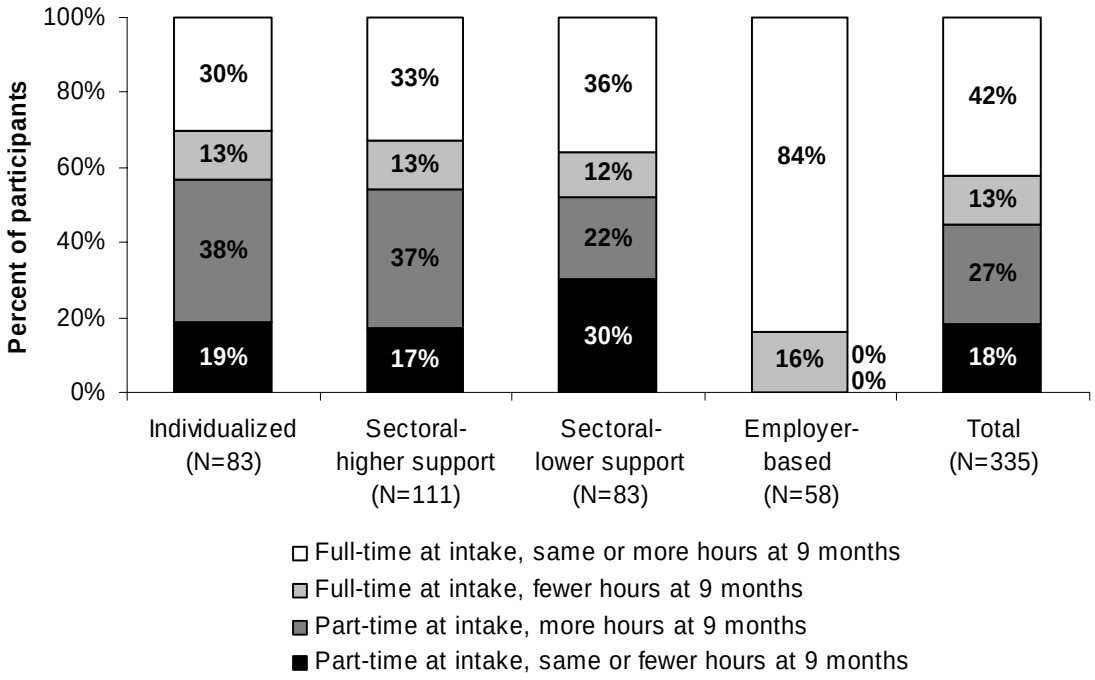


31. Percent change in hourly wages, participants enrolled at intake and one year after baseline (DEED data)



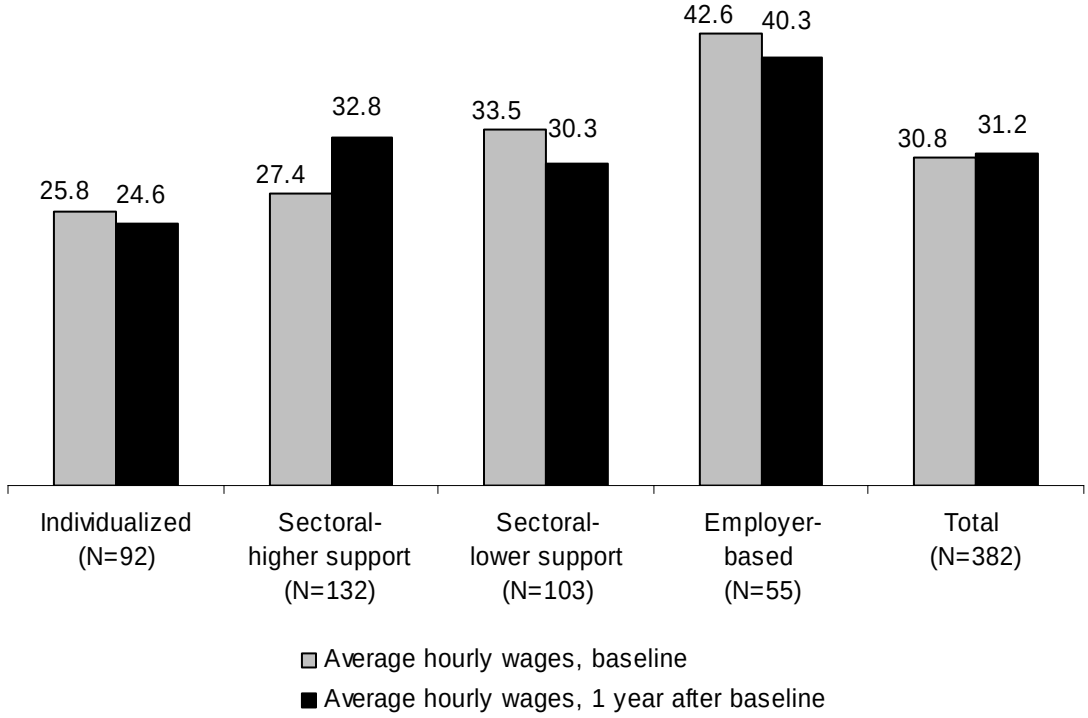
Participants in the individualized and both sectoral clusters were about equally likely to be working part-time at intake, while all employer-based participants were working at least full-time hours. By the time of the nine-month follow-up interview, participants in the individualized or sectoral-higher support programs who had started at part-time were considerably more likely than those in sectoral-lower support programs to have reported increasing their work hours. See Figure 32.

32. Participants' self-reported changes in number of work hours per week from intake to nine-month follow-up

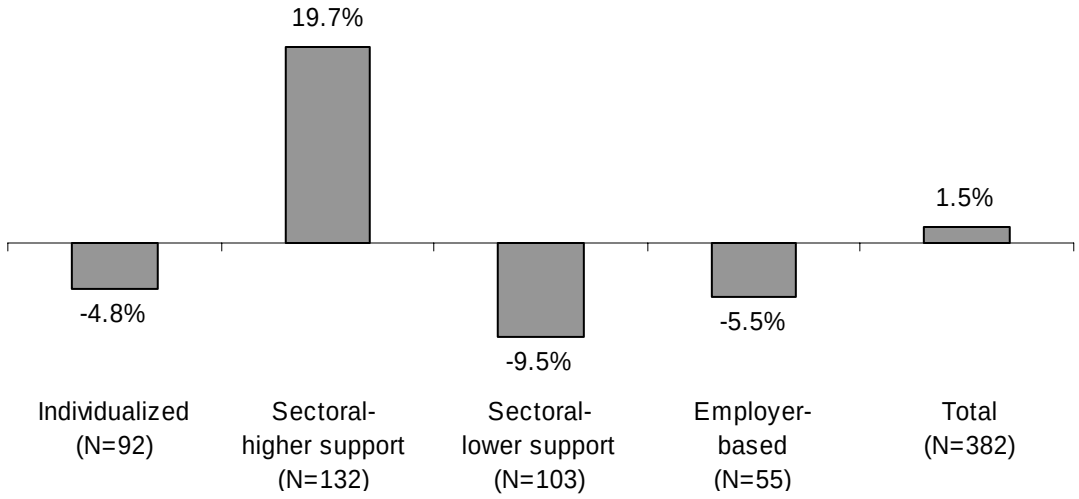


Department of Employment and Economic Development data indicates that participants who were employed both at intake and one year after baseline were working an average of 31.2 hours per week at one year after baseline, which is a slight increase in average hour per week, up from 30.8 at baseline. Participants in the employer-based cluster were working an average of 40.3 hours per week at one year after baseline (highest average for clusters) and participants in the individualized cluster were working an average of 24.6 hours per week at one year after baseline (lowest average for clusters). At one year after baseline, participants in the sectoral-higher support cluster were the only cluster of participants to have experienced an average increase in the number of hours they worked per week since baseline. See Figure 33.

33. Number of hours worked per week by participants who were employed at intake and one year after baseline (DEED data)

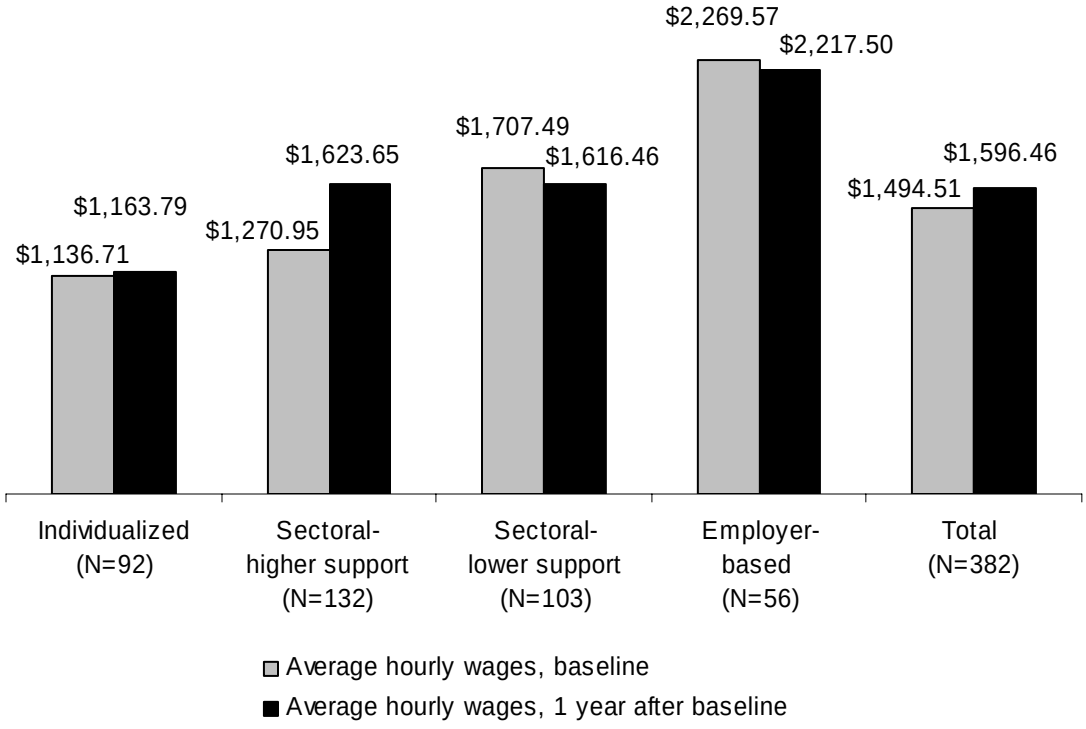


34. Percent change in hours worked per week, participants employed at intake and one year after baseline (DEED data)

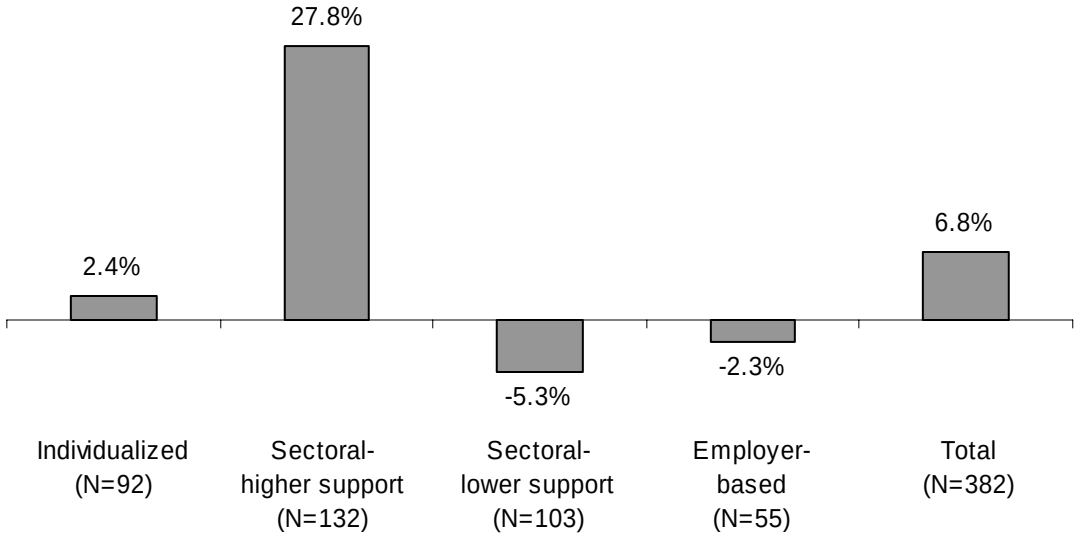


Based on participants' monthly incomes at intake and one year after baseline, it is clear that most participants have experienced increased income over their first few months in the program. In fact, the average change in monthly income from intake to one year post-enrollment is just over $100. Participants in the sectoral-higher support had significantly higher increases in monthly incomes, which is likely explained by the fact that participants in this cluster experienced both increases in work hours and increases in wages whereas participants in the other clusters experienced increases in wages while their hours actually decreased. See Figure 35.

35. Changes in monthly income from intake to one year after baseline for participants who were employed at both times (DEED data)

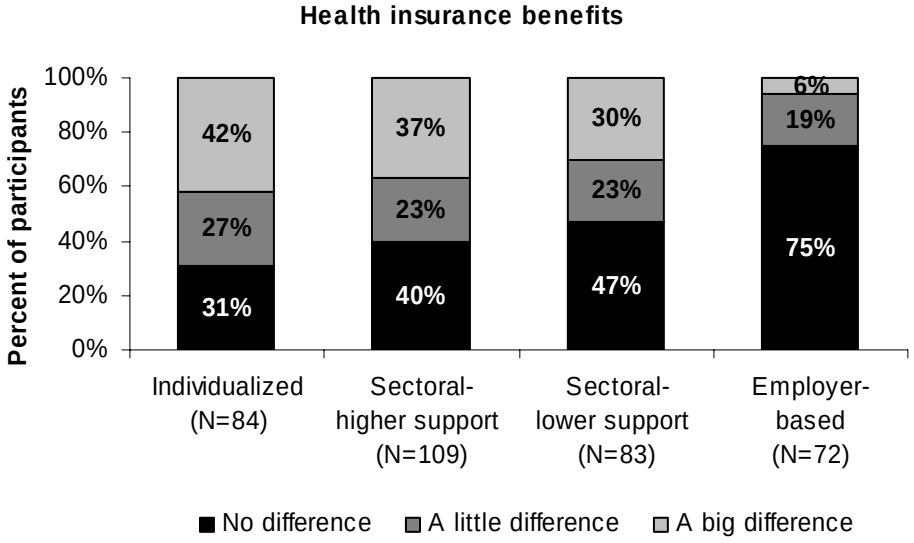


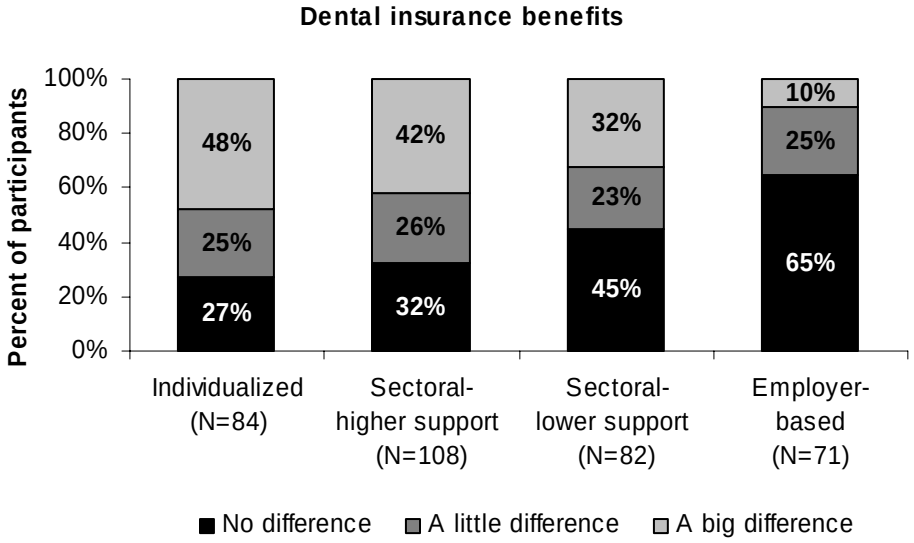
36. Percent change in monthly income, participants employed at intake and one year after baseline (DEED data)



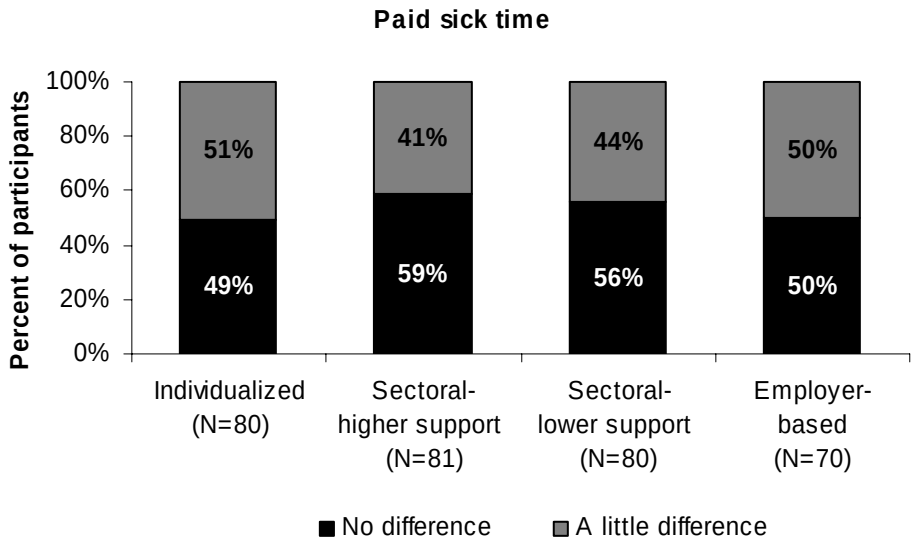
In the Wilder follow-up survey, participants are asked if they are offered health insurance and dental insurance. If they are offered these benefits they are also asked if they use the benefits. Participants are also asked if their employer provides them with paid sick time and paid vacation time. Overall, three-quarters of participants are offered health insurance of which two-thirds use the benefit. Two-thirds are offered dental insurance, of which three-fifths use the benefit. Over half are offered retirement plan benefits, of which nearly three-fifths use the benefit. Approximately three-quarters of participants are offered paid vacation time, slightly over half are offered paid sick time, and about one-quarter are offered paid parental leave. See Figure 37.

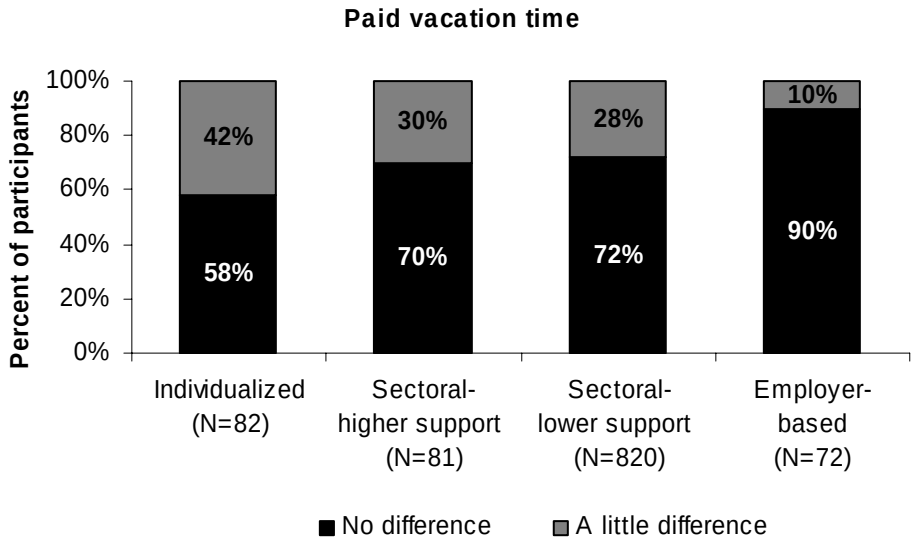
37. Benefits offered and utilized by participants who were employed at intake and nine-month follow-up





37. Benefits offered and utilized by participants who were employed at intake and nine-month follow-up (continued)

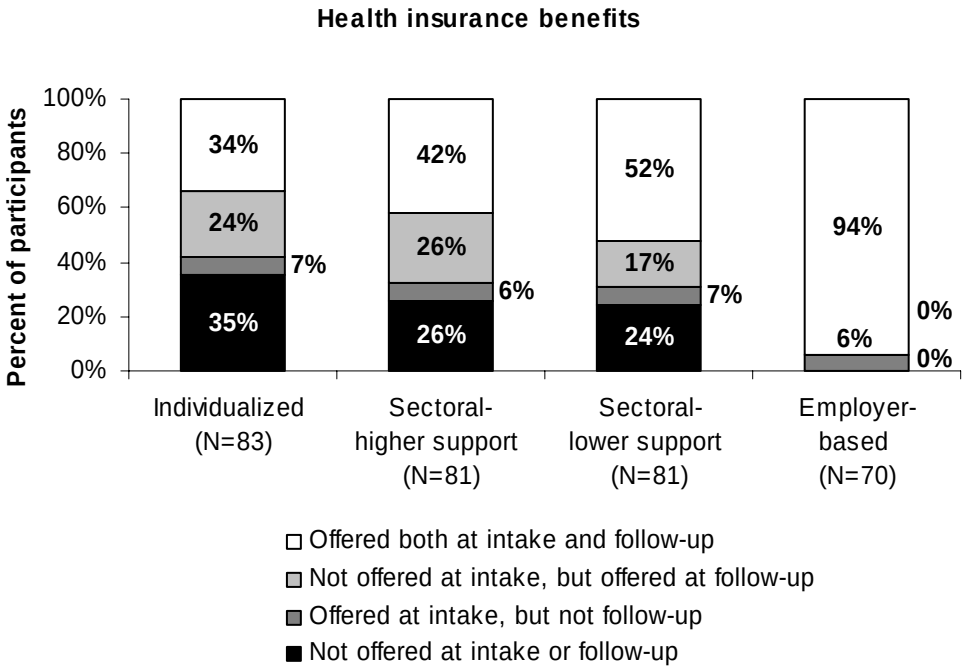


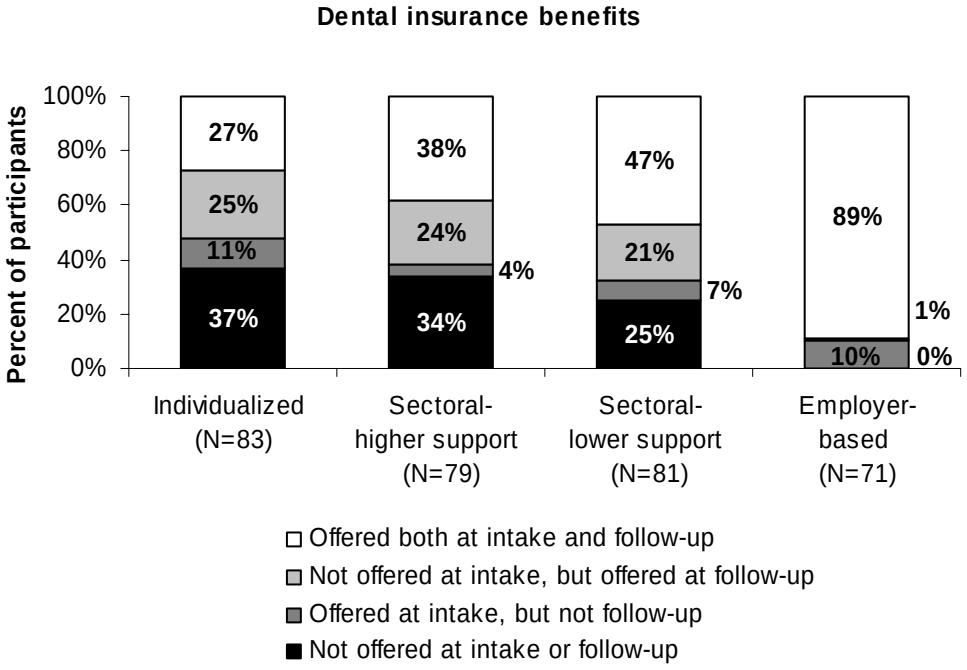


In addition, we examined participants' changes in employment-related benefits from intake to nine-month follow-up for those participants who were employed at both times. Participants in the employer-based cluster were most likely to have been offered employment-related benefits at both intake and follow-up; however, these participants were also the most likely to have lost their benefits between intake and follow-up. Participants from the individualized cluster were least likely to have been offered benefits at both intake and follow-up. Participants from the sectoral-higher support cluster were the most likely to have been offered benefits at the time of their nine-month follow-up

that they were not offered at intake (i.e., participants in this cluster experienced the most improvements in employment-related benefits). See Figure 38.

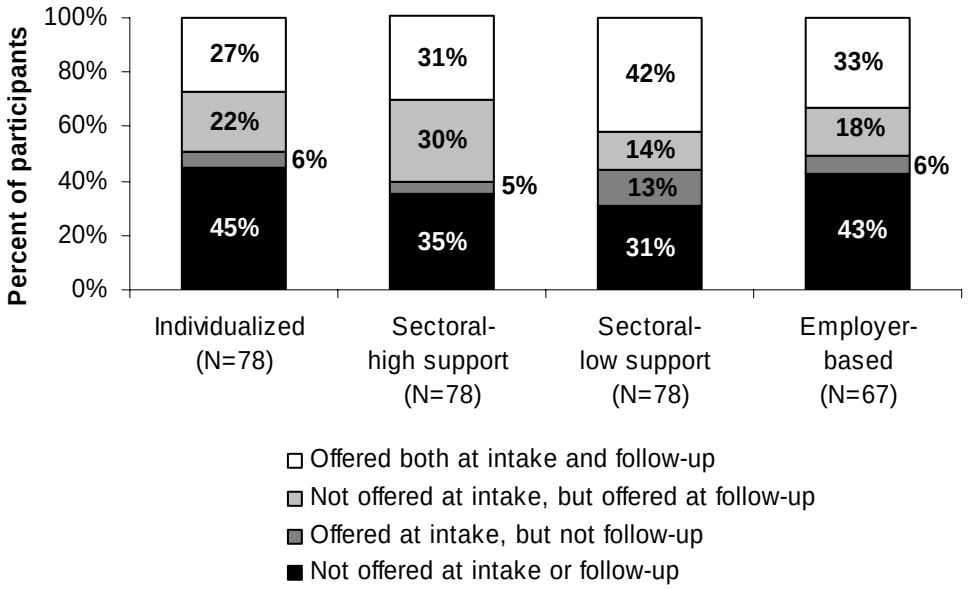
38. Changes in employment-related benefits for participants who were employed both at intake and nine-month follow-up



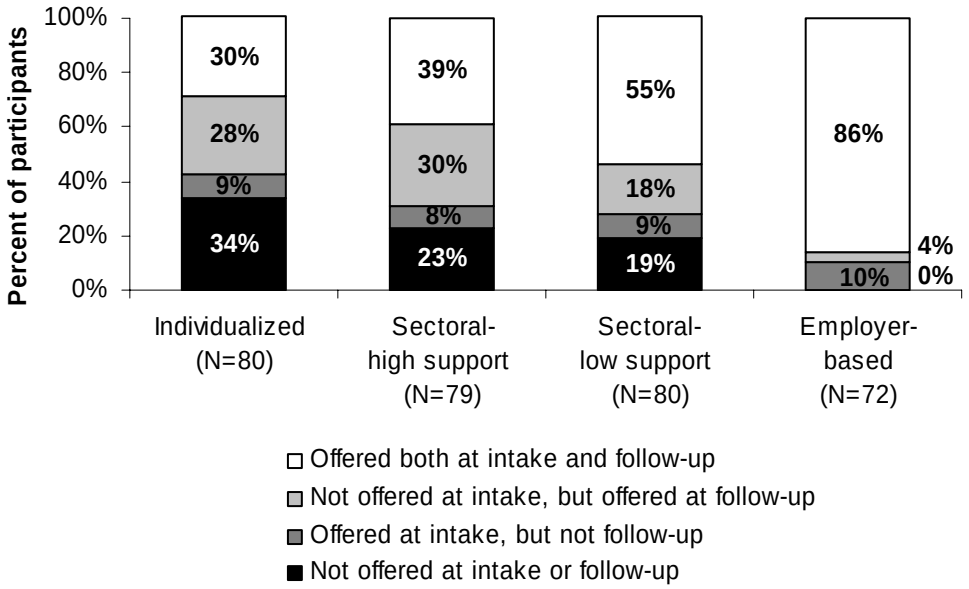


38. Changes in employment-related benefits for participants who were employed both at intake and nine-month follow-up (continued)

Paid sick time



Paid vacation time



Summary of job outcomes for those employed at intake (incumbent workers)

Approximately nine months after enrolling in a Families Forward program, 88 percent of participants who were initially employed were still working. According to Wage Detail data, the average wages for the still-employed group were $11.80, an increase of $0.59 or 5.3 percent. The average number of hours per week was almost the same overall, but an increase of 20 percent among participants in the sectoral-higher support cluster was balanced by decreases of 5 to 10 percent in the other clusters. Combining the wage and hour changes, monthly incomes rose 7 percent on average. This overall figure again masks increases in two clusters (individualized and sectoral-higher support) with decreases in two clusters (employer-based and sectoral-lower support).

In nearly every measure of job quality, examining only the point in time at nine months after intake, participants in the employer-based cluster are doing the best: more of them are working full-time, they have higher wage levels, and they are more likely to be offered and to make use of health or dental insurance and paid vacation time. Only in the availability of paid sick time did another cluster (sectoral-higher support) come out higher.

However, when one considers not point-in-time status but improvement, participants in the sectoral-higher support programs fared best on most measures: they are more likely to report having gotten a better job due to the program. They are more likely to have better wages, and to report that those are due to the program. They show greater increases in availability of health care and dental benefits, and of paid sick and vacation time. Participants in the individualized cluster were most likely to report having gotten a better job (although they were not most likely to report that the improvement was a result of the program). Participants in employer-based programs were most likely to be still employed, although they were least likely to have a better job or better wages. In fact, participants in employer-based programs appear to have lost ground in nearly all benefits, while participants in other programs were more likely to be improving in this respect.

The first-year wage gains for participants who remained employed are considerably above the 0 to 3 percent increases that have been experienced in recent years by entry-level Minnesota workers in general (those in the bottom quintile). Both offer and use rates of benefits are gains over baseline rates, which also represents an improvement compared to trends for low-wage workers overall in recent years.

In statistical testing, few results were found to be significantly related to participants' levels of need. Reviewing the pattern of results for those with low, medium, and high levels of need, there is some indication that participants with high need were more likely to achieve higher wages than those with medium need, and those with medium need were in turn more likely to achieve higher wages than those with low need. This same general pattern was evident overall and in each cluster separately, although not statistically significantly in any. Except in the employer-based program, the same pattern is observed in participants' crediting the program for helping them get their higher wages. No similar pattern was found in participants' reports of promotions or increased hours. Without over-interpreting these relatively minor findings, it appears possible that the training provided by programs may be making the most difference to those with the most needs, who started with the lowest wages and would have had the lowest likelihood of achieving the same improvements on their own.

Indicators of longer-term outcomes

Not all job outcomes expected as a result of Families Forward programs are likely to be evident within the first nine months, and not all program outcomes will be reflected just in employment hours, wages, and benefits. In this section we present two-year follow-up data on job outcomes for a small number of the earlier participants, based on Wilder surveys (with 94 of the earliest participants) and state records (of 196 early participants for whom two-year data were available). We also present survey findings about participants' perceptions of other benefits they have received from being part of the program.

Job outcomes for participants who were not employed at intake

Wilder survey data with 41 early participants who were not employed at intake shows that three-quarters (75%) of the group were employed two years later, and two-thirds of them had been working for all of the previous six months.

Data were available from the Department of Employment and Economic Development on 61 early participants who were not employed at all in the quarter before enrolling in the program but were employed two years after baseline. Participants in this group were working an average of 23.1 hours per week earning an average of $12.42 per hour, for average monthly earnings of just under $1,250.

Job outcomes for participants who were employed at intake (incumbent workers)

Wilder survey data with 53 early participants who were employed at the time of intake found that three-quarters (77%) were also employed at the time of the two-year follow-up interview. Of this group (those employed at both times), 41 percent reported their current job was a step up from where they had started. This number is one-third (32%) of all those employed at intake. A larger proportion, 71 percent of those employed at both times, reported they were earning higher hourly wages than at intake. This is 55 percent of all those who were employed at intake.

Wage Detail data were available for 135 early participants who were employed at intake and two years after baseline. Their average hourly wages increased from $11.15 at baseline to $12.75 at two years post-enrollment. This corresponds to an average increase of $1.60 per hour, or a 14.4 percent increase in hourly wages across clusters.

The Wilder survey found that, of participants who were working at both intake and two-year follow-up, one-third (34%) reported they were working the same number of hours, 46 percent were working more hours, and 20 percent were working fewer hours.

State data indicate that, of participants who were employed at intake and two years after baseline, the average number of hours they were working per week increased from 29.0 hours per week at baseline to 30.8 hours per week two years post-enrollment. This corresponds to an average increase of 1.9 hours per week, or a 6.5 percent increase in number of hours worked per week across clusters.

Accordingly, state data for participants who were employed at intake and two years post-enrollment indicate that participants' monthly income increased substantially. At baseline, these participants were earning an average of just under $1,400 per month and by two years post-enrollment, they were earning an average of over $1,700 per month for an average increase of $304.72 per month or a 21.8 percent increase in monthly income across clusters.

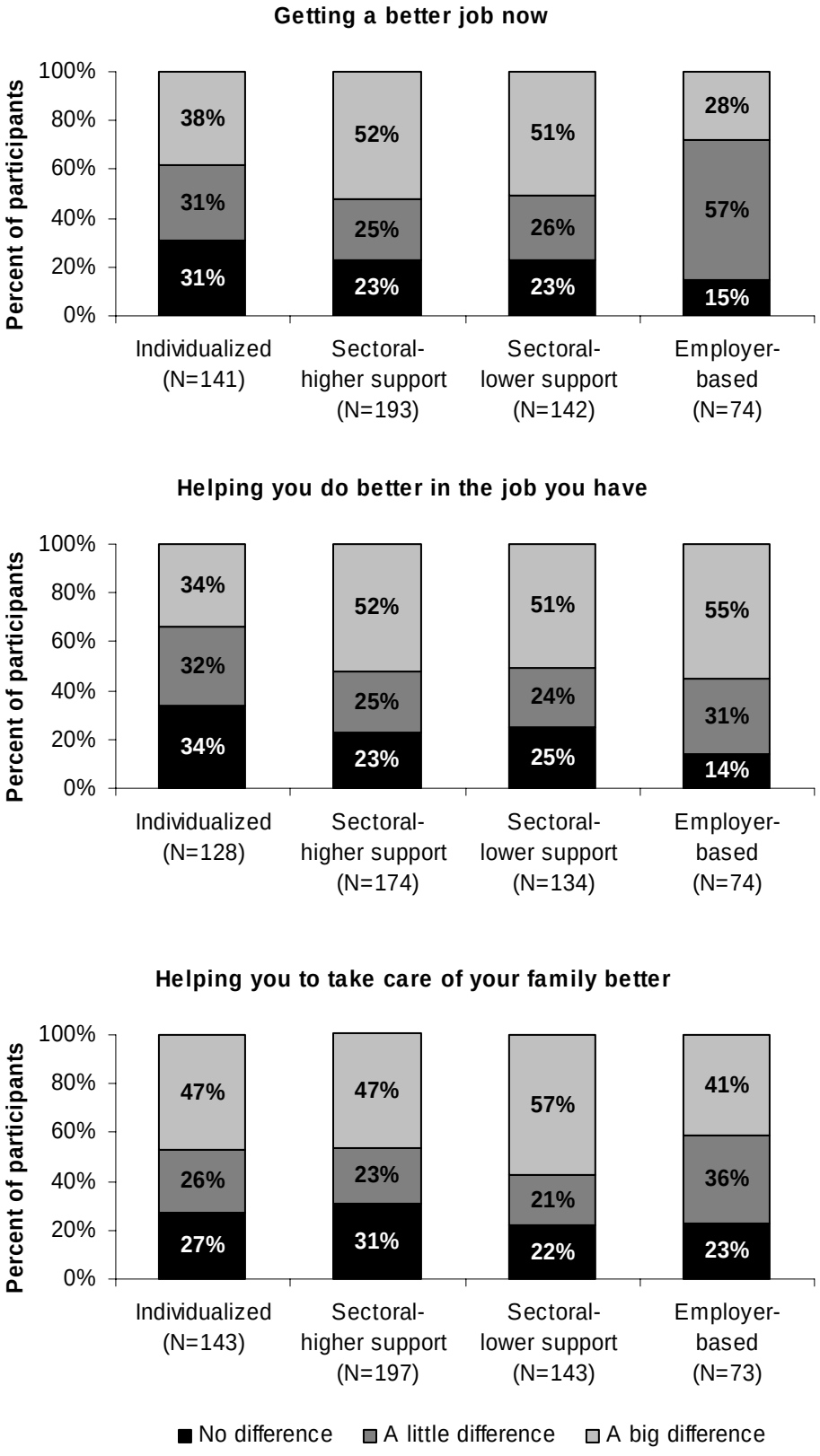
Overall, of the group employed at both intake and two-year follow-up, Wilder surveys found that 68 percent reported that they were offered health care benefits at the time of follow-up (and 50% used them), 67 percent were offered dental benefits (and 49% used them), 62 percent were offered paid sick time, and 68 percent were offered paid vacation time.

Other results for participants

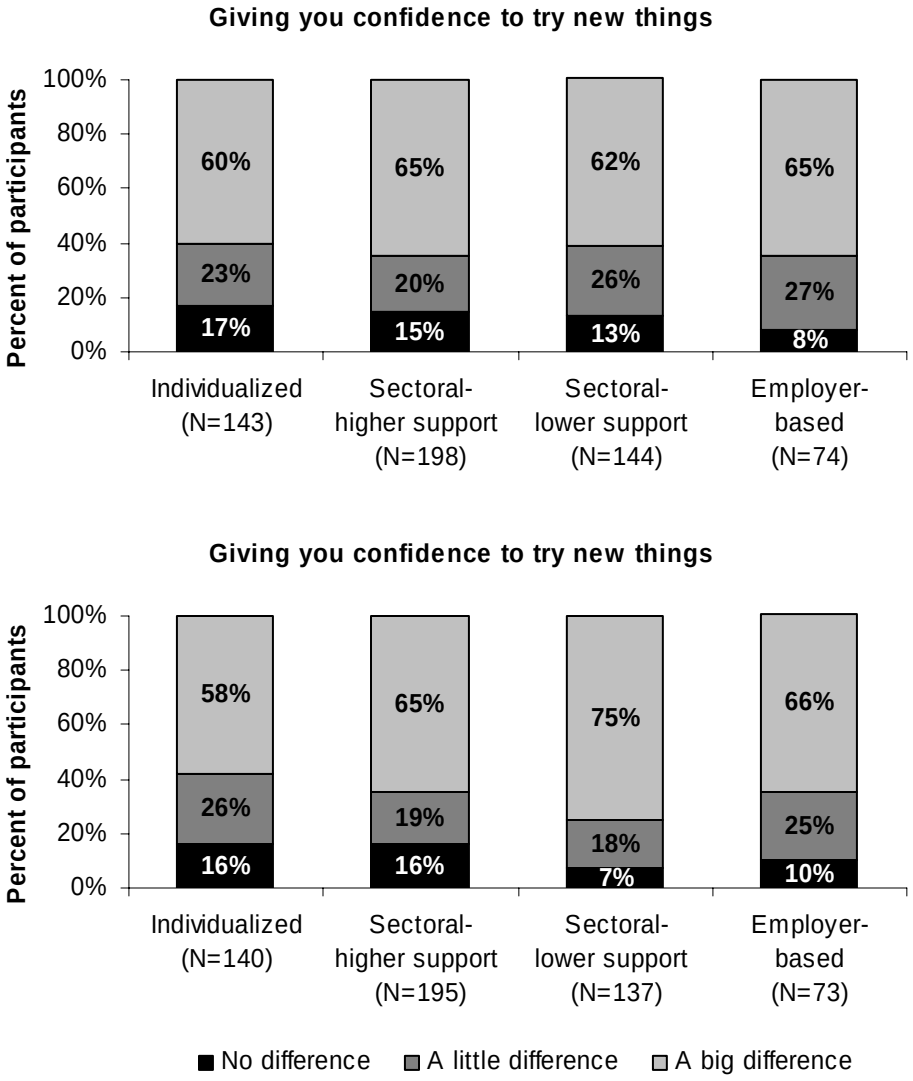
Participants were asked at nine-month follow-up and at their 24-month follow-up if they felt the training they participated in helped them to get a better job, do better in the job they currently have, take better care of their family, having confidence to try new things,

and get a better job in the future. At the time of the nine-month follow-up interview, participants in the sectoral clusters were more likely to say the training had made "a big difference" in terms of getting a better job now compared to participants in the individualized and employer-based clusters. Over half of the participants in both sectoral clusters and the employer-based cluster also said the training made "a big difference" in terms of helping them do better in the job they already have. Participants in the employer-based cluster were somewhat less likely to report that the training had made "a big difference" in helping them to take better care of their family, although nearly half of all participants reported that the training had made "a big difference" in this area. Nearly two-thirds of participants in all clusters said the training made "a big difference" in giving them confidence to try new things. Three-quarters of participants in the sectoral-lower support cluster, two-thirds of participants in the employer-based and sectoral-higher support clusters, and nearly three-fifths of participants in the individualized cluster reported that the training made "a big difference" in their ability to get a better job in the future. See Figure 39.

39. Participants' ratings of the difference the training made in various aspects of their lives at the time of the nine-month follow-up



39. Participants' ratings of the difference the training made in various aspects of their lives at the time of the nine-month follow-up (continued)



The initial 24-month follow-up results on the same questions show that these first impressions of program benefits have been strengthened over time for participants in the sectoral-higher support cluster and maintained or decreased somewhat for participants in the other three clusters, with one exception: a higher proportion of participants from the employer-based cluster at 24-months compared to the same cluster of participants at 9-months said the program made "a big difference" in terms of their confidence to try new things and in helping them to get a better job in the future. However, caution should be used when interpreting these results because of the small sample size in the 24-month follow-up period. Across all clusters, 66 percent of participants said the program made "a big difference" in terms of their confidence to try new things and 60 percent said the program made "a big difference" in terms of helping them to get a better job in the future. In addition, 48 percent of participants who responded to the 24-month follow-up said the program made "a big difference" in terms of helping them to get a better job now, 39 percent said the program made "a big difference" in helping them take care of their family better, and 39 percent also said the program made "a big difference" in terms of helping them to better in the job they already have.

Furthermore, most participants (89%) who completed the 24-month follow-up interview said that the program encouraged them to get motivated and to think they could do something new or something more. We consider this promising, because participants are not likely to have responded to the question positively if they had experienced an initial burst of motivation that had decreased over time; the high proportion answering positively at two years indicates that the programs have had lasting effects on the "dreams" of participants. Program leaders have consistently stressed the importance of participants' motivation for success in their programs and success in job retention and advancement. This finding about lasting effects of motivation is thus a hopeful sign of other likely positive effects for participants.

Results on this item and other items about the program's impact on participants' ability to obtain and maintain adequate employment should be considered preliminary due to the small sample sizes. However, next year's evaluation report will include enough participants who have completed the 24-month follow-up interview to make further analysis of these items valuable and informative on the issue of the longer-term impact of the program.

Variations among programs within clusters

The preceding sections have presented data at the level of multi-program clusters, because it would not be useful to present all findings at the individual program level. However, there is enough variation among programs within clusters that the aggregations mask some important differences. The table below on pages 104-106 shows cluster averages as well as the variation within the clusters on some key program-level measures of participants' characteristics at intake, services received and needed during the first three months of the program, and participants' self-reports on key outcomes at nine months.

From the analysis of findings at the individual program level, the following observations can be drawn:

- While there is a consistent trend across clusters from lowest average needs of participants among the employer-based programs to highest needs of participants among individualized programs, there are also significant differences in at least some programs within the clusters. For example, one program in the sectoral-higher support cluster has a higher proportion of medium- and high-need participants than any other program in the initiative.

- Program attrition, as measured by participants' self-reports at three months, does not appear to be related to program model. The three programs with the highest attrition rates are scattered among three different clusters.

- The most consistent success, measured by participants' self-reports of improvements in positions and wages at nine months, is concentrated in the individualized and sectoral-higher support clusters. Three of the four programs in the individualized cluster, and four of the six programs in the sectoral-higher support cluster achieved higher than overall average rates of success on gains in promotions, wages, and hours.

- There is greater variability in outcomes, but also some notable successes in both of the other two clusters. Some of the highest success rates on all four outcome measures appear among participants in one of the sectoral-lower support programs (although, from participants' reports of services received in the initial three months of the program, it appears likely that this program may have been mis-classified when it was assigned as "lower support"). In addition, in the employer-based cluster, participants in one program, while with low promotion rates, show some of the highest rates of receiving higher pay at nine months. In general, in the employer-based and sectoral-lower support clusters, programs are more likely to achieve

success on only one or two of the outcomes measures (promotions, raises, or increased hours) rather than on all three.

- Three programs serving a particularly high proportion of participants in poverty showed very strong results, especially given the level of need of their participants. These programs are in three different clusters (the two sectoral clusters and the individualized one).

- No single measure of success is adequate. Wages and hours interact to yield monthly income levels, so neither alone is enough to establish self-sufficiency. Furthermore, temporary reductions in hours may be needed for participants engaging in relatively intensive training programs (including some college-level education programs, especially if they involve more than a single course per semester). Such temporary adjustments may show up as declines in income during the first year of a longer-term program, making short-term results hard to interpret.

Combining these observations with the findings from interviews with program leaders, we draw the following conclusions:

- Strong training programs and strong relationships with employers are core elements that must both be present for significant success. Neither alone appears to be sufficient.

- Programs with highest success rates are ones in which program leaders indicated that their program planning incorporated the needs of both employers and individual workers, indicating that they were operating as true workforce intermediaries balancing both sets of interests.

- The most successful programs appear to have delivered relatively intensive support services to participants within the context of an ongoing relationship that conveyed psychological as well as concrete support. (The most successful employer-based program did not include significant concrete supports, but it also served a participant population that was in less need of most concrete assistance.)

- All the most successful programs included not only training and support services (appropriate for the level of need), but also employment services including job development to identify jobs, and job placement and retention supports. (The most successful employer-based program is again an exception, since all its participants were already employed. However, employment support was nevertheless provided through the program's work with the employer to develop improved workplace conditions including strengthened supervision and increased advancement opportunities.)

- It is not clear from these results whether the program's choice of a specific industry sector or sectors for training is important. We do observe that all the most successful programs include more than one sector (except the most successful employer-based program, which included only one sector, but multiple employers within that sector). This diversification of focus among the outstanding programs may explain why only some of the health care programs appear on the list: the ones that stand out are programs that included at least one other training strand in addition to their health care sub-program, and so were less seriously affected by the unexpected downturn in the labor market for entry-level nursing assistants.

- All the programs with especially strong results were operated by organizations with energetic, entrepreneurial leaders.

40. Summary of participant data, by cluster

Cluster	Program	# FUP interviews completed: # of intakes to date	new 3-month	9-month	24-month	Demographics/needs at intake: % Hispanic or non-White	% employed at intake	% at or below poverty	% low-income (101-200% poverty)	% low need	% medium need	% high need	Program estimates of % with: Not very stable	Vague or unrealistic goals	Somewhat or seriously limited potential
Individualized (N=4 programs)	Range	62-100	0-59	21-51	0-20	8-90	64-97	25-77	20-70	20-30*	24-40*	36-46*	20-75	10-45	10-68*
	Total	**303**	**116**	**143**	**24**	**50**	**87**	**45**	**51**	**27**	**34**	**40**	**41****	**23 ****	**10 ****
Sectoral – higher support (N=6 programs)	Range	15-94	2-53	11-59	0-18	18-97	27-65	60-77	22-32	0-51	26-58	0-64	1-50	0-25	0-55
	Total	**396**	**178**	**257**	**30**	**59**	**48**	**67**	**29**	**30**	**38**	**32**	**19****	**13 ****	**8 ****
Sectoral – lower support (N=4 programs)	Range	50-74	14-53	20-52	0-15	38-73	24-100	20-76	24-52	29-55	32-41	14-29	0-80	5-70	10-88
	Total	**242**	**118**	**146**	**35**	**64**	**64**	**39**	**45**	**45**	**35**	**20**	**42****	**28 ****	**33 ****
Employer-based (N=4 programs)	Range	22-61	3-27	0-47	0-4	13-98	100	4-15	22-62	*	*	*	0-20*	0*	0-10*
	Total	**137**	**42**	**74**	**5**	**78**	**100**	**11**	**44**	**64**	**12**	**24**	**15****	**0 ****	**0 ****
OVERALL TOTAL		**1,078**	**908**	**620**	**94**	**60**	**69**	**47**	**41**	**36**	**34**	**30**	**31 ****	**19 ****	**15 ****
Data source:		intake	3-mo	9-mo	24-mo	intake	intake	intake	intake	3-mo	3-mo	3-mo	site survey	site survey	site survey
													(see detail of categories in Appendix)		

Key: ***** = shows lowest or highest value among programs with data available; not all programs in the cluster are represented

** = based on site leaders' estimates, where available; cluster and overall percentages calculated ONLY for those sites able to estimate

Interpretation: Of the four programs in the individualized cluster, the program with the fewest intakes to date had 62, and the program with the most intakes to date has 100; the total number of intakes to date in the individualized cluster is 303. Of the same four programs, one program had only 8% of its participants who were Hispanic or non-White, and one program had 90% of its participants who were Hispanic or non-White; the average among all programs in this cluster was 50% of participants who were Hispanic or non-White.

40. Summary of participant data, by cluster (continued)

cluster	program	% employed while training	% receiving services within first 3 months (participant report): Any assess-ments	Any kinds of training	Any employment services	Any financial support services	Case mgt/ personal support services	% needing but not receiving services, first 3 months: Any assess-ments	Any kinds of training	Any employment services	Any financial support services	Case mgt/ personal support services
Individ-ualized (N=4)	Range	55-95	68-80*	44-62*	41-60*	76-90*	44-80*	27-49*	15-41*	22-45*	40-65*	34-49*
	Total	**69**	**72**	**52**	**45**	**84**	**53**	**36**	**28**	**32**	**52**	**41**
Sectoral – higher support (N=6)	Range	24-68	74-92*	53-87*	57-82*	66-100*	51-83*	23-55*	19-42*	13-50*	28-83*	21-51*
	Total	**50**	**84**	**71**	**66**	**80**	**65**	**35**	**27**	**30**	**39**	**35**
Sectoral – lower support (N=4)	Range	39-90	75-86	43-94	55-88	72-94	36-76	29-53	29-41	21-35	36-47	21-65
	Total	**60**	**80**	**75**	**66**	**82**	**52**	**46**	**36**	**25**	**44**	**32**
Employer -based (N=4)	Range	100*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*
	Total	**100**	**79**	**88**	**50**	**64**	**50**	**48**	**40**	**31**	**50**	**33**
OVERALL TOTAL		**62**	**79**	**69**	**59**	**80**	**57**	**39**	**31**	**29**	**45**	**36**
Data source:		9-mo	3-mo	3-mo	3-mo	3-mo	3-mo	3-mo	3-mo	3-mo	3-mo	3-mo
			(see detail of categories on pages 65-66)					**(see detail of categories on pages 65-66)**				

Key: * = shows lowest or highest value among programs for which sufficient data are available; not all programs in the cluster are represented

Interpretation: Of the four programs in the individualized cluster, the proportion of participants who reported they were employed while in training ranged from a low of 55% in one program to a high of 95% in one program; the average for programs in the individualized cluster was 69% of participants employed while in training. Of the four programs in the employer-based cluster, there were not enough participants reporting employment while in training to give statistics for all individual programs, but of those with enough to report, the average was 100% employed while in training.

40. Summary of participant data, by cluster (continued)

Cluster	Program	Program duration & retention				Job outcomes at 9 months									
		% still getting services at 3 mos	% who dropped out by 3 mos	% still getting services at 9 mos	Pgm.*** estimate of typical duration	(N not empl. at intake)	% who are now working	(N empl. at intake)	% who are no longer working	% with better jobs	% with higher pay	% with more hours	Avg. hourly wages	Avg. % increase in wages	Avg. % increase monthly income
Individ-ualized (N=4)	Range	68-80*	2-15*	24-83	Varies*	(2-17)	50-65*	(19-34)	15-41	18-32	35-68	26-33			
	Total	**74**	**7**	**46**		(29)	62	(114)	25	**23**	**45**	**30**	**$10.92**	**7.5%**	**2.4%**
Sectoral – higher support (N=6)	Range	26-72*	0-18*	0-46*	< 3 mos	(7-39)	46-100*	(4-35)	4-23*	15-38*	49-69*	27-38*			
	Total	**50**	**5**	**27**		(130)	62	(125)	11	**28**	**58**	**32**	**$11.42**	**6.7%**	**27.8%**
Sectoral – lower support (N=4)	Range	24-86	0-9	0-51	< 3 mos to > 12 mos	(0-34)	54-74*	(7-43)	0-6*	9-56*	61-67*	15-56*			
	Total	**52**	**4**	**23**		(58)	66	(88)	6	**22**	**59**	**28**	**$12.30**	**4.6%**	**- 5.3%**
Employer -based (N=4)	Range	*	*	7-13*	< 3 mos*	(0)	-	(12-47*)	0-7*	0-8*	17-67*	0-17*			
	Total	**42**	**22**	**11**		(0)	-	(74)	3	**1**	**32**	**6**	**$12.70**	**3.4%**	**- 2.3%**
OVERALL TOTAL		**56**	**7**	**29**		**(217)**	**63**	**(401)**	**12**	**20**	**50**	**26**	**$11.80**	**5.3%**	**6.8%**
Data source:		3-mo	3-mo	9-mo	Site survey	9-mo	9-mo	9-mo	9-mo	9-mo	9-mo	9-mo	DEED	DEED	DEED

Key: * = shows lowest or highest value among programs for which sufficient data are available; not all programs in the cluster are represented

*** Program estimate of typical duration: for core hard skills training only (if no hard skills, for core soft skills training).

Interpretation: Of the four programs in the individualized cluster, the proportion of participants who reported they were still receiving services three months after intake ranged from a low of 68% in one program to a high of 80% in one program; the average for programs in the individualized cluster was 74% of participants still receiving services three months after intake. Of the four programs in the employer-based cluster, there were not enough participants in the three-month survey to give statistics for all individual programs, but of those who were surveyed in these programs, the average was 42% still receiving services at three months.

Discussion, conclusions, and recommendations

The experiences of Families Forward grantees and participants in the last three years have been productive not only of new dreams, skills, and opportunities for around one thousand low-income Minnesota workers, but have also given rise to a number of observations and learnings that can help to increase such opportunities for others. In this section we highlight some key points that will be of interest to funders, program planners and managers, employers, and policy makers.

Overall, participants are realizing higher wages, hours, and benefits on average than when they began their programs. Participants in employer-based programs began with the highest levels of wages, hours, and benefits, and have maintained that position at the nine-month follow-up period, but participants in groups who started at lower levels have closed part of the gap by rising further.

Most successful models

On average, the amount of improvement in wages, hours, and benefits is notably higher among participants in the sectoral-higher support clusters. Their participants are more likely to get better jobs and higher wages within nine months, and more likely to report that their participation in the program helped them get those jobs and raises. Furthermore, this success was remarkably consistent among the different programs within the cluster. Based on responses to the Wilder survey, out of the five programs in the cluster with enough responses to report, only one of the five did not exceed the overall Families Forward average for the proportion of participants receiving higher pay nine months later. In addition, only one did not meet or exceed the average for better jobs, and that was a program that did exceed the average outcome for better jobs and more hours. In addition, this success does not appear to have been accomplished at the cost of accepting only the easier-to-serve clients. In most of the programs, the participants exceeded the overall average for the proportion in poverty at the time they began, and participants in half of the programs were equally or more likely to be rated as "high need" based on the number of personal and employment barriers they had recently experienced. All of these five programs also served a number of participants that exceeded the average (60)[18] for all Families Forward programs.

Notwithstanding this relatively consistent success among the sectoral programs offering a high level of support services, programs in other clusters have also demonstrated some

[18] This average counts West Central as three different programs (the first year as an individualized program, the second and third years as a sectoral program, and the joint program with Teamworks).

notable successes with their program models. Among programs within the same cluster, there is wide variation in the kinds of participants served, the mix of services offered, and the results for participants. Considering the proportion of participants who have achieved higher pay within nine months of starting their programs, each of the other clusters includes at least one program that has produced results better than the overall average even for the sectoral-higher support cluster. In particular, of the programs in the sectoral-lower support cluster for which there are enough responses to report, all showed higher-than average proportions of participants reporting higher pay. However, the participants in these programs were less likely than those in the sectoral-higher support cluster to report that they had more hours or jobs that were a step up from where they started. In the individualized cluster, all four programs met or exceeded the initiative average for the proportion of participants who worked more hours at follow-up, two exceeded the proportion reporting better jobs, and one significantly exceeded the average proportion of participants reporting higher pay. Finally, in the employer-based cluster, where no participants reported better jobs at follow-up (and where there was little room for increases in hours), one program significantly exceeded the overall average for participants reporting higher pay.

It would thus be a mistake to concentrate future efforts too exclusively on the sectoral-higher support strategy and overlook the value of other models for meeting specific niches for which they may be better suited. These include the individualized programs (Communities Investing in Families and West Central in its first year) that have demonstrated a strong potential for serving participants in rural parts of the state, where the concentration of industry is too low to be able to capitalize on the economy of scale offered by sectoral programs.

Programs well suited to specific niches also include employer-based or sectoral-lower support programs, in some situations. The circumstances that appear to be related to greater success include the simultaneous availability of an identifiable and relatively homogeneous pool of low-income workers along with an employer or identifiable pool of employers in need of workers with specific skills for which the available workers can be trained in a relatively short period of time. This set of circumstances allowed energetic and entrepreneurial program leaders to develop targeted and effective programs (Teamworks, Workforce Development, Inc., and Hennepin Technical College) to meet those specific needs with a lower level of support services. However, in each of these cases the program was planned and managed by an organization with significant organizational history in the community and prior expertise in workforce issues, which helped them to recognize and capitalize on the opportunity and be at less risk as an organization in the event that a specific pool of workers or employers dries up and the specific program is required to scale back or discontinue. In a labor market in which job

categories can be in great demand at one time and in surplus a short time later, such flexibility is essential for organizations serving workers at the margins of the market.

The role of support services

The importance of support services to incumbent worker trainees continues to be just as consistent a theme as in the first two years of the initiative. After working with their participants for two or three years, program leaders no longer seem so surprised about the extent and severity of low-income workers' personal and family challenges. However, the complexity of these challenges have led them to continue to struggle to find ways to help them. While programs have not reduced their goals for their grantees (in terms of better skills, better jobs, and better wages), they have in many cases reduced their estimates of the number of participants who can be effectively served with their available resources, and increased their estimates for the length of time or intensity of the services that will be needed to serve them.

The role of soft skills

Consistent with findings from the first two years, we continue to see evidence that "soft skills" is not a well-defined term, and that people in different positions perceive different causes and solutions where "soft skills" are thought to be lacking. In gathering data for this evaluation, we heard from a large majority of participants that they knew – and understood the importance of – the basic workplace norms for behavior, but at the same time we heard from program leaders that they found it necessary to incorporate more "soft skills" training into their programs. This disconnect is not unique to this study – a study of a group of Michigan women attempting to leave welfare for work also found that "most recipients are familiar with work norms" and expressed surprise, "given that much of the job preparation training in 'work first' programs assumes a general lack of this knowledge among recipients."[19]

The design of this evaluation does not allow us to uncover the reasons for this mismatch in perceptions. Part of the difficulty no doubt lies in the variety of dimensions that may be included in the varying definitions of the single term, "soft skills." The authors of a recent multi-city survey of employers define it as "skills, abilities, and traits that pertain to personality, attitude, and behavior rather than to formal or technical knowledge," and point out that it commonly includes at least two distinct clusters of behaviors: interaction (including friendliness, teamwork, ability to fit in, appropriate grooming, and the like)

[19] Danziger, S., et al. (2000). *Barriers to the employment of welfare recipients.* Ann Arbor, MI: University of Michigan, Poverty Research and Training Center. Downloaded January 21, 2005 from www.fordschool.umich.edu/research/poverty/pdf/wesappam.pdf. The selection quoted here is on page 14.

and motivation (including such components as enthusiasm, positive work attitude, dependability, and willingness to learn). The term often also includes some communication behaviors.[20]

The vagueness of this term suggests another part of the difficulty in determining individuals' level of "skill:" any assessment of the kinds of traits included in the term is likely to be subjective, and the performance of "soft skills" is more affected by context than the more technical "hard skills."

Some of the mismatch in perceptions about participants' levels of soft skills is probably due to the relatively complex array of elements included under this concept. It is very likely that some entry-level workers have some of the soft skill elements well in hand (such as appropriate grooming and fitting in) but may not have had prior background or experience with some other elements (such as work attitude or certain culturally-shaped ways of expressing enthusiasm).

Response to changing social and economic conditions

In their continuing exploration of effective ways to provide support services, programs are learning from their participants, and sharing with them, the tough realities of what it takes to move out of poverty. Grantees are finding that they need to make adjustments based on challenges that have proven to be larger than their resources were budgeted to cover, scale back their aspirations, and – by the exertion of significant ingenuity as well as effort – find new, often untried ways of going about things.

The new ways often include approaches to dealing with other organizations that are less than completely responsive to participants' needs. Many of the major institutions in the constellation that supports workforce development (in particular the community and technical colleges and the WorkForce Centers) are organized on the historical assumption that most skills needed for employment are acquired early in life, before the beginning of "real" employment. Compared to two to three decades ago, more people are finding this assumption hard to meet now, when a larger fraction of adults is in the workforce and the threshold of expectations for minimum skills has increased.

Like other recent workforce programs for low-income people, Families Forward programs have had to deal with the fact that many adult workers, for a variety of reasons, currently need skills for job advancement that they did not acquire during the earlier stages of their lives. These include not only "hard" skills for specific job functions, but also basic reading, writing, and computing skills, and "soft" skills related not only to

[20] Moss, P., & Tilly, C. (2001). *Stories employers tell: Race, skill, and hiring in America.* New York: Russell Sage Foundation. (Selection quoted is on page 44).

motivation and reliability but also teamwork and communication. As working adults, often with family responsibilities, they often need help negotiating a system that is not set up for people who already have jobs they cannot afford to leave, or children who require care and attention.

The flexibility of the McKnight Foundation funding has been an important factor in programs' ability to respond in flexible ways to changing or unexpected situations. In addressing the needs of participants who have not been a significant focus of the workforce development system in the past, the experiences of programs in the initiative have contributed new understanding about the kinds of challenges faced by newer, less experienced, and less traditional workers, and the kinds of strategies that might be effective. As programs have learned and adjusted their strategies, they have been able to be flexible in a number of ways, including filling in gaps in service left between other categorical programs; adjusting training schedule or location as they learned what was accessible and convenient; adding or strengthening program components found to be important (including assessments, soft skills training, and job retention supports); and adjusting to unexpected changes in the labor market or in policies and funding for public skills development institutions such as the Minnesota State Colleges and Universities (MnSCU) or Adult Basic Education.

The difficulty of training for incumbent workers

The flexibility of the programs and of the McKnight funding have been important in another way as well. These same tough realities of dealing with competing demands and priorities help to shed light on why there are so few incumbent worker programs elsewhere to be replicated. To judge by the evidence of our data, very few programs in this initiative have actually been able to test a purely *incumbent* worker training model for low-wage workers. Except in the employer-based cluster, all programs included a mix of people who did and did not work throughout the training. The proportion of those working or not working appears to depend on the intensity of the training and the availability of pay during training. On average, across all programs, only 62 percent of participants reported having been employed while in training.

For people with limited skills and resources, there appears to be a hard-to-win trade-off between working and training. If you work and train at the same time, you can maintain the income necessary to afford living expenses, as well as training expenses if those are not too large. However, you may not be able to spare the time to engage in training with the kind of intensity that appears to be important to make real progress in marketable skills in a reasonable length of time. If you stop working in order to concentrate on a training program with the needed intensity, you may not be able to pay for basic living

expenses, let alone training program costs. Compared to the challenges for single adults, the choices are even harder for parents or others who have caregiving responsibilities.

This situation is reminiscent of the infamous "trilemma" in the child care industry, in which costs to parents are too high, pay for providers is too low, and solving either of those problems risks jeopardizing the quality of care. As with the child care trilemma, there appears to be no closed-system solution for the incumbent worker training problem; that is, no solution that requires only the redistribution of resources already to be found among the workers and the training providers. The situation is likely to be fully resolved only if additional resources from other sources can be found, either to help meet living expenses for those who leave work temporarily to concentrate on training, or to help with work and family supports for the additional child care, transportation, training costs, and other expenses that are experienced by those who continue to work during training.

Other challenges besides the basic one of resources are more amenable to solution. For example, the barriers to access for incumbent worker trainees can be reduced by providing training at times and places that are convenient. This appears to be part of what promotes success for employer-based and sectoral-lower support programs: by working with groups of participants in similar circumstances (such as those needing similar preparation or skills, or those with similar work locations and schedules), it is more feasible to schedule and locate cohort-based training that requires less financial or personal support service to help participants access the program.

Programs have reported a variety of other ways that they have found to make training more flexible to better suit the hectic lives of working, often single, parents. They have tested new ways of serving people from cultures with less prior familiarity with the American workplace, including immigrants and English language learners and American-born workers with family histories of generational poverty. Program staff have engaged in relentless relationship-building with employers to increase hiring, job retention, and career ladder opportunities for people who have often been considered high-risk employees, to be avoided or kept in entry-level positions unless other applicants were available.

Alignment of models to participant and employer needs

The programs tested in the Families Forward initiative were not intended to help people who could progress to better jobs on their own, using only the resources available to anyone in the community. Rather, they were designed to provide help for those who were "stuck" at some point and unlikely to progress to greater skills and greater opportunities without outside help. The four main program models (clusters) represent a continuum of responses to the needs of individuals spread across a continuum of need

and prior workforce experiences and stuck at different positions. Because of the shortage of programs to help incumbent workers with training, and the large number of low-income people looking for such help, it is inevitable that some participants will enroll in programs that are not ideally suited to their developmental needs, but on the whole the programs appear to have succeeded well in matching their programs to the participants best suited to take advantage of them.

- Individualized programs are serving participants with significant personal, family, and skill development needs, which are often not addressable in group settings because of geographic distance or the lack of a common unifying focus. Participants in these programs often have the lowest access to resources (along with those in sectoral-higher support programs), are likely to be least connected to the labor market, and are least likely to have had prior training experience.

- Sectoral programs are serving people with slightly more developed aspirations, who are able, through a shared occupational focus and geographic proximity, to be served in group settings. Their job skills may be enough to get into the labor market, but not to stay in it when more marginal workers are laid off, or to transfer readily into more promising occupations. Depending on participants' degree of personal and family stability (which can be quite low among some sectoral-higher support programs), the provision of services to cohorts of participants can help to reduce the need for individualized support services. Group-based services can also be a way to provide peer support that is valuable in its own right.

- Employer-based programs are suited for participants with demonstrated success at entering and staying in the labor market but limited chance of advancing within it. Their need is for help to develop skills that cannot be acquired from ordinary on-the-job experience and which they are unlikely to be able to access on their own initiative.

Programs' relationships with employers

In interviews, grantees frequently demonstrated that one major consideration in how they operate their programs is the importance of developing and strengthening relationships with employers. This consideration is expressed in how grantees plan and oversee their programs, and with whose input, and it is reflected in decisions about scheduling and locating training and support services, as well as the content of those services. As with participants, the work is different for employers who begin with different attitudes, resources, and backgrounds. In different degrees, it involves helping them develop interest and motivation (dreams) initially, and making the case that those dreams are realistically attainable; it involves the transmission of specific content knowledge

(equivalent to hard skills training) – that is, educating employers about the value to them of investing in the development of low-skilled workers; it involves changes in attitudes to promote greater flexibility and communication skills with their entry-level workers who are from previously underrepresented groups (an acculturation process, in many ways equivalent to "soft skills" development).

To do this work with employers, nearly all grantees have increased the degree to which they function as intermediaries, that is, organizations that provide training and support not only to workers (to be better able to meet employers' needs), but also to employers (to be better able to understand and get the most out of their employees). Just as they have had to learn how to inspire and motivate workers to have new goals and get beyond their habitual ways of doing things, it is clear that many grantees have also been testing how to inspire and motivate employers to see entry-level and nontraditional workers in a new way and get beyond their usual practices for recruiting, hiring, supervising, and promoting them. About half of the grantees report they have succeeded in changing some employers' views about the value and potential of entry-level and non-traditional workers.

The experiences of the different kinds of programs points to a real strength of operating a workforce program from a truly intermediary position; that is, one with the "capacity, commitment, and agility to meet the needs of employers, as well as individuals"[21] and thus bridge supply and demand. Families Forward programs that identified a main focus on serving the needs of individual participants, for the most part, have not developed the kinds of stable, long-term relationships with employers that inspire employers' confidence to seek or rely on the program as a source of new workers or support for existing ones. Programs that identified a main focus on serving the needs of employers, again for the most part (and with exceptions), have had little leverage for changing employment practices to better accommodate the needs of the workers; as a result, these programs for the most part appear to have increased workers' skills in ways that are useful to the employer, without substantial increases in the opportunities (promotions, pay raises, or better benefits) that would be to the advantage of the workers.

With help from the Governor's Workforce Development Council, many grantees (most of whom are nonprofit, educational, or philanthropic organizations) have made strides in learning to understand and communicate with the different culture in which for-profit businesses operate, and to become able to go back and forth between that culture, through the nonprofit/social services culture, to the cultures of participants, and to act as interpreters of needs, goals, and behaviors of each to the other.

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[21] Jobs for the Future. (2002). *How to help welfare recipients and other low wage workers secure – and keep – better jobs* (page 4). Boston, MA: Author. Retrieved January 27, 2003, from www.jff.org/jff/PDFDocuents/TANFreauth.pdf

Programs' work with other workforce organizations

The intermediary work of grantees extends beyond just participants and employers. With the help of the Governor's Workforce Development Council, Families Forward grantees have also been addressing challenges and opportunities relating to the wide variety of institutions that work in the field of workforce development in Minnesota, including local WorkForce Centers, Adult Basic Education consortia, community and technical colleges, and a wide range of social service providers. Many grantees who are not themselves public agencies but who work with these other institutions have been affected by budget cutbacks in some public services, including WorkForce Centers, adult education, and welfare and its associated employment services.

On the other hand, several programs report promising developments in working with community and technical colleges and experimenting with new ways of delivering services, or delivery to new populations. This includes grantees' perceptions that some of these institutions have become more aware of needs of the participant groups and of the importance of adjusting their own services to be more responsive. This perception is most often mentioned in connection with immigrant and refugee groups, whose obvious cultural and language differences make it relatively easy to perceive the need to adjust services to be responsive. It is not as clear that the main institutions perceive a need to adjust services to be more responsive to other groups that have also been historically underrepresented in labor market opportunities, including American-born, English-speaking American Indians, African Americans, and Hispanics, or poor Whites from communities with long-standing or pervasive poverty.

Results of the initiative for workforce services

The lasting effects of the program will be felt in multiple ways. A substantial proportion of participants appear to have experienced more promotions, increased hours, and improved wages and benefits compared to what might have been expected in the current labor market without outside intervention. For some, the dollar value of job outcomes has been small, but nearly all continue to report, two years after enrolling in the program, that they have been helped to increase their motivation and confidence to try new things. This change in individual capacity may be an indication that future job advancement outcomes may require less outside intervention and support than would have been needed without the boost in attitude and confidence.

Beyond the individual participant outcomes, grantees report that a number of employers who have worked with their programs have adjusted employment practices in ways that will continue to afford greater opportunities to entry-level workers on an on-going basis, and that other organizations and institutions (especially specific local WorkForce Centers

and community or technical colleges) have shown evidence of increased flexibility to work in new ways with incumbent workers in need of skill development. There is strong evidence that nearly all of the 17 grantees have gained in their organizational capacity, to varying extents, and that those who can find other sources of funding will continue to serve low-skilled workers in the future with greater effectiveness and better results as a consequence of their experience in the Families Forward initiative.

Finally, the work of the Governor's Workforce Development Council has been significantly informed by the interaction of its staff with grantee organizations, and the involvement of grantee staff in GWDC's committees and the Council itself. Through the GWDC and its recommendations for state-level policy, program, and funding actions, some other key state agency leaders are demonstrating increased awareness of the need for skill development (in addition to rapid workforce attachment) as an important goal for state attention, and it appears likely that the legislature and state agencies will be prepared to take action to move this agenda forward within the next few years. There is evidence that the Families Forward initiative is contributing both to the direction of this movement, and to its pace.

In light of continuing shortages in public budgets at the state and local levels, it will be difficult to secure new funding for any public programs. However, three years of experience with Families Forward programs has provided strong evidence that the investment in skill development that meets needs of workers and employers produces results with valuable public benefits, including higher individual (taxable) incomes as well as stronger, more competitive businesses.

Furthermore, the needs for such skill development are increasing as the economy recovers from the recent recession. Grantees foresee continuing needs among Minnesota businesses and workers for basic and advanced skills in the next five years and for programs that can develop those skills. The evidence from the programs that have been tested in this initiative is that service providers will need resources to offer such programs, and employers and workers will need supports to make use of them.

In the absence of new public funding, grantees that have most thoroughly adopted the intermediary role, meeting both worker and employer needs simultaneously, appear to be best positioned to secure and combine the variety of public and private funds needed to continue the work piloted under the Families Forward grants. These programs are concentrated in the sectoral clusters, but include some employer-based and individualized models as well. It is likely that a few such programs would continue to operate after McKnight funding ends, but at a significantly reduced scale.

Recommendations

Based on the findings of this evaluation, we conclude that the following actions would help to promote skill development for low-skilled workers in ways that have been demonstrated to contribute to increased self-sufficiency for low-wage workers and their families, and are considered likely to also promote the competitive positions of Minnesota businesses:

For workforce, economic development, and business leaders in the state:

Recognize and promote the role played by intermediary organizations in meeting needs of workers and employers simultaneously. Private intermediaries, unlike public agencies, can best provide the agility required in any economy that is prone to rapid change. Intermediaries in the Families Forward initiative have demonstrated a growing capacity to communicate with and promote the alignment of the other varied partners needed. Furthermore, those with significant institutional experience appear to be well positioned to know about and best positioned to combine the variety of different funding sources that are required to effectively meet the needs both of workers and of employers. Further work is needed to develop a greater understanding of how the private intermediary role might best complement public workforce institutions. In addition, further work is needed to help employers learn to understand and make the most of such organizations. This can be accomplished by communication with one firm at a time and through such contacts by word of mouth among employers, or it can also be promoted through employers' organizations.

For Families Forward grantees and partners, GWDC, and advocacy groups:

Recognize, and help funders and policy makers to understand, the length of time that is needed to make any real change in long-standing institutions and ways of doing things. This principle applies to individual change for training participants who have limited prior exposure to employment or positions of responsibility. It applies to employers who face intense competition and narrow profit margins and have limited tolerance for the risks involved in new business practices. It applies to local service providers trying new service strategies and for regional and state organizations with changing service priorities and funding. In each of these cases, it will be important to keep expectations realistic, and to strive to provide stable, consistent resources that can be depended on for the length of time that is required to make lasting change.

For state agency leaders and policy makers, and community leaders who help to inform them on the issues:

Recognize that current public policies do not adequately address the needs of incumbent workers for skill development. Opportunities for change that would benefit both workers and employers include the following:

Increase the share of workforce investment funding that is allocated for skill development in general and development of incumbent workers in particular. Funding trends in the last decade have reduced funds for skill development and elevated the emphasis on rapid workforce attachment. As a result, as the economy enters a new expansionary cycle, there are likely to be a large number of relatively inexperienced workers in the entry levels of the workforce with little prior training for the tasks that they are required to perform. Skill training for workers in these entry-level ranks will be increasingly important.

When planning and funding training programs for low-income workers, recognize the need for support services to enable access and effective participation. This includes more general provision of many of the same work supports that help low-wage workers make ends meet (such as child care assistance, public health care coverage, and Earned Income Tax Credits, as well as other less generally available supports such as housing subsidies and transportation assistance). For entry-level, low-skilled workers, ensuring the accessibility and effectiveness of the core hard skills training also includes funding for:

- **Modest stipends for living expenses** while workers take short leaves from jobs to concentrate on programs that offer the intensity required for significant learning.

- **Assessments and vocational counseling** to help match workers to programs that will meet their needs and interests.

- **Incorporating soft skills training** together with hard skills, to ensure that participants will be able effectively to apply their training.

- **Job placement and retention supports**, simultaneously meeting needs of workers and employers, to ensure that trained workers successfully adapt to their new positions and that their supervisors can effectively support and make the most of their skills.

Provide incentives to employers to offer or facilitate assessment and skills training for their own new or incumbent workers. Explore ways to develop or incubate local or regional consortia of employers to pool the costs, risks, and benefits of sectoral training. Such consortia help promote regional economic development as well as avoid the disincentives that individual employers face to offering training on their own, thereby risking that other employers will realize the benefits by hiring the trained workers away from them.

Build on the benefits gained from GWDC's work to help bridge gaps in communication between state-level policymakers and front-line workforce service organizations. The connections initiated during the Families Forward initiative have shown value in promoting improvements both in local practices and in state-level planning and responsiveness. Use this work, or additional evaluation, to continue to identify best practices in serving new and lower-skilled workers in need of skill development.

Continue the work now being led by the Department of Employment and Economic Development to strive for balance between clear vision and policy at the state level and flexibility at the local level in carrying out that policy. This must involve development of consensus in the value of consistent, clear public direction from the state, and increased flexibility in the local use of funds. This flexibility will help to promote responsiveness both to local variations and to changes in economic conditions over time. The continued involvement of local leaders and workforce service providers in state decision-making bodies can contribute to the establishment of appropriate expectations for state and local responsibilities in this balance.

For Minnesota State Colleges and Universities (MnSCU) campus and statewide leadership:

Adjust the planning and use of resources in the MNSCU system to recognize the varied needs of adult and part-time students. These include modifications to financial aid policies to better serve those attending part-time and in non-degree programs; expansion of the emergency grant monies for child care, transportation, and course materials; examining how classes are scheduled, including consideration not only of times of day and week, but also issues relating to annual calendars, including more flexible (and frequent) starting points. Also explore opportunities to make vocation-related content available in smaller units that can be started at more varied times of year and completed more quickly. Develop or work with community partners to offer more "bridge" programs to address specific gaps in basic knowledge or skills among those preparing to enter classes.

For local and statewide leaders and advocates in preschool and K-12 education:

Continue to identify opportunities and strategies in the P-12 education system to address educational disparities and to produce or enhance the basic skills that are the foundation for later job skills. Although skill development is becoming more of a lifelong process than a one-time investment, it still begins at the earliest ages, and later learning relies on the strength of earlier foundations. In addition, current shortfalls in capacity in adult basic education and English as a second language are restricting both the upward mobility of willing workers and the productivity of employers who hire them.

Concluding thoughts

The recent recession and current slow recovery have provided many lessons in the effects of economic cycles on workers who are most weakly attached to the labor force. In slow times, workers are more likely to need re-training but less likely to have income to pay for it, and employers have fewer resources to provide needed training or even, in some cases, continue people in their jobs. While philanthropies and non-profits have made significant efforts to respond flexibly and creatively, they have also suffered declining revenues to fund services and are unable to make up the difference. Only the public sector can exert a significant counter-cyclical influence.

The efforts of workforce service organizations in the Families Forward initiative have produced increased employee skills and thereby likely increased productivity for employers, increased capacity among a significant group of innovative workforce service providers, and increased job responsibility and wages for a significant proportion of program participants. These effects have occurred in all kinds of settings, including urban, suburban, rural, and regional centers. The number of businesses and workers served through these programs has not come close to exhausting the demand for such services. Expansion through public leadership and funding would produce economic benefits that would be spread broadly throughout the state.

Such immediate economic outcomes are not the only benefits of the kinds of training piloted in this initiative and ready for expansion. In the final report on this initiative in 2005, we expect to be able to describe not only participants' job outcomes for a longer follow-up period, but also their outcomes with respect to personal and family stability. We will be able to compare incoming participants' reports about their challenges in the six months just before starting the program with their answers to the same set of questions two years later, to see whether they appear to be any more personally as well as financially secure. Such security affects not only adults' job performance in the immediate time frame, but also has been shown widely elsewhere to contribute to the later job readiness of those adults' children.

Appendix

Questions and response categories for site leaders' estimates of participants' stability, goals, and motivation and potential

Profiles of participant characteristics at intake

Families Forward initiative overall

Individualized cluster overall

Sectoral-higher support cluster overall

Sectoral-lower support cluster overall

Employer-based cluster overall

Profiles of participant outcomes at nine months after intake

Families Forward initiative overall

Individualized cluster overall

Sectoral-higher support cluster overall

Sectoral-lower support cluster overall

Employer-based cluster overall

Questions and response categories for site leaders' estimates of participants' stability, goals, and motivation and potential

(shading shows the response category or categories reported in the chart and summary table)

The personal and family stability of your program's participants

A. **Very stable** – able to add training on top of work and family responsibilities with support from their own resources and/or minimal information and referral from the program
B. **Somewhat stable** – able to add training on top of work and family responsibilities with modest support from the program for no longer than three months
C. **Not very stable** – required intensive support from the program, or modest support for a period of more than three months, to be able to manage training and/or work on top of their family responsibilities

The degree to which your participants entered your program with clear training or career goals

A. **Given:** Goal of training is determined by employer based on participants' current position and/or skill test results
B. **Clear and realistic:** Entering participants have a clear and realistic goal for training or career that is compatible with the program, or develop such a goal as part of the application/intake process
C. **General:** Entering participants have some general ideas about career or training goals but typically require help from the program to make them more specific and/or realistic
D. **Vague or unrealistic:** Entering participants have little or no vision of their current training needs or longer-term career direction, or have goals that are not realistic; participants need intensive or sustained help from the program to develop specific and realistic goals and plans

The level of motivation and potential your participants came to you with

A. **High:** Participant has high motivation and potential
B. **Moderate:** Participant has moderate motivation and potential
C. **Somewhat limited**: Participant has limited motivation to advance, or has somewhat limited performance potential
D. **Seriously limited:** Participant may or may not be highly motivated, but has serious limitations to performance potential (e.g. low IQ, chronic health or mental health problem, serious learning disability)

Profiles of participant characteristics at intake

Families Forward

Profile of participants

Fifth data run: Those who started the program September 2001 – July 2004

OVERALL (16 SITES)

Number of participants: 1261 entered the program September 1, 2001 through July 30, 2004 *(available data as of August 10, 2004)*.

Demographic characteristics of participants

- ***Gender:***

  32% male, 68% female

- ***Age:*** Average age = 33 (<1% missing data)

  24% age 24 or younger (youngest is 16)
  37% age 25 to 34
  27% age 35 to 44
  11% age 45 or older (oldest is 73)

- ***Marital status:*** (8% missing data)

  37% married
  9% living with a partner in a marriage-like relationship
  20% separated, divorced, or widowed
  35% single, never married

- ***Dependent children:*** (8% missing data)

  Average number = 2.0
  6% have none
  64% have 1 or 2 children
  25% have 3 or 4 children
  5% have 5 or more children

- ***Age of child:*** (12%, 11% missing data)

Youngest		Oldest
43%	0 to 2 years old	20%
21%	3 to 5 years old	16%
17%	6 to 9 years old	22%
9%	10 to 12 years old	14%
9%	13 to 17 years old	21%
1%	18 years or older	8%

- ***Race/ethnicity:*** (<1% missing data)

39%	White	11%	American Indian
29%	Black	8%	Asian
11%	Hispanic	1%	Mixed race

- ***Citizenship:*** (1% missing data)

  U.S. citizens 76%, non-citizens 24%

- ***Primary language:*** (12% missing data)

79%	English	10%	Spanish
3%	Somali	2%	Amharic
1%	Hmong		
<1%	each of 38 other languages		

Of the 235 participants for whom English is not the primary language, grantee staff estimate that:

59% can understand conversations in English "well" or "very well" (3% missing data)
56% can carry on conversations in English "well" or "very well" (3% missing data)
53% can read papers and books in English "well" or "very well" (4% missing data)
49% can write notes or letters in English "well" or "very well" (3% missing data)

Education and training background of participants

- ***Highest grade of school completed:*** (10% missing data)

  14% have less than 12th grade, no diploma or high school equivalency
  59% have a high school diploma or GED
  12% some post-secondary experience, no details
  9% have a 2-year degree
  6% have a 4-year degree or more

- ***Job training:*** (18% missing data)

  39% completed a job training program before entering Families Forward

continued

Employment status and background

- ***Current employment:***
  - 72% were employed at the time of intake
  - 8% of those employed were working more than one job (9% missing data)
  - 3% have never been employed
- ***Stability of workforce attachment:*** (8% missing data)
  Number of months employed, out of the previous 6 months (worked at least 20 hours a week for at least two weeks of the month):
  - 16% 0 months of the previous 6 months
  - 17% 1, 2, or 3 months of the previous 6 months
  - 10% 4 or 5 months of the previous 6 months
  - 57% all 6 of the previous 6 months
- ***Length of time since last job (for those currently unemployed):*** (4% missing data)
  - 59% up to half a year
  - 23% more than half a year to 1 year
  - 14% more than 1 year to 2 years
  - 5% more than 2 years

For those currently employed:

- ***Length of time in current position:***(<1% missing data)
  - 31% up to half a year
  - 19% more than half a year to 1 year
  - 28% more than 1 year to 3 years
  - 11% more than 3 years to 5 years
  - 11% more than 5 years
- ***Total hours worked in an average week:***
  - 12% less than 20 hours (16% missing data)
  - 31% 20 to 34 hours
  - 48% 35 to 40 hours
  - 9% more than 40 hours

Job quality measures

- ***Current wage:*** (16% missing data)
  Average is $10.06 per hour (Note: Not all wages were given as hourly rates; some are calculated from weekly or monthly figures, using reported average number of hours worked per week.)
  - 12% up to $6.75 per hour (minimum is $1.00)
  - 13% more than $6.75 to $8.00 per hour
  - 30% more than $8.00 to $10.00 per hour
  - 34% more than $10.00 to $13.00 per hour
  - 12% more than $13.00 per hour (maximum is $32.00)
- ***Current monthly income from employment:*** Average = $1,415 (Note: Monthly income may be more reliable than hourly wage.) (<1% missing data)
  - 13% up to $500 (minimum is $0)
  - 19% more than $500 to $1,000
  - 23% more than $1,000 to $1,500
  - 26% more than $1,500 to $2,000
  - 20% more than $2,000 (maximum is $4,500)
- ***Type of job (current or most recent job):***
  - 27% service occupations (5% missing data)
  - 23% clerical and sales occupations
  - 13% professional, technical, or managerial occupations
  - 9% machine trade occupations
  - 5% processing occupations
  - 23% other (agricultural/fishery/forestry, benchwork, structural, and miscellaneous occupations)
- ***Benefits (for those currently employed):***
  (2% or less missing data, unless otherwise noted)
  - 64% are offered health care coverage, of which 70% take it
  - 61% are offered dental care coverage, of which 76% take it
  - 48% are offered retirement plans (12% missing data) of which 66% take it (6% missing data)
  - 46% are offered paid sick time (3% missing data)
  - 64% are offered paid vacation time
  - 33% are offered paid parental leave (15% missing data)

For more information

This summary presents a profile of participants in the Families Forward Initiative. For more information about these data, contact Ellen Shelton at Wilder Research Center, 651-637-2470.

NOVEMBER 2004

Families Forward

Profile of participants

Fifth data run: Those who started the program September 2001 – July 2004

Cluster: EMPLOYER-BASED

Number of participants: 268 entered the program September 1, 2001 through July 30, 2004 *(available data as of August 10, 2004)*.

Demographic characteristics of participants

- ***Gender:***
  61% male, 39% female
- ***Age:*** Average age = 35 (<1% missing data)
  - 20% age 24 or younger (youngest is 19)
  - 36% age 25 to 34
  - 24% age 35 to 44
  - 20% age 45 or older (oldest is 73)
- ***Marital status:*** (38% missing data)
  - 61% married
  - 7% living with a partner in a marriage-like relationship
  - 8% separated, divorced, or widowed
  - 24% single, never married
- ***Dependent children:*** (38% missing data)
  Average number = 1.6
  - 32% have none
  - 43% have 1 or 2 children
  - 17% have 3 or 4 children
  - 8% have 5 or more children
- ***Age of child:*** (34% missing data)

Youngest		Oldest
47%	0 to 2 years old	12%
23%	3 to 5 years old	29%
9%	6 to 9 years old	17%
8%	10 to 12 years old	13%
8%	13 to 17 years old	17%
5%	18 years or older	11%

- ***Race/ethnicity:*** (<1% missing data)

21%	White	<1%	American Indian
14%	Black	30%	Asian
35%	Hispanic	0%	Mixed race

- ***Citizenship:*** (<1% missing data)
  U.S. citizens 48%, non-citizens 52%
- ***Primary language:*** (55% missing data)

66%	Spanish	29%	English
3%	Bosnian	2%	Vietnamese
1%	each of Hmong and French		

Of the 87 participants for whom English is not the primary language, grantee staff estimate that:

- 13% can understand conversations in English "well" or "very well" (9% missing data)
- 13% can carry on conversations in English "well" or "very well" (9% missing data)
- 9% can read papers and books in English "well" or "very well" (9% missing data)
- 8% can write notes or letters in English "well" or "very well" (9% missing data)

Education and training background of participants

- ***Highest grade of school completed:*** (44% missing data)
  - 46% have less than 12th grade, no diploma or high school equivalency
  - 40% have a high school diploma or GED
  - 5% some post-secondary experience, no details
  - 5% have a 2-year degree
  - 3% have a 4-year degree or more
- ***Job training:*** (52% missing data)
  - 27% completed a job training program before entering Families Forward

continued

Employment status and background

- ***Current employment:***

  100% were employed at the time of intake

  6% of those employed were working more than one job (43% missing data)

  0% have never been employed

- ***Stability of workforce attachment:*** (33% missing data)
  Number of months employed, out of the previous 6 months (worked at least 20 hours a week for at least two weeks of the month):

  0% 0 months of the previous 6 months

  6% 1, 2, or 3 months of the previous 6 months

  3% 4 or 5 months of the previous 6 months

  91% all 6 of the previous 6 months

- ***Length of time since last job (for those currently unemployed):***

N/A – All participants employed at intake.

For those currently employed:

- ***Length of time in current position:***

  16% up to half a year

  16% more than half a year to 1 year

  41% more than 1 year to 3 years

  14% more than 3 years to 5 years

  13% more than 5 years

- ***Total hours worked in an average week:***

  0% less than 20 hours (53% missing data)

  0% 20 to 34 hours

  84% 35 to 40 hours

  17% more than 40 hours

Job quality measures

- ***Current wage:*** (53% missing data)
  Average is $11.18 per hour (Note: Not all wages were given as hourly rates; some are calculated from weekly or monthly figures, using reported average number of hours worked per week.)

  0% up to $6.75 per hour

  0% more than $6.75 to $8.00 per hour

  35% more than $8.00 to $10.00 per hour (minimum is $8.75)

  57% more than $10.00 to $13.00 per hour

  9% more than $13.00 per hour (maximum is $20.00)

- ***Current monthly income from employment:***
  Average = $1,927 (Note: Monthly income may be more reliable than hourly wage.) (1% missing data)

  0% up to $500

  1% more than $500 to $1,000 (minimum is $1,000)

  19% more than $1,000 to $1,500

  41% more than $1,500 to $2,000

  40% more than $2,000 (maximum is $4,067)

- ***Type of job (current or most recent job):***

  1% service occupations

  2% clerical and sales occupations

  4% professional, technical, or managerial occupations

  22% machine trade occupations

  14% processing occupations

  57% other (agricultural/fishery/forestry, benchwork, structural, and miscellaneous occupations)

- ***Benefits (for those currently employed):***
  (2% or less missing data, unless otherwise noted)

  97% are offered health care coverage, of which 72% take it

  97% are offered dental care coverage, of which 86% take it

  71% are offered retirement plans (5% missing data)
  of which 59% take it (3% missing data)

  58% are offered paid sick time

  95% are offered paid vacation time

  64% are offered paid parental leave (8% missing data)

For more information

This summary presents a profile of participants in the Families Forward Initiative. For more information about these data, contact Ellen Shelton at Wilder Research Center, 651-637-2470.

NOVEMBER 2004

Families Forward

Profile of participants

Fifth data run: Those who started the program September 2001 – July 2004

Cluster: SECTORAL-HIGHER SUPPORT

Number of participants: 238 entered the program September 1, 2001 through July 30, 2004 *(available data as of August 10, 2004).*

Demographic characteristics of participants

- ***Gender:***

  16% male, 84% female

- ***Age:*** Average age = 32

  23% age 24 or younger (youngest is 17)
  39% age 25 to 34
  31% age 35 to 44
  7% age 45 or older (oldest is 57)

- ***Marital status:***

  37% married
  4% living with a partner in a marriage-like relationship
  16% separated, divorced, or widowed
  43% single, never married

- ***Dependent children:***

  Average number = 2.1
  <1% have none
  71% have 1 or 2 children
  24% have 3 or 4 children
  5% have 5 or more children

- ***Age of child:*** (1% missing data)

Youngest		Oldest
42%	0 to 2 years old	20%
24%	3 to 5 years old	14%
17%	6 to 9 years old	26%
10%	10 to 12 years old	16%
6%	13 to 17 years old	18%
1%	18 years or older	6%

- ***Race/ethnicity:*** (<1% missing data)

16%	White	4%	American Indian
72%	Black	3%	Asian
3%	Hispanic	2%	Mixed race

- ***Citizenship:*** (1% missing data)

  U.S. citizens 57%, non-citizens 43%

- ***Primary language:***

66%	English	9%	Amharic
6%	Somali	3%	Yoruba
1%	or less each of 23 other languages, and 2 Non-English – Language unknown		

Of the 81 participants for whom English is not the primary language, grantee staff estimate that:

88% can understand conversations in English "well" or "very well"
84% can carry on conversations in English "well" or "very well"
84% can read papers and books in English "well" or "very well"
77% can write notes or letters in English "well" or "very well"

Education and training background of participants

- ***Highest grade of school completed:*** (3% missing data)

  11% have less than 12th grade, no diploma or high school equivalency
  58% have a high school diploma or GED
  16% some post-secondary experience, no details
  6% have a 2-year degree
  10% have a 4-year degree or more

- ***Job training:*** (7% missing data)

  48% completed a job training program before entering Families Forward

continued

Employment status and background

- ***Current employment:***
  - 40% were employed at the time of intake
  - 5% of those employed were working more than one job
  - 9% have never been employed
- ***Stability of workforce attachment:*** (2% missing data)
  Number of months employed, out of the previous 6 months (worked at least 20 hours a week for at least two weeks of the month):
  - 39% 0 months of the previous 6 months
  - 20% 1, 2, or 3 months of the previous 6 months
  - 12% 4 or 5 months of the previous 6 months
  - 29% all 6 of the previous 6 months
- ***Length of time since last job (for those currently unemployed):*** (5% missing data)
  - 47% up to half a year
  - 25% more than half a year to 1 year
  - 19% more than 1 year to 2 years
  - 9% more than 2 years

For those currently employed:

- ***Length of time in current position:*** (1% missing data)
  - 39% up to half a year
  - 29% more than half a year to 1 year
  - 20% more than 1 year to 3 years
  - 8% more than 3 years to 5 years
  - 4% more than 5 years
- ***Total hours worked in an average week:***
  - 20% less than 20 hours
  - 43% 20 to 34 hours
  - 33% 35 to 40 hours
  - 4% more than 40 hours

Job quality measures

- ***Current wage:*** (1% missing data)
  Average is $9.36 per hour (Note: Not all wages were given as hourly rates; some are calculated from weekly or monthly figures, using reported average number of hours worked per week.)
  - 14% up to $6.75 per hour (minimum is $2.95)
  - 11% more than $6.75 to $8.00 per hour
  - 36% more than $8.00 to $10.00 per hour
  - 32% more than $10.00 to $13.00 per hour
  - 8% more than $13.00 per hour (maximum is $15.00)
- ***Current monthly income from employment:*** Average = $1,022 (Note: Monthly income may be more reliable than hourly wage.) (1% missing data)
  - 27% up to $500 (minimum is $62)
  - 29% more than $500 to $1,000
  - 22% more than $1,000 to $1,500
  - 15% more than $1,500 to $2,000
  - 8% more than $2,000 (maximum is $2,500)
- ***Type of job (current or most recent job):***
  - 42% service occupations (5% missing data)
  - 36% clerical and sales occupations
  - 7% professional, technical, or managerial occupations
  - 1% machine trade occupations
  - 1% processing occupations
  - 13% other (agricultural/fishery/forestry, benchwork, structural, and miscellaneous occupations)
- ***Benefits (for those currently employed):***
  (2% or less missing data, unless otherwise noted)
  - 41% are offered health care coverage, of which 55% take it
  - 37% are offered dental care coverage, of which 53% take it (6% missing data)
  - 29% are offered retirement plans (11% missing data)
    of which 58% take it (21% missing data)
  - 37% are offered paid sick time (4% missing data)
  - 46% are offered paid vacation time
  - 11% are offered paid parental leave (20% missing data)

For more information

This summary presents a profile of participants in the Families Forward Initiative. For more information about these data, contact Ellen Shelton at Wilder Research Center, 651-637-2470.

NOVEMBER 2004

Families Forward

Profile of participants

Fifth data run: Those who started the program September 2001 – July 2004

Cluster: SECTORAL-LOWER SUPPORT

Number of participants: 246 entered the program September 1, 2001 through July 30, 2004 *(available data as of August 10, 2004).*

Demographic characteristics of participants

- ***Gender:***

  38% male, 62% female

- ***Age:*** Average age = 33

  16% age 24 or younger (youngest is 18)
  45% age 25 to 34
  26% age 35 to 44
  13% age 45 or older (oldest is 68)

- ***Marital status:***

  42% married
  11% living with a partner in a marriage-like relationship
  15% separated, divorced, or widowed
  32% single, never married

- ***Dependent children:***

  Average number = 2.3
  5% have none
  57% have 1 or 2 children
  31% have 3 or 4 children
  7% have 5 or more children

- ***Age of child:*** (6% missing data)

Youngest		Oldest
42%	0 to 2 years old	16%
23%	3 to 5 years old	16%
14%	6 to 9 years old	22%
10%	10 to 12 years old	13%
10%	13 to 17 years old	21%
1%	18 years or older	12%

- ***Race/ethnicity:***

36%	White	25%	American Indian
24%	Black	2%	Asian
11%	Hispanic	1%	Mixed race

- ***Citizenship:***

  U.S. citizens 85%, non-citizens 15%

- ***Primary language:***

81%	English	7%	Somali
7%	Spanish	2%	Hmong
1%	or less for each of 4 other languages		

Of the 46 participants for whom English is not the primary language, grantee staff estimate that:

78% can understand conversations in English "well" or "very well"
74% can carry on conversations in English "well" or "very well"
71% can read papers and books in English "well" or "very well" (2% missing data)
67% can write notes or letters in English "well" or "very well"

Education and training background of participants

- ***Highest grade of school completed:***

  9% have less than 12th grade, no diploma or high school equivalency
  62% have a high school diploma or GED
  14% some post-secondary experience, no details
  12% have a 2-year degree
  4% have a 4-year degree or more

- ***Job training:*** (13% missing data)

  36% completed a job training program before entering Families Forward *continued*

Employment status and background

- ***Current employment:***
  - 64% were employed at the time of intake
  - 9% of those employed were working more than one job
  - 2% have never been employed
- ***Stability of workforce attachment:*** (1% missing data)
  Number of months employed, out of the previous 6 months (worked at least 20 hours a week for at least two weeks of the month):
  - 16% 0 months of the previous 6 months
  - 14% 1, 2, or 3 months of the previous 6 months
  - 9% 4 or 5 months of the previous 6 months
  - 61% all 6 of the previous 6 months
- ***Length of time since last job (for those currently unemployed):***
  - 66% up to half a year
  - 24% more than half a year to 1 year
  - 10% more than 1 year to 2 years
  - 0% more than 2 years

For those currently employed:

- ***Length of time in current position:*** (<1% missing data)
  - 20% up to half a year
  - 17% more than half a year to 1 year
  - 29% more than 1 year to 3 years
  - 14% more than 3 years to 5 years
  - 20% more than 5 years
- ***Total hours worked in an average week:***
  - 4% less than 20 hours
  - 30% 20 to 34 hours
  - 58% 35 to 40 hours
  - 8% more than 40 hours

Job quality measures

- ***Current wage:*** (<1% missing data)
  Average is $11.01 per hour (Note: Not all wages were given as hourly rates; some are calculated from weekly or monthly figures, using reported average number of hours worked per week.)
  - 8% up to $6.75 per hour (minimum is $5.00)
  - 6% more than $6.75 to $8.00 per hour
  - 27% more than $8.00 to $10.00 per hour
  - 40% more than $10.00 to $13.00 per hour
  - 20% more than $13.00 per hour (maximum is $20.18)
- ***Current monthly income from employment:***
  Average = $1,528 (Note: Monthly income may be more reliable than hourly wage.)
  - 3% up to $500 (minimum is $157)
  - 18% more than $500 to $1,000
  - 32% more than $1,000 to $1,500
  - 29% more than $1,500 to $2,000
  - 18% more than $2,000 (maximum is $4,500)
- ***Type of job (current or most recent job):***
  - 31% service occupations (11% missing data)
  - 22% clerical and sales occupations
  - 21% professional, technical, or managerial occupations
  - 8% machine trade occupations
  - 5% processing occupations
  - 14% other (agricultural/fishery/forestry, benchwork, structural, and miscellaneous occupations)
- ***Benefits (for those currently employed):***
  (2% or less missing data, unless otherwise noted)
  - 74% are offered health care coverage, of which 79% take it
  - 70% are offered dental care coverage, of which 80% take it
  - 58% are offered retirement plans (13% missing data) of which 75% take it (6% missing data)
  - 62% are offered paid sick time (3% missing data)
  - 76% are offered paid vacation time
  - 27% are offered paid parental leave (17% missing data)

For more information

This summary presents a profile of participants in the Families Forward Initiative. For more information about these data, contact Ellen Shelton at Wilder Research Center, 651-637-2470.

NOVEMBER 2004

Families Forward

Profile of participants

Fifth data run: Those who started the program September 2001 – July 2004

Cluster: INDIVIDUALIZED

Number of participants: 325 entered the program September 1, 2001 through July 30, 2004 *(available data as of August 10, 2004)*.

Demographic characteristics of participants

- ***Gender:***

  11% male, 89% female

- ***Age:*** Average age = 31 (1% missing data)

  33% age 24 or younger (youngest is 18)
  31% age 25 to 34
  27% age 35 to 44
  10% age 45 or older (oldest is 55)

- ***Marital status:***

  19% married
  7% living with a partner in a marriage-like relationship
  31% separated, divorced, or widowed
  44% single, never married

- ***Dependent children:***

  Average number = 2.0
  0% have none
  72% have 1 or 2 children
  24% have 3 or 4 children
  4% have 5 or more children

- ***Age of child:*** (2%, <1% missing data)

Youngest		Oldest
39%	0 to 2 years old	23%
20%	3 to 5 years old	16%
18%	6 to 9 years old	18%
10%	10 to 12 years old	13%
13%	13 to 17 years old	22%
<1%	18 years or older	9%

- ***Race/ethnicity:*** (<1% missing data)

52%	White	12%	American Indian
29%	Black	3%	Asian
3%	Hispanic	2%	Mixed race

- ***Citizenship:*** (<1% missing data)

  U.S. citizens 94%, non-citizens 7%

- ***Primary language:***

  95% English
  1% or less of 7 languages, and 1 Non-English – Language unknown

Of the 15 participants for whom English is not the primary language, grantee staff estimate that:

80% can understand conversations in English "well" or "very well"
67% can carry on conversations in English "well" or "very well"
67% can read papers and books in English "well" or "very well"
53% can write notes or letters in English "well" or "very well"

Education and training background of participants

- ***Highest grade of school completed:*** (1% missing data)

  9% have less than 12th grade, no diploma or high school equivalency
  59% have a high school diploma or GED
  14% some post-secondary experience, no details
  10% have a 2-year degree
  8% have a 4-year degree or more

- ***Job training:*** (7% missing data)

  39% completed a job training program before entering Families Forward *continued*

Employment status and background

- ***Current employment:***
  - 88% were employed at the time of intake
  - 11% of those employed were working more than one job
  - 0% have never been employed
- ***Stability of workforce attachment:***
  Number of months employed, out of the previous 6 months (worked at least 20 hours a week for at least two weeks of the month):
  - 7% 0 months of the previous 6 months
  - 20% 1, 2, or 3 months of the previous 6 months
  - 12% 4 or 5 months of the previous 6 months
  - 62% all 6 of the previous 6 months
- ***Length of time since last job (for those currently unemployed):*** (13% missing data)
  - 63% up to half a year
  - 29% more than half a year to 1 year
  - 6% more than 1 year to 2 years
  - 3% more than 2 years

For those currently employed:

- ***Length of time in current position:*** (<1% missing data)
  - 45% up to half a year
  - 19% more than half a year to 1 year
  - 21% more than 1 year to 3 years
  - 8% more than 3 years to 5 years
  - 7% more than 5 years
- ***Total hours worked in an average week:***
  - 17% less than 20 hours (<1% missing data)
  - 41% 20 to 34 hours
  - 38% 35 to 40 hours
  - 5% more than 40 hours

Job quality measures

- ***Current wage:*** (<1% missing data)
  Average is $9.73 per hour (Note: Not all wages were given as hourly rates; some are calculated from weekly or monthly figures, using reported average number of hours worked per week.)
  - 12% up to $6.75 per hour (minimum is $1.00)
  - 19% more than $6.75 to $8.00 per hour
  - 31% more than $8.00 to $10.00 per hour
  - 27% more than $10.00 to $13.00 per hour
  - 11% more than $13.00 per hour (maximum is $32.00)
- ***Current monthly income from employment:***
  Average = $1,167 (Note: Monthly income may be more reliable than hourly wage.) (<1% missing data)
  - 18% up to $500 (minimum is $0)
  - 29% more than $500 to $1,000
  - 23% more than $1,000 to $1,500
  - 21% more than $1,500 to $2,000
  - 10% more than $2,000 (maximum is $2,827)
- ***Type of job (current or most recent job):***
  - 36% service occupations (2% missing data)
  - 35% clerical and sales occupations
  - 20% professional, technical, or managerial occupations
  - 2% machine trade occupations
  - <1% processing occupations
  - 7% other (agricultural/fishery/forestry, benchwork, structural, and miscellaneous occupations)
- ***Benefits (for those currently employed):***
  (2% or less missing data, unless otherwise noted)
  - 44% are offered health care coverage (3% missing data)
    of which 56% take it
  - 41% are offered dental care coverage (3% missing data)
    of which 56% take it (3% missing data)
  - 35% are offered retirement plans (16% missing data)
    of which 72% take it (7% missing data)
  - 36% are offered paid sick time (4% missing data)
  - 44% are offered paid vacation time (3% missing data)
  - 17% are offered paid parental leave (21% missing data)

For more information

This summary presents a profile of participants in the Families Forward Initiative. For more information about these data, contact Ellen Shelton at Wilder Research Center, 651-637-2470.

NOVEMBER 2004

Profiles of participant outcomes at nine months after intake

Families Forward

Profile of participants' outcomes at nine-months after intake

Second report

OVERALL (15 sites)

Number of participants: 620 completed the 9 month follow-up by July 31, 2004

Background and job outcomes of participants

- ***Program status:***

29% still enrolled (1%, 2%, 2% missing data)

- 43% classes or training
- 72% counseling or follow-up
- 38% something else

72% no longer enrolled

- ***Job status:*** (<1% missing data)

57% employed at intake and follow-up

22% not employed at intake, but employed at follow-up

13% not employed at intake or follow-up

8% employed at intake, but not employed at follow-up

- ***Job quality change:*** (of those employed at both intake and follow-up) (1% missing data)

70% same position as intake

7% new position, no better

16% better position, due to program

7% better position, not due to program

- ***Pay rate change:*** (of those employed at both intake and follow-up) (2% missing data)

43% pay no better than at intake

30% higher pay, due to program

26% higher pay, not due to program

- ***Hours per week change:*** (of those employed at both intake and follow-up) (2% missing data)

11% working more hours, due to program

18% working more, not due to program

55% working same number of hours

16% working fewer hours

- ***Benefits change:*** (of those employed at both intake and follow-up)

- Health (3% missing data)

51% benefit offered at intake and follow-up

7% benefit offered at intake but not follow-up

18% benefit offered at follow-up but not intake

23% benefit offered neither time

- Dental (3% missing data)

46% benefit offered at intake and follow-up

8% benefit offered at intake but not follow-up

19% benefit offered at follow-up but not intake

26% benefit offered neither time

- Paid sick time (7% missing data)

32% benefit offered at intake and follow-up

7% benefit offered at intake but not follow-up

22% benefit offered at follow-up but not intake

38% benefit offered neither time

- Paid vacation time (4% missing data)

50% benefit offered at intake and follow-up

8% benefit offered at intake but not follow-up

21% benefit offered at follow-up but not intake

20% benefit offered neither time

Impact of program participation

- ***Getting a better job*** (2% missing data)

44% a big difference

31% a little difference

25% no difference

- ***Doing better in the job you have*** (10% missing data)

47% a big difference

26% a little difference

27% no difference

continued

Impact of program participation (continued)

- ***Helping you take better care of your family***
  (1% missing data)
  - 49% a big difference
  - 25% a little difference
  - 26% no difference
- ***Giving you confidence to try new things***
  (<1% missing data)
  - 62% a big difference
  - 24% a little difference
  - 15% no difference
- ***Getting a better job sometime in the future***
  (3% missing data)
  - 66% a big difference
  - 21% a little difference
  - 13% no difference

Program participation

- ***"Did participation in this class or program make it harder for you to…" (percentage yes)***
  (<1%, 2%, 2% missing data)
  - 13% take care of your family
  - 10% get back and forth to work
  - 6% stay employed

- ***"What was the best thing about this program for you?"*** (most common responses to open-ended question – mentioned 51 times or more)
  - (134) Guidance, encouragement and support
  - (130) Training – general – including computer, safety, job preparation skills
  - (81) Financial help, including cash grants, tuition, classes, job tools, clothing, related expenses
  - (66) Training delivery (good teachers, convenient hours, location, hands-on experience)
  - (66) Motivation and goal setting
  - (63) Help finding a job, finding a better job
  - (51) Training – specific – including construction, banking, health care
  - (51) Personal growth in general attitude, out-look

Suggestions for programs and participants

- ***Program improvements:*** (most common responses to open-ended question – mentioned 37 times or more)
  - (241) Nothing, no changes needed, good program
  - (61) Place more emphasis on teaching of skills, e.g. computer, English, specific job skills
  - (61) Expand training program – offer more classes, longer training periods
  - (47) Provide more support to participants (financial, personal, training, and job supports)
  - (38) Better teachers, counselors (more accessible, patient, courteous, helpful, engaged in work)
  - (37) Improve overall program organization and management
- ***Participants' changes if given opportunity to do program over:*** (most common responses to open-ended question – mentioned 14 times or more)
  - (324) Nothing, would do things again the same way
  - (102) Take more advantage of services offered, take program more seriously, put forth more effort
  - (38) Enroll in program sooner, start training sooner
  - (26) Get more training, education, practice in field
  - (22) Be more focused on getting a good job, job in my field, job that matches my interests
  - (14) Slow down, not try to do so much, change my work or training schedule

For more information

This summary presents a profile of participants in the Families Forward Initiative. For more information about these data, contact Ellen Shelton at Wilder Research Center, 651-637-2470.

NOVEMBER 2004

Families Forward

Profile of participants' outcomes at nine-months after intake

Second report

Cluster: EMPLOYER-BASED (3 sites included)

Number of participants: 74 completed the 9 month follow-up by July 31, 2004

Background and job outcomes of participants

- ***Program status:***

  11% still enrolled
  - 63% classes or training
  - 63% counseling or follow-up
  - 13% something else

  89% no longer enrolled

- ***Job status:***

  97% employed at intake and follow-up
  0% not employed at intake, but employed at follow-up
  0% not employed at intake or follow-up
  3% employed at intake, but not employed at follow-up

- ***Job quality change:*** (of those employed at both intake and follow-up) (1% missing data)

  92% same position as intake
  7% new position, no better
  1% better position, due to program
  0% better position, not due to program

- ***Pay rate change:*** (of those employed at both intake and follow-up) (1% missing data)

  68% pay no better than at intake
  13% higher pay, due to program
  20% higher pay, not due to program

- ***Hours per week change:*** (of those employed at both intake and follow-up) (1% missing data)

  1% working more hours, due to program
  4% working more, not due to program
  86% working same number of hours
  9% working fewer hours

- ***Benefits change:*** (of those employed at both intake and follow-up)

  - Health (3% missing data)

  94% benefit offered at intake and follow-up
  6% benefit offered at intake but not follow-up
  0% benefit offered at follow-up but not intake
  0% benefit offered neither time

  - Dental (1% missing data)

  89% benefit offered at intake and follow-up
  10% benefit offered at intake but not follow-up
  1% benefit offered at follow-up but not intake
  0% benefit offered neither time

  - Paid sick time (7% missing data)

  33% benefit offered at intake and follow-up
  6% benefit offered at intake but not follow-up
  18% benefit offered at follow-up but not intake
  43% benefit offered neither time

  - Paid vacation time

  86% benefit offered at intake and follow-up
  10% benefit offered at intake but not follow-up
  4% benefit offered at follow-up but not intake
  0% benefit offered neither time

continued

Impact of program participation

- ***Getting a better job***
  - 28% a big difference
  - 57% a little difference
  - 15% no difference
- ***Doing better in the job you have***
  - 55% a big difference
  - 31% a little difference
  - 14% no difference
- ***Helping you take better care of your family*** (1% missing data)
  - 41% a big difference
  - 36% a little difference
  - 23% no difference
- ***Giving you confidence to try new things***
  - 65% a big difference
  - 27% a little difference
  - 8% no difference
- ***Getting a better job*** (1% missing data)
  - 66% a big difference
  - 25% a little difference
  - 10% no difference

Program participation

- ***"Did participation in this class or program make it harder for you to…" (percentage yes)*** (1%, 1%, 1% missing data)
  - 11% take care of your family
  - 19% get back and forth to work
  - 10% stay employed
- ***"What was the best thing about this program for you?"*** (most common responses to open-ended question – mentioned 5 times or more)
  - (29) Training – general – including computer, safety, job preparation skills
  - (26) Learning English, American culture
  - (7) Personal growth to apply new skills in role-modeling, communication, caring for others
  - (5) Motivation and goal setting
  - (5) Job retention, improved job performance, improved working conditions

Suggestions for programs and participants

- ***Program improvements:*** (most common responses to open-ended question – mentioned 8 times or more)
  - (24) Expand training program – offer more classes, longer training periods
  - (18) Nothing, no changes needed, good program
  - (11) Improve cultural competence of program, use interpreters, give more help to minorities
  - (11) Better teachers, counselors (more accessible, patient, courteous, helpful, engaged in work)
  - (10) Place more emphasis on teaching of skills, e.g. computer, English, specific job skills
  - (8) Give more intensive, individualized training
- ***Participants' changes if given opportunity to do program over:*** (most common responses to open-ended question – mentioned 6 times or more)
  - (40) Nothing, would do things again the same way
  - (10) Take more advantage of services offered, take program more seriously, put forth more effort
  - (6) Get more training, education, practice in field

For more information

This summary presents a profile of participants in the Families Forward Initiative. For more information about these data, contact Ellen Shelton at Wilder Research Center, 651-637-2470.

NOVEMBER 2004

Families Forward

Profile of participants' outcomes at nine-months after intake

Second report

Cluster: SECTORAL – HIGHER SUPPORT (5 sites included)

Number of participants: 257 completed the 9 month follow-up by July 31, 2004

Background and job outcomes of participants

- ***Program status:***
  - 27% still enrolled (1%, 3%, 4% missing data)
    - 42% classes or training
    - 72% counseling or follow-up
    - 30% something else
  - 73% no longer enrolled
- ***Job status:*** (1% missing data)
  - 44% employed at intake and follow-up
  - 32% not employed at intake, but employed at follow-up
  - 19% not employed at intake or follow-up
  - 6% employed at intake, but not employed at follow-up
- ***Job quality change:*** (of those employed at both intake and follow-up) (1% missing data)
  - 62% same position as intake
  - 6% new position, no better
  - 26% better position, due to program
  - 6% better position, not due to program
- ***Pay rate change:*** (of those employed at both intake and follow-up) (3% missing data)
  - 36% pay no better than at intake
  - 38% higher pay, due to program
  - 26% higher pay, not due to program
- ***Hours per week change:*** (of those employed at both intake and follow-up) (4% missing data)
  - 12% working more hours, due to program
  - 22% working more, not due to program
  - 45% working same number of hours
  - 21% working fewer hours
- ***Benefits change:*** (of those employed at both intake and follow-up)
  - ***- Health*** (3% missing data)
    - 37% benefit offered at intake and follow-up
    - 6% benefit offered at intake but not follow-up
    - 27% benefit offered at follow-up but not intake
    - 30% benefit offered neither time
  - ***- Dental*** (5% missing data)
    - 33% benefit offered at intake and follow-up
    - 6% benefit offered at intake but not follow-up
    - 25% benefit offered at follow-up but not intake
    - 36% benefit offered neither time
  - ***- Paid sick time*** (8% missing data)
    - 28% benefit offered at intake and follow-up
    - 4% benefit offered at intake but not follow-up
    - 31% benefit offered at follow-up but not intake
    - 36% benefit offered neither time
  - ***- Paid vacation time*** (5% missing data)
    - 38% benefit offered at intake and follow-up
    - 6% benefit offered at intake but not follow-up
    - 30% benefit offered at follow-up but not intake
    - 26% benefit offered neither time

Impact of program participation

- ***Getting a better job*** (4% missing data)
  - 48% a big difference
  - 26% a little difference
  - 26% no difference
- ***Doing better in the job you have*** (14% missing data)
  - 49% a big difference
  - 23% a little difference
  - 28% no difference

continued

Impact of program participation (continued)

Helping you take better care of your family

(<1% missing data)

48% a big difference
23% a little difference
29% no difference

Giving you confidence to try new things

62% a big difference
22% a little difference
16% no difference

Getting a better job sometime in the future

(1% missing data)

65% a big difference
19% a little difference
16% no difference

Program participation

"Did participation in this class or program make it harder for you to…" (percentage yes)

(0%, 3%, 3% missing data)

16% take care of your family
9% get back and forth to work
6% stay employed

"What was the best thing about this program for you?" (most common responses to open-ended question – mentioned 24 times or more)

(56) Training – general – including computer, safety, job preparation skills
(52) Guidance, encouragement and support
(40) Training delivery (good teachers, convenient hours, location, hands-on experience)
(36) Training – specific – including construction, banking, health care
(29) Help finding a job, finding a better job
(27) Financial help, including cash grants, tuition, classes, job tools, clothing, related expenses
(24) Personal growth in general knowledge and awareness, including basic life skills

Suggestions for programs and participants

Program improvements: (most common responses to open-ended question – mentioned 17 times or more)

(103) Nothing, no changes needed, good program
(30) Place more emphasis on teaching of skills, e.g. computer, English, specific job skills
(23) Expand training program – offer more classes, longer training periods
(17) Provide more support to participants (financial, personal, training, and job supports)
(17) Better teachers, counselors (more accessible, patient, courteous, helpful, engaged in work)
(17) Better preparation for job market - more career exploration, more practical experiences

Participants' changes if given opportunity to do program over: (most common responses to open-ended question – mentioned 10 times or more)

(128) Nothing, would do things again the same way
(46) Take more advantage of services offered, take program more seriously, put forth more effort
(18) Enroll in program sooner, start training sooner
(10) Get more training, education, practice in field
(10) Be more focused on getting a good job, job in my field, job that matches my interests

For more information

This summary presents a profile of participants in the Families Forward Initiative. For more information about these data, contact Ellen Shelton at Wilder Research Center, 651-637-2470.

NOVEMBER 2004

Families Forward

Profile of participants' outcomes at nine-months after intake

Second report

Cluster: SECTORAL – LOWER SUPPORT (4 sites included)

Number of participants: 146 completed the 9 month follow-up by July 31, 2004

Background and job outcomes of participants

- ***Program status:***
  - 23% still enrolled
    - 73% classes or training
    - 61% counseling or follow-up
    - 46% something else
  - 77% no longer enrolled
- ***Job status:***
  - 57% employed at intake and follow-up
  - 26% not employed at intake, but employed at follow-up
  - 14% not employed at intake or follow-up
  - 3% employed at intake, but not employed at follow-up
- ***Job quality change:*** (of those employed at both intake and follow-up) (2% missing data)
  - 72% same position as intake
  - 7% new position, no better
  - 17% better position, due to program
  - 4% better position, not due to program
- ***Pay rate change:*** (of those employed at both intake and follow-up) (2% missing data)
  - 37% pay no better than at intake
  - 37% higher pay, due to program
  - 26% higher pay, not due to program
- ***Hours per week change:*** (of those employed at both intake and follow-up)
  - 15% working more hours, due to program
  - 16% working more, not due to program
  - 59% working same number of hours
  - 11% working fewer hours
- ***Benefits change:*** (of those employed at both intake and follow-up)

  - Health (2% missing data)
  - 52% benefit offered at intake and follow-up
  - 7% benefit offered at intake but not follow-up
  - 17% benefit offered at follow-up but not intake
  - 23% benefit offered neither time

  - Dental (2% missing data)
  - 47% benefit offered at intake and follow-up
  - 7% benefit offered at intake but not follow-up
  - 21% benefit offered at follow-up but not intake
  - 25% benefit offered neither time

  - Paid sick time (6% missing data)
  - 42% benefit offered at intake and follow-up
  - 13% benefit offered at intake but not follow-up
  - 14% benefit offered at follow-up but not intake
  - 31% benefit offered neither time

  - Paid vacation time (4% missing data)
  - 55% benefit offered at intake and follow-up
  - 9% benefit offered at intake but not follow-up
  - 18% benefit offered at follow-up but not intake
  - 19% benefit offered neither time

Impact of program participation

- ***Getting a better job*** (3% missing data)
  - 51% a big difference
  - 26% a little difference
  - 23% no difference
- ***Doing better in the job you have*** (8% missing data)
  - 51% a big difference
  - 24% a little difference
  - 25% no difference

continued

Impact of program participation (continued)

- ***Helping you take better care of your family*** (2% missing data)
  - 57% a big difference
  - 21% a little difference
  - 22% no difference
- ***Giving you confidence to try new things*** (1% missing data)
  - 62% a big difference
  - 26% a little difference
  - 13% no difference
- ***Getting a better job*** (6% missing data)
  - 75% a big difference
  - 18% a little difference
  - 7% no difference

Program participation

- ***"Did participation in this class or program make it harder for you to…" (percentage yes)*** (1%, 2%, 2% missing data)
  - 16% take care of your family
  - 11% get back and forth to work
  - 7% stay employed
- ***"What was the best thing about this program for you?"*** (most common responses to open-ended question – mentioned 14 times or more)
  - (31) Financial help, including cash grants, tuition, classes, job tools, clothing, related expenses
  - (29) Training – general – including computer, safety, job preparation skills
  - (24) Motivation and goal setting
  - (21) Help finding a job, finding a better job
  - (20) Guidance, encouragement and support
  - (17) Personal growth in general attitude, out-look
  - (14) Training – specific – including construction, banking, health care

Suggestions for programs and participants

- ***Program improvements:*** (most common responses to open-ended question – mentioned 8 times or more)
  - (64) Nothing, no changes needed, good program
  - (16) Place more emphasis on teaching of skills, e.g. computer, English, specific job skills
  - (12) Improve overall program organization and management
  - (10) Expand training program – offer more classes, longer training periods
  - (9) Provide more support to participants (financial, personal, training, and job supports)
  - (8) Advertise program more widely, get word out
- ***Participants' changes if given opportunity to do program over:*** (most common responses to open-ended question – mentioned 5 times or more)
  - (81) Nothing, would do things again the same way
  - (14) Take more advantage of services offered, take program more seriously, put forth more effort
  - (10) Enroll in program sooner, start training sooner
  - (7) Slow down, not try to do so much, change my work or training schedule
  - (5) Be more focused on getting a good job, job in my field, job that matches my interests

For more information

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NOVEMBER 2004

Families Forward

Profile of participants' outcomes at nine-months after intake

Second report

Cluster: INDIVIDUAL-FOCUSED (3 sites included)

Number of participants: 143 completed the 9 month follow-up by July 31, 2004

Background and job outcomes of participants

- ***Program status:***

  46% still enrolled

  (2%, 2%, 2% missing data)

  - 28% classes or training
  - 79% counseling or follow-up
  - 46% something else

  54% no longer enrolled

- ***Job status:***

  59% employed at intake and follow-up

  13% not employed at intake, but employed at follow-up

  8% not employed at intake or follow-up

  20% employed at intake, but not employed at follow-up

- ***Job quality change:*** (of those employed at both intake and follow-up)

  62% same position as intake

  7% new position, no better

  13% better position, due to program

  18% better position, not due to program

- ***Pay rate change:*** (of those employed at both intake and follow-up) (2% missing data)

  39% pay no better than at intake

  28% higher pay, due to program

  33% higher pay, not due to program

- ***Hours per week change:*** (of those employed at both intake and follow-up) (2% missing data)

  13% working more hours, due to program

  27% working more, not due to program

  38% working same number of hours

  22% working fewer hours

- ***Benefits change:*** (of those employed at both intake and follow-up)

  - Health (2% missing data)

  34% benefit offered at intake and follow-up

  7% benefit offered at intake but not follow-up

  24% benefit offered at follow-up but not intake

  35% benefit offered neither time

  - Dental (2% missing data)

  27% benefit offered at intake and follow-up

  11% benefit offered at intake but not follow-up

  25% benefit offered at follow-up but not intake

  37% benefit offered neither time

  - Paid sick time (8% missing data)

  27% benefit offered at intake and follow-up

  6% benefit offered at intake but not follow-up

  22% benefit offered at follow-up but not intake

  45% benefit offered neither time

  - Paid vacation time (6% missing data)

  30% benefit offered at intake and follow-up

  9% benefit offered at intake but not follow-up

  28% benefit offered at follow-up but not intake

  34% benefit offered neither time

Impact of program participation

- ***Getting a better job*** (1% missing data)

  38% a big difference

  31% a little difference

  31% no difference

- ***Doing better in the job you have*** (10% missing data)

  34% a big difference

  32% a little difference

  34% no difference

continued

Impact of program participation (continued)

- ***Helping you take better care of your family***
  - 47% a big difference
  - 26% a little difference
  - 27% no difference
- ***Giving you confidence to try new things***
  - 60% a big difference
  - 23% a little difference
  - 17% no difference
- ***Getting a better job sometime in the future***
  (2% missing data)
  - 58% a big difference
  - 26% a little difference
  - 16% no difference

Program participation

- ***"Did participation in this class or program make it harder for you to…" (percentage yes)***
  (0%, 2%, 2% missing data)
  - 6% take care of your family
  - 6% get back and forth to work
  - 4% stay employed
- ***"What was the best thing about this program for you?"*** (most common responses to open-ended question – mentioned 12 times or more)
  - (61) Guidance, encouragement and support
  - (23) Financial help, including cash grants, tuition, classes, job tools, clothing, related expenses
  - (16) Training – general – including computer, safety, job preparation skills
  - (15) Motivation and goal setting
  - (13) Personal growth in general attitude, out-look
  - (12) Education, going back to school
  - (12) Help finding a job, finding a better job

Suggestions for programs and participants

- ***Program improvements:*** (most common responses to open-ended question – mentioned 8 times or more)
  - (56) Nothing, no changes needed, good program
  - (21) Provide more support to participants (financial, personal, training, and job supports)
  - (17) More follow-up after program has ended
  - (10) Advertise program more widely, get word out
  - (8) Improve overall program organization and management
- ***Participants' changes if given opportunity to do program over:*** (most common responses to open-ended question – mentioned 6 times or more)
  - (75) Nothing, would do things again the same way
  - (32) Take more advantage of services offered, take program more seriously, put forth more effort
  - (9) Enroll in program sooner, start training sooner
  - (6) Get more training, education, practice in field

For more information

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NOVEMBER 2004