

# INVESTING IN WORKFORCE PROGRAM INNOVATION:

A Formative Evaluation of  
Five Workforce Organizations'  
Experiences During the Human Capital  
Innovation Fund Initiative

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Finally, it is important to note that the findings and conclusions presented in this report are those of the authors alone, and do not necessarily reflect the opinions of the Capital One Foundation or any other individual or organization.

# TABLE OF CONTENTS

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- Acknowledgments**..... 1
- Executive Summary**..... 3
- Introduction**..... 10
  - The HCIF Investment Strategy..... 10
  - Overview of HCIF Grantees..... 10
  - About This Report..... 12
- About AspenWSI's Evaluation**..... 13
- Grantees' Experiences Developing and Maintaining Strategic Partnerships**..... 15
  - Strategic Partner Development..... 15
  - Building and Maintaining Mutually Reinforcing Resources and Services..... 17
  - Investing in Strategies and Structures to Support Partnership Development ..... 19
- HCIF Grantee Work With Employers**..... 21
  - Cultivating Relationships to Inform Training Design and Strengthen Job Placement..... 21
  - Identifying "Good Fit" Job Opportunities for Participants..... 23
  - Influencing Employer Thinking and Practice Through Sustained Engagement..... 25
- HCIF Grantees' Enhancement of Support Service Strategies**..... 27
  - Placing Participants at the Center of Support Service Strategies..... 27
- Examples of Program Capacity Built During the HCIF Initiative**..... 31
- Final Thoughts**..... 32
- Appendix A – Profiles of HCIF-Supported Projects**..... 34
- Appendix B – Participant Characteristics, Training Completion, and Employment Outcomes**..... 44

# EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

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Through its Human Capital Innovation Fund (HCIF), the Capital One Foundation invested in five workforce organizations testing new strategies that would enhance their ability to position low-income individuals for employment. Three HCIF grantees are workforce organizations that provide services directly to jobseekers; two are intermediary organizations that provide a range of capacity-building supports for workforce training partnerships comprising different types of institutions, including workforce organizations, community-based organizations, employers, and community colleges. The grantees are DC Central Kitchen in Washington, DC; the Greater New Orleans Foundation in New Orleans, Louisiana; and Brooklyn Workforce Innovations, The Door, and JobsFirstNYC in New York, New York. Between 2012 and 2016, these five workforce organizations received HCIF funds to plan, implement, and adapt strategic innovations while developing new capacity to support their missions.

Each of the HCIF grantees served different populations and targeted different industries in its regional economic context. All of their HCIF-supported projects focused on testing strategies in areas of practice that represent challenges shared by a number of other workforce programs. As the evaluator for the HCIF initiative, the Aspen Institute Workforce Strategies Initiative (AspenWSI) has had a window into the work of grantees that has enabled us to follow along as grantees learned and to document adaptations they made to their HCIF-supported projects over time. Also, because an important objective of our work has been to generate shared learning for the workforce field, we intentionally conducted an evaluation in which grantees' experiences guided our research process. This report is intended to provide the type of contextual details that we hope will offer insights to program operators and investors who are interested in building capacity for effective approaches to workforce development for low-income jobseekers in their own communities.

We describe HCIF-supported projects and the innovations they tested in Table 1 below. We then highlight key learning based on ways in which grantees have leveraged HCIF resources to support three areas of activity that workforce development organizations across the United States typically find challenging: developing and maintaining strategic partnerships with other organizations, engaging with employers, and delivering support service strategies tailored to the needs of training participants. We describe how the grantees' experiences testing new approaches have resulted in enduring capacity for the grantee organizations and others in their local workforce systems. We conclude this summary with considerations for investors who are interested in building capacity for effective approaches to workforce development for low-income jobseekers in their own communities and invite readers to read the full report to learn much more about grantees' programs and work during the HCIF initiative.

**Table 1: Overview of HCIF-Supported Organizations and Projects**

ORGANIZATION	ORGANIZATION TYPE	LOCATION	HCIF PROJECT	POPULATION SERVED	HCIF INNOVATION TESTED
Brooklyn Workforce Innovations (BWI)	Direct service	New York, New York	Brooklyn Workforce Collaboration	Residents in the low-income communities surrounding Brooklyn-based industrial parks	To test whether unemployed Brooklyn residents can be connected to new jobs created in Brooklyn's expanding industrial parks through the timely development and delivery of customized skills training programs
DC Central Kitchen (DCKK)	Direct service	Washington, DC	Go-Team Initiative	Adults with criminal histories, housing challenges, and limited work experience	To experiment with a program delivery strategy that implements DCKK's Culinary Job Training program at off-site locations in the greater Washington, D.C., metro area
The Door	Direct service	New York, New York	Advance in Retail	Young adults who are out of school and out of work	To pilot a training program to prepare and support young adults to enter and advance in the retail industry, and also change perceptions about opportunities for careers in the industry
Greater New Orleans Foundation	Intermediary	New Orleans, Louisiana	New Orleans Works	Jobseekers and incumbent workers in low-wage, frontline employment	To create new employer-led training partnerships in New Orleans' healthcare industry with the objective of connecting local residents to well-paying middle-skill jobs and opportunities for career advancement
JobsFirstNYC	Intermediary	New York, New York	Young Adult Sectoral Employment Project	Young adults who are out of school and out of work	To test whether sector strategies can prepare young adults for careers by providing capacity-building and financial support to facilitate the development of partnerships — composed of at least one community-based organization, one industry training entity, and one employer or employer intermediary

## Developing and Maintaining Strategic Partnerships with Other Organizations

Over the course of the HCIF initiative, grantees initiated or further cultivated relationships with a range of other institutions. These included social service providers, education providers, economic development agencies, and other workforce and community-based organizations. Strategic partnering with other organizations helped grantees make new or deeper connections with businesses, increased their reach into new communities of individuals who need workforce development services, and provided access to new sources of supportive services for participants, among other benefits. Also, by reaching across institutional lines with a broad range of organizations, the grantees helped influence the way other organizations work and effect change in their local workforce systems.

Charting a path to work together, even when organizations have common goals, is challenging because organizations have different operating environments, cultures, resource constraints, and accountability measures. Therefore, working effectively together required HCIF grantees and partner organizations to learn a lot about one another to identify common ground, bridge differences, and build trust. It required not only leadership commitment, but also buy-in by other staff at different levels within organizations. Developing and maintaining partnerships required resources in the form of staff time, particularly to maintain progress when staff or leaders changed.

HCIF grantees' experiences offer insights into the complex work of developing and maintaining relationships that cross institutions. Key findings include the following:

- *The "getting to know you" stage of partnership development is time consuming (and can be ongoing if organizations experience leadership or staff turnover). The activities required for organizations to understand one another's goals,*

*motivations, and operating culture necessitate a commitment of resources.*

- *Buy-in and collaboration by frontline staff are important to the success of ongoing partner relationships. Maintaining a regular presence and continued engagement at partner organization sites can lead to more effective coordination and delivery of services.*
- *Partnerships may have an initial plan, but when partners have mutual goals, the nature of their work together can evolve and deepen over time as each partner learns about the value the other can contribute.*
- *As a partnership's work unfolds over time, partnering organizations that remain flexible may find new ways to leverage one another's strengths and adapt original plans to better meet their participants' needs.*
- *Intermediaries can play an important role in providing the resources and dedicated time necessary for collaborations of organizations to explore opportunities, build new relationships with one another, and develop plans for implementing workforce programs.*

## Engaging with Employers

Over the course of the HCIF initiative, sustained and deep employer engagement emerged as a hallmark across grantees' programs. Staff at all of the programs engaged with employers in a variety of ways to accomplish a number of different goals: informing program design, developing work-based learning opportunities for training participants, and learning about job openings, hiring trends, and workforce skill needs. Program staff also worked with employers to explore strategies to promote job quality and employment advancement of participants on the job, and to help participants get and keep jobs.

Grantees cultivated long-term relationships that informed workforce program design and promoted

job placement. They explored the characteristics of opportunities provided by different employers with an eye toward identifying workplaces and jobs that are a good fit for their participants. They devised strategies to work with employers to develop or more clearly articulate pathways that can lead to advancement for entry-level workers. Intermediary organizations also created learning and capacity-building opportunities that fostered engagement between employers and workforce service providers. Business leaders involved in workforce partnerships engaged in assessment of their hiring and employment practices. Some discerned ways in which they could make changes to provide higher job quality, improve employee engagement, and increase retention.

Through our evaluation, we identified the following key learning from the grantees' experiences cultivating employer relationships:

- *Employer engagement across HCIF grantees was characterized by sustained involvement and required consistent and ongoing dedication of resources, represented mainly by staff time, to learn about businesses' operations and their workforce needs.*
- *When exploring "good fit" opportunities for participants, it is important to consider which industries and which employers within those industries offer opportunities that meet the needs of participants.*
- *Within an industry sector, there are usually a wide range of employment environments and workplace characteristics that affect how good a fit different jobs will be for a workforce program's participants.*
- *By providing support for learning and capacity building, intermediary organizations can engage employers to consider the importance of training and advancement opportunities for their frontline workers.*
- *Intermediaries can help bring employers and workforce providers together to plan sectoral training programs and engage employers to reflect on their workplace practices, a topic that can be difficult for workforce service providers to broach on their own.*

## Delivering Support Services Tailored to the Needs of Participants

Low-income jobseekers who participate in workforce training programs face a range of life challenges. Some are juggling training and education while trying to raise and support their families; some are homeless, transitioning from jail or prison, or recovering from addiction; some have limited work experience and low levels of educational attainment. The experiences of low-income jobseekers vary greatly, and it is often the case that training participants face more than one of these challenges. This was true for the HCIF grantees, and each of the programs supported by HCIF differed in terms of the types of barriers its participants faced and the types of services they needed. Therefore, the HCIF grantees focused on designing and delivering training programs that targeted their participants' specific needs.

By providing support services such as counseling, case management, and connections to public benefits such as transportation, childcare, and medical and housing assistance, HCIF grantees helped their participants succeed in and beyond training programs. However, finding funds to pay for supportive services in the resources typically available for workforce programming is challenging because much of the funding that is available cannot be used to provide the types of comprehensive and ongoing support necessary to help participants achieve stable, long-term employment. Through the HCIF initiative, grantees were able to augment their existing resources for support services and learn about the effectiveness of services and service delivery approaches to meet their participants' needs.

We identified the following important observations from this work:

- *Programs can more effectively support participants when all of their staff (not just counselors and case managers) are engaged in identifying and communicating about participants' support needs. This approach requires setting expectations about and providing time for program staff to communicate and coordinate with one another.*

- *Extending supportive services to participants after they have obtained jobs is an important strategy for helping them achieve long-term success in the workplace.*

## Examples of Program Capacity Built During the HCIF Initiative

Although the HCIF initiative has ended, grantees' work testing out new approaches has resulted in creation of new areas of capacity that continue. In addition, in response to learning and collaboration with HCIF grantees during the initiative, some partner organizations and employers have made changes to the ways they operate, including the following examples:

- *Brooklyn Workforce Innovations (BWI)* has established itself as a valued partner in Brooklyn industrial parks, creating paths to employment with new businesses for local unemployed and under-employed residents. When the organization first set out to experiment with developing employer-customized trainings, BWI staff faced a steep learning curve. Today, BWI has the capacity to respond quickly and implement training programs that prepare local residents as new jobs are created. Staff have developed capability for scoping out skill needs, and the organization has a deep bench of training providers engaged with the work. Additionally, one industrial park has recently incorporated a provision into new leases that requires business tenants to begin searches for new employees by working with BWI and its partners.
- *DC Central Kitchen* adapted its Go-Team plan as it learned what worked in real time, experimenting to develop effective working partnerships with different organizations. By the end of the initiative, through partnering, DC Central Kitchen had expanded its capacity to effectively serve many more Washington, DC, residents who have very high barriers to employment. DC Central Kitchen staff also developed knowledge about and new relationships with employers in a variety of types of food service employment environments to identify those that offer "good fit" jobs for its participants.
- *The Door*, through exploratory work with retail employers to design sector-focused employment programming, developed new capacity for its work helping youth and young adults prepare for and succeed in employment in the sector. The Door staff enhanced their understanding of industry needs, identified opportunities for participants to secure good employment, and developed a new ability to design training for participants to advance in retail careers. The organization has leveraged learning from these experiences to inform approaches to working with employers to develop strategies adapted for other sectors.
- *The Greater New Orleans Foundation* piloted a process that resulted in local healthcare employers thinking differently about the workforce development needs of their frontline staff. In a shift from long-standing professional development resource allocation practice, which had focused on higher-wage medical staff, two employers are now paying for training for lower-level frontline workers. Healthcare employers have begun evaluating their wage structures, and one hospital, the state's largest nongovernmental employer, has raised wages for medical assistants. During HCIF, the Greater New Orleans Foundation developed capacity for organizing and managing this new approach for engaging with healthcare employers to explore workforce development practices. It plans to expand this approach and engage with employers in other sectors around workforce development issues for frontline positions.
- *JobsFirstNYC* set out to demonstrate that sector strategies can prepare out-of-school, out-of-work young adults for careers. To accomplish this, JobsFirstNYC facilitated the development of new partnerships between youth development and workforce development providers and employers. During the planning phase, partners received funding to support their participation in learning community activities designed to help them plan together and bridge the types of differences that typically keep organizations that have different primary missions siloed. Five of the seven partners that joined the Young Adult Sectoral Employment Project (YASEP) at its inception have received funds from other investors to pilot new sectoral employment strategies. Although JobsFirstNYC provided partnerships with financial

resources only during their planning stage, most partners have continued to participate in YASEP learning community activities. Also, four new collaborative programs serving youth and young adults have joined YASEP.

## Considerations for Workforce Investors

Through its Human Capital Innovation Fund initiative, the Capital One Foundation made investments that supported its five grantees to engage in sustained planning, relationship building, and adaptation over time. This investment strategy provided a foundation for innovation and learning. Throughout the formative evaluation period, grantees cited ways in which flexible and long-term funding provided by HCIF was key to their ability to sustain the activity necessary for building the type of program-to-program collaboration and employer engagement that underpinned their progress on these fronts. This is the type of long-term investment that is needed in the workforce development field to make inroads toward systems changes within and among agencies and businesses and build capacity in workforce programs that will ultimately help jobseekers.

The following are considerations for investors that are interested in building capacity for effective approaches to workforce development for low-income jobseekers in their own communities.

► *Workforce programs need planning resources that support strategy development over time.*

Designing change-focused strategies that leverage the expertise and resources of a range of partners is no small undertaking. Change requires planning, and planning takes time. Collaborating with external partners to make a plan and building the relationships and staff capacity needed to implement a plan takes even more time. Resources to support staff time for planning and relationship building are among the most difficult to secure. Through the HCIF initiative, the Capital One Foundation provided nine-month planning grants to support the development of HCIF change-focused projects, and notably, it also recognized that planning is not a one-off activity but rather an activity that must be sustained to support project implementation and adaptation over time.

The HCIF grant program provided not only flexible funding but also a forum within which grantees met peer to peer throughout the initiative. This learning community convened twice per year and provided time and space for grantees to both plan within their organizational teams and learn from the experiences of other HCIF grantees engaged in change strategies in other communities. Grantees provided input on topics they wanted to focus on as well as made suggestions to the Foundation to invite outside subject matter and workforce policy experts to facilitate sessions. Grantees described this range of ongoing support as instrumental to their ability to learn from one another and develop and refine their approaches over the years of the HCIF initiative.

► *Workforce programs need resources that can support flexible approaches to implementation.*

The five HCIF focus projects did not unfold in a vacuum. Each was implemented in a dynamic environment, and programs encountered factors that were sometimes beyond their control. In addition to responding to changing labor market conditions, including effects of the Great Recession and changes in employer hiring practices and trends, grantees contended with other challenges. These included natural disasters such as Hurricane Sandy, staffing and financial condition changes experienced by grantees and important partners, and changes in the needs of local residents seeking workforce development services. The Capital One Foundation recognized that the HCIF projects were testing new strategies and operating in a constantly changing environment. Therefore, the Foundation's investment approach was supportive of the reality that plans would be adapted over time. The HCIF funding strategy helped grantees be in a position to nimbly respond to changes within their organizations and in their environment. Rather than being tied to an initial plan, HCIF grantees were afforded a great deal of flexibility to respond to challenges (and new opportunities) during the multiyear implementation period and to refine and adapt their strategies in response to both learning and environmental changes.

► *Traditional workforce program outcomes measures do not capture activity and outcomes of work designed to build capacity and create systems change.*

The direct service providers and intermediary organizations in the HCIF initiative worked to develop programs that support populations facing multiple challenges to achieve employment and income goals that require long-term work on a variety of fronts. Progress in this work can be challenging to measure and is not always quantifiable. Typical performance measures used to assess progress focus on training completion, certifications earned, job placement, wage rates, and short-term employment retention. While these indicators certainly point to important participant milestones, they fail to document the ongoing work of relationship building and employer engagement that is required to design

and deliver effective workforce development services. Questions that help capture progress in this ongoing work and that can be explored through evaluation include the following: In what ways has an organization engaged with employers or partners, and how have they responded? Did employers change their workplace practices by, for example, investing resources in entry-level employee training, increasing wages, or changing scheduling practices? Have partner organizations increased the level of resources devoted to supporting workforce programs?

These activities contribute to the efforts of organizations to create lasting changes in workforce development systems or employer practices that benefit both workers and employers.

# INTRODUCTION

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Years after the Great Recession, millions of Americans continue to struggle to find work or better work. In persistently challenging local labor markets across the country, workforce organizations are striving to help unemployed and under-employed individuals prepare for, connect to, and advance in employment. To support this work, the Capital One Foundation established its Human Capital Innovation Fund (HCIF) and between 2012 and 2016 invested in building the capacity of five workforce organizations. Recognizing the limited number of organizations its funds could support, the Capital One Foundation set an additional goal of developing and sharing learning from grantees' experimental work that could be useful to the broader workforce field.

In 2013 the Capital One Foundation engaged The Aspen Institute's Workforce Strategies Initiative (AspenWSI) to conduct a three-year formative evaluation of the work conducted through HCIF investments. An important objective of AspenWSI's work is to generate and share information from evaluation that is useful for the broader workforce development community. This report describes the results of our research. It details the different strategies implemented by HCIF grantees, the near-term outcomes from the work, and the implications and insights that have potential utility for other workforce program operators, intermediaries, and investors in the field.

## The HCIF Investment Strategy

The Human Capital Innovation Fund represented a new investment area for the Capital One Foundation. Given this, Foundation staff began with a yearlong exploratory process through which they gathered insights about promising workforce strategies and the types of investments that might allow them to experiment and learn.

This process of inquiry led the Foundation to recognize the workforce field's interest in opportunities for program leaders to test new strategies they had not previously piloted and that they believed could result in more effective work. Based on its learning, the Capital One Foundation issued a request for proposals asking for leaders of experienced workforce organizations in its service

areas to submit ideas for new strategies that they would like to test.<sup>1</sup> The Foundation sought leaders who wanted to build new capacity and had a strong rationale for how implementation of a different approach could lead to better connections to employment for the populations they serve.

In 2012, 10 workforce development organizations received nine-month planning grants from the Capital One Foundation's Human Capital Innovation Fund. During this planning period, leaders were engaged in a series of convenings where they reflected on and shared the types of challenges they encounter in their work. Leaders also developed plans for approaches they believed would improve their ability to serve their low-income constituents effectively. At the end of this planning process, five organizations had developed viable plans for experimental capacity-building work and received HCIF implementation grants.

## Overview of HCIF Grantees

The HCIF grantees are DC Central Kitchen in Washington, DC; the Greater New Orleans Foundation in New Orleans, Louisiana; and The Door, JobsFirstNYC, and Brooklyn Workforce Innovations in New York, New York. These five organizations are diverse in terms of location, organizational structure, funding sources, and the strategies they set out to explore. Three of the grantees provide services directly to jobseekers; the two remaining grantees are intermediary organizations that provide a range of capacity-building supports for workforce training partnerships comprising different types of institutions, including workforce organizations, community-based organizations, employers, and community colleges. The five grantees are similar in that they are all established organizations, and HCIF funds leveraged additional public and private resources that provided support for programming prior to and during the HCIF exploratory period. Finally, each of the grantees' HCIF-supported projects focused on testing strategies in areas of practice that not only were a challenge to grantees, but also represent challenges shared by many other workforce programs. We describe HCIF-supported projects and the innovations they tested in Table 1 on the following page. Additional information is available in Appendix A.

<sup>1</sup> The Capital One Foundation's service areas include New York; Washington, DC; Louisiana; and Texas.

**TABLE 1: Overview of HCIF-Supported Organizations and Projects**

ORGANIZATION	ORGANIZATION TYPE	LOCATION	HCIF PROJECT	POPULATION SERVED	HCIF INNOVATION TESTED
Brooklyn Workforce Innovations (BWI)	Direct service	New York, New York	Brooklyn Workforce Collaboration	Residents in the low-income communities surrounding Brooklyn-based industrial parks	To test whether unemployed Brooklyn residents can be connected to new jobs created in Brooklyn's expanding industrial parks through the timely development and delivery of customized skills training programs
DC Central Kitchen (DCK)	Direct service	Washington, DC	Go-Team Initiative	Adults with criminal histories, housing challenges, and limited work experience	To experiment with a program delivery strategy that implements DCK's Culinary Job Training program at off-site locations in the greater Washington, DC, metro area
The Door	Direct service	New York, New York	Advance in Retail	Young adults who are out of school and out of work	To pilot a training program to prepare and support young adults to enter and advance in the retail industry, and also change perceptions about opportunities for careers in the industry
Greater New Orleans Foundation	Intermediary	New Orleans, Louisiana	New Orleans Works	Jobseekers and incumbent workers in low-wage, frontline employment	To create new employer-led training partnerships in New Orleans' healthcare industry with the objective of connecting local residents to well-paying middle-skill jobs and opportunities for career advancement
JobsFirstNYC	Intermediary	New York, New York	Young Adult Sectoral Employment Project	Young adults who are out of school and out of work	To test whether sector strategies can prepare young adults for careers by providing capacity-building and financial support to facilitate the development of partnerships — composed of at least one community-based organization, one industry training entity, and one employer or employer intermediary

Given the different populations served, industries targeted, and regional and economic contexts, the grantees' HCIF-supported projects are naturally very different, but they all focused on testing strategies in areas of practice that represent challenges shared by a number of other workforce programs. As the evaluator for the HCIF initiative, AspenWSI researchers' goal was not only to document the implementation and outcomes of HCIF-supported projects, but also to identify learning from this work that has potential to be helpful to other workforce program operators and intermediaries in the field.

This report is organized around three areas of practice that workforce programs often see as critical to advancing their goals, but at the same time find challenging to implement consistently for a variety of reasons:

- **Developing and maintaining strategic partnerships with other organizations**
- **Engaging with employers**
- **Delivering support service strategies tailored to the needs of participants**

In designing and implementing their projects, HCIF grantees recognized that they could not achieve their desired outcomes if their work occurred in isolation. HCIF grantees therefore used new resources to finance the staff time needed to build partnerships with a range of institutions, including education, training, and social service providers; public workforce agencies; economic development agencies; and employers. The HCIF grantees' experiences offer insights into the complex work of developing and maintaining relationships that cross institutions.

Working effectively with employers is also critical to a workforce program's ability to connect individuals to better opportunities in the labor market. While it is important to implement and design training programs that meet employers' needs, workforce program operators' primary mission is to help low-income jobseekers connect to employment that meets their needs. The HCIF investment afforded grantees the ability to spend time cultivating employer relationships, strengthening the design and delivery of training in response to what they learned from employers (and participants), focusing on job placement, and, in several cases, providing input that influenced positive changes made by employers in workplace environments. Grantees explored the characteristics of opportunities provided by different employers with an eye toward identifying jobs that are a good fit for their participants. Intermediary organizations created learning and capacity-building opportunities that fostered engagement between employers and workforce service providers. Business leaders involved in workforce partnerships engaged in assessment of their hiring and employment practices. Some discerned ways in which they could make changes to provide higher job quality, improve employee engagement, and increase retention.

Finally, finding funds to pay for supportive services in the resources typically available for workforce programming is challenging. Much of the funding that is available cannot be used to provide the types of comprehensive and ongoing supports necessary to help participants persist in training and achieve stable, long-term employment. Through the initiative, grantees were able to augment their existing resources for support services and learn about the effectiveness of services and service delivery approaches to meet their participants' needs.

## About This Report

AspenWSI researchers had a window into the work of grantees that enabled us to follow along as they learned and to document adaptations they made to their programs over time. We worked closely with grantees to understand the motivations for their initial strategies, how they designed and delivered new services, and ways in which their strategies evolved over the three-year period. We also explored how grantees' strategies were influenced by the challenges and opportunities they encountered. Because an important objective of our work is to share learning with the broader workforce field, we intentionally conducted an evaluation in which grantees' experiences guided our research process. This report is intended to provide the type of contextual details that we hope will offer insights to program operators and investors who are interested in building capacity for effective approaches to workforce development for low-income jobseekers in their own communities.

In the following section we describe AspenWSI's evaluation methodology in more detail. Then we highlight a number of ways in which grantees have leveraged HCIF resources to support three areas of activity that workforce development organizations across the United States typically find challenging: developing strategic partnerships, cultivating employer relationships, and providing support services targeted to the needs of specific populations. We conclude the report with considerations for funders interested in pursuing or supporting similar efforts in their communities. Appendices provide more detailed descriptions of the HCIF-supported projects and information about the characteristics and outcomes of participants enrolled in training and education services.

# ABOUT ASPENWSI'S EVALUATION

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The Capital One Foundation engaged AspenWSI in a three-year (2013-2016) formative evaluation of the HCIF initiative. The goals of the evaluation included:

- **Exploring the development, implementation, and outcomes of the HCIF focus projects;**
- **Understanding the role of environmental factors, local community influence, and organizational capacity on the implementation of projects; and**
- **Supporting peer learning for grantees as they interpreted and learned from their project implementation and outcomes data.**

We designed our research approach to understand how project implementation unfolded and what each grantee accomplished as it implemented new strategies. We chose an exploratory framework for our evaluation since many of the HCIF focus projects were still in the early stages of development when we began our research. A central goal of the HCIF initiative was to support grantee learning and development. Therefore, we engaged with grantees in a variety of ways, including developing logic models, planning and participating in site visits, reviewing project documents, analyzing data on participants served by programs, and participating in HCIF cohort convenings. Each of these activities is described in more detail below.

**LOGIC MODELS** – We worked with HCIF grantees to develop new logic models or refine existing ones. This activity helped inform our understanding of the reasons why each of the grantees developed a particular HCIF innovation strategy and helped us learn how HCIF project strategies fit within grantees' organizational structures and cultures. To develop these logic models, we worked individually with grantee leaders to explore why and how they design and deliver services for their specific populations, the ways in which they leverage resources, how they engage with various stakeholders and the purposes of these engagements, and their goals for the planned HCIF projects.

At the outset of the evaluation, we recognized that some of the long-term outcome goals of grantees' work (for example, stable career development for participants or the establishment of robust interagency partnerships) might not be observable during the three-year evaluation period. Developing logic models helped us identify short-term and interim milestones along the path toward achieving longer-term goals.

For instance, shorter-term participant milestones such as job placement, wage increases, and 90-day retention goals can indicate progress toward longer-term employment retention and career advancement outcomes. Short-term milestones such as signed partnership agreements and interim milestones such as increases in the number of client referrals or level of services provided by a partner organization can provide indicators of progress on partnership development.

**SITE VISITS** – AspenWSI researchers conducted annual site visits with the five HCIF-supported organizations. Site visits provided us the opportunity to learn about HCIF-supported projects on the ground in their communities and to continue learning and documenting as HCIF strategies evolved over the course of implementation. During site visits we spoke with a range of stakeholders, including HCIF project leaders and staff, program participants, leaders of partner organizations, and employers. Through these interviews, organizational leadership and program staff shared their perspectives on HCIF-supported strategies, including why strategies were or were not adapted over time. Interviews with leaders of partner organizations informed our understanding of their objectives for partnering, the ways in which they collaborated with staff from the HCIF-supported organization, and challenges and successes encountered in partnering. Similarly, interviews with employer partners helped us understand their hiring needs and expectations, their perspectives on the HCIF-supported projects, and their experiences hiring participants from programs. Finally, interviews with programs' participants informed our understanding of their experiences with the HCIF-supported organizations, including the types of services (training, supportive, post-placement) they received, the ways in which they benefited from participating in the program, challenges they encountered, and suggestions they had for improvements to programs. Information gathered through this diversity of interviews helped us identify a range of ways that programs made progress toward their goals. Some of these are not easily measured and cannot be quantified, including indicators of changes in an employer's perception of a training program or indicators of progress in a new partner relationship. Following site visits, AspenWSI developed site visit summary reports and shared these with grantees to inform their work on project implementation and adaptation over time.

**DOCUMENT REVIEW** – AspenWSI researchers conducted ongoing review of project documentation, including strategic plans, proposal applications, reports, learning community meeting proceedings, and curricula and syllabi for training programs. Document review informed our understanding of grantees' HCIF focus projects, particularly as related to partnership development and the structure and content of training programs. For instance, the three HCIF grantees that directly serve training participants shared their recruitment and outreach materials, program applications, and training curricula. These documents helped us understand the characteristics of participants targeted for training and the programs' eligibility requirements. Training curricula informed our understanding of programs' training schedules, the topics and industry skills covered, and the ways in which participants are prepared for employment. Strategic plans and proposals from the two HCIF intermediary organizations (JobsFirstNYC and the Greater New Orleans Foundation) provided information about the types of partnerships they were supporting and the objectives of partners' work together. Notes from intermediaries' learning community meetings and partnership implementation plans helped us understand the needs of their constituent organizations and the ways in which intermediaries provided capacity-building supports to new and developing partnerships.

**PARTICIPANT OUTCOME STUDIES** – We worked with the three organizations that provide training and employment placement services directly to clients (Brooklyn Workforce Innovations, DC Central Kitchen, and The Door) to develop and conduct reviews of participant-level data. Participant outcome studies helped us learn about the characteristics and outcomes of individuals served during HCIF

project implementation.<sup>2</sup> Because each of these grantees was serving a different target population and working to prepare participants for employment in different sectors, each collected slightly different client characteristic data and used different definitions and standards to identify and assess employment outcomes. AspenWSI researchers collected, compiled, cleaned, and analyzed data for each program and reviewed participant data study results individually with each workforce program leader. Results of the participant data studies are included in Appendix B of this report. Two of the grantees (JobsFirstNYC and the Greater New Orleans Foundation) are intermediary organizations; therefore, they do not have direct access to participant data. We worked with these organizations to identify outcomes measures – both qualitative and quantitative – that would be helpful to collect and analyze from their own grantees.

**HCIF COHORT CONVENINGS** – AspenWSI participated in learning meetings for HCIF grantees that the Capital One Foundation convened four times during the implementation period. At these meetings, grantees had the opportunity to connect with their peers, share information about work in progress, and discuss challenges and opportunities encountered during the course of the initiative. These meetings, as well as periodic check-in calls with the grantees, helped AspenWSI researchers stay informed about project implementation. Conversations during learning meetings also provided the opportunity to learn about experiences, issues, and challenges that were common to multiple HCIF grantee members and informed our understanding of issues that might be of interest to the broader workforce field.

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<sup>2</sup> See Appendix B for demographic and participant outcomes data.

# GRANTEES' EXPERIENCES DEVELOPING AND MAINTAINING STRATEGIC PARTNERSHIPS

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Over the course of the HCIF initiative, grantees initiated or further cultivated relationships with a range of other institutions. These included social service providers, education providers, economic development agencies, and other workforce and community-based organizations. Strategic partnering with other organizations helped grantees make new or deeper connections with businesses, increased their reach into new communities of individuals who need workforce development services, and provided access to new sources of supportive services for participants, among other benefits. Overall, partnerships were essential elements of HCIF grantees' strategies for making meaningful progress toward providing more effective programming for their constituents.

Charting a path to work together, even when organizations have common goals, is challenging because organizations have different operating environments, cultures, resource constraints, and accountability measures. Therefore, working effectively together required HCIF grantees and partner organizations to learn a lot about one another to identify common ground, bridge differences, and build trust. It required not only leadership commitment, but also buy-in by other staff at different levels within organizations. Developing and maintaining partnerships required resources in the form of staff time, and resources were especially needed to maintain progress when staff or leaders changed.

HCIF grantees' experiences offer insights into the complex work of developing and maintaining relationships that cross institutions. We believe these are helpful to share with the broader community of workforce development program operators and investors. In this section, we describe key learning about HCIF grantees' work on partnership and relationship building. We discuss factors grantees considered while identifying partner organizations, as well as some of the approaches they used to develop these partnerships and navigate challenges that are common to partnerships.

## Strategic Partner Development

Grantees were strategic about selecting partner institutions, taking steps to identify institutions that shared a common mission, aimed to serve similar participant populations, and had access to resources or information that could benefit their own participants. Grantees engaging in new types of partnerships found that they had to adapt their approach to partner selection over time. In the first part of this section, we describe how two grantees approached the process of identifying partners and building relationships, and highlight some of the key learning from this process. We then return to these examples to discuss how these partnerships developed during the initiative.

► *The "getting to know you" stage of partnership development is time consuming (and can be ongoing if organizations experience leadership or staff turnover). The activities required for organizations to understand one another's goals, motivations, and operating culture necessitate a commitment of resources. The following example of Brooklyn Workforce Innovation's partnership with the Brooklyn Navy Yard Development Corporation illustrates how the HCIF investment supported the forging of a new relationship.*

Brooklyn Workforce Innovations' (BWI's) primary objective for its HCIF focus project was to train local and public housing residents for job opportunities in Brooklyn's expanding industrial parks. To do this, BWI initiated a long-term strategy to forge partnerships with the economic development agencies managing these parks. Through this work, BWI has become better positioned to play an important role in developing new talent pipelines through which local community members are prepared for employment by the businesses operating in rapidly expanding industrial parks.

One of BWI's economic development agency partners is the Brooklyn Navy Yard Development Corporation, which manages an industrial business

park on the Brooklyn waterfront. In addition to serving as the property manager for the business tenants of the park, the development corporation operates an on-site Navy Yard Employment Center. Early on, the Employment Center's activity to promote local resident hiring mainly involved posting job listings for and helping to fill internal Navy Yard positions such as security guards and shuttle bus drivers. As the base of business tenants in the Navy Yard expanded, the Employment Center's responsibilities shifted toward providing services for Navy Yard tenant businesses, which include warehouse distribution firms and food and furniture manufacturers. The Employment Center posts tenants' job openings, conducts pre-screening of employment applications, and provides interviewing services for tenants.

Navy Yard leadership recognized that in the communities neighboring the industrial park there was a significant population of unemployed residents who could potentially fill the hiring needs of incoming business tenants. However, while these residents could more easily access jobs in the Navy Yard than could New Yorkers living in other boroughs, many needed skills training to be competitive. In this context, BWI focused its role in partnership with the Brooklyn Navy Yard on providing customized training programs for Navy Yard employers. This would augment the Employment Center's job placement services and more fully meet the hiring needs of businesses entering the industrial park.

Forging new relationships is never easy, and as with any new relationship, it took time and resources for BWI and Employment Center staff to understand each other's goals, motivations, and operating cultures and reach the point where they could work effectively together. BWI staff recognized that they had to build trust with Employment Center staff, and part of this process would mean demonstrating that BWI's motivation for working in the Navy Yard was to support the two organizations' shared goal of connecting local community residents to employment. BWI had to demonstrate that its employer-customized training projects were designed to support and complement the Employment Center's services, rather than to compete with the center for job placement outcomes (a component of the center's accountability metrics). BWI rented office space at the Navy Yard and co-located with the

Employment Center in order to be in a position to integrate the two organizations' work. BWI also made financial investments in Employment Center staff positions and helped connect the center to other local community-based organizations and funders. Finally, BWI staff worked closely with Employment Center staff to enhance job applicant screening and job placement services. In this way, BWI's engagement could help the Employment Center meet its required job placement outcomes. These relationship-building efforts helped the two organizations' staff become familiar with each other's work and build trust. Over time, BWI staff, being more integrated into the regular operations of the Navy Yard, were in a position to obtain information about job vacancies and plans for business expansion efforts at the Navy Yard. Getting early access to information of this nature helped BWI plan and deliver training programs that were well-received by both established and newly arrived business tenants.



*Brooklyn Workforce Innovations participant takes part in a manufacturing training.*

- *Buy-in and collaboration by frontline staff are important to the success of ongoing partner relationships. Maintaining a regular presence and continued engagement at partner organization sites can lead to more effective coordination and delivery of services. The following example describes how DC Central Kitchen approached having a regular presence at partner organization sites and how this supported productive working relationships among frontline staff.*

The Go-Team initiative was launched to expand DC Central Kitchen's successful Culinary Job Training program to partner organizations serving different target populations and located in different parts of the Washington, DC, metropolitan area. Initially, DC Central Kitchen program leaders selected four organizations with which to partner. As they moved forward, however, leaders soon recognized challenges that they had not anticipated. For instance, they realized that their initial plan to work with a partner site to deliver the Culinary Job Training program once per year did not allow either organization to build the staff relationships necessary to support and deliver the program efficiently. In addition, due to working with each site for such a short period of time, adapting the training program for different target populations served by other community-based organizations proved challenging. DC Central Kitchen leaders recognized that they needed to shift their partnership development approach and maintain a more regular presence at fewer partner sites in order to cultivate productive working relationships with partner staff. In response, DC Central Kitchen made a strategic decision to decrease the number of partnerships it would develop to two – Central Union Mission and the Arlington Employment Center. Leaders of both organizations were committed to partnering on Culinary Job Training programs at their facilities multiple times per year, and classroom and commercial kitchen spaces were available. Importantly, DCCK, Central Union Mission, and the Arlington Employment Center served populations with similar characteristics. By narrowing the number of partnerships they were trying to maintain and focusing on those that met a few important criteria, Go-Team staff were able to increase their presence at partner sites and spend time in activities that have proved key to program success. For example, Go-Team staff played more of a lead role in participant recruitment and screening in later rounds of training – not only helping partners learn how to identify individuals who are ready to participate in the culinary training, but also working with partners to gain buy-in for the Culinary Job Training program's thorough intake process. Go-Team staff also worked closely with case workers at partner sites to determine how to align their sites' support service delivery with the schedule and needs of participants engaged in the Culinary Job Training program.

## Building and Maintaining Mutually Reinforcing Resources and Services

When partnerships begin, the different agencies involved generally have a "big goal" in mind for their work together. Accomplishing this big goal is initially the focus of partnership efforts; only after some time and experience working together do partners begin to see a wider variety of ways in which they may stand to benefit from collaboration. As grantees dedicated resources and time to partnership development during the HCIF evaluation period, we observed that they and their partners began to find new benefits from sharing resources and expertise and identified practical ways to support one another as their partnerships deepened. Through the process of working through challenges together, partners were able to identify and assess one another's strengths and to achieve greater clarity around the actual roles and responsibilities each would end up playing. We return to the previous examples to illustrate how Brooklyn Workforce Innovations' and DC Central Kitchen's partnerships evolved over time in response to what each learned about the practical realities of working with local partners:

- *Partnerships may have an initial plan, but when partners have mutual goals, the nature of relationships and plans can evolve and deepen over time as each partner learns about the value the other can contribute. The following example describes how BWI's evolving partnership with the Navy Yard has, over time, resulted in new potential for extending employment opportunities to increasing numbers of local residents.*

Over the course of the evaluation, BWI and Navy Yard Employment Center staff have come to understand the ways in which each organization's work helps to connect local community residents to jobs in the Navy Yard. As described previously, the Employment Center conducts pre-screening and interviewing for Navy Yard tenant businesses interested in hiring local residents. BWI staff expanded Employment Center capacity by assisting clients with the job application process for example by helping jobseekers develop resumes and interviewing skills and designing and implementing training programs that meet Navy Yard businesses' hiring needs. In interviews with AspenWSI researchers, Employment Center staff noted that BWI is a valued partner, and that employer-customized training is a valuable

service that BWI provides for Navy Yard employers. BWI staff noted that as Employment Center staff have come to understand BWI's role, they have become more comfortable with sharing information about job vacancies and new tenants who have signed leases in the business park. This information is instrumental to helping BWI plan for and design the skill development training that provides an accessible pipeline for local residents to prepare for and obtain work in the Navy Yard. Employment Center and BWI staff now often visit employers together, with the objective that employers view their services as part of a single entity. Additionally, the Brooklyn Navy Yard Development Corporation noted that the partnership between BWI and the Employment Center represents an attractive amenity to tenants. The development corporation feels that the partnership can effectively serve its business tenants, and it recently incorporated a provision into Navy Yard leases that requires new businesses to begin searches to fill job vacancies by contacting the BWI-Employment Center partners. This system change has the potential to result in many more workers being hired from the local community surrounding the Navy Yard.

- *As a partnership's work unfolds over time, partnering organizations that remain flexible may find new ways to leverage one another's strengths and adapt original plans to better*

*meet their participants' needs. The following example describes how, over time, DC Central Kitchen and its partners were able to improve support services and better align delivery of some services by remaining open to learning as they worked together.*

When DC Central Kitchen's Go-Team took the Culinary Job Training program to Central Union Mission and the Arlington Employment Center, partners anticipated that Go-Team staff would be responsible for culinary skills training and Central Union Mission and Arlington Employment Center staff would primarily oversee participant recruitment and case management. As they worked together over time and became familiar with one another's strengths, each partner's responsibilities began to change. For example, local partners' initial reluctance to turn participant screening and enrollment over to Go-Team staff lessened as they gained firsthand knowledge about the Culinary Job Training program. As partners observed how the Go-Team's thorough intake process contributed to program completion and how its trauma-informed case management approach supported participants, their trust in the Go-Team increased. Partner organizations were increasingly willing to let Go-Team staff oversee the enrollment process in addition to the culinary training. Similarly, as DC Central Kitchen staff developed relationships



*DC Central Kitchen Go-Team participants engage in the Culinary Job Training program.*

with partners' staff, they were able to work more closely with those organizations' case managers to align their existing support service delivery approaches with the schedule and needs of participants. Culinary Job Training students served at DC Central Kitchen's location also benefited from the partnership. Central Union Mission, which provides emergency and transitional housing assistance at its location, has helped DCCK's participants with access to much-needed housing services.

## Investing in Strategies and Structures to Support Partnership Development

Two of the HCIF projects invested in capacity-building activities to support the development of workforce partnerships. These partnerships comprise diverse institutions, including workforce organizations, community-based organizations, youth development organizations, employers, and community colleges. This approach grew out of an understanding that partnership building takes time and sustained effort. Therefore, capacity-building projects were designed to provide time, space, and structure for partners to come together to meet and work more closely with one another over time.

- *Intermediaries can play an important role in providing the resources and dedicated time necessary for collaborations of organizations to explore opportunities, build new relationships with one another, and develop plans for implementing workforce programs. The following example describes planning and capacity-building activities provided by JobsFirstNYC and the Greater New Orleans Foundation and how these resources helped support project implementation.*

Both JobsFirstNYC's and the Greater New Orleans Foundation's (GNOF's) HCIF focus projects are designed to provide capacity-building support for partners in their communities to work together to achieve big goals. JobsFirstNYC has a goal of connecting 9,000 of New York City's 172,000 out-of-school, out-of-work youth and young adults, ages 18 to 24, to employment. Through its Young Adult Sectoral Employment Project (YASEP), JobsFirstNYC invests in capacity building for industry-focused training partnerships to help young adults prepare for

and obtain good jobs. Similarly, through New Orleans Works (NOW), the Greater New Orleans Foundation seeks to support the large numbers of unemployed and under-employed New Orleans residents who were negatively impacted by Hurricane Katrina and the subsequent Great Recession. NOW supports employer-led training partnerships to work on issues related to workforce development for frontline workers in New Orleans' burgeoning healthcare sector.

A key component of both JobsFirstNYC's and the Greater New Orleans Foundation's HCIF strategies is providing planning grants to support partnership development. JobsFirstNYC provides planning grants to workforce partnerships composed of at least one community-based organization, one industry training entity, and one employer or employer intermediary. These organizations meet regularly in facilitated convenings to work on designs for sectoral employment training programs for young adults. To support training program development, JobsFirstNYC helps connect YASEP partners with youth development and industry experts who offer customized technical assistance and help partners explore local labor market information, identify job opportunities, and consider strategies for their intended projects. The Greater New Orleans Foundation provides planning grants to healthcare employers. Grants are intended to support employers' efforts to explore frontline staff positions in their organizations that could benefit from training opportunities, identify appropriate internal staff to engage in planning and implementing training, and work with training and community-based service providers to design and deliver training and support services for participants.

JobsFirstNYC and the Greater New Orleans Foundation convene the organizations they support in learning communities designed to offer facilitated planning and implementation activities as well as time and space to strengthen relationships and promote learning within and across partnerships. Monthly, beginning with project planning and continuing through implementation, YASEP partners participate in meetings that feature guest speakers who are subject matter experts in areas such as youth development and sector-specific employment



*YASEP partners participate in a learning meeting convened by JobsFirstNYC.*

development strategies. During these meetings, grantees also have the opportunity to meet within their partnership teams to work on their own approaches and discuss plans for new strategies with other YASEP members. During the HCIF implementation period, GNOF convened healthcare employers quarterly to help them build connections with one another, discuss workforce challenges they face, and share information about strategies they are implementing to address challenges. These meetings represent the first time that major healthcare employers in New Orleans have come together to discuss workforce issues and concerns since Hurricane Katrina. Local workforce service providers are invited to attend GNOF convenings to provide employers information about their programs and services.

In interviews with AspenWSI researchers, individuals representing partnerships engaged with both the Young Adult Sectoral Employment Project and New Orleans Works noted that

financial resources, connection to subject matter experts, and convenings were instrumental in supporting strong partnership development and grantees' ability to create robust workforce development implementation plans. They noted that having dedicated planning time allows them to carefully identify and assess each partner's strengths and clearly define the roles, responsibilities, and resources that are needed to support effective project implementation. Finally, partnership representatives noted that establishing trust and familiarity with one another has allowed them to feel safe when they have needed to address issues that arose when implementation did not go as planned. Because of this open communication and trust, partners could more quickly and effectively make course corrections during project implementation, candidly discuss how things were going, and establish expectations about how they would work together going forward.

# HCIF GRANTEE WORK WITH EMPLOYERS

Working effectively with employers is critical for connecting individuals to better opportunities in the labor market. To be successful, workforce development programs aim to design and implement programs that meet the hiring needs of employers in their local labor markets. But at the same time, program operators' primary mission is to help their job-seeking participants find and advance in work that offers good job quality. It is time and resource intensive to establish and maintain the deep relationships with employers that program staff need to accomplish both goals.

Over the course of the HCIF initiative, sustained and deep employer engagement emerged as a hallmark across grantees' programs. Staff at all of the programs engaged with employers in a variety of ways to accomplish a number of different goals: informing program design, developing work-based learning opportunities for training participants, and learning about job openings, hiring trends, and workforce skill needs. Program staff also worked with employers to explore strategies to promote job quality and employment advancement of participants on the job, and to help participants get and keep jobs.

In this section, we describe in more detail examples of how grantees engaged with employers for their HCIF focus projects. Three thematic areas serve to illustrate the depth and breadth of this engagement. Grantees cultivated long-term relationships that informed workforce program design and promoted job placement. They explored the characteristics of employment opportunities provided by different employers with an eye toward identifying workplaces and jobs that were a good fit for their participants. They also created learning and capacity-building opportunities for workforce service providers to engage with employers. In these fora business leaders were engaged in assessing their own hiring and employment practices to discern ways in which they might make changes to their practices to provide higher job quality, improve employee engagement and productivity, and increase retention.

## Cultivating Relationships to Inform Training Design and Strengthen Job Placement

At the most basic level, workforce service providers engage with employers to learn about job openings

for the purpose of connecting their participants to employment opportunities. Over the course of the evaluation, HCIF grantees' engagement activities with employers went far beyond this. The organizations worked with employers to gain very detailed information about skills, credentials, and experiences necessary to succeed in specific occupations. They used this information to strengthen and refine training programs, tailor curricula to employer needs, and make program adjustments in response to changes in workforce needs identified over time.

► *Employer engagement across HCIF grantees was characterized by sustained involvement and required consistent and ongoing dedication of resources, represented mainly by staff time, to learn about businesses' operations and their workforce needs. This example from Brooklyn Workforce Innovations describes how HCIF-supported project staff engaged with employers and economic development partners to inform training design and deepen their relationships with employers over time.*

During the HCIF evaluation period, Brooklyn Workforce Innovations developed and delivered two types of training programs – employer-customized training, designed to meet the needs of specific employers, and industry cluster training, designed to meet the needs of a variety of employers that have similar worker skill needs. As the following examples illustrate, both types of training have required BWI staff to have ongoing and deep engagement with employers.

BWI staff nurtured a long-term relationship with a local modular construction company located in the Navy Yard. The workforce agency designed and adapted several pre-employment customized training programs to develop a local pool of qualified workers who were positioned to fill projected job openings at the firm. To design this training, BWI staff worked with company hiring managers to map out each stage of their modular construction process and identify basic skills and competencies required for positions the company sought to fill. BWI then served as lead training provider and identified, secured, and contracted with additional training partners



*Brooklyn Workforce Innovations participants during a manufacturing training*

with the expertise to help students develop the competencies identified through this needs assessment. BWI worked with training partners to develop an employer-customized curriculum that included both classroom and hands-on components. BWI also incorporated information gleaned from discussions with the employer to inform student recruitment and screening – ensuring to the greatest extent possible that trainees would stand a good chance of being hired if they successfully completed the program. The first two customized trainings were successful at meeting the construction company's aggressive hiring needs; and importantly, 69 percent of training graduates obtained employment with the construction company.

As the construction company developed confidence in BWI's training and satisfaction with employees hired through the program, its engagement with BWI increased. The foreman and members of the construction company's supervisory staff worked with BWI and training partners to review blueprints for construction projects, and collaborated with them on tailoring the training curriculum to ensure that participants would learn all of the skills needed to properly install the firm's modular units. The company's confidence in program staff grew to the point that it relied exclusively on BWI and the Navy Yard's Employment Center to screen and assess participants for future rounds of training and hiring for a variety of its positions. Earning this level of trust enabled BWI, over time, to build a pipeline of qualified workers from the local area. It also underpinned BWI program staff's ability to initiate conversations with the employer about hiring individuals who typically would not have been considered for employment. Notably, the employer hired a participant who had a criminal

background, which in the past would have automatically disqualified him. The firm trusted BWI to vouch for the participant's commitment and performance based on knowledge it gained about him during training.

BWI developed a different approach to address needs for skills that are shared across several of the industrial parks' small and "maker" businesses that create products such as food, apparel and accessories, furniture, and home decor. To design training for these firms, BWI staff engaged a number of employers in ongoing individual conversations and used input and job postings gathered by its economic development partners to identify a broad set of skills in demand by a group of manufacturing employers. A key aspect of what BWI calls a "cluster training program" is that it includes flexible modules that can be added or removed based on the needs of groups of employers at a particular point in time. For example, BWI offered training for the Occupational Safety and Health Administration's forklift operator certification as a component of the skills covered in one training cycle, but it omitted the training in the next cycle because employers were no longer looking to hire forklift operators. Based on conversations with jewelry manufacturers in the industrial park, BWI offered training in jewelry soldering techniques. BWI also plans to add specific modules on food manufacturing, such as food safety, as new food industry businesses lease space in the industrial park. As BWI has strengthened its curriculum and expanded the variety of training modules it can offer, staff have found that, more and more, employers are willing to come to them to offer information about their hiring needs and to inquire about training.

## Identifying “Good Fit” Job Opportunities for Participants

HCIF grantees serve participant populations with very different characteristics. What is common across the programs is that they have developed deep knowledge of their participants' employment challenges and needs and approach employer engagement with the goal of identifying job opportunities that are accessible to and beneficial for their participants. Discerning among employers requires developing depth in terms of industry knowledge. This means program staff need to have the confidence to ask probing questions of employers to learn about organizational culture, workplace practices, wages and benefits, quality of supervision, efforts to engage employees, and opportunities for learning. Grantees were strategic about selecting employers and job opportunities that were a good fit with both the needs and the strengths of their clients.

- *When exploring “good fit” opportunities for participants, it is important to consider which industries and which employers within those industries offer opportunities that meet the needs of participants. This example illustrates how The Door works closely with employers to identify “good fit” job opportunities for its young adult participants.*

Based on The Door’s experience working with a national employer on a retail training and

internship initiative for in-school youth, the organization saw potential for the industry to serve as a provider of both first jobs and longer-term careers for out-of-school and out-of-work young adults. This led The Door to create the Advance in Retail (AIR) training program, which offers entry-level and advanced training tracks in the retail sector and also aims to help young adults explore opportunities in the industry for good jobs and advancement opportunities. While developing the AIR program, The Door engaged an advisory board of retail employers to help program staff understand the types of skills needed to succeed in the retail sector, which include problem-solving, decision-making, and communication skills. Through these conversations, employers also provided information about the types of positions and career paths available in the retail industry. Retail employers advised The Door staff on the development of maps outlining pathways to advancement in careers such as merchandising, loss prevention, and store operations. These maps also detailed the education and skills needed to advance to different positions.

In interviews with AspenWSI researchers, program leaders at The Door pointed out a number of qualities that make retail a good fit for its youth population. For instance, program leaders noted that retail industry employers already hire young adults, require low skill levels



*Participants of The Door’s Advance in Retail training program*

to obtain first jobs, and offer opportunities for advancement. Part-time work in the retail industry may offer employees the flexibility they need to earn income and continue their education (e.g., high school equivalency diploma or post-secondary education). Working in the retail sector also provides youth with the opportunity to gain work experience and learn skills that are transferable to future jobs. Finally, through their close relationships with employers, The Door staff identified ways they could support participants' advancement within the industry – for example, through customized training for positions including optician apprentice, pharmacy technician, and beauty consultant. According to The Door staff, each of these positions offers wages that are above average for the retail industry, as well as further opportunities for advancement.

AIR staff carefully consider employer "fit" as they identify and cultivate relationships with retail businesses that offer job opportunities for their young adult clients. Program staff noted that "good fit" employers include those that provide mentoring in the workplace, have supportive supervisory practices, offer a welcoming and safe environment, and have scheduling practices that can accommodate and are supportive of young adults' need to attend school. The Door engages employers looking to hire permanent staff, as well as those that can provide internships to help young adults gain familiarity with the workplace practices and norms of the retail sector. When identifying internship opportunities, job developers noted the importance of cultivating relationships with employers that can and are willing to provide exposure to a wide range of retail work activities and give regular and constructive feedback to interns about their performance.

Advance in Retail staff noted that it takes considerable staff resources to cultivate relationships with employers that can provide "good fit" job opportunities. One reason for this is that a good fit for one participant is not necessarily a good fit for another. AIR staff consider each young adult's individual strengths and interests when determining whether an internship or job opportunity is likely to be successful. For example, for a young adult who is detail oriented and shy, a "good fit" position

might involve working in a retail stock room at a business where supervisors offer support to grow over time into a position that requires more customer interaction. In another example, AIR staff working with a young adult interested in the arts identified a position with a major home furnishing retailer as a good fit. In an interview with AspenWSI researchers, this participant described his employer as a good fit because the culture was welcoming of employees from different backgrounds and provided the opportunity to advance from working as a cashier to becoming part of the floor display team – a position that would play to his strengths and interest in the arts.

- *Within an industry sector, there are usually a wide range of employment environments and workplace characteristics that affect how good a fit different jobs will be for a workforce program's participants. The following example from DC Central Kitchen illustrates how the organization explored a variety of food service work environments to identify "good fit" employers for training participants with different employment needs.*

Historically DC Central Kitchen employed the majority of its graduates in its social enterprises, which prepare and supply food to several local social service agencies. As increasing numbers of culinary students graduated over the years, DCCK staff found that they needed to build relationships with additional employers. Given the wide diversity of work environments within the food service industry, staff carefully considered the characteristics of different job opportunities to determine "good fit" employment for its core participants, which include individuals with a history of homelessness, mental illness, and criminal justice involvement. Over time, DCCK refined its employer engagement strategy to target segments of the industry that could best support its client population. Restaurant work, which can often be chaotic and frequently requires working night and weekend hours, presents challenges for DCCK training participants on parole or recovering from addiction. Although DCCK does maintain relationships with restaurant employers, staff have expanded their focus to engage with employers such as food services divisions in universities, corporate dining facilities, senior

housing, and hospitals. Culinary Job Training staff note that these types of facilities usually provide more stable work environments and regular and predictable schedules. DC Central Kitchen has also established a partnership with a food incubator organization that is home to start-up catering, retail, and wholesale food businesses. These new businesses offer transitional work opportunities for training graduates who have high barriers to employment and for whom finding work has proved to be a challenge. Through this partnership, DCCK provides a grant-funded subsidy to start-up businesses that hire Culinary Job Training program graduates, with the amount of the subsidy gradually declining as the graduate remains employed with the business. Staff noted that an important benefit of this program is that it connects graduates who face very high barriers to employment with jobs that offer hands-on training and experience.

## Influencing Employer Thinking and Practice Through Sustained Engagement

Two of the HCIF grantees, the Greater New Orleans Foundation and JobsFirstNYC, provide capacity-building support for employers to develop or strengthen their engagement in partnerships with workforce service providers. AspenWSI researchers observed that as employers engaged with partners, learned from one another, and participated in capacity-building activities, they developed a greater

understanding of the benefits they could realize in the workplace by more effectively supporting frontline and entry-level employees. While this work is in early stages, we observed employers beginning to make meaningful changes to their business practices to support workers.

- *By providing support for learning and capacity building, intermediary organizations can engage employers to consider the importance of training and advancement opportunities for their frontline workers. This example from New Orleans Works describes some of the ways in which employers were engaged by the initiative and how employers, in turn, made some meaningful changes that improved job quality and provided training and development opportunities for frontline healthcare workers in New Orleans.*

One of the goals of the Greater New Orleans Foundation's New Orleans Works (NOW) initiative is to engage healthcare employers as the lead planners and implementers of new workforce training partnerships. An important purpose of these partnerships is to support healthcare employers' goals of expanding their hiring of jobseekers from the low-income neighborhoods that surround a number of large healthcare facilities in the city. In addition, the partnerships help healthcare providers identify and implement strategies to create advancement opportunities for their existing frontline worker employees. NOW provides planning and implementation grants



*Graduates of the New Orleans Works Medical Assistant training*

for healthcare employers to identify frontline workforce development needs, develop a team to design training programs, and support training implementation. NOW also convenes employers on a quarterly basis, providing a forum for them to share challenges and successes associated with their work on issues related to frontline workforce development and consider pathways to advancement for frontline workers in their organizations.

In interviews with AspenWSI researchers, employer grantees cited their involvement with the initiative as influencing how they thought about employment and advancement for frontline workers. Like many healthcare providers, these employers had previously dedicated their professional development resources to higher-wage medical staff, such as nurses and physicians. Two hospitals have begun allocating internal professional development funds to support training for incumbent frontline workers, and one of the hospitals has created a new workforce development department for its frontline workforce. One of the hospital grantees has implemented a national program for certification of medical assistants as a central aspect of its jobseeker and incumbent worker training. The certification provides individuals who complete medical assistant training with a credential that is portable and transferable. Additionally, this employer has raised wages for medical assistants across its network of hospitals and is considering changes to hiring practices that would reduce barriers for some jobseekers with criminal histories. Finally, representatives of two employer grantees have joined the New Orleans Workforce Investment Board, signaling interest in supporting workforce development efforts for frontline workers across the city.

- *Intermediaries can help bring employers and workforce providers together to plan sectoral training programs and engage employers to reflect on their workplace practices, a topic that can be difficult for workforce service providers to broach on their own. This example from JobsFirstNYC describes how the Young Adult Sectoral Employment Project learning community provided a space for employers to learn from one another, share information about promising practices, and reflect on their own workplace practices that affect their hiring, retention, and workforce advancement goals.*

JobsFirstNYC's Young Adult Sectoral Employment Project (YASEP) provides capacity-building support for workforce partnerships that involve employers as key partners alongside workforce and training organizations. Through YASEP, JobsFirstNYC provides planning grants for partnerships to come together to design and implement industry-focused training programs for young adults in New York City. Employers participate in the partnerships by advising on training and curriculum design and implementation plans, or by co-implementing training and hiring graduates. YASEP partners, including employers, take part in a monthly learning community forum that occurs throughout a three-year planning and implementation period. The learning community provides employers with time to plan with organizational partners and learn from peer employers and a variety of experts in the sectoral employment and youth development fields. In interviews with AspenWSI researchers, employers described the learning community as providing a space they valued. They noted that convenings offered opportunities to learn from one another and reflect on their own workplace practices. For example, one employer described how others reacted positively to information she shared about workplace practices that she believes have improved employee engagement, performance, and retention at her firm. She shared details about how her firm encourages supervisors to use supportive management practices, including clearly communicating, in positive terms, expectations about what is required at work and sharing very specific information about the nature of a work opportunity with employees. This employer also described how the nonprofit workforce partners in the learning community helped her to explore characteristics of different employment opportunities in her firm and how these characteristics would determine the type of individuals for whom the work would be a good fit. In response to hearing this conversation, another employer in the group came to the realization that her firm did not engage in these types of practices. She could see how she might improve retention of young adult workers by making changes to promote supportive management practices and more clearly articulate information to workers about advancement opportunities and what is required for advancement. Nonprofit partners involved in the learning community noted that this type of conversation would be difficult to initiate one on one with an employer.

# HCIF GRANTEES' ENHANCEMENT OF SUPPORT SERVICE STRATEGIES

Low-income jobseekers who participate in workforce training programs face a range of life challenges. Some are juggling training and education while trying to raise and support their families; some are homeless, transitioning from jail or prison, or recovering from addiction; some have limited work experience and low levels of educational attainment. It is often the case that training participants face more than one of these challenges. Yet with the assistance of programming designed to meet their needs, many individuals can secure employment. By providing support services such as counseling, case management, and connections to public benefits such as transportation, childcare, and medical and housing assistance, workforce organizations can help their participants succeed in and beyond training programs. However, finding funds to pay for supportive services in the resources typically available for workforce programming is challenging because much of the funding that is available cannot be used to provide the types of comprehensive

and ongoing support necessary to help participants achieve stable, long-term employment.

The experiences of low-income jobseekers vary greatly, and each of the programs supported by HCIF differed in terms of the types of barriers its participants faced and the types of services they needed. In this section, we describe ways that grantees leveraged their resources and embedded targeted support services as part of their HCIF strategies. We discuss factors that led grantees to design or enhance specific services, as well as some of the approaches they took to implement these services.

## Placing Participants at the Center of Support Service Strategies

The following examples highlight how two grantees—DC Central Kitchen and The Door—made investments that enhanced their ability to deliver support services and increased the likelihood that



*DC Central Kitchen Go-Team participants take part in the Culinary Job Training program.*

participants would meet employer needs and be retained in stable, long-term employment. DC Central Kitchen designed and strengthened its suite of services to help participants overcome barriers and succeed during training and in employment. The Door invested in job retention support services to help participants sustain employment.

► *Programs can more effectively support participants when all of their staff (not just counselors and case managers) are engaged in identifying and communicating about participants' support needs. This approach requires setting expectations about and providing time for program staff to communicate and coordinate with one another. The following example describes how the HCIF investment helped DC Central Kitchen strengthen its suite of support service offerings and create new capacity for staff to communicate and coordinate with one another.*

DC Central Kitchen has traditionally served individuals with a history of homelessness, substance abuse, and involvement with the criminal justice system. Of the 104 individuals who participated in Go-Team initiative programs, 70 percent reported having a past felony or misdemeanor, 88 percent reported housing instability at the time of intake, and 21 percent reported a prior history of mental illness.<sup>3</sup> Through its Culinary Job Training program, DC Central Kitchen has made investments in targeted services to support clients, particularly with "self-empowerment" sessions that aim to help participants build the skills they need to handle new and possibly stressful work and life situations. Go-Team programming allowed DC Central Kitchen to accommodate and enroll more participants, who likely would have been waitlisted in previous years. As its participant base expanded, DCCK staff also found that trainees were experiencing greater challenges than in years past. The flexibility of HCIF funds provided resources for DCCK to strengthen the level and coordination of support services it offered to trainees.

During the period of the HCIF initiative, DC Central Kitchen invested a portion of its funds to increase the number of staff who directly support participants. DC Central Kitchen hired

its first full-time clinical social worker, who met with each culinary training participant to identify and assist with mental health, emotional, and behavioral needs. The clinical social worker worked closely with DCCK's self-empowerment facilitator and case manager. These three staff members share responsibility for supporting clients in all Culinary Job Training programs. DC Central Kitchen also hired additional culinary chef instructors and an additional workforce development coordinator.

By adding staff members, the organization was able to increase capacity for staff to communicate and coordinate with one another and more effectively support training participants. Training and social work staff collaborated by meeting regularly to discuss participants' progress in skills training, self-empowerment, and professional development classes and by jointly problem-solving issues that jeopardized participants' ability to complete training and find employment. For example, in interviews with AspenWSI researchers, program staff described a participant whose behavior suddenly shifted during culinary training sessions. Culinary chef instructors noticed the change and reported their observations to the social work team. In response, the team identified that the participant's housing situation was keeping her from getting the sleep she needed to be successful in training. The social work team members were then able to problem-solve with the client and help her find a better housing situation. In other instances, staff reported that having more capacity to interact with participants enabled them to track changes in participants' moods. For a participant with a history of mental illness, this type of attention has the potential to greatly increase their ability to be successful in training. Staff were able to follow up with participants who demonstrated mood changes, inquire about whether they were taking needed medication, and help them schedule appointments with their mental healthcare providers.

Finally, as relationships with Go-Team partners deepened, DC Central Kitchen identified ways to support participants by leveraging the resources of its two partners, Central Union Mission and the Arlington Employment Center. DC Central Kitchen worked with Central Union

<sup>3</sup> Housing data were not reported for three participants (n=101) and mental health data were not reported for four participants (n=100).



*Advance in Retail participants and staff members at The Door*

Mission to connect its participants to that agency's robust housing services. Over time, this service became available for other DC Central Kitchen participants who were not affiliated with Go-Team programming. DC Central Kitchen also found new ways to collaborate with the Arlington Employment Center to provide social services. Over the course of the HCIF evaluation, Arlington Employment Center redesigned its social services support for the program to devote a single case manager to oversee all of its Culinary Job Training participants. This allowed Go-Team staff to work closely with one designated Arlington Employment Center staff person and improved their ability to coordinate the support services participants needed to succeed in training and at work. Together, Go-Team and Arlington Employment Center staff provided case management to Culinary Job Training clients, connected them to services such as transportation and childcare assistance, and helped them obtain appropriate clothing for interviews and work.

- *Extending supportive services to participants after they have obtained jobs is an important strategy for helping them achieve long-term success in the workplace. The following example illustrates how The Door leveraged HCIF funds to help participants access supports and navigate workplace and life challenges after they were employed.*

The Door's Advance in Retail (AIR) program serves out-of-school, out-of-work young adults. The participants' average age is 21, and they face a variety of challenges to preparing for and obtaining employment. Twenty-five percent have experienced homelessness, 45 percent have not earned a high school degree or equivalent diploma, and 56 percent have no prior work experience. Recognizing that navigating workplace challenges can be particularly difficult for young adults who face multiple barriers to workplace success, The Door provides critical support services throughout each stage of the AIR program and continues to support participants after they obtain jobs. At the beginning of the program, participants are assigned a career advancement coach who helps connect them to the wide range of on-site supports at The Door, including physical and mental healthcare, crisis services and case management for runaway and homeless youth, and legal services. In interviews with AspenWSI, program participants recounted how they were able to access a range of on-site support services through the AIR program. For instance, one participant recounted her experience with the on-site education services office, which helped her pay for and navigate the college application process. Another participant described how, upon enrollment in AIR training, he was connected to a mental health counselor and attended weekly therapy appointments. Other participants spoke about how through their engagement with the

AIR program, their coaches helped make sure they were connected to on-site physical health services and obtained health-related supports such as new eyeglasses.

For Advance in Retail participants who have obtained employment, a job developer and career advancement coach maintain regular communication – through either home visits or meetings at their job sites. Through these engagements, post-placement staff help participants solve problems that arise on the job. In interviews with AspenWSI researchers, post-placement staff reported coaching participants about how to engage in difficult conversations with their supervisors and peers, for example to address workplace conflicts. Staff also worked with young people to trouble-shoot absenteeism and tardiness at work, helping them obtain more reliable transportation, childcare, or transitional housing, depending on their needs. Asked to illustrate some of the ways in which they help young people succeed at work, one AIR job coach described an example in which a participant was required to walk 10 blocks to pick up her manager's lunch. This job coach noted that while

he could have intervened with the employer, he instead encouraged the participant to speak with her manager directly. The job coach described working with the young woman using role-playing to practice having a conversation with her employer about the issue.

The Door's approach is primarily to empower its young adult participants to address workplace challenges independently, but program staff at times do work directly with employers to solicit feedback about participants and discuss opportunities for them to advance at work. In an interview with AspenWSI researchers, one employer noted that The Door's comprehensive post-placement services help her firm retain and advance employees, noting that this is a real value of hiring The Door's participants. In turn, AIR participants expressed great appreciation for the supports received from The Door, especially for their ongoing relationships with coaches who help them navigate challenges in their current job situations and also keep them motivated to continue working toward longer-term career and education goals.

# EXAMPLES OF PROGRAM CAPACITY BUILT DURING THE HCIF INITIATIVE

Although the HCIF initiative has ended, grantees' work testing out new approaches has resulted in creation of new areas of capacity that continue. In addition, some partner organizations and employers have made changes in the way they operate in response to learning and collaboration with HCIF grantees during the initiative. Some examples of these include the following:

- **Brooklyn Workforce Innovations** has established itself as a valued partner in Brooklyn industrial parks, creating paths to employment with new businesses for local unemployed and under-employed residents. When the organization first set out to experiment with developing employer-customized trainings, BWI staff faced a steep learning curve. Today, BWI has the capacity to respond quickly and implement training programs that prepare local residents as new jobs are created. Staff have developed capability for scoping out skill needs, and the organization has a deep bench of training providers engaged with the work. Additionally, one industrial park has recently incorporated into new leases a provision that requires business tenants to begin searches for new employees by working with BWI and its partners.
- **DC Central Kitchen** adapted its Go-Team plan as it learned what worked in real time, experimenting to develop effective working partnerships with different organizations. By the end of the initiative, through partnering, DC Central Kitchen had expanded its capacity to effectively serve many more Washington, DC, residents who have very high barriers to employment. DC Central Kitchen staff also developed knowledge about and new relationships with employers in a variety of different types of food service employment environments to identify those that offer "good fit" jobs for their participants.
- **The Door**, through exploratory work with retail employers to design sector-focused employment programming, developed new capacity for its work helping youth and young adults prepare for and succeed in employment in the sector. The Door staff enhanced their understanding of industry needs, identified opportunities for participants to secure good employment, and developed new ability to design training for participants to advance in retail careers. The Door has leveraged learning from these experiences to inform approaches to working with employers to develop strategies adapted for other sectors.
- **The Greater New Orleans Foundation** piloted a process that resulted in local healthcare employers thinking differently about the workforce development needs of their frontline staff. In a shift from long-standing professional development resource allocation practice, which had focused on higher-wage medical staff, two employers are now paying for training for lower-level frontline workers. Healthcare employers have begun evaluating their wage structures, and one hospital, the state's largest nongovernmental employer, has raised wages for medical assistants. During HCIF, the Greater New Orleans Foundation developed capacity for organizing and managing this new approach for engaging with healthcare employers to explore workforce development practices. It plans to expand this approach and engage with employers in other sectors around workforce development issues for frontline positions.
- **JobsFirstNYC** set out to demonstrate that sector strategies can prepare young adults who are out of school and out of work for careers. To accomplish this, JobsFirstNYC facilitated the development of new partnerships between youth development and workforce development providers and employers. During the planning phase, partners received funding to support their participation in learning community activities designed to help them plan together and bridge the types of differences that typically keep organizations that have different primary missions siloed. Five of the seven partners that joined the Young Adult Sectoral Employment Project (YASEP) at its inception have received funds from external investors to pilot new sectoral employment strategies. Although JobsFirstNYC provided partnerships with financial resources only during their planning stage, most partners have continued to participate in YASEP activities. Also, four new collaborative programs serving youth and young adults have joined YASEP.

# FINAL THOUGHTS

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This report has highlighted information and key learning resulting from AspenWSI's formative evaluation of five workforce development organizations that were grantees of the Capital One Foundation's Human Capital Innovation Fund initiative. In addition to describing how HCIF grantees implemented and adapted new approaches, this report details key findings in three areas of practice that are often challenging for workforce organizations to sustain over time: strategic partnering, employer engagement, and support services. Our hope is that the information we provide will be helpful to other workforce program operators and investors in workforce development programming.

Through its Human Capital Innovation Fund initiative, the Capital One Foundation made investments that supported its five grantees to engage in sustained planning, relationship building, and adaptation over time. This investment strategy provided a foundation for innovation and learning. Throughout the formative evaluation period, grantees cited ways in which flexible and long-term funding provided by HCIF was key to their ability to sustain the activity necessary for building the type of program-to-program collaboration and employer engagement that underpinned their progress on these fronts. This is the type of long-term investment that is needed in the workforce development field to make inroads toward systems changes within and among agencies and businesses and build capacity in workforce programs that will ultimately help jobseekers.

The following are considerations for investors that are interested in building capacity for effective approaches to workforce development for low-income jobseekers in their own communities.

► *Workforce programs need planning resources that support strategy development over time.*

Designing change-focused strategies that leverage the expertise and resources of a range of partners is no small undertaking. Change requires planning, and planning takes time.

Collaborating with external partners to make a plan and building the relationships and staff capacity needed to implement a plan takes even more time. Resources to support staff time for planning and relationship building are among the most difficult to secure. Through the HCIF initiative, the Capital One Foundation provided nine-month planning grants to support the development of HCIF change-focused projects, and notably, it also recognized that planning is not a one-off activity but rather an activity that must be sustained to support project implementation and adaptation over time.

The HCIF grant program provided not only flexible funding but also a forum within which grantees met peer to peer throughout the initiative. This learning community convened twice per year and provided time and space for grantees to both plan within their organizational teams and learn from the experiences of other HCIF grantees engaged in change strategies in other communities. Grantees provided input on topics on which they wanted to focus and made suggestions to the Foundation to invite outside subject matter and workforce policy experts to facilitate sessions. Grantees described this range of ongoing support as instrumental to their ability to learn from one another and develop and refine their approaches over the years of the HCIF initiative.

► *Workforce programs need resources that can support flexible approaches to implementation.*

The five HCIF focus projects did not unfold in a vacuum. Each was implemented in a dynamic environment, and programs encountered factors that were sometimes beyond their control. In addition to responding to changing labor market conditions, including effects of the Great Recession and changes in employer hiring practices and trends, grantees contended with other challenges. These included natural disasters such as Hurricane Sandy, staffing and financial condition changes experienced by grantees and

important partners, and changes in the needs of local residents seeking workforce development services. The Capital One Foundation recognized that the HCIF projects were testing new strategies and operating in a constantly changing environment. Therefore, the Foundation's investment approach was supportive of the reality that plans would be adapted over time. The HCIF funding strategy helped grantees be in a position to nimbly respond to changes within their organizations and in their environment. Rather than being tied to an initial plan, HCIF grantees were afforded a great deal of flexibility to respond to challenges (and new opportunities) during the multiyear implementation period and to refine and adapt their strategies in response to both learning and environmental changes.

► *Traditional workforce program outcomes measures do not capture activity and outcomes of work designed to build capacity and create systems change.*

The direct service providers and intermediary organizations in the HCIF initiative worked to develop programs that support populations facing multiple challenges to achieve employment and income goals that require long-term work on a variety of fronts. Progress in this work can be challenging to measure and is not always quantifiable. Typical performance measures used to assess progress focus on training completion, certifications earned, job placement, wage rates, and short-term employment retention. While these indicators certainly point to important

participant milestones, they fail to document the ongoing work of relationship building and employer engagement that is required to design and deliver effective workforce development services. These activities contribute to the efforts of organizations to create lasting changes in workforce development systems or employer practices that benefit both workers and employers.

Questions that AspenWSI researchers explored to inform the earlier sections in this evaluation report are important not only because they provide context for understanding a workforce organization's participant outcomes, but also because they expand our ability to learn about the scope of work behind those outcomes. Some of the questions that helped us get a fuller picture of an organization's work and progress include the following: In what ways has the organization engaged with employers? In what ways have employers responded? Have employers changed their workplace practices by, for example, investing resources in entry-level employee training, increasing wages, devising or promoting advancement opportunities, changing supervisory practices, or changing scheduling practices? In what ways has an organization engaged with other workforce development organizations, and toward what goals? What level of resources has an organization devoted to this type of external relationship building, and to what effect and over what time frame?

# APPENDIX A – PROFILES OF HCIF-SUPPORTED PROJECTS

**ORGANIZATION NAME:** Brooklyn Workforce Innovations

**LOCATION:** New York, New York

**HCIF FOCUS PROJECT:** Brooklyn Workforce Collaboration

**HCIF FOCUS PROJECT OBJECTIVE:** To deliver customized skills training programs to employers concentrated in Brooklyn's industrial parks while connecting low-income and public housing residents in surrounding communities to employment

**TARGET INDUSTRIES:** Manufacturing and construction

**KEY PARTNERS:** The Consortium for Worker Education, Opportunities for a Better Tomorrow, Non-traditional Employment for Women, Brooklyn Navy Yard Development Corporation, Southwest Brooklyn Industrial Development Corporation, New York City College of Technology, and New York City Housing Authority Residential Training Academy

## Background

Founded in 2000, Brooklyn Workforce Innovations (BWI) assists jobless and working poor New Yorkers to establish careers in occupations that offer good wages and opportunities for advancement. BWI provides training in commercial driving, woodworking for cabinetmaking and fabrication, network cable wiring, and television and film production. BWI also trains public housing residents for jobs at New York City Housing Authority properties.

With support from the Capital One Foundation's HCIF, BWI leads the Brooklyn Workforce Collaboration (BWC) to deliver skills training programs to employers concentrated in Brooklyn's industrial parks and to connect residents in surrounding communities to employment. BWC is implemented in partnership with three local community-based organizations: The Consortium for Worker Education, Opportunities for a Better Tomorrow, and Non-traditional Employment for Women.

Brooklyn Workforce Collaboration launched during a time of growth in business and industry along the Brooklyn waterfront. In 2011, BWC staff began planning efforts to deliver training services at the Brooklyn Navy Yard, a 4.5 million-square-foot industrial business park located on the Brooklyn waterfront. The industrial park is owned by the City of New York and managed by the Brooklyn Navy Yard Development Corporation. In 2011, the development corporation leased space to approximately 350 small and mid-sized businesses while also initiating a period of planned expansion.

The Brooklyn Navy Yard Development Corporation plans to develop 3 million square feet of new space and estimates that business tenants will bring approximately 7,000 temporary and permanent jobs to the location. Navy Yard tenants represent a great diversity of types of businesses, including warehouse distribution sites for medical supplies, packaging companies, and television and film production studios. In recent years, the Navy Yard has increasingly leased space to "maker movement"

businesses. These enterprises create a wide range of products, including food, apparel and accessories, furniture, and home decor. In addition to serving as the property manager of the Navy Yard, the development corporation operates the Navy Yard Employment Center, which posts tenants' job openings, conducts pre-screening of employment applications, and provides job placement services to its tenants and nearby businesses. Brooklyn Workforce Collaboration supports the Employment Center's job placement services and provides employer-focused skills training programs to more fully meet the hiring needs of businesses entering or expanding within the industrial park.

Business development at the Navy Yard was temporarily stalled following Hurricane Sandy in October 2012. Several of the businesses located in the Navy Yard experienced significant damage from flooding. In response to decreased demand for training services, Brooklyn Workforce Collaboration expanded its service area to include industrial areas of the Sunset Park waterfront. Home to 2,000 businesses, Sunset Park is the largest industrial zone in New York City, and many businesses located within it are similar to those located in the Navy Yard. Businesses within the Sunset Park industrial zone are eligible to receive services from the South Brooklyn Industrial Development Corporation (SBIDC). In addition to providing economic development services, SBIDC also operates the Brooklyn satellite office of the City's Workforce1 Industrial & Transportation Career Center to support job placement activities. Similar to its partnership with the Navy Yard Employment Center, Brooklyn Workforce Collaboration works with SBIDC to support its job placement services by offering worker training programs for Sunset Park employers.

### **HCIF Focus Project Activities**

In 2013, Brooklyn Workforce Collaboration began offering customized training programs to employers located at the Navy Yard. In addition to addressing the specific skill needs of employers, customized trainings prepare participants for exams that lead to industry-recognized certifications. Following its 2013

pilot trainings for two Navy Yard employers, in 2014 BWI delivered two additional customized training programs for one of the employers. In 2015, this employer signed on for three additional customized trainings and extended the length of trainings from one week to five weeks. Through its work with employers to assess their workforce needs, Brooklyn Workforce Collaboration also identified a number of shared skill needs among small businesses located in the industrial parks. In 2014, the collaboration piloted a cluster training program designed to meet some of these common worker skill needs through modular training programs that teach basic construction skills, math and measurement, blueprint reading, forklift operating, and basic job readiness skills. In 2015, BWC implemented an additional cluster training program, followed by two additional cluster trainings in 2016.

As of September 2016, Brooklyn Workforce Collaboration had designed and implemented 11 HCIF-supported training programs attended by 164 participants. Seven of the programs were customized for Navy Yard employers and four were designed to provide training in common skill needs of multiple manufacturing employers. Overall, 87 percent of participants completed training, and of those that completed training, 83 percent obtained a job earning a median wage of \$17.50 per hour.<sup>4</sup> The average age of participants was 37 years. The majority were male (83 percent), 32 percent were living in public housing when they enrolled in training, 30 percent had a prior conviction of a misdemeanor or felony, and 25 percent had not completed high school or earned a GED.

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<sup>4</sup> We calculated the percentage of participants who obtained employment based on the experiences of 10 cohorts (n=123). One of the manufacturing cluster training cohorts had not completed training and did not have sufficient time to conduct job search and secure employment as of the time of data collection.

**ORGANIZATION NAME:** DC Central Kitchen (DCCK)

**LOCATION:** Washington, DC

**HCIF FOCUS PROJECT:** Go-Team Initiative

**HCIF FOCUS PROJECT OBJECTIVE:** To mobilize a “Go-Team” approach in which DCCK’s Culinary Job Training staff implement this training at off-site locations in the DC area. The Go-Team initiative seeks to increase the number of clients served in Culinary Job Training, and has a longer-term goal of partner sites replicating the program.

**TARGET INDUSTRIES:** Culinary arts

**KEY PARTNERS:** Arlington Employment Center and Central Union Mission

### Background

DC Central Kitchen’s (DCCK’s) mission is “to use food as a tool to strengthen bodies, empower minds, and build communities.” DC Central Kitchen has operated a food recycling program and Culinary Job Training program since its launch in the late 1980s, and the organization also operates several income-generating enterprises. These include a contract with the District of Columbia to prepare food for social service agencies, a catering business, school food service contracts, and a distribution business that purchases fresh produce from farms near the metro region to sell at corner stores located in food deserts within Washington, DC. DC Central Kitchen also supports the replication of its programming by helping start 60 similar kitchens across the US.

With support from the Capital One Foundation’s HCIF, the Go-Team initiative expanded its Culinary Job Training program to new sites in the DC metro area. The Culinary Job Training program helps prepare adults who have experienced long-term unemployment or homelessness or have reentered the community from jail or prison for careers in the culinary arts. The program offers a comprehensive approach to training that helps participants overcome challenges and succeed in employment. To participate in the training, applicants must complete a thorough intake process that includes a written application, initial screening interview,

a trial period in DCCK’s commercial kitchen, and a final group interview modeled after DCCK’s self-empowerment class (described below). The training is 14 weeks and includes nine weeks of job training, a three-week internship, and two weeks of job search and placement services. DCCK also provides two years of post-placement supports to ensure a smooth transition to employment and offer support, guidance, and mentorship during this process. Support services are a core aspect of the training model. Self-empowerment classes are scheduled each morning during the nine weeks of training and two weeks of job placement, and once weekly during the internship period. These classes are group therapy sessions in which participants are asked to share their emotional reactions to everyday training, work, and life situations. A facilitator offers exercises designed to help participants shift how they perceive themselves, others, and work. The purpose of the classes is to help participants build the skills they need to handle new and possibly stressful situations in positive ways. The program’s internship component provides participants with opportunities to develop communication and coping skills in addition to expanding their culinary acumen. Hotel and restaurant kitchen environments are busy and fast paced, work is demanding, and staff hierarchy can be mysterious to newcomers. Thus, completing an internship while still being supported by DCCK program staff, who can help new workers

navigate this challenging and unfamiliar environment, is an important component of the program.

The Culinary Job Training program is staffed by a program director, a program manager, two recruitment and intake coordinators, two culinary chef instructors, a case manager, a clinical social worker, and two workforce development coordinators. The training program is also guided by an advisory group of employer representatives and chefs who help ensure that the curriculum is aligned with industry needs while also preparing students to be successful on the job.

### **HCIF Focus Project Activities**

The Go-Team initiative is DC Central Kitchen's HCIF focus strategy for expanding the Culinary Job Training program to partner organizations in the Washington, DC, metro area. Go-Team programs closely follow the Culinary Job Training approach described above and are managed by its program director and members of the training staff, who travel to the two partner sites. Partner sites are responsible for providing commercial kitchen and classroom space, as well as supporting participants' case management needs as appropriate. At the start of the initiative, DC Central Kitchen selected four organizations to which to expand its Culinary Job Training model. In the second half of 2014, DC Central Kitchen shifted its focus to cultivate deeper partnerships with fewer organizations, working with Arlington Employment Center (an American Jobs Center in Arlington, Virginia) and Central Union Mission (a faith-based organization that provides

housing services to homeless men in the District of Columbia). In 2014, DC Central Kitchen delivered two trainings at Central Union Mission and one training at Arlington Employment Center. As it continued to establish relationships with these organizations, in 2015 it held three additional training cohorts at Central Union Mission. In 2016 DC Central Kitchen held three additional cohorts at Central Union Mission and one at Arlington Employment Center, with more classes scheduled for future dates.

As of September 2016, DC Central Kitchen had delivered 10 rounds of the culinary training program at Central Union Mission and Arlington Employment Center. Two programs were held at the Arlington Employment Center, and eight programs were held at Central Union Mission. Overall, 104 participants enrolled in training and 71 graduated (a 74 percent training completion rate).<sup>5</sup> Of those who completed training, 86 percent passed the national ServSafe and AllerTrain certification exams, and 82 percent obtained a job at a median wage of \$11.82 per hour within 90 days of training completion. The majority of participants who graduated were African American men (86 percent), and the average age was 38 years. Many participants faced multiple barriers to employment when they enrolled. For example, 88 percent of Go-Team participants were living in an unstable housing situation (e.g., homeless or living in a treatment facility), 70 percent had a past felony or misdemeanor conviction, and 21 percent reported having experienced mental illness at some time in the past.

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<sup>5</sup> We calculated the percentage of participants who completed training based on the experiences of nine cohorts (n=96). One of the 10 cohorts had not completed training at the time of data collection.

**ORGANIZATION NAME:** The Door

**LOCATION:** New York, New York

**HCIF FOCUS PROJECT:** Advance in Retail

**HCIF FOCUS PROJECT OBJECTIVE:** To provide training and support to prepare youth to enter and advance in the retail industry and change perceptions about opportunities for careers in the industry

**TARGET INDUSTRY:** Retail

### Background

Established in 1972, The Door is a nonprofit youth development organization that serves nearly 10,000 youth per year. The Door's mission is "to empower young people to reach their potential by providing comprehensive youth development services in a diverse and caring environment." The Door's model offers a range of integrated services under one roof, including an adolescent health center, mental health counseling and crisis assistance, legal assistance, career and education services, supportive housing, sports and recreational activities, arts programs, and nutritious meal services. The Door offers any young person aged 12-24 access to these services out of a six-story building in lower Manhattan. The organization also operates a satellite career and education center in the South Bronx and two supportive housing facilities on the Lower East Side. All young people interested in accessing The Door's services go through an initial membership intake assessment, after which they are connected to any needed services.

The Door's Career and Education Services Department offers multiple pathways and services to both in-school and out-of-school youth, including support with retention and advancement. EPOCH is The Door's Manhattan-based career and education training program for young adults aged 17-24 who are out of school and out of work. EPOCH provides adult basic education and high school equivalency exam preparation, college access services, internships, job placement services, and Advance in Retail (AIR), a training program that prepares young adults for jobs in the retail industry.

### HCIF Project Activities

Through Advance in Retail (AIR), The Door offers entry-level and advanced training tracks in the retail sector, and also aims to help young adults explore opportunities in the sector for good jobs and advancement opportunities. The Work Readiness and Customer Service (WRCS) program is AIR's entry-level training. WRCS training is 12 weeks, and includes eight weeks of training and four weeks of targeted job search activities. During the training, students learn basic work readiness and customer service skills, are introduced to entry-level work in a retail setting, and are provided assistance in obtaining employment in the retail industry. During the WRCS training, participants focus on customer service skills and gain exposure to different career tracks in the retail sector. At the end of the training, participants take the National Retail Federation Credential in Customer Service exam. AIR's advanced-level retail training, Move Up, targets young people who are currently working or have worked in retail and are looking to advance or develop a career in the retail industry. Through Move Up, The Door helps students develop skills and better position themselves for promotion. In 2015, The Door refined its training model for Move Up to better accommodate the schedules of its participants. Move Up participants meet for workshops once per month over the course of three months. The workshop format is designed to accommodate students' work schedules and includes time for them to meet individually with a coach for targeted career advancement planning.

The Door has created a Retail Advisory Board consisting of a range of retail employers. In addition to informing WRCS training curricula, this council met to help design the Move Up curriculum. Members of the council also served as guest speakers in Move Up trainings, met individually with staff to inform project activities, and interviewed potential candidates for employment. Through Move Up, The Door has worked with employer partners to develop customized trainings to fill specific employer needs. In 2014, The Door began working with a national drugstore retailer to develop customized training programs for beauty consultant and pharmacy technician occupations. In 2015, The Door worked with a designer eyewear company to co-develop a 12-week optician apprentice training program. The Door has also recently begun working with a supermarket chain to deliver a pilot culinary arts training program. According to The Door, these jobs pay higher than average for entry-level retail

positions while also providing opportunities for advancement.

As of September 2016, The Door had delivered training and career advancement services to 349 participants through its HCIF-supported retail training programs. The majority of participants (270) took part in WRCS training; 96 participants took part in Move Up training, including a number of former WRCS participants. Eighty-four percent of WRCS participants (226 students) and 55 percent of Move Up participants (53 students) completed training. Of WRCS students who completed training, 53 percent obtained a job and earned a median wage of \$10 per hour.<sup>6</sup> The average age of retail training participants was 21. When participants first entered The Door, 25 percent reported they had previously been homeless, 56 percent had no previous job experience, and 45 percent had not earned a high school degree or equivalent.

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<sup>6</sup> Move Up employment outcomes are not included because the program is intended for participants who are already employed.

**ORGANIZATION NAME:** Greater New Orleans Foundation

**LOCATION:** New Orleans, Louisiana

**HCIF FOCUS PROJECT:** The New Orleans Works Initiative

**HCIF FOCUS PROJECT OBJECTIVE:** To support workforce partnerships between employers and training providers with the objective of connecting New Orleans residents to well-paying middle-skill jobs and opportunities for career advancement

**TARGET INDUSTRIES:** Healthcare

**KEY PARTNERS:** Ochsner Health System, Southeast Louisiana Veterans Health Care System, Daughters of Charity Health Center, and Louisiana Children's Medical Center

### **Background**

Founded in 1983, the Greater New Orleans Foundation (GNOF) is a local community foundation that serves the 13-parish region of Southeast Louisiana and supports programming in community and economic development. GNOF houses New Orleans Works (NOW), a funder collaborative and workforce initiative supported in part by the Capital One Foundation's HCIF.

New Orleans Works' goal is to support workforce partnerships between employers and training providers with the objective of connecting New Orleans residents to well-paying middle-skill jobs and opportunities for career advancement. This initiative began in 2011, when New Orleans was continuing to grapple with the social and economic consequences of Hurricane Katrina and the subsequent Great Recession. The NOW initiative focused on the healthcare sector, particularly the training needs of frontline healthcare workers who do not have advanced degrees and typically earn less than \$40,000 per year. During this time, The BioDistrict, New Orleans' new medical corridor, was poised for rapid growth. Also, the city's four major healthcare institutions are projected to add many new healthcare jobs at various skill levels.

In addition to support from the Capital One Foundation during the HCIF initiative, New Orleans Works is funded by the National Fund for Workforce

Solutions and receives financial support from other philanthropic partners. Other active partners may not provide cash support but do provide in-kind services and offer thought leadership to support the implementation of New Orleans Works programming.

### **HCIF Project Activities**

New Orleans Works provides six-month planning grants to employer partners to help them identify pressing frontline workforce issues, determine the type of training their frontline workers need to be effective and productive, and develop a team to design training. Upon completion of the planning period, employer grantees submit training plans and requests for funding to New Orleans Works to support training implementation. Training is customized to meet the needs of individual employers while also helping frontline employees succeed and advance. Therefore, trainings supported by New Orleans Works include both entry-level training for jobseekers and incumbent worker training geared toward helping frontline employees advance within their organizations. Through the New Orleans Works initiative, the Greater New Orleans Foundation also convenes employer grantees on a quarterly basis, providing a forum for employers to discuss learning from their workforce explorations as well as workforce and training challenges they have experienced. NOW also uses these convenings as a space for employers to reflect on pathways to advancement for their frontline healthcare workers,

a portion of the workforce that receives limited professional development by many healthcare providers.

In 2013, NOW helped support and build a pilot program with Ochsner Health Systems, the state's largest nongovernmental employer. Following the Ochsner pilot, in 2014 NOW provided planning and implementation grants to two additional healthcare organizations. By 2015, NOW had engaged all four major healthcare employers in New Orleans, with each employer delivering training for jobseekers or incumbent workers by 2016. Since the start of the initiative, two employer grantees have begun allocating internal professional development funds to support training for incumbent frontline workers. Additionally, representatives of two employer grantees have joined the New Orleans Workforce Investment Board, signaling their commitment to

supporting workforce development efforts for frontline workers across the city.

NOW reported that 84 jobseekers and 123 frontline incumbent workers had participated in training as of December 2015. All 84 jobseeker training participants (100 percent) completed training, and 66 participants who completed training (79 percent) obtained healthcare jobs and earned wages between \$10 and \$12.49 per hour. At the time they began training, 50 percent of jobseeker participants were receiving some form of public assistance.<sup>7</sup> Of the 113 incumbent workers who completed training by December 2015, 100 percent successfully completed training.<sup>8</sup> Ninety-five percent were still employed by the same employer six months after training, 12 percent received a promotion after training, and 23 percent earned a wage gain after completing training.

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<sup>7</sup> Fifteen participants did not report information about public benefits receipt.

<sup>8</sup> We calculated the percentage of incumbent worker participants who completed training based on the experiences of two cohorts (n=113). One of the three incumbent worker cohorts had not completed training at the time of data collection.

**ORGANIZATION NAME:** JobsFirstNYC

**LOCATION:** New York, New York

**HCIF FOCUS PROJECT:** Young Adult Sectoral Employment Project

**HCIF FOCUS PROJECT OBJECTIVE:** To facilitate the development of partnerships creating and supporting sectoral training programs to prepare out-of-school, out-of-work young adults for careers and to provide capacity-building and financial support to ensure partnerships implement their programs to meet the hiring needs of business partners

**TARGET INDUSTRIES:** Varies

**KEY PARTNERS:** Cypress Hills Local Development Corporation, Comprehensive Development Inc., Paraprofessional Healthcare Institute, Per Scholas, Phipps Neighborhoods, Queens Connect, Bronx Digital Pipeline, Green City Force, Roundabout Theatre Company, Stanley M. Isaacs Neighborhood Center, and Wildlife Conservation Society

### Background

Established in 2006, JobsFirstNYC is an intermediary organization in New York City that was formed as a direct response to the growing need for better opportunities for out-of-school and out-of-work young adults in New York City. Its mission is “to leverage all available community, corporate, human, organization, private and public resources to bring out-of-school and out-of-work young adults into the economic life of New York City.”

JobsFirstNYC is operating under a five-year strategic plan (2012-2017) that calls for reducing the number of New York City’s 172,000 out-of-school and out-of-work 18- to 24-year-olds by 5 percent by the year 2017. To realize this goal, approximately 9,000 young adults must be connected to employment over the five-year period. According to JobsFirstNYC’s strategic plan, strategies to achieve this goal include:

- **employer engagement to make business a key partner in connecting young adults to the labor market,**
- **raising consciousness about the out-of-school and out-of-work young adult crisis, and**
- **advancing practice of organizations and individuals focused on the needs of young adults.**

With support from the Capital One Foundation’s HCIF initiative, JobsFirstNYC organized the Young Adult Sectoral Employment Project (YASEP) in spring 2013 to demonstrate that sector strategies, if adapted specifically for young adult training programs, could improve employment outcomes for 18- to 24-year-olds. Through YASEP, JobsFirstNYC has engaged two cohorts – a total of 11 partnerships – comprised of organizations working together to design and implement sector-based employment programs for young adults. Partnerships were selected via a competitive application process and include workforce organizations with experience implementing sector-focused strategies, agencies with experience and expertise in providing young adults with education and social support services, and employers interested in improving their hiring practices with young adults.

### HCIF Project Activities

JobsFirstNYC provides several capacity-building activities to support the work of YASEP partnerships. During their first year in the YASEP network, partnerships receive a \$50,000 planning grant to work together, refine their sector strategies, and develop proposals for implementation. JobsFirstNYC convenes partnership

members in learning community meetings, where they have dedicated time to plan with their organizational partners and professionally facilitated opportunities to learn from a variety of workforce and sector field experts as well as their YASEP peers. During the planning period, JobsFirstNYC also brokers relationships between key funders and the partnerships to help organizations secure funding for implementation. JobsFirstNYC staff and consultants provide individualized technical assistance to partnerships through feedback on implementation plans and offer guidance on potential ways to address challenges during project implementation. The organization also works with partnership members to develop customized reporting tools to support the collection of data related to participant, partnership, and employer outcomes. For instance, partnerships report on the effectiveness of data sharing between partners, number of participant referrals to other partners in the YASEP network, level of employer satisfaction with YASEP hires, and rates of retention for employers hiring YASEP participants. JobsFirstNYC has documented its experience with YASEP through its publications "Innovations in the Field: Young Adult Sectoral

Employment Project" (2014) and "Optimizing Talent: The Promise and Perils of Adapting Sectoral Strategies for Young Workers" (2016).

The 11 partnerships participating in the YASEP initiative are designing and implementing sectoral employment strategies in a range of industries, including healthcare, hospitality, information technology, transportation and logistics, and technical theater. Five of the seven partnerships that joined YASEP at its inception have piloted a sectoral employment strategy. Four partnerships that joined YASEP in its second cohort are in the process of securing funds to begin implementation in 2017.

As of September 2016, JobsFirstNYC reported that the five partnerships that had reached their second year of implementation by this time had enrolled 1,130 young adults in training. Seventy-two percent (819) of these young adults had completed training.<sup>9</sup> Among these, 501 graduates (61 percent) earned an industry-specific credential relevant to their training and career interests, and 554 (68 percent) obtained employment.

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<sup>9</sup> Seventy-four participants were still in training at the time of reporting.

# APPENDIX B - PARTICIPANT CHARACTERISTICS, TRAINING COMPLETION, AND EMPLOYMENT OUTCOMES FOR HCIF-SUPPORTED PROJECTS, 2014-2016

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## **Brooklyn Workforce Innovations, DC Central Kitchen, and The Door**

Three of the organizations that received funds through the Capital One Foundation's HCIF initiative – Brooklyn Workforce Innovations, DC Central Kitchen, and The Door – provided training and employment placement services directly to clients. This appendix provides information about participants served by these organizations between 2014 and 2016. Data were compiled and reported by program staff to AspenWSI by September 30, 2016. The analyses reflect information about the characteristics of participants at the time they enrolled in a program as well as information about the number of participants who completed training and obtained employment during the HCIF evaluation period.<sup>10</sup>

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<sup>10</sup> In calculating percentages, numbers were rounded to the nearest hundredth place.

## BROOKLYN WORKFORCE INNOVATION'S BROOKLYN WORKFORCE COLLABORATION

**Table 1: Training and Employment Outcomes Data**

<b>Training and Completion</b>		
	<b>Employer-Customized Training (n=94)</b>	<b>Manufacturing Cluster Training (n=70)</b>
# Training Cohorts	7	4
# Participants	94	70
% Participants Completed Training	93%	79%
<b>Employment Outcomes for Participants Who Completed Training</b>		
	<b>Employer-Customized Training (n=87)</b>	<b>Manufacturing Cluster Training (n=36)<sup>1</sup></b>
% Obtained Employment	86%	75%
<b>Wages and Benefits for Participants Who Obtained Employment</b>		
	<b>Employer-Customized Training (n=75)</b>	<b>Manufacturing Cluster Training (n=27)</b>
Average Wage	\$18.75	\$13.14
Median Wage	\$17.50	\$12.00
% < \$10/hour	4%	22%
% \$10-\$15.99/hour	16%	59%
% \$16-\$19.99/hour	43%	15%
% > \$20/hour	37%	4%

We calculated the percentage of participants who obtained employment based on the experiences of three cohorts (n=36). One of the four cohorts had recently completed training at the time of data collection, and participants had not had sufficient time to conduct a job search and secure employment.

**Table 2: Characteristics of Training Participants at Enrollment**

<b>n=164</b>	
<b>Housing</b>	
Experienced Homelessness in 12 Months Prior to Enrollment <sup>1</sup>	16%
NYCHA (Public Housing) Resident	32%
<b>Unemployed</b>	75%
<b>Had Prior Conviction (Misdemeanor or Felony)</b>	30%
<b>Possessed HS Diploma/GED<sup>2</sup></b>	75%
<b>Gender</b>	
Female	17%
Male	83%
<b>Race/Ethnicity</b>	
African American	76%
Caucasian	3%
Hispanic/Latino	13%
Other <sup>3</sup>	8%
<b>Age</b>	
Average Age (in Years)	37
< 25	13%
25-34	33%
35-44	26%
45-54	21%
> 55	7%

<sup>1</sup>Missing data for three participants (n=161). <sup>2</sup>Missing data for 11 participants (n=153). <sup>3</sup>Includes participants identifying as biracial and multiracial (n=7).

## DC CENTRAL KITCHEN'S GO-TEAM INITIATIVE

**Table 3: Training and Employment Outcomes Data**

<b>Training and Completion (n=104)</b>	
# Training Cohorts	10
# Participants	104
% Participants Completed Training (n=96) <sup>1</sup>	74%
<b>Certification and Employment Outcomes for Participants Who Completed Training (n=71)</b>	
% Received ServSafe and AllerTrain Certification	86%
% Obtained Employment Within 90 Days of Training	82%
<b>Wages and Benefits for Participants Who Obtained Employment (n=58)<sup>2</sup></b>	
Average Wage	\$11.82
Median Wage	\$11.70
% < \$10/hour	19%
% \$10-\$12/hour	48%
% > than \$12/hour	33%

<sup>1</sup>We calculated the percentage of participants who completed training based on the experiences of nine cohorts (n=96). One of the 10 cohorts had not completed training at the time of data collection.

<sup>2</sup>Wage data are calculated based on the highest wage earned by participants within 90 days of training completion.

**Table 4: Characteristics of Training Participants at Enrollment**

<b>n=164</b>	
<b>Criminal Justice Involvement</b>	
Past Conviction (Misdemeanor or Felony)	70%
Felony Conviction	55%
<b>Housing<sup>1</sup></b>	
Unstable Housing (i.e., Homeless or Living in a Treatment Facility)	88%
<b>History of Mental Illness<sup>2</sup></b>	
	21%
<b>Possessed HS Diploma/GED<sup>1</sup></b>	
	82%
<b>Gender</b>	
Female	15%
Male	84%
Transgendered	1%
<b>Race/Ethnicity<sup>2</sup></b>	
Black	86%
Caucasian	7%
Hispanic/Latino	6%
Other	1%
<b>Age</b>	
Average Age (in Years)	38
< 25	18%
25-34	27%
35-44	23%
45-54	20%
> 55	12%

<sup>1</sup>Missing data for three participants (n=101). <sup>2</sup>Missing data for four participants (n=100).

## THE DOOR'S ADVANCE IN RETAIL PROGRAM

**Table 5: Training Participation Data for Work Readiness and Customer Service and Move Up Training Cohorts**

<b>Participants Trained</b>	
# Entry-Level Participants	270
# Advanced-Level Participants	96
Total Participants Trained <sup>1</sup>	349

<sup>1</sup>Seventeen participants took part in both the entry-level and advanced-level trainings.

**Table 6: Training and Employment Outcomes Data for Work Readiness and Customer Service Cohorts<sup>1</sup>**

<b>Training Completion Outcomes (n=270)</b>	
% Participants Completed Training	84%
<b>Certification Outcomes for Participants Who Completed Training (n=226)</b>	
% Earned National Retail Federation Certification	79%
<b>Employment Outcomes for Participants Who Completed Training (n=226)</b>	
% Obtained employment <sup>2</sup>	53%
<b>Wage Outcomes for Participants Who Obtained Employment (n=120)<sup>3</sup></b>	
Average Wage	\$10.14
Median Wage	\$10.00
% < \$10/hour	71%
% \$10-\$12/hour	20%
% > than \$12/hour	9%

<sup>1</sup>Move Up outcomes are not included because the program is intended for participants who are already employed.

<sup>2</sup>At the time that data were collected, participants in some 2016 cohorts had recently completed training and just entered the job search phase of the training program.

<sup>3</sup>Wage data are calculated based on the highest wage earned by a participant following training completion.

## THE DOOR'S ADVANCE IN RETAIL PROGRAM

**Table 7: Characteristics for Training Participants at Enrollment**

n=349	
<b>Housing<sup>1</sup></b>	
Homeless	24%
Previously Homeless	25%
<b>Previously in Foster Care<sup>2</sup></b>	9%
<b>Pregnant/Parenting<sup>3</sup></b>	13%
<b>Criminal or Juvenile Justice Involvement<sup>4</sup></b>	9%
<b>Possessed HS Diploma or Equivalent<sup>5</sup></b>	55%
<b>Ever Previously Employed<sup>2</sup></b>	44%
<b>Gender</b>	
Female	49%
Male	50%
Transgendered	1%
<b>Race/Ethnicity</b>	
Black	59%
Caucasian	2%
Hispanic/Latino	28%
Other <sup>6</sup>	11%
<b>Age</b>	
Average Age (in Years)	21
<18	6%
19-21	61%
> 22	33%

<sup>1</sup>Missing data for two participants (n=347). <sup>2</sup>Missing data for one participant (n=348). <sup>3</sup>Missing data for nine participants (n=340).

<sup>4</sup>Missing data for 11 participants (n=338). <sup>5</sup>Missing data for three participants (n=346). <sup>6</sup>Includes 11 participants identifying as multiracial.



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