



MAKING APPRENTICESHIP WORK FOR OPPORTUNITY YOUTH

On Monday, March 27, 2017, 30 members of America’s newest cohort of young workers strode across the threshold of a training center on South Broad Street in Center City Philadelphia to begin their pre-apprenticeship training to launch new careers in health care.

These Philadelphia workers are “opportunity youth”—some of the five million young adults between the ages of 16 and 24 who are neither in school nor the workforce. The fact that this diverse group of young people—19 women and 11 men, 93 percent of them people of color—was entering a program designed to lead directly into an apprenticeship in health care is the result of a nationwide effort to increase access to apprenticeships, a proven on-the-job training program that has historically been available mostly to white men in construction and manufacturing.

These Philadelphia participants in a pre-apprenticeship-to-apprenticeship program developed by the District 1199C Training & Upgrading Fund (the Training Fund), and their counterparts enrolled in the Earn and Learn program in New Orleans, represent an early wave in a growing movement in cities across the United States that use earn-and-learn strategies to open the doors to education and

career opportunities for opportunity youth. Both programs contain the essential elements of effective work-based learning: participants are paid a fair wage, receive industry supervision, are awarded college credit, and earn industry certification upon completion of the program.

Young people who are out of school and unemployed need substantial preparation and supports in order to get and keep a job or succeed in postsecondary education. Most opportunity youth need to support themselves, and many also support family members. The average estimated household income for members of the group entering the Training Fund’s Direct Support Professional Apprenticeship program is just \$25,000, and six participants have children to support. They cannot afford to stop working and enroll in school, but they need additional education in order to access high-paying jobs with career growth prospects. Many opportunity youth also have histories of involvement with the

Image: Members of the first cohort celebrating at The Training Fund’s annual graduation, June 2017.

foster care or criminal justice systems. They often have little support at home, limited trust in systems, and none of the social capital that is needed for young people to make their way in an economy that requires highly skilled workers and is driven by personal networks. But they are bright, resilient, compassionate, and have the energy and creativity of youth and the digital native's comfort with technology—qualities in high demand by employers. The young people who participate in Earn and Learn and the Training Fund program are also trained and prepared for the entry-level positions that employers struggle to fill. Joy Smith-Groomes, senior human resources manager at JEVS Human Services in Philadelphia, one of the organizations employing apprentices in the Training Fund program, explains:

The training that the pre-apprentices receive ensures that they are well-equipped with the tools they need when they come in the door. It's great to have someone with book knowledge. Then, the job shadowing portion...[gives] us an opportunity to really get to know the students... [And] the support they receive, the ongoing training and education in the classroom during the yearlong apprenticeship, will really help—we'll end up with someone who is committed to our organization, committed to the work we do, someone who will want to stay and move up in the organization...The pre-apprentices really took their choice of agencies very seriously.

Apprenticeships are an entry point to highly skilled jobs that pay well and don't typically require a college degree. Traditionally limited in the United States to the building trades and manufacturing, most apprenticeships pay higher starting wages than entry-level service jobs in retail or fast food and provide a series of wage increases tied to mastery of competencies. An apprentice's individualized mentoring with an experienced worker both reinforces technical instruction and helps instill the cultural knowledge and competencies that are essential to workplace success. But finding and entering an apprenticeship is a daunting task for members of groups that historically haven't had access to the apprenticeship system. Some of the barriers are educational: in many industries, apprentices must have a high school diploma or equivalent, achieve mastery of specific levels of math, have a basic understanding of safety procedures around tools and machinery, or have other occupational knowledge such as an ability to read blueprints. Other barriers are cultural: apprentices in many industries are expected to own a set of tools, have the right work clothes and shoes, and be prepared to navigate a workplace culture that is unfamiliar and may at times feel unwelcoming.

Pre-apprenticeship programs are designed to provide supports tailored to the needs of specific groups to prepare them to enter and succeed in an apprenticeship program. The programs profiled here are designed specifically for opportunity youth, and although the two programs differ in important ways—Philadelphia's leads participants into an integrated apprenticeship in behavioral health careers, while the New Orleans program prepares participants for jobs in a range of industries—both share the characteristics of effective youth training programs: they use proven youth-focused support strategies, employ highly trained youth specialists, and have strong connections with employers.

Investing in opportunity youth is an investment in the talent pipeline, the social fabric, and in these young people, whose grit and resilience suggests that they have enormous potential to contribute to the nation's economy and to their communities.

What is Apprenticeship and Pre-Apprenticeship?

Apprenticeship is a model of workforce training that allows employees to earn while they learn. These programs generally last from one to six years and include a combination of on-the-job training and formal classroom instruction. Registered apprentices earn progressively increasing wages and an industry-recognized credential. Apprenticeships can be overseen either by the U.S. Department of Labor's Office of Apprenticeship or by a State Apprenticeship Agency, while employers and other sponsors administer individual apprenticeship programs.

Pre-apprenticeship programs are designed to prepare individuals to enter and succeed in apprenticeships. While pre-apprenticeship programs are not federally vetted, quality programs have a strong relationship with at least one apprenticeship program, provide training and curriculum that align with that program, and include a wide range of support services designed specifically to ensure students' success.

Visit the [U.S. Department of Labor](#) and read the [Training and Employment Guidance Letter 13-16](#) to learn more about apprenticeship and pre-apprenticeships.

America's Opportunity Youth: An Untapped Talent Pool

Opportunity Cost of Not Investing

Potential Return on Investment

OPPORTUNITY YOUTH

Average earnings of a mostly disconnected youth are

\$4,100/year,

increasing only to

\$20,000/year

by age 28.

By age 28, only 1% have completed at least an associate degree.

Average earnings of a typical employed youth are

\$13,900/year,

increasing to over

\$30,000/year

by age 28.

By age 28, 36% have completed at least an associate's degree.

BUSINESSES

Disengaged opportunity youth can **reduce the overall talent pool**

available to business, and dampen productivity and economic development when large numbers of young workers are under-employed in low-skill service jobs.

Youth workers represent an **annually renewable new talent pipeline,**

bring diversity and innovation to businesses, and their success drives future economic development.

PUBLIC / TAXPAYERS

After age 25, the lifetime social burden related to health, crime, and public assistance associated with each opportunity youth totals \$529,000.

Under- and unemployed opportunity youth in the United States represent a total loss of

\$11 billion

in foregone tax contributions annually.

Youth who participate in employment programs are

43% less likely to be arrested

for a violent crime.



Clay Watkins receives his pre-apprenticeship certificate in June, 2017.

Turning Compassion into a Career in Philadelphia

Claybourne Watkins Jr., Clay to his friends, wasn't particularly interested in becoming a behavioral care direct-support professional when he joined the Training Fund's apprenticeship program. He was talked into joining by Amber, a friend who wants to become a social worker. As time went on, Clay reports, "I actually started to like it." Clay, who is 24 and dropped out of high school at age 16, explains how the program grew on him:

Before I started the program, I was between jobs. I was stuck—didn't know which way was up, which opportunity to take, or where to go. I didn't take [the Training Fund's program] as serious as I should have at the beginning, but...when the pre-apprenticeship started, something changed. I said, "Wow—I made it this far"... it evolved into something bigger and greater...

Although he stumbled into the pre-apprenticeship program, Clay is now a fan. Before he joined the Training Fund's program, Clay had only heard of apprenticeship from "the TV show...The idea was foreign to me until now. I'm happy to be a part of it; it's new, it's invigorating, and it's opened up the doors to a lot of opportunities for me."

That is precisely why Cheryl Feldman, executive director of the Training Fund, a labor management health care workforce development nonprofit organization that sponsors the pre-apprenticeship-to-apprenticeship training program, has been working for two years to develop the innovative apprenticeship program focused exclusively on opportunity youth. The program leads participants to jobs as direct support professionals in behavioral health services, in-

demand jobs that pay \$10 to \$15/hour—a considerable improvement over Pennsylvania's minimum wage of \$7.25/hour. Equally important are the opportunities for further career growth that it opens up. The required coursework allows participants to earn 24 college credits toward an associate's degree in health and human services by the time they complete their apprenticeship year. With those credits, participants can continue on a career pathway at Philadelphia University for the associate's degree, a bachelor's degree in behavioral health, and a master's degree in trauma counseling, with access to high-skilled, well-paying jobs on every rung of this career ladder.

Long a leader of sectoral training initiatives, the Training Fund in Philadelphia began to develop health care apprenticeship training programs in 2014 and now offers 10 apprenticeships in 6 occupations. Like all apprenticeships, the starting point for creating the opportunity youth apprenticeship is employers: "Understanding employer skill needs first is essential to success in developing any apprenticeship program," advises Feldman.

To that end, the Training Fund commissioned a [2015 study](#) of health care employers' needs and how these needs might match the strengths of opportunity youth. Later needs-assessment work with employers confirmed a high demand for direct support professionals in behavioral health, a critical frontline role providing care for children or adults who need assistance with daily living in community settings such as outpatient clinics, group homes for the intellectually disabled, and addiction recovery homes. Interviews with employers also revealed that they want

behavioral health workers who are not only skilled but also have “lived experiences” related to their clients’ needs. Over 75 percent of participants in the first cohort of the apprenticeship program report having direct experiences with caregiving, mental illness, addiction, or intellectual disability themselves, with a member of their households, or with someone close to them. Because of their experiences, employers perceive these young workers as uniquely qualified for these jobs. In addition, employers surveyed in the study reported that young workers are often more caring and empathetic, and they are comfortable adapting to new technologies.

Joy Smith-Groomes explains that partnering with the Training Fund’s program provides a unique opportunity to bring young people into a field that doesn’t usually attract a young workforce: JEVS “supports people with intellectual disabilities and serious mental illness. I think not enough young people get to know this population, know their needs. I’m a huge supporter of getting young people into the field—not just at JEVS.”

Joy’s initial encounter with the pre-apprentices came during the second phase of the program, when the pre-apprentices participated in a job shadow at the employer partner’s site to learn about the available jobs and the organization’s culture. Joy recalls: “We started the group in a room . . . before sending them off to their assignments; the energy in the room was incredible. I asked them: How did you get to the program? What brought you here? Hearing the stories was amazing—so energizing.”

The pre-apprentices that JEVS then hires as apprentices aren’t just young and energetic, they are well trained and prepared for the challenging jobs they will do. Joy is very clear about the value of trained, well-prepared employees:

The difference here [between the Training Fund hires and those recruited conventionally] is the education—the pieces they get external to JEVS, and the support with the mentor. That helps them create a bond with someone who is a veteran staff member who will share and implant their knowledge. It’s different from other new hires. Most of our staff have someone at the site who is the lead, but the mentoring relationship is different—this is intentional and structured...The pre-apprenticeship program offers considerable cost savings to employers—that is very important.

That training and education has helped Clay transform his innate compassion into the professional attitudes he’ll need on the job. Like many of his peers in the training program, Clay has direct experience with caregiving: “I provided end-of-life care for my mother, before she passed. I took care of her—it opened my eyes to what compassion and altruism truly is.” As part of the pre-apprenticeship training, Clay has learned to apply that compassion to individuals with disabilities:

I’m learning the proper language—how to talk about them. They’re people first. I’m learning about not defining them by their disabilities. It takes a lot of practice, a lot of mental adjustments . . . you have to go in and change everything that you know. It’s a struggle, but a welcome one.

What’s changed for Clay?

My perception of people with disabilities. I used to think that it wasn’t that big a deal, or that being disabled made life easier. Now I know that [disability] is a real thing. I learned to channel my compassion so you want to help, want to make things better—I had to learn that. I’m become accustomed to using it . . . the learning process is a way of life, now that I think about it.

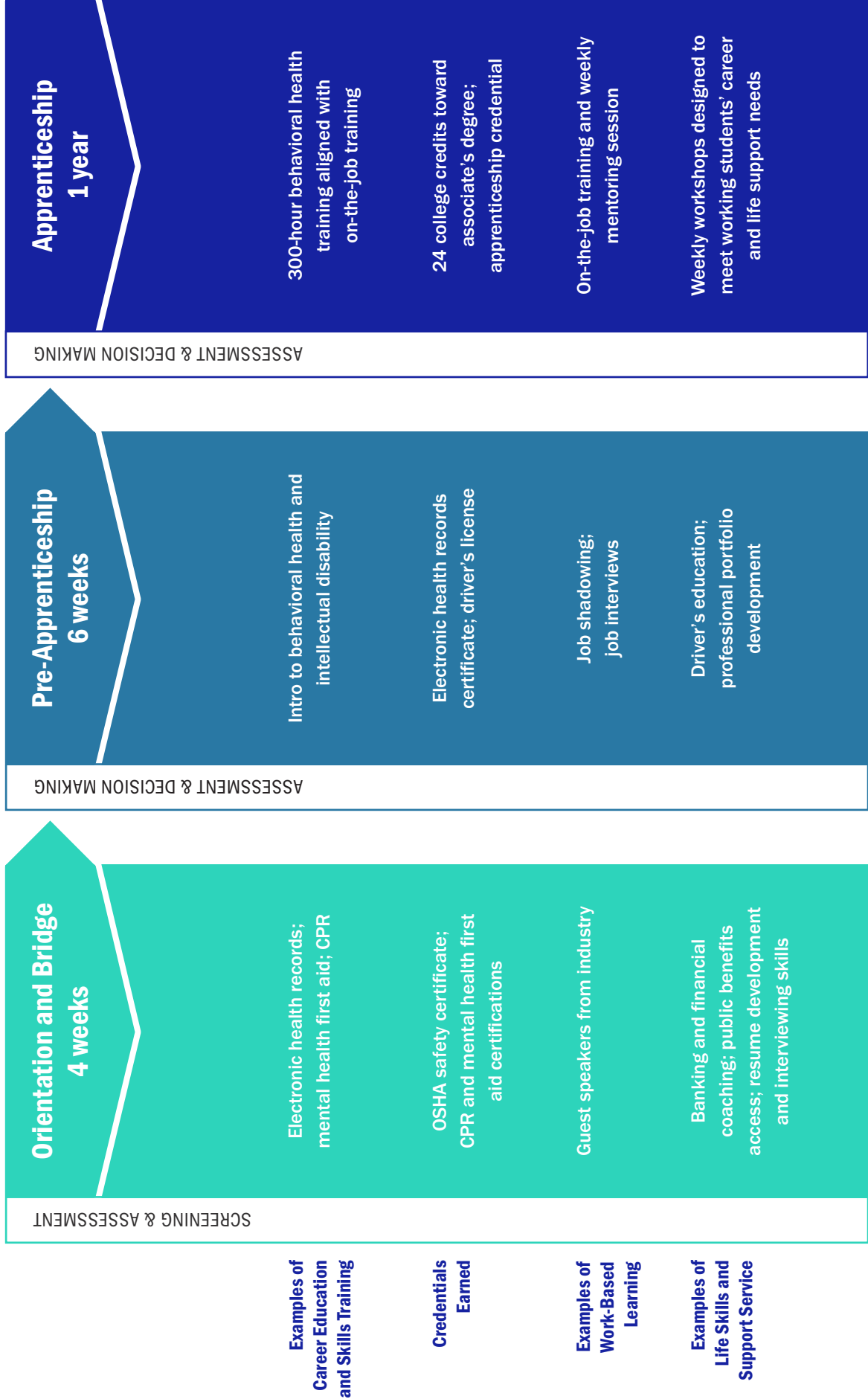
The training that is helping Clay change his perception of people with disabilities features a continuum of developmental experiences. In each phase, participants both learn the technical knowledge they need to work as behavioral care direct-support professionals, and practice the social and emotional skills required to provide patient-focused, compassionate care.

Three-Phase Program Design

The Direct Support Professional Apprenticeship program synchronizes a technical training and credential-earning track with work-based learning experiences, life-skills workshops, and support services. The Training Fund and its partners offer a single comprehensive program model that stretches from bridge, to pre-apprenticeship training, to apprenticeships, with assessments and decision points at the conclusion of each phase. The early bridge and pre-apprenticeship phases of the program flow naturally into the apprenticeships and are designed to avoid the disconnects often seen when programs operate separately.

Within these three phases, there is a progression of work-based learning experiences starting with guest speakers and employer site visits, and culminating in formal on-

Three-Phase Program Design



← Ongoing, individualized support services →

the-job training under the direction of a trained mentor within a apprenticeship training program. The work-based learning experiences are complemented by a progressively more challenging training curriculum that begins with contextualized basic skills embedded within the technical skills training, and continues to technical instruction at college-credit level. Running throughout the program is a support service track, led by specially trained youth-case managers, that includes access to a range of specific on-site support services such as tutoring, social-emotional coaching, transportation assistance, financial coaching, and referrals for other services with partner organizations. Support services can run the gamut from help with child care for the six participants in the first cohort who have children, to assistance getting drivers' licenses, which are required by most employers and which 75 percent of the participants in the first cohort lack.

The program's three-phase structure means that the intensity builds slowly. That gradual increase in performance pressure, and the consistent support from both staff and other participants, are critical. When we interviewed Clay, he had completed the classroom-based orientation and occupationally contextualized bridge program, and was doing the six-week pre-apprenticeship portion of the program. Asked which aspect of the program he likes better, Clay said: "Both! I'm actually in the job training part now; in a couple of weeks, we will start doing both at once [during the one-year apprenticeship]. It's an easy transition—not just everything all at once. It's not stressful; gives us time to adjust."

The biggest adjustment for Clay has been the time commitment:

I've had to put a lot of priorities on the back burner. I have a family, a whole big family...they're used to me being there—emotionally, physically, spiritually. I'm not there as much as I used to be... [But] the program taught me time management; time and responsibilities—that's what it's all about. My family is supportive of what I do. They've given me a green light to do what I need to make myself better.

A Web of Partnerships Creates Career Pathways

Partnerships are essential. Throughout the program development process, the Training Fund worked with employers, local workforce system leaders, funders, and other organizations to create the web of partnerships that undergirds a comprehensive opportunity-youth-focused apprenticeship program.

Around the same time that the Training Fund commissioned its study of how opportunity youth could help meet healthcare employers' talent needs, Philadelphia's workforce, education, municipal, and community leaders had begun to renew their collective vision for engaging opportunity youth, through their participation in [The Opportunity Youth Incentive Fund](#), run by The Aspen Forum for Community Solutions and supported by Jobs for the Future. Locally led by [The Philadelphia Youth Network](#), an intermediary that alleviates a root cause of poverty by preparing youth to become productive working adults, this collective impact initiative aims to knit together many stakeholder organizations, including The Training Fund, into an interconnected system of referral, support and training provider organizations. Feldman and her team met with a series of partners with capabilities to deliver needed services to engage them in the new youth apprenticeship program. The Philadelphia University serves as a key higher education partner for the behavioral health apprenticeship program. The university credits 300 hours of technical training delivered by the Training Fund during the apprenticeship year and delivers one class directly.

Once the core partners were confirmed, the Training Fund's team turned its attention to Philadelphia's health care employers, to engage them with the program's first cohort and to hire qualified apprentices. The thorough program planning and the Training Fund's established reputation among health care employers helped to quickly bring them on board. The Training Fund serves as the apprenticeship sponsor, relieving employers of administrative responsibility for tracking and reporting apprenticeship data. To lower costs to businesses, the Training Fund also braids multiple funding streams from federal, state, and local government and philanthropic investment partners to help pay a portion of the apprenticeship training costs. By the start of the first cohort, four behavioral health employers had signed on, with more employers to be added as the program matures.

Inaugural Employer Partners

[Community Behavioral Health](#)

[JEVS](#)

[Philadelphia Mental Health Care Corporation](#)

[SPIN](#)

Several of the current sites are approving additional apprentices on an ongoing basis.

SPIN Inc., a large nonprofit that provides services to children and adults with autism and intellectual or developmental disabilities, has agreed to hire five full-time apprentices from the initial cohort as direct service professionals, a key frontline position that works directly with adult or children served by the organization. Within its overall workforce of 1,200 staff who serve nearly 4,000 clients annually in home and center-based settings, SPIN employs approximately 750 direct support professionals, so there is ample room to grow its apprenticeship strategy. Judy Dotzman, executive director of SPIN, views apprenticeship as a new opportunity to address the long-term workforce crisis in behavioral health and human services fields. Squeezed by public funding reimbursements that haven't grown in 10 years, human service organizations like SPIN have embraced apprenticeships with "highly engaged youth" as a potential long-term solution to attract, train, and retain a stable workforce of professional aides. Dotzman adds, "we're always looking for opportunities to enhance our workforce and are very impressed with this first group" of apprenticeship candidates at the Training Fund.

Once hired, apprentices at SPIN will start at a training wage of just under \$10 an hour (plus benefits), and receive quarterly wage increases, rising to a little over \$13 an hour by the time they successfully complete the apprenticeship

year. After the apprenticeship timeframe, those who are interested in additional career opportunities can continue formal studies at Philadelphia University, and they are also eligible to apply for SPIN's internal leadership development program to qualify for promotions into supervisory and program specialist roles.

For Judy Dotzman, investing in opportunity youth makes both business and civic sense:

We've always invested in opportunity youth. That's not new for us...I believe that employers like us have a responsibility to introduce youth to new careers... Given the workforce crisis in human services, youth are an excellent option for us. We can draw on their lived experiences and their resiliency.

Nationally, these positions have a 25 percent turnover rate...Turnover is really hard on the children and families in our programs. Apprenticeships can help stabilize the workforce to provide more consistent care for families.

Asked what she would tell other employers about the opportunity youth apprenticeship program, Judy doesn't hesitate: "Having a diverse workforce strengthens the organization. Youth deserve an opportunity and are a strong target audience for these jobs."

The job shadowing portion...[gives] us an opportunity to really get to know the students....We'll end up with someone who is committed to our organization, committed to the work we do, someone who will want to stay and move up in the organization....The pre-apprentices really took their choice of agencies very seriously.

Staff Training and Customized Curriculum Drive Success in New Orleans

Like Philadelphia, New Orleans is a city with a large population of opportunity youth, one in seven of 16- to 24-year-olds. Also like Philadelphia, New Orleans is a member of the Opportunity Youth Incentive Fund. In 2014, Tulane University's Cowen Institute launched the [Earn and Learn program](#) that combines yearlong technical training programs in either information technology/digital media or building trades occupations with hands-on paid work experience, first within the University's Technology Services and Facilities Operations departments and then with local employers. The program, supported in part by [Opportunity Works](#), JFF's Social Innovation Fund initiative, enrolls youth 18 to 24 who have completed high school or its equivalent and are out of work and education.

A four-person team at Tulane's Cowen Institute runs the program, with each staff member responsible for key program elements: a senior program manager, who directs the overall enterprise; a manager of instruction and academic partnerships, who guides the skills instruction and academic and credentialing partnerships; a college and career counselor, who handles ongoing participant support services and case management; and a manager of on-the-job training, who coordinates work-based learning and the network of workplace supervisors at the university. This team works closely on a weekly basis with external partners, including Delgado Community College for technical training, Bard Early College for postsecondary-level academic instruction, and other community-based program partners involved in outreach and support services.

Earn and Learn is designed as a paid work-based learning program modeled on apprenticeship: it includes highly coordinated academic and occupational skills instruction that complements paid on-the-job learning guided by trained supervisors as mentors. Antoine Young is one of those supervisors. He is responsible for all of Tulane's campus security cameras and was eager to participate in the Earn and Learn program.

The early weeks of the placement were challenging. Darnell, the participant assigned to Antoine's group, was bright and eager, but he had no computer background:

It was very interesting...learning how to work with an individual who had no background. We tried to understand what his level of knowledge is, and what he can give to our team...we needed to understand what the basics are for us, and what we needed to teach him: "what is a computer; what is [Microsoft] Office"; it was a good learning experience for us.

Some weeks into Darnell's placement, Antoine realized that he could help Darnell prepare for the Internet Core Competency (IC3) certification he was working toward through the Earn and Learn program. It "seemed like we're helping with the experience side, the practical knowledge side, and the IC3 exam is a school thing; but when we started really talking about it, we realized how we could help him get the certification." Before long, Antoine and his colleagues were helping Darnell study for the certification tests: "We worked with him on study habits, the best way to tackle specific test questions around computer terminology." And once he understood the content Darnell was covering in school, Antoine made a concerted effort to match the IC3 course material with the on-the-job training.

The training that the pre-apprentices receive ensures that they are well-equipped with the tools they need when they come in the door.

The learning curve was steep for both Antoine and Darnell, but by the end of the placement Darnell had not only completed the IC3 certification, he had discovered an aspect of the work that appeals to him and has a career path: installing and maintaining the surveillance cameras that Antoine's department controls. What has Antoine learned? "How to approach the challenge of making the time the student spends with us worthwhile."

Cultivating Employers as You Would Donors

"We've learned a lot about employer engagement and buy-in," says Amy Barad, The Cowen Institute's director of strategic initiatives and the founder of the Earn and Learn program. Selling the idea initially was a challenge. "We leveraged our relationships within the university to convince people to take meetings with us and listen to our pitch." Over time, as the program has grown, engaging employers has become easier. "We treat employer engagement like we treat donor cultivation in development," Amy explains, "with lighter touch, lower-stakes engagement, initially." They began by inviting employers to look at the curriculum and make sure that it would address their pipeline issues. Then came network days, when 10 to 20 employers came to campus for informational interviews, mock interviews, and group information sharing. Meeting the young people "has the biggest impact," Amy observes. "Young people have the opportunity to tell their stories, talk to [employers] about

the 40 hours a week that they've dedicated to advancing themselves. It's a key piece of relationship cultivation." Finally, employers invite the Earn and Learn program on site visits, so participants can visualize the work environment and experience the culture. With each step, employers get more interested and more invested in the program.

Initially, program graduates were placed with external employers only after they completed the 11-month work-based learning portion the program at Tulane University. But, beginning with the 2017 cohort, program designers shortened the Tulane job placement and added a 6-week internship opportunity with external employer partners. This change provides a low-stakes opportunity for employers to understand what it means to hire a young person who has been out of school and unemployed at some point. Internships also provide an opportunity for young people to build their social networks, which are essential to advancing professionally.

Keys to Success

Earn and Learn's high success rates are a function of the structured education and job training, which are also essential to any good pre-apprenticeship, and the program aspects that are designed specifically to support opportunity youth. These include specially trained staff and the program's homegrown social and emotional development curriculum, which also fosters a powerful peer-to-peer support community.

Earn and Learn Quick Facts

Time: Two overlapping cohorts—January to September, and September to the following June—with the potential for a six-week internship with an employer partner after each cohort completes the on-campus portion of the program.

Pay: Participants are paid \$220 total per week for 15 hours of work each Monday through Wednesday, and 7 hours of participation in the program's social and emotional development curriculum every Thursday.

Who: Approximately 85 percent of participants are African American and 5 percent Latino or Vietnamese. Typically, 35 to 40 percent are women.

Outcomes: Of the January 2016 cohort of 31 enrollees, three-quarters successfully completed the yearlong program in December 2016. By May 2017, 82 percent of these program completers had either secured a full-time job or enrolled in postsecondary education, surpassing the goal of 80 percent within 6 months of program completion. The cohort that began in January 2017 also started strongly, with 14 of the 15 participants (93 percent) retained in the program as of May 2017.

YOUTH-SPECIFIC STAFF TRAINING

Working with opportunity youth requires training. These young people have limited work experience and may have challenges around meeting requirements that strike them as arbitrary. To ensure that the Earn and Learn participants have the support they need, program staff and several partner representatives join several times a year with 30 other staff from youth-serving organizations in a training program developed by the [David P. Weikart Center for Youth Program Quality](#) that focuses on a research-based continuous quality-improvement process for youth-serving programs. The ongoing professional development program helps the team build a youth-focused learning environment, provides an accountability framework for instructors to assess their methods, and instills a culture of continuous improvement. Over the first two and a half years of the Earn and Learn program, this cultural attribute has led to numerous changes, such as introducing more “positive incentives” to encourage participants to adapt in order to meet the expectations of employers and faculty.

The willingness to adapt the program to meet participants’ needs and the focus on positive incentives also led to structural change: in the original design, apprentices spent 11 months in a work-based learning job placement at Tulane. When ongoing program assessments found that some apprentices’ interest level and commitment to punctuality began to wane in the second half of the job placement, the university job placement period was shortened to match the academic year. Participants who maintain strong attendance and performance now have an opportunity to get an internship with employer partners in New Orleans during the last few months of the program year. This change meant that the program replaced a potential source of conflict—managing poor attendance and other unprofessional behavior—with a series of incentives to perform well in the first months of the program in order to earn the opportunity for additional job placements.

EMPHASIS ON SOCIAL AND EMOTIONAL DEVELOPMENT

Every Thursday, the Earn and Learn staff and their academic and social-emotional learning partners, Bard Early College and Family Services of Greater New Orleans, provide an intensive day interweaving college courses and skills training with group and individualized workshops that develop each participant’s “toolkit” of situational responses essential to success at work and higher education. The overall curriculum features a variety of experiential activities within youth-focused thematic modules, such as building an integrated identity, fostering a growth mindset, building community, and problem solving. For example, within the

Earn and Learn Employer Partners

Earn and Learn graduates have been hired by these employers:

[The Intercontinental](#)

[Louisiana Center for Children’s Rights](#)

[The Hyatt House](#)

[Loyola University New Orleans](#)

[Dillard University](#)

Upcoming partnerships include some of the above employers, plus:

[The Hilton New Orleans Riverside Hotel](#)

[The Hyatt Regency New Orleans](#)

[Oschner Health Systems](#)

[Gallo Mechanical](#)

[Turbosquid](#)

[Laitram](#)

[Woodward Design + Build](#)

Supervisor Training and Supports

Tulane staff who supervise Earn and Learn participants also receive training and support that includes:

1. Bimonthly professional development around the following topics:
 - Program orientation and expectations review
 - Supervision through a trauma-informed lens (including reporting procedures)
 - What to do during downtime and keeping apprentices motivated
 - Effectively delivering feedback
 - Communicating across differences (cultural, racial, class-based, age/generational, gender)
2. Biweekly one-on-one coaching for effective supervision, trouble shooting, and goals setting with apprentices
3. A monthly newsletter, which contains updates and general tips/how-tos

integrated identity theme, participants learn about “code-switching” techniques to adapt to different environments, and that adapting to a corporate environment when working doesn’t mean losing one’s personal identity. The introduction of each tool comes with opportunities for participants to immediately apply the tools to specific work and learning situations.

Each Thursday’s schedule follows a predictable framework to create safe spaces for participants to build an authentic and powerful learning community in which participants and staff listen, learn, bond, and grow together. Every moment of the day is choreographed by a detailed facilitator’s guide that includes references to specific participants’ needs and interests that emerge as the cohort progresses. As participants learn new skills and tools during the year, the instructional team aims to enlist student leaders to become “co-creators” of the program to help drive the learning process and demonstrate leadership competencies.

For example, the 2017 cohort developed a series of videos in which they describe what they’ve learned, and crafted plans to create a YouTube channel to house the videos for the benefit of other youth.

Amy Barad offers this advice to other organizations considering emulating the Earn and Learn program: “First, the program needs to hire staff who are already more student-directed than content-focused.” Avoiding staff-participant power struggles that trigger old behaviors is essential to maintaining relationships of mutual respect. Participants are explicitly reminded that they can choose not to deploy tools that they don’t see a use for, reminders that help to strengthen their sense of agency. “Staff must avoid the trap of seeing themselves as the experts. Everyone is learning together, in both teacher and learning roles, in a continuous learning process. Staff must demonstrate the same growth mindset and flexibility asked of students.”

PROMISING PROGRAMS

Pre-Apprenticeship and Work-Based Learning for Opportunity Youth around the United States

While effective pre-apprenticeship programs combine employer engagement, holistic support for participants, and access to work-based learning experiences, among other elements, programs that support opportunity youth often begin with just one of these elements in place and build from there. Around the country there are promising efforts to help opportunity youth gain access to work-based learning while providing the types of supports typical of pre-apprenticeship programs:

- **Specialized Youth Support Service.** In Baltimore, the nonprofit [JumpStart’s](#) construction training program developed a new youth-specific mentoring program in the fall of 2016 that trained and paired program graduates working in construction trades with some of the younger participants within this mixed-age program. Mentors do everything from helping mentees overcome frustration at work and stay on the job to transporting mentees to take a driver’s license test.
- **Mobile Work-Based Learning.** In Chicago, the [Manufacturing Careers Internship Program](#), sponsored by the Chicago Cook Workforce Partnership and delivered by Business and Career Services, focuses exclusively on 18- to 24-year-old unemployed youth. MCIP moves its manufacturing training and internship program around the city to neighborhoods with the highest rates of youth unemployment, in partnership with community-based organizations that are trusted by youth. Employer engagement is central to this program: new neighborhood-based cohorts can only start after securing commitments from at least three nearby manufacturing employers within easy commuting range who agree to create temp-to-perm internship positions for program participants.
- **Removing Barriers to Youth Success.** In Philadelphia, [YouthBuild Philadelphia Charter School](#) offers an innovative construction pre-apprenticeship partnership program led by organizations that do not typically work together: the local carpenter’s trade union and the non-union affiliate of the national Associated Builders and Contractors trade association. With this program’s 2017 pilot cohort, the partners are testing changes to longstanding policies that had previously been barriers to opportunity youth entering construction apprenticeship programs. Changes include a waiver of the requirement for apprenticeship candidates to have cars, and allowing pre-apprenticeship participants to quickly re-take the union apprenticeship screening exam, which previously required a one-year wait.

Helping Opportunity Youth Succeed: Five Strategies

Philadelphia's Behavioral Care Pre-Apprenticeship program and New Orleans' Earn and Learn program each combine specific strategies for supporting opportunity youth with effective work-based learning practices. These strategies and practices can be adopted by a range of organizations interested in expanding access to apprenticeship for opportunity youth.

Strategies for supporting opportunity youth in pre-apprenticeship and apprenticeship:

- **Youth-Focused Staff Selection and Training**

Leaders in both the Philadelphia and New Orleans programs stressed a need to carefully select program staff who demonstrate a sensitivity to and interest in the specific needs of opportunity youth. In both cases, the organizations further prepare staff through specialized professional development.

- **Attention to Youth Social-Emotional Development**

Successful opportunity youth programs recognize the unique needs of this population as they reengage in education and career opportunities. The programs offer safe learning environments and provide fresh learning opportunities for youth to develop a new repertoire of constructive responses to the challenges and stresses of professional and postsecondary learning environments.

Best practices for growing opportunity youth training programs into pre-apprenticeship and apprenticeship:

- **Work-Based Learning Progression**

Youth with limited exposure to and experience with career-track employment in particular benefit from a series of exposures to work-based learning. This continuum of work experiences allows them to explore different options and to have a range of choices to match an emerging awareness of their interests and aptitudes. Such a progression of work-based experiences also gives participants chances to learn from these interim experiences before entering higher-stakes employment settings with less tolerance for mistakes. In a parallel track, technical instruction provides a progression of skill building to reinforce and inform work experiences, ranging from contextualized basic skills to more advanced college-level instruction.

- **Early Employer Engagement in Planning**

Working jointly with business partners from the beginning, rather than later in the process, pays off in building the credibility of provider organizations and a program focus on specific career opportunities that match youth assets. Pre-apprenticeship programs need to work with apprenticeship sponsors to align curriculum and training design with the entrance standards of the apprenticeship program, which are driven by the interplay between academic instruction and the employers who hire and mentor the apprentices.

Applicable to all:

- **Integrated Delivery Partnerships**

No single organization is likely to have the full range of capacities needed to offer a comprehensive apprenticeship program for opportunity youth that includes employer engagement, work-based learning, and college-level technical instruction, along with youth-specific recruitment, support services and case management, and expertise navigating the apprenticeship system. Comprehensive programs must artfully weave the assets and staff specialists of multiple provider organizations, technical educators, and participating employers into an integrated and mutually reinforcing set of services and activities.

Staff must avoid the trap of seeing themselves as the experts. Everyone is learning together, in both teacher and learning roles, in a continuous learning process. Staff must demonstrate the same growth mindset and flexibility asked of students.

Unlocking the Talent of Opportunity Youth

America's most famous youth apprentice, Ben Franklin (a printer's apprentice at age 12), reputedly described the basic learning process of apprenticeship this way: "Tell me and I forget, teach me and I may remember, involve me and I learn." This aphorism fits 19-year-old New Orleanian Da'Jonae Curtis. Although she was valedictorian of her high school class in 2016, she had no interest in postsecondary education: "I knew that I didn't want to go to school—I was just done with school." Instead, Da'Jonae found Earn and Learn and is about to complete her job placement with Tulane's HVAC department. "I was kind of skeptical [of HVAC work] at first. It was something I never thought about doing," she says. But after almost eight months on the job, Da'Jonae is proud of the certifications she's earned and looking forward to an externship. Da'Jonae describes what she likes about work-based learning:

I like that it's very hands on. I learn multiple skills in multiple different jobs—HVAC has electrical, carpentry, all kinds of things—it's not just one thing. The first thing I had to learn was the tools—everyone here has big tool cases and stuff—tools that I [had] never seen before. They would say, "hand me this, hand me that"; I had no idea of what they wanted. But now, it feels great to know what all the tools are.

She's the only woman on her team at the moment, and she says "it really isn't a problem. My supervisor is a really cool guy, very understanding; he's a great teacher." Da'Jonae's advice about succeeding in Earn and Learn is aimed at participants, but rings true for everyone involved in creating pre-apprenticeship programs. "I think it's an awesome program," she says, "you just have to have the patience."

The programs described here and others emerging around the country represent an effort to involve a segment of the U.S. workforce in learning that can lead to real economic opportunity. Making apprenticeship accessible to opportunity youth opens up a deep pool of talent in an economy starved for highly skilled, technology-savvy workers, and it gives young people who haven't had access to this valuable form of on-the-job training an opportunity to gain a foothold in an economy in which technical training and postsecondary education are prerequisites for the jobs of the future.



Earn and Learn September 2017 cohort. Da'Jonae is in the center, front, wearing all black.

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About Equity Partners in Registered Apprenticeship

Under a contract awarded by the U.S. Department of Labor, JFF is serving as an equity partner in Registered Apprenticeship and working to connect women, people of color, and opportunity youth to Registered Apprenticeship programs. JFF has convened a national partnership that includes CVS Health, Hilton, The Hartford, National Association of Workforce Boards, Community College Workforce Consortium, Opportunity Youth Incentive Fund, Upwardly Global, and FASTPORT, as well as regional partners in Chicago, Houston, Los Angeles/Long Beach, and Philadelphia. These employers, community colleges, workforce boards, and community-based organizations, with technical assistance from JFF, seek to advance equity in Registered Apprenticeship by creating stronger referral systems into Registered Apprenticeship programs, creating new pre-apprenticeships or aligning existing job training programs to Registered Apprenticeship, and enhancing services that increase the retention and success of apprentices.



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