

Career Pathways Initiative

Evaluation briefs describe the goals of major programs and strategic initiatives, what we have learned through monitoring and evaluation, key conclusions and examples of impact.

EVALUATION CONDUCTED BY:
Victoria Dougherty Consulting, LLC

TYPE OF EVALUATION:
Developmental – Utilizing administrative data, document review and interviews to document program evolution, lessons learned, and participant outcomes

THE CHALLENGE: WHY IT MATTERS

Meaningful employment and accessible career paths are essential to families and communities. However, in Hartford, unemployment is near 10 percent, and in some neighborhoods it is over 30 percent. Regional unemployment rates are also higher than the state as a whole. Many residents are unable to access training, are unaware of training opportunities, or encounter barriers because of their limited literacy skills. Residents facing the most pervasive obstacles to employment include low-literacy adults, returning offenders, homeless individuals, single parents, immigrants, and at-risk young adults.

The Career Pathways Initiative (CPI) is working to increase the job skills and employment of low-literacy and/or low-skilled residents of Greater Hartford through nine cross-sector collaborations. CPI seeks to:

- Build and refine career pathways for low-literacy and/or low-skilled residents.
- Support and promote partnerships across sectors to develop career pathways for low-literacy and/or low-skilled residents.
- Foster an integrated career pathway system to respond to workforce needs of low-literacy and/or low-skilled residents.

CPI EVALUATION FOCUS

CPI sites worked on three parallel goals: building and refining career pathways, building and maintaining partnerships and fostering an integrated career pathways system. The evaluation covered:

- Determining best practices for helping residents move toward employment.
- Identifying strategies for effective partnership development.
- Moving towards integrated adult education and workforce development systems in Greater Hartford.

KEY FINDINGS

Moving Residents toward Employment: Recruitment and retention challenges included the opportunity cost of trainings (loss of income while enrolled without the assurance of a promise of an immediate, better paying, and steady job after completing the training), participants' lack of understanding of program expectations, academic challenges, and family responsibilities. Partnerships responded to these challenges by expanding academic remediation, strengthening personalized supports, and implementing more rigorous screening so that enrollees better understand program demands.

Career Pathways Initiative

For further information on the Career Pathways Initiative, contact: **Judy McBride**, Director of Grants and Partnership Investments at jmcbride@hfpg.org

For further information on research and evaluation contact: evaluation@hfpg.org

Participant training, employment, and education milestones are reported in the table:

CPI Participant Employment & Education Outcomes (2016-2017)				
	One Month Outcomes ¹		Six Month Outcomes ²	
	Total	%	Total	%
Completed Training	276	100%	182	100%
Employment				
Employed	147	53%	95	52%
Unemployed	96	35%	32	18%
Unknown	33	12%	55	30%
Education				
Enrolled in Education Program ³	32	12%	18	10%

¹ Of all Y1 and Y2 participants who completed CPI core training (as defined by site) by 12/31/17. Note: OPP, as a multi-year program, does not yet have employment data available.
² Of all Y1 and Y2 participants who completed CPI core training (as defined by site) by 6/30/17.
³ Not exclusive of "employed."

At the end of Year 2, a few CPI partnerships had not established any employer relationships and others struggled to make meaningful connections. This inadequate employer engagement hinders partnerships' ability to provide internships and eventual job placements.

Partnership Development: Most partnerships functioned well by end of Year 1, with established partnerships continuing this work in Year 2. Partners ascribe this success to communication, shared resources, and shared learning. While partners valued shared learning during quarterly CPI meetings, there were few instances of cross-site collaboration. Staff cited difficulty envisioning how to put collaboration into practice.

System Building: CPI's long-term goal to affect systems across education, training, employment, and social services requires highly collaborative partnerships. By Year 2, partnerships have mostly adopted transactional models in which partners provide discrete services without contributing to shared strategies.

RECOMMENDATIONS AND NEXT STEPS

Employer engagement: Many partnerships need to intensify efforts to build employer relationships by engaging them in planning, implementation, and supporting participants' transition to employment.

Recruitment and retention: CPI partnerships should continue ensuring that enrollees have realistic expectations of program requirements and benefits. Programs should sustain their strong case management that addresses participants' individual needs.

Cross-site collaboration: CPI partnerships should seek out collaborative opportunities. For example, partnerships could share information about other CPI programs with potential enrollees to increase the likelihood of finding the best fit for each participant.

PROJECTS AND LEAD PARTNERS:

Aerospace Employment Placement Program
[Journey Home](#)

Business Plan for Success
[Literacy Volunteers of Greater Hartford](#)

Immigrant Career Pathways Food Service
[Hartford Public Library](#)

Chrysalis/Urban League Career Pathways Initiative
[Chrysalis Center](#)

Contextualized English Language Learner/Medical Office Assistant Program
[Capitol Region Education Council](#)

Manufacturing Career Pathway
[Goodwin College](#)

Opportunity Academy College Scholars
[Our Piece of the Pie](#)

STARR Training to Work 2
[Community Partners in Action](#)

YW Career Women at Manchester Community College
[YWCA Hartford Region](#)