Organization A
Job Program
Final Evaluation Report

Kathy Dowell, Ph.D.
Melissa Page, Ph.D.
The Evaluation Group

The Evaluation Group
Dynamic Program Evaluation

CONTENTS

1. INTRODUCTION 2

1.1 Overview 2

1.2 Project Description 2

2. EVALUATION OVERVIEW 5

2.1 Formative Evaluation 5

2.2 Summative Evaluation 6

3. RESULTS 8

3.1 Formative Question 1: To what extent are the five pilot sites implementing the Job Program with fidelity? 8

3.2 Formative Question 2: How do pilot sites differ in implementation? 9

3.3 Formative Question 3: Do differences in implementation impact participant outcomes? 11

3.4 Formative Question 4: What factors facilitate implementation and what key challenges/barriers need to be addressed to guide program expansion to other Organization A sites? 12

3.5 Summative Question 1: What are the mindset outcomes (grit and self-efficacy) for Job Program participants? 13

3.6 Summative Question 2: How do mindset outcomes of Job Program participants vary by demographic groups, such as gender and race/ethnicity? 15

3.7 Summative Question 3: What changes did staff observe in Job Program participants? 15

4. SUMMARY 16

5. RECOMMENDATIONS 17

1. INTRODUCTION

1.1 Overview

In 2020, Organization A was awarded funding from the Accenture Foundation and General Motors to launch the Organization A Job Program, a 3-year program serving 15–24-year-old jobseekers and career advancers. The Job Program promotes consistent high-quality services with a common framework with equitably effective mission practices. Youth and young adults use Job Program to develop skills and experience needed to be competitive in the job market, while also gaining access to necessary wraparound supports to ensure long-term success. Holistic by design, the framework offers a tailored approach to service delivery to ensure the best chance for the job seeker to meet their career aspirations and goals.

1.2 Project Description

Job Program's three components – Assess and Plan, Equip and Connect, and Launch and Evaluate - each include evidence-informed and field-tested approaches to supporting employment readiness and career advancement to support career pathways. The components listed below describe the job seeker/career advancer journey.

Assess and Plan. This phase focuses on outreach and recruitment. Youth and young adults access online and in-person services, or a hybrid of the two, through local Organization A career centers. They may be recruited or referred to a local Organization A for services through partnering organizations or employers. During enrollment, youth and young adults participate in an intake session with an Organization A career coach to identify interests, skills, and needs to support their educational and career goals.

Using the information obtained through comprehensive intake and assessments, Organization A career coaches leverage local labor market information to assist participants with mapping their career journey. Career plans include training needed to achieve education and career goals; wrap-around supports (like transportation, childcare, food, mental and physical healthcare, housing, clothing, and other services) needed to stabilize and achieve the plan; financial goal setting; and any remedial support needed to assist the job seekers/career advancers with achieving goals. Career plan goals are specific, measurable, achievable, realistic, and time-bound goals (SMART). Youth and young adults meet periodically with their Organization A career coach to update, revise, or establish new goals as needed.

Equip and Connect. An important component of this phase is providing wrap-around and support services. Leveraging services provided by local Organization As or through partnering organizations, participants are connected to the necessary supports identified during the intake and assessment process and as outlined in the career plan.

To improve employment competencies, as directed by the career plan, youth and young adults participate in employment readiness training deemed essential to build resilient competencies to meet the needs of today's and tomorrow's workforce. Examples include communication; critical thinking and problem-solving skills; resume development and interview skills; collaboration and teamwork; professionalism in the workplace; and growth mindset. If they do not already have the competencies, participants build basic digital skills needed to be successful in any industry. Digital skills training includes basic digital awareness such as introduction to email and online job search strategies and using software applications such as Microsoft Office or Google G-Suite productivity tools.

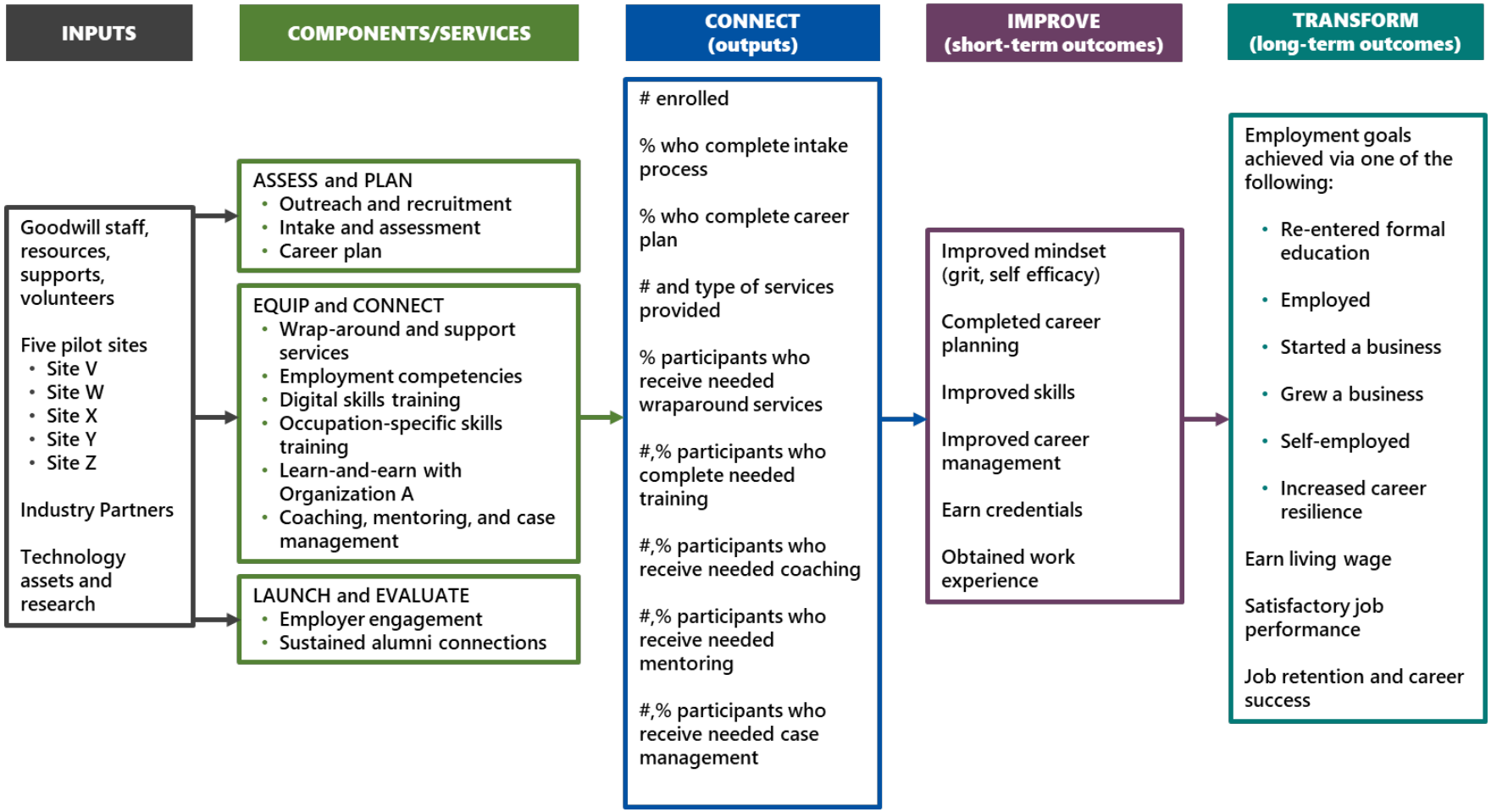
Using the information provided in the Assess and Plan phase, participants are connected to the most appropriate skills training program provided either by a local Organization A or through a collaborative partner. Training pathways are informed by local labor market demands and include in-demand career pathways in sectors like healthcare, advanced manufacturing, information technology, hospitality, retail, and transportation and logistics. When possible, funds are leveraged to connect participants to learn-and-earn opportunities such as on-the-job training, internships, pre-apprenticeships, and apprenticeships where they demonstrate competencies in a workplace setting to augment classroom learning. Finally, through all phases, participants engage with a local Organization A and/or partner career coaches and employer mentors to build their competence, confidence, and social capital in their chosen career path.

Launch and Evaluate. During this phase, participants are connected with employment opportunities aligned with their chosen career path. Local Organization A career coaches leverage relationships with small, medium, and large employers, and connections to national relationships such as Indeed and LinkedIn. Organization A career coaches coordinate hiring events and prepare job seekers to demonstrate their newly obtained skills to employers.

Participants often enjoy opportunities to engage with and learn from their peers. Organization A career coaches engage current and previous graduates to convene peer mentoring, learning, and coaching connections. These activities assist career advancers with creating a culture of learning while broadening their networks and social capital.

The Job Program logic model, shown on the next page, displays the program's theory of change. The logic model shows how the inputs and activities are expected to lead to short- and long-term participant outcomes.

Job Program Logic Model



2. EVALUATION OVERVIEW

The Job Program evaluation included five pilot sites that were selected by Organization A for program implementation. The evaluation included two components:

- A **formative** component to assess adherence to the Job Program logic model, also referred to as implementation fidelity; and
- A **summative** component to determine the impact of Job Program on participant mindset outcomes (grit and self-efficacy).

2.1 Formative Evaluation

The formative evaluation focused on determining the extent to which Job Program was implemented as planned and in accordance with the program model. The formative evaluation addressed the questions:

- To what extent are the five pilot sites implementing Job Program with fidelity?
- How do pilot sites differ in implementation?
- Do differences in implementation impact participant outcomes?
- What factors facilitate implementation and what key challenges/barriers need to be addressed to guide program expansion to other Organization A sites?

To measure implementation of Job Program, The Evaluation Group (TEG) and Organization A developed a program-level implementation fidelity index that allowed each pilot site to document and track the extent to which Job Program activities and services were implemented as expected. The fidelity index was created with input from program site staff to ensure that the fidelity index accurately identified the critical components of implementation.

The fidelity index is comprised of participant- and program-level indicators that align with the program components and strategies identified in the Job Program logic model (e.g., career planning, training) with minimum thresholds for determining "adequate" fidelity. Targets for each fidelity indicator were established by program stakeholders. For each program component, fidelity scores were computed based on the scores on the indicators for that component. Component fidelity scores were averaged to compute an overall fidelity score that could range from 0 to 2. Fidelity scores of 0-0.67 were considered low fidelity, scores between 0.67 and 1.33 were considered medium fidelity, and scores above 1.33 were considered high fidelity. Fidelity data were collected and reported by staff at the pilot sites.

To supplement the fidelity index data, TEG conducted focus groups with Job Program participants in the fall of 2021 and the fall of 2022. Focus groups focused on the strengths and challenges of the program, barriers to participation, additional services or supports needed, and how the program could be improved. Reports of focus group findings were submitted previously to Organization A. Interviews with site staff were conducted in January-March 2022 and in January 2023. During the interviews, site staff identified factors that are facilitating implementation and factors that are presenting challenges to implementation. A report of findings from the first round of interviews was previously submitted to Organization A. Interview and focus groups previously submitted to Organization A are included in Appendix A.

2.2 Summative Evaluation

The Job Program summative evaluation focused on assessing outcomes of program participants and addressed the questions:

- What are the mindset outcomes (grit and self-efficacy) for Job Program participants?
- How do mindset outcomes of Job Program participants vary by gender and race/ethnicity?
- What changes did staff observe in Job Program participants?

Data for the summative evaluation came from the data system used by Organization A and the pilot sites. Data were collected by site staff using pre-enrollment and post-services forms; data were then entered into the data system. Final data files for each pilot site were sent to TEG for analysis. Analysis focused on changes in two mindset outcomes from pre-enrollment to post-services – grit and self-efficacy.

Table 1 displays the number of participants for whom data were collected; the number of pre-enrollment and post-services participants; and the number of matched cases where participants had both pre-enrollment and post-services data on at least one of the outcomes of interest (grit, self-efficacy). Note that the number of pre-enrollment and post-services participants do not add to the total number of participants because the time frame information was missing for many cases. The analysis ultimately included 81 matched cases from two sites (Y and Z) that represented just 4% of the participants enrolled.

Table 1. Data Collection by Site				
Site	**Total Participants**	**# Pre-Enrollment**	**# Post-Services**	**# Matched Pre-Post ***
Site V	433	125	1	0
Site W	303	51	6	0
Site X	133	--	--	0
Site Y	857	495	9	5
Site Z	440	435	81	76
TOTAL	**2,166**	**1,106**	**97**	**81**

*Includes cases with pre-enrollment AND post-services scores on either grit or self-efficacy.

**The Site V data file did not include information about the data collection time (pre-enrollment or post-services).

The two outcomes of interest were grit and self-efficacy. Both scales included eight items and scores could range from 8 to 40. Mean scores were calculated for the analysis.

Clients responded to the grit items using a 5-point scale from 1=very much like me to 5=not at all like me. Four of the grit items were worded positively and four were worded negatively. To make all items align so that **a higher score indicates a higher level of grit**, the positively worded items were reverse coded (i.e., 1=5, 2=4, 3=3, 4=2, 5=1).

Clients responded to self-efficacy items on a five-point scale (1=strongly agree to 5=strongly disagree). All items were reverse coded (i.e., 1=5, 2=4, 3=3, 4=2, 5=1) so that **a higher score indicates a greater sense of self-efficacy**.

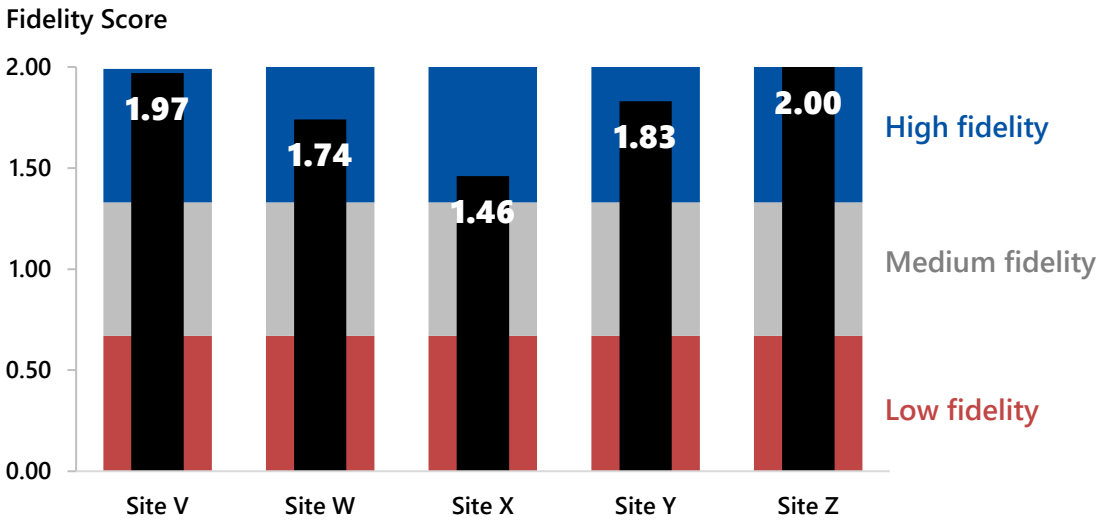
3. RESULTS

3.1 Formative Question 1: To what extent are the five pilot sites implementing the Job Program with fidelity?

Implementation fidelity scores for each of the five pilot sites are shown in Figure 1. Fidelity scores ranged from a low of 1.46 at Site X to a high of 2.00 at Site Z. All sites implemented the program at a high level of fidelity, indicating that sites were successful at adhering to the Job Program logic model.

Figure 1.

For overall Job Program implementation, all five pilot sites implemented at a high level of fidelity



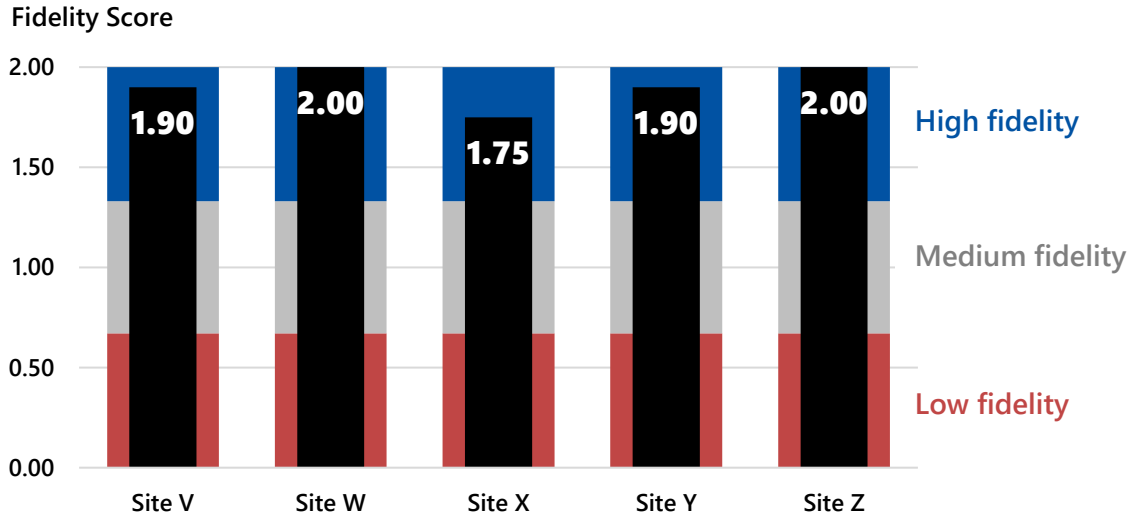
3.2 Formative Question 2: How do pilot sites differ in implementation?

As shown previously, all five sites implemented Job Program with a high level of fidelity. Site Z and Site W implemented at a higher level than the other three sites. Site X had the lowest fidelity score although fidelity was still high.

Figures 2-4 show fidelity scores for the three major phases of the Job Program program. For the Assess and Plan component (see Figure 2), fidelity scores for all five sites were high, ranging from 1.75 to 2.00. All sites implemented this component with high fidelity, with Site X having the lowest fidelity score.

Figure 2.

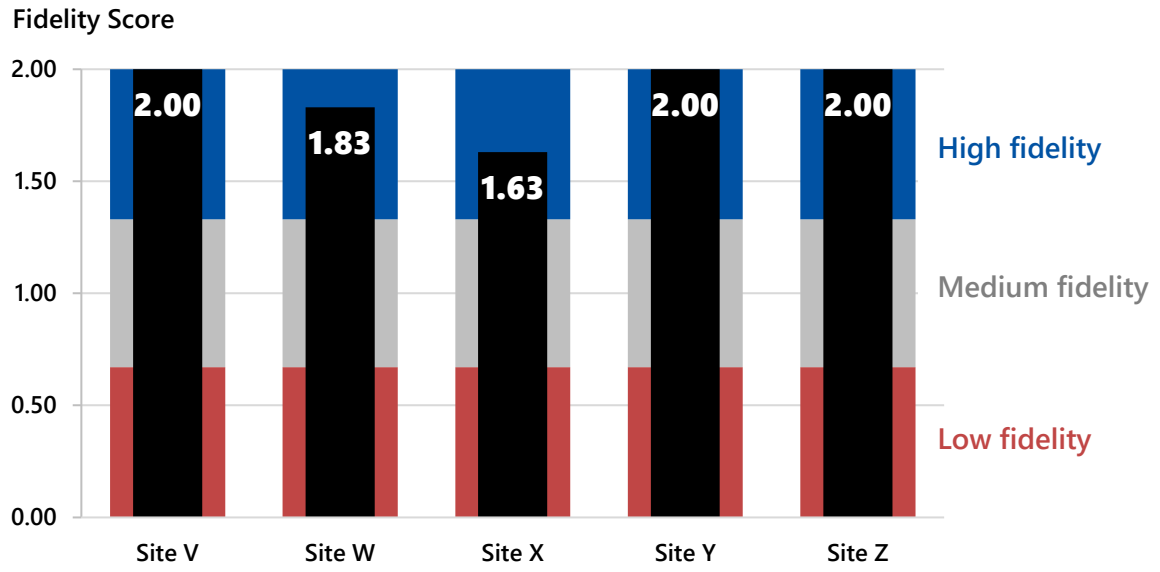
For the Assess and Plan component, all five pilot sites implemented at a high level of fidelity



For the Equip and Connect component (see Figure 3), fidelity scores for all five sites were high, ranging from 1.63 to 2.00. All sites implemented this component with high fidelity, with Site X having the lowest fidelity score.

Figure 3.

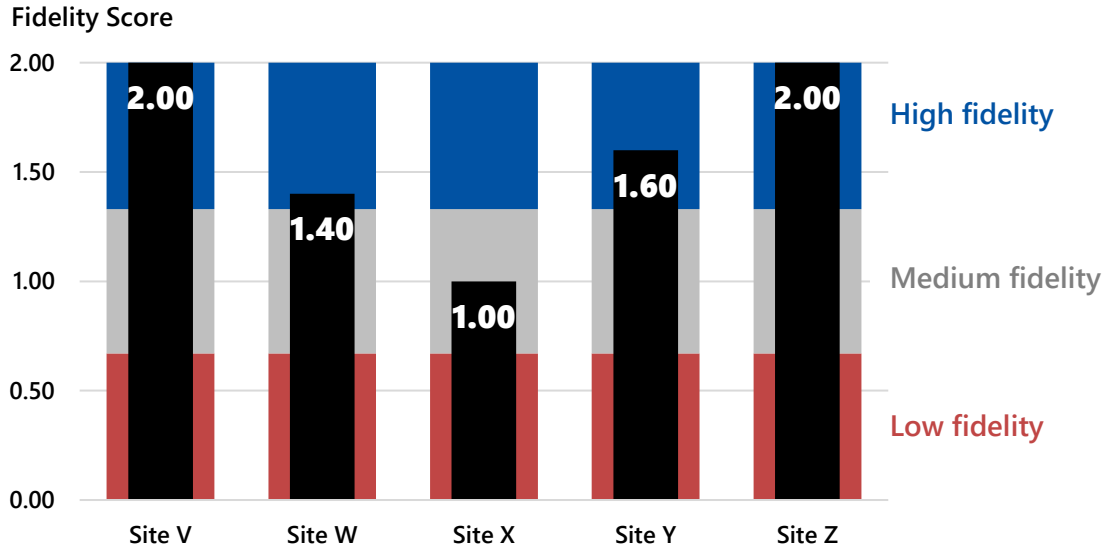
For the Equip and Connect component, all five pilot sites implemented at a high level of fidelity.



The greatest differences across sites were found for the Launch and Evaluate component (see Figure 4). As shown, fidelity scores for Site V and Site Z were highest (2.00). Site Y and Site W also had scores in the high fidelity range, although they were substantially lower than Site V and Site Z. Houston, TX had the lowest fidelity score on this component, implementing at a medium fidelity level.

Figure 4.

For the Launch and Evaluate component, four of five pilot sites implemented at a high level of fidelity. Houston achieved medium fidelity.



In summary, overall fidelity scores were high for all sites. While Site Z and Site V consistently achieved high fidelity of implementation, Site X consistently had the lowest fidelity scores and only achieved medium fidelity for the Launch and Evaluate component of Job Program.

3.3 Formative Question 3: Do differences in implementation impact participant outcomes?

We were unable to conduct an analysis for this question, as most of the outcome data (94%) came from one site, Site Z.

3.4 Formative Question 4: What factors facilitate implementation and what key challenges/barriers need to be addressed to guide program expansion to other Organization A sites?

Factors facilitating implementation. During the January 2023 interviews with site staff, interviewees were asked what lessons they had learned about how to facilitate the implementation of programs for youth and young adults. Interviewees shared strategies that were successful for them, as well as ideas they have to facilitate implementation in the future. Lessons/suggestions were:

- Conduct file audits to make sure data is complete and up-to-date and to ensure that documents/forms are completed, and the information is correct;
- Be flexible in approaching and interacting with youth; everyone is different and different approaches are needed;
- Provide incentives for youth, something they can walk away with that is tangible (e.g., new skills, certificates, GED);
- Be organized and detail oriented in data collection and reporting;
- Build partnerships with community organizations as they are key to getting Organization A's name out into the community and finding youth to enroll in the program;
- Be flexible with programming; one approach may not always work, so be able to change course when needed; and
- Celebrate youth successes; they often do not have other support people in their lives, so filling that role for them is important.

Implementation challenges. Staff identified challenges they encountered in implementing the Job Program. Most of these challenges were consistent throughout the two years of the evaluation. First, a common challenge was **difficulty recruiting youth** due to childcare issues, lack of transportation, housing instability, or lack of technology for virtual engagement. In addition, for programs that take place in school, low school attendance makes it difficult for youth to engage fully in the program. Finally, youth are busy and have a lot going on in their lives; therefore, staff need to make it worth their while to attend programming.

Several sites reported difficulty **keeping youth engaged**. This was most often due to lack of commitment (i.e., youth do not want to attend after a long day at school), need for childcare, and lack of transportation.

Programming challenges were also mentioned. For example, some goals (starting or growing a business) are difficult or not doable for this younger population. Few youth, especially students, are thinking about starting or growing a business. In addition, unpaid work experiences were not popular with youth; many need paid work experiences to support themselves or their families.

Data collection and reporting also presented challenges to the pilot sites. Challenges in this area included:

- Changing data systems meant that staff had to learn new systems;
- Some sites had two data systems that needed to be aligned;
- Difficulty getting follow-up forms completed;
- Lack of guidance on when to collect each form;
- Youth sometimes do not know the answers to questions on the forms (e.g., household income); and
- The amount of paperwork can be overwhelming for youth.

Another challenge is the **difficulty in long-term youth engagement and follow-up**. In some cases, sites were unable to follow students to see if they were employed or continued with school.

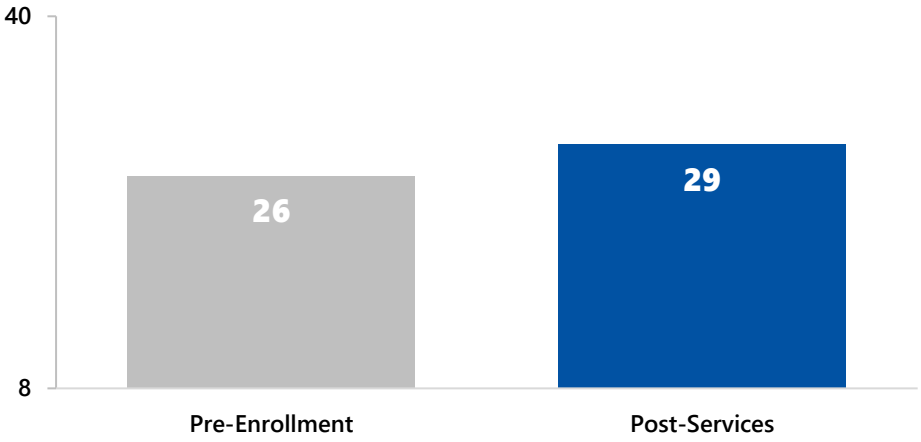
Finally, **staffing changes and shortages** were obstacles for some sites. Changes and shortages lead to difficulties in implementing the full set of Job Program strategies and in collecting and reporting data.

3.5 Summative Question 1: What are the mindset outcomes (grit and self-efficacy) for Job Program participants?

There was a moderate, statistically significant increase in grit after participating in Job Program. The mean score at enrollment was 26 and the mean score after participation was 29 (see Figure 5). Note that caution should be used when interpreting these results, as this analysis was based on a very small sample of program participants, the majority of whom came from one Job Program site and may not be representative of actual changes among all program participants.

Figure 5.

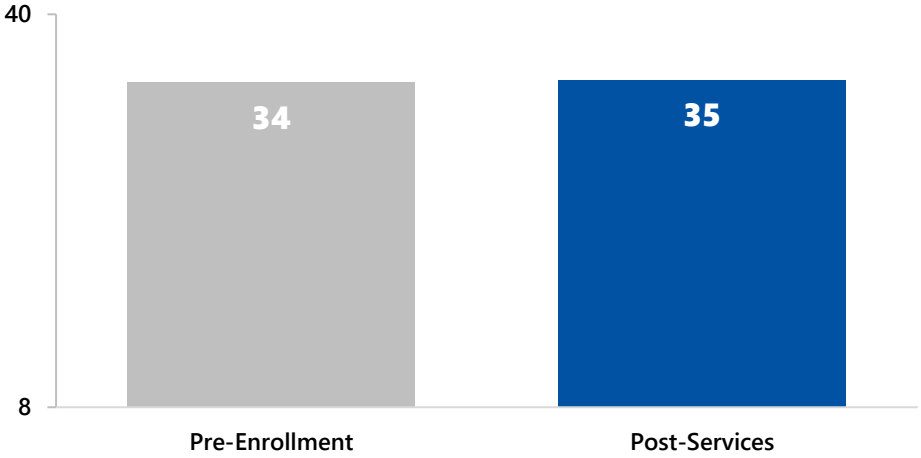
There was a moderate, statistically significant increase in grit after participating in Job Program.



There was no change in self-efficacy after participating in Job Program. The mean score at enrollment was 34 and the mean score after participating was 35 (see Figure 6). As with the grit analysis, caution should be used when interpreting these results, as this analysis was based on a very small sample of program participants and may not be representative of actual changes among all program participants.

Figure 6.

There was no change in self-efficacy after participating in Job Program.



3.6 Summative Question 2: How do mindset outcomes of Job Program participants vary by demographic groups, such as gender and race/ethnicity?

There were no differences in grit or self-efficacy scores by gender, race, or ethnicity.

3.7 Summative Question 3: What changes did staff observe in Job Program participants?

Staff were asked to describe changes they observed in Job Program participants. Changes included development of social skills, feeling hopeful about the future, graduating from high school, ability to plan their future, and knowledge about job searching and gaining employment. The following comments describe some outcomes for youth participants:

> "It gave them an opportunity to not only pursue an occupation, but also to **meet people within their age group and to develop some social skills**."
>
> "Sometimes we would be the first person they call whenever they were getting addicted, and **it just gave them an opportunity to be hopeful**. To know like there is a way out. There is a better way to live. And there are people available who would help you."
>
> "That's the impact we've made in their lives. **Some of our kids are first generation graduates**. First generations to go to college or get the occupational skill certificate. So really big impact."
>
> "**They can gain confidence in themselves** and are more independent and then to see how they're making decisions to everything that's going on in their lives."
>
> "Students are kind of realizing and planning their goals. **They can see something that they see is possible for them, and they're actually doing it**."
>
> "We're able to help them get their high school diploma. **We're able to help them understand what they need to do to job search** and to interview, and to get a job."

4. SUMMARY

According to data submitted by the sites, the Job Program sites were successful at implementing the program with fidelity to the program model. Site Z and Site V consistently had the highest fidelity scores while Site X had the lowest; however, all sites implemented with a high level of fidelity. Compared to other program phases, the Launch and Evaluate phase had the lowest fidelity scores, with one site scoring at medium fidelity during this phase.

Site staff identified several factors that will help implementation of Job Program, including file audits, programming flexibility, incentives for participation, organization and attention to detail, building partnerships with community organizations, and celebrating youth successes. Sites also identified challenges including difficulty recruiting and engaging youth in the program, data collection and reporting issues, staffing shortages and changes, and youth not wanting to engage in non-paid work.

Clients reported a higher level of grit after participating in Job Program but no change in sense of self-efficacy. However, caution should be used when interpreting these findings as the clients included in the analysis represented only 4% of the clients who enrolled in the program.

Struggles with data collection and reporting posed a major challenge for this evaluation. Specifically, the small amount of post-services data, the lack of any longer-term follow-up data, and lack of data from a comparison group prevented the evaluation from making reliable determinations about the impact of the program.

Overall, the Job Program is being implemented well, and preliminary results indicate possible improvements in participants' mindset (grit). Site staff also reported positive outcomes for youth and stressed the importance of the program in supporting and guiding youth and young adults as they pursue their education and/or career goals.

5. RECOMMENDATIONS

Based on successes and challenges encountered during the implementation of the Job Program evaluation, we offer the following recommendations to strengthen future evaluation efforts.

1. Revisit the Job Program Logic Model

The Job Program evaluation could be strengthened by revisiting the program model. The current slate of Job Program pilot sites were implementing the program quite differently, providing different activities, serving different populations (e.g., youth who are in school vs. young adults who are seeking jobs), and, in some cases, working toward different outcomes. Creating separate program models for different populations may be a solution. Refining program models would help focus and streamline the evaluation since more narrowly defined programs would have common activities, services, supports, and outcomes.

2. Set Requirements for Pilot Site Selection

When selecting sites to participate in future Job Program initiatives, requirements to be a pilot site should be developed and clearly outlined. For example, sites must agree to: 1) collect specific data, 2) adhere to reporting deadlines, 3) participate in monthly calls, and 4) ensure participation in interviews and/or focus groups. It is also important to ensure sites have the staff and resource capabilities to collect evaluation data to improve data quality and quantity.

3. Provide Evaluation and Data Collection Training to Future Job Program Pilot Sites

Training for pilot sites will help ensure that site staff understand the evaluation process, the need for consistent and high-quality data, and requirements for participating in evaluation. In addition, sites would benefit from clear and specific guidelines for data collection. This should include guidance on when each Job Program form needs to be completed by participants and which data elements on the forms are required to be collected. This will ensure that data is collected in a consistent manner across sites.

4. Revise the Grit and Self-Efficacy Scales

The grit and self-efficacy scales on the Job Program forms can be improved. Suggestions are:

- Change the order of the self-efficacy scale responses to strongly disagree, disagree, neither agree nor disagree, agree, strongly agree;

- Change the order of the grit scale responses to not at all like me, not much like me, somewhat like me, mostly like me, very much like me; and

- Delete the numbers associated with the response options, as the numbers can influence participants' responses.

Below are examples of the suggested revisions.

Self-Efficacy Scale

	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neither Agree nor Disagree	Agree	Strongly Agree
I will be able to achieve most of the goals that I have set for myself.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
When facing difficult tasks, I am certain that I will accomplish them.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐

Grit Scale

	Not Like Me At All	Not Much Like Me	Somewhat Like Me	Mostly Like Me	Very Much Like Me
New ideas and projects sometimes distract me from previous ones.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Delays and obstacles (things that get in the way) don't discourage me.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐

5. Automate the Scoring of the Grit and Self-Efficacy Scales

Having the Organization A data system automatically calculate grit and self-efficacy scores, rather than relying on site staff to compute the scores, would eliminate: 1) human error in calculating scores that can lead to inaccurate data, and 2) uncertainty as to how the scores were calculated.

When scoring, numbers can be assigned to each response as follows, and the numbers can be summed or averaged to achieve overall scale scores:

Self-Efficacy Scale	Grit Scale
1=Strongly disagree	1=Not like me at all
2=Disagree	2=Not much like me
3=Neither agree nor disagree	3=Somewhat like me
4=Agree	4=Mostly like me
5=Strongly agree	5=Very much like me

Scoring of the grit scale requires manipulation of responses to four of the eight grit items. Items 1, 3, 5, and 6 are negatively worded. Therefore, prior to scoring, the numbers assigned to each response need to be reverse coded (1=5, 2=4, 3=3, 4=2, 5=1) so that higher scores indicate a positive response to the item.

6. Allow for Electronic Collection of Organization A Forms

Data collection could be improved by providing sites with electronic versions of the Job Program forms and giving participants the option of completing the forms online. This would make it easier for participants and site staff, as forms would not have to be completed in a face-to-face setting. This will likely increase the response rate and the amount of data collected. In addition, using electronic forms will reduce the data entry burden for staff and reduce data entry errors. Google Forms is one option for creating online forms.

7. Conduct Regularly Scheduled Data Reviews

Data quality and quantity can be improved with quarterly data reviews by Organization A. Each quarter, download data from each pilot site, review the data for completeness and errors, and require sites to fix any errors or gather missing data. Conducting these reviews on a quarterly basis will allow Organization A to identify and correct any data collection problems before they become unsurmountable.

8. Enhance Fidelity Data Collection

When collecting fidelity data, we suggest that Organization A revise the process for collecting the data. First, it may be helpful to have an Organization A staff member help site staff with data collection either in person or virtually. This will help ensure that appropriate data is being collected for each indicator. Second, consider requiring sites to provide documentation in the form of a portfolio of examples to demonstrate how ratings on each indicator were determined.