

## MEMORANDUM

**To:** The Hartford Foundation for Public Giving

**From:** Victoria Dougherty Consulting, LLC

**Re:** Emerging Evaluation Findings from Year 2 of the Career Pathways Initiative

**Date:** March 22, 2018

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This memo presents emerging findings from the developmental evaluation of the Career Pathways Initiative (CPI). In the second year, the evaluation sought to address the following questions:

1. What lessons are emerging from grantees about what it takes to successfully implement programs and build working partnerships?
2. What evidence is there that CPI is moving towards its longer-term outcomes?
3. What adjustments might be made to CPI's approach – both at the initiative and grantee levels – to improve its likelihood of success going forward?

Our data collection methods included:

- Reviewing relevant CPI grantee documents, including program marketing and training materials (ongoing)
- Conducting mid- and end-year phone interviews with the Hartford Foundation For Public Giving (“the Foundation”) staff (June 2017 and January 2018)
- Conducting mid-year phone interviews with site lead organizations (August 2017)
- Collecting self-assessments of partnership development indicators (October 2017)
- Collecting enrollment, completion, and employment data from CPI partners (January 2018)
- Conducting site visits to interview lead organizations, partners, and participants and to observe programs, when possible (January-February 2018)

In Year 2, we continued to engage the CPI programs and the Foundation as partners in our learning process, an integral element of our developmental evaluation approach. In April, we will present a full evaluation report designed to inform Foundation and grantee discussions of how to build on the progress of Year 2 to improve site and cross-site efforts in Year 3, the initiative's final year.

The enrollment, completion, and employment data presented represent results as of December 31, 2017. Please note that – because the nine programs operate on different cycles – these numbers capture a specific point in time, which may or may not correspond to individual program cycles.

## SUMMARY FINDINGS

2017 CPI Participant Enrollment & Completion	
	CPI TOTAL
Total Enrolled in 2017	377
<i>Enrolled, Program Continuing</i>	105
<i>Enrolled, Program Concluded<sup>1</sup></i>	272
Completed Program in 2017 <sup>2</sup>	78%

1) Participants enrolled in program sessions with an end date on/before 12/31/17

2) Of the 272 not continuing enrollment into 2018

### Participant Enrollment

A total of 377 individuals were enrolled in CPI programs in 2017, a 12% increase over the 2016 total (336). Almost all Career Pathways Initiative (CPI) programs successfully enrolled the targeted number of participants meeting the population criteria the programs were designed to serve. Eight of the nine programs successfully recruited and enrolled their target number of participants. Two of the sites that had struggled with recruitment in Year 1 were able to increase recruitment in Year 2, one by hiring a part-time recruiter to do face-to-face outreach, the other by relying on traditional recruitment methods such as flyers and mass mailings.

2017 CPI Participant Characteristics	
	CPI TOTAL
<b>Gender</b>	
# Female	53%
# Male	47%
<b>Age</b>	
# 18-24 years old	15%
# 25-44 years old	56%
# 45 years old or older	29%
<b>Hispanic Origin, Any Race</b>	
# of Hispanic, Latino, or Spanish origin	32%
<b>Race<sup>1</sup></b>	
# Asian	11%
# Black or African American	49%
# White	12%
# Other Race	22%

1) Most programs do not track Hispanic origin separately from race, so in some instances "Other Race" category captures Hispanic/Latino participants. In addition, the figure includes 1% American Indian/Alaska Native; 1% Native Hawaiian/Pacific Islander; 1% Two or More Races; and 4% Unknown.

**Ninety-two percent of 2017 CPI participants met the original program criteria, which vary considerable by program (e.g., immigrants, homeless individuals, formerly-incarcerated individuals).** In one case, a program serving only immigrant English

language learners expanded its enrollment criteria to include non-immigrant ELL students (e.g. Puerto Rican Americans) and English-speaking immigrants needing additional literacy skills (e.g. a segment of the West Indian immigrant population). In two other cases, programs slightly adjusted participation requirements to expand the pool of potential participants.

All CPI participants resided within the Foundation’s geographical target area, with 65% being City of Hartford residents and the remainder residing in Greater Hartford. The majority of CPI participant were female (53%); around half were Black or African American (49%) and one-third were of Hispanic origin (32%). Fifty-six percent of participants were between 25 and 44 years old, with an additional 29% being 45 or older. Three-quarters of participants had a high school diploma or equivalent (73%) and one-third had dependent children (34%), although only 6% had dependent children age 5 and under. While employment status at enrollment was unknown for over one-quarter of participants, the data available suggest that at least half of the participants are not employed when they enter CPI. Unfortunately, not enough of the programs collect and record past employment history to illuminate what proportion of participants are long-term unemployed.

<b>2017 CPI Participant Education, Family, and Employment Status at Enrollment</b>	
	<b>CPI TOTAL</b>
<b># With High School Diploma or GED</b>	73%
<b>Dependent Children</b>	
<b># With Dependent Children</b>	34%
<i># With Children Age 5 and Under</i>	6%
<i># With Children Age 6 and Over</i>	12%
<i># With Children, Age Unknown</i>	15%
<b># Without Dependent Children</b>	52%
<b># Unknown</b>	14%
<b>Employment Status at Time of Enrollment</b>	
<b># Employed Full Time (or FT Equivalent)</b>	10%
<b># Employed Part Time</b>	15%
<b>#Not Employed at Enrollment</b>	47%
<i># Never Employed</i>	2%
<i># Previously (though Not Currently) Employed</i>	24%
<i># Unknown</i>	20%
<b># Unknown</b>	27%

### **Participant Completion**

**Of the 272 participants enrolled in CPI programs in 2017, 78% (212/272) completed the program.**<sup>1</sup> Those sites with higher completion rates had rigorous pre-enrollment screening (to ensure readiness and interest) and strong individualized supports to keep participants on track. When participants did not complete, the most commonly cited reasons were getting a job and childcare issues. Other challenges included housing problems and/or homelessness; transportation problems; family crises; and substance abuse or mental health issues.

**Participants interviewed were highly satisfied with the programs; they expressed gratitude for the opportunity to participate and optimism about the future.** Most participants believed that the most important factor in their success was feeling supported by the program and by their peers. In Year 2, participants continued to benefit from the strong supports provided by CPI programs, while appreciating the fact that the programs had high expectations of them. Having people committed to their success not only motivated them to do well, but also built their confidence. When asked about ways in which the programs could be improved, some participants mentioned that they would have liked more information upfront about their career and education options and the possible trade-offs of enrolling in the program, such as expected or typical earning and benefit potential in the career path versus seeking immediate employment.

### **Participant Employment**

<b>CPI Participant Employment &amp; Education Outcomes (2016-2017)</b>				
	<b>One Month Outcomes<sup>1</sup></b>		<b>Six Month Outcomes<sup>2</sup></b>	
	<b>Total</b>	<b>%</b>	<b>Total</b>	<b>%</b>
<b>Completed Training<sup>3</sup></b>	276	<b>100%</b>	182	<b>100%</b>
<b>Employment</b>				
Employed	147	<b>53%</b>	95	<b>52%</b>
Unemployed	96	<b>35%</b>	32	<b>18%</b>
Unknown	33	<b>12%</b>	55	<b>30%</b>
<b>Education</b>				
Enrolled in Education Program <sup>4</sup>	32	<b>12%</b>	18	<b>10%</b>

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) For Literacy Volunteers of Greater Hartford, includes only those participants in the Sodexo cohort

4) Not exclusive of "employed"

<sup>1</sup> Analysis includes only those participants whose programs ended by December 31, 2017. An additional 105

**Fifty-three percent (147/276) of CPI graduates<sup>2</sup> were employed within one month of program completion; twelve percent (32/276) were enrolled in education programs.<sup>3</sup>** Although six-month employment data was not complete<sup>4</sup>, available data suggests that the six-month employment rate of CPI graduates is about the same as the one-month rate (52% or 95/182). Over three-quarters of CPI participants (78% or 208/266) were trained in three career clusters<sup>5</sup>: hospitality and tourism, health sciences, and manufacturing. Of these, manufacturing had the highest employment rate, with 90% of participants trained in this cluster employed at one month and 75% employed at six months. Forty-eight percent (103/214) of all participants who were unemployed at enrollment were employed one month after completion, just slightly below the average employment rates for all CPI participants, suggesting that CPI programs are successfully supporting individuals who are out of the labor force and likely harder to employ.

**Programs have mixed results in terms employment outcomes; while many participants have jobs post program completion, many took jobs in other sectors or in sectors that may not have clear career trajectories.** Thirty-seven percent of participants were employed in the same career cluster as their CPI training at one month (versus 52% employed overall).<sup>6</sup> Most of the participants interviewed intended to continue in the field in which CPI trained them, while others saw the training as a stepping-stone to other goals. Nevertheless, most participants admitted feeling financial pressure to take jobs immediately after completion, even if not in their CPI trained field. Some noted that they would take a full-time job in a lower paying field over a part-time or seasonal job in their field of training because their primary need is financial stability. Participants felt confident that many of the skills they were gaining through CPI programs – not only technical skills, but also soft skills -- could be transferred to other jobs and careers.

**In most cases, employers interviewed were enthusiastic about the quality of CPI trained interns and/or employees.** Employers noted the enthusiasm and strong work ethic of the employees from the CPI programs, This is especially relevant as several of the programs improved their soft-skills components in Year 2 to ensure participants are work-ready. In addition, a few programs are beginning to focus more on post-employment supports. As more graduates enter the labor market, CPI programs are

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<sup>2</sup> LVGH “counseling” participants are excluded from this analysis because after participants “complete” the core program they typically continued accessing services from LVGH, and are not necessarily expected to immediately be able to become employed or enroll in education outside of LVGH

<sup>3</sup> Includes individuals who were both employed *and* enrolled in education.

<sup>4</sup> Six-month employment outcomes were “unknown” for 30% (18/182) of the participants who completed their programs by June 2017.

<sup>5</sup> We grouped CPI programs among the sixteen career clusters described in the Connecticut Career Paths 2017 Report.

<sup>6</sup> We’re excluding six-month employment data because of the high number of “unknowns.”

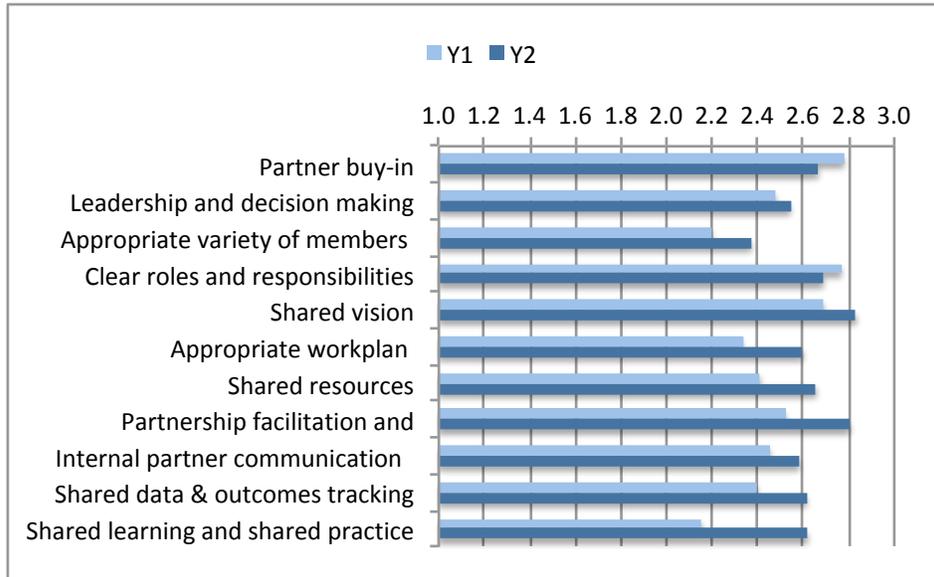
realizing that a steady job does not make all of life’s challenges disappear and that their participants still need considerable support to maintain their jobs. To address this, some programs are testing different strategies, such as training employment supervisors on how to work with their clients or conducting more intensive follow-up with former participants.

**For most CPI programs, connecting participants to employment opportunities continues to be a challenge.** Thanks to the efforts of their job developers, several CPI programs improved their employer engagement. Nevertheless, most continued to find it difficult to engage employers in meaningful ways. At the end of Year 2, a few CPI programs did not have any employer relationships in place.

**While many programs are making efforts to leverage additional resources to support the program, most program staff and partners interviewed doubted that the programs could be sustained beyond the three-year grant period without continued Hartford Foundation funding.** Given the high needs of CPI’s target population, the program model is expensive on a per-capita basis. Not only are technical training programs costly, particularly when curricula must be contextualized with basic skills elements, but the social service, job development, and even post-employment needs of the population drive up the cost significantly. Meanwhile, as federal funding sources dry up, programs have fewer funding opportunities and face more competition for existing sources.

*Partnership Development*

**2017 Partnership Self-Assessment\***



*\*CPI partners completed a self-assessment in the fall of 2017, rating their partnership on various elements of partnership capacity on a scale of one to three, with three representing the highest level of achievement. The above chart illustrates the average scores assigned to*

*these elements across the nine partnerships in Year 1 and Year 2. The self-assessment will be collected again in 2018 to gauge progress.*

**Established CPI partnerships continued to work successfully in Year 2.** Through a self-assessment, partners indicated functioning well in most capacities integral to effective collaboration, with improvements in nine of the eleven indicators from Year 1 to Year 2. The largest improvements were in areas related to the operation of the partnerships, such as appropriate workplans, shared resources, partnership facilitation, and shared learning. As was the case in Year 1, partnerships scored themselves lowest in the area of “appropriate variety of members,” reflecting the continued challenge in attracting employer partners to the table. Partners also noted the need to bring on partners to support participants with some of their more common obstacles, such as childcare and housing.

**While some CPI partnerships work in close collaboration, most are more transactional, with one lead agency running the program and various partners providing specific services.** In the more successful partnerships, partners are in close communication and program decisions are made through joint discussion. While lead agencies are still primarily responsible for program management and partners are providing discrete services, this more collaborative model produces a natural feedback loop resulting in continuous program improvement. In the more transactional partnerships, although partners may troubleshoot together, the various elements of work are more fragmented and there are fewer opportunities for joint learning and for leveraging the various partners’ perspectives in strategic decisions.

### ***Cross-site Learning***

**While partners appreciate the opportunity to meet their peers during learning communities, sites have not fully leveraged the potential value-added of the convenings.** Most programs collaborate with other CPI sites to some degree, although many of these relationships pre-date CPI. Although program staff and partners interviewed saw the potential in possibly working across CPI sites, few could envision how such collaboration might work in a practical sense. Given programs’ limited capacity and focus on achieving individual program goals, they are unlikely to stretch themselves to pursue this type of collaboration without incentives or guidance.

## **CONCLUSION**

In Year 2, many CPI sites strengthened their programs with better recruitment strategies, more rigorous pre-enrollment screening, and stronger individualized supports for participants. Nevertheless, many felt the strain of training individuals with high poverty-related needs and steering them into employment in the career pathways. Additionally, engaging employers continues to be a challenge for most. In Year 3, while CPI sites continue to bolster their programs and establish relationships with employers, they will also be looking for ways to institutionalize and sustain the programs.