

Synopsis of Key Research on YouthBuild – Prepared by YouthBuild USA

Below are brief summaries of demographics and outcomes from YouthBuild programs, plus key external studies conducted on YouthBuild programs since 1990.

OUTCOMES OVER TIME

Summary of Demographics and Outcomes over Time Recorded by YouthBuild USA:

Enrollees are 91% without a high school diploma; 72% young men, 28% young women; 39% court involved; 10% in foster care; 46% African American, 24% White; 23% Latino; 3% Native American; 4% other; average reading grade level is 7.2; 100% are poor.

An average of 60% of enrollees complete the program. 52% obtain their GED or high school diploma. 73% of completers are placed in college (15%) and/or in jobs with an average wage of \$8.71/hour. The recidivism rate ranges from 5 – 28% compared to a national rate of 67%. There are 2 to 10 times as many applicants as can be accepted.

RESEARCH STUDIES

Highlights found in research studies outlined below:

- Return on Investment: a minimum of \$10.80 for every dollar spent on a court-involved youth;
- Impact on graduates: 75% in college or employed at an average wage of \$10/hour up to 7 years after program completion.
- Evaluation by graduates: 91% give highly positive assessment.
- Personal change: A reliable process of personal transformation has been observed and defined.
- GED rates: higher than other national programs for high school dropouts.
- Impact of AmeriCorps education awards on YouthBuild students: Increased college participation for YouthBuild students who obtain an AmeriCorps education award for their service building housing.

Cost-Benefit Studies

Mark Cohen PhD, and Alex Piquero, PhD, [*Costs and Benefits of a Targeted Intervention Program for Youthful Offenders: The YouthBuild USA Offender Project.*](#) 2008.

This is a cost-benefit analysis of YouthBuild USA's targeted intervention program aimed at youthful offenders using data on 388 offenders at 34 local programs. The authors found (1) evidence of reduced recidivism and improved education outcomes, and (2) a positive benefit-to-cost ratio, showing that every dollar spent on every court-involved youth is estimated to produce a social return on investment between \$10.80 and \$42.90, with benefits to society ranging between \$134,000 and \$536,000 per participant at a cost to society of about \$12,500 (the wages to students for work performed is excluded from this \$12,500.)

Minnesota Department of Employment and Economic Development, [*Minnesota YouthBuild Program: A Measurement of Costs and Benefits to the State of Minnesota.*](#) revised 2003.

This study measures the benefits of increased earnings, state taxes paid by participants on these earnings, and reduced state prison costs of participants with a prior offense. It focuses on the YouthBuild programs funded by the State of Minnesota. The study finds that each new group of youth trained in the Minnesota YouthBuild program produces approximately \$350,000 per year in additional state tax revenues and \$1.2 million in state prison cost savings in the first year after finishing the program. This translates into approximately \$1.5 million in direct benefits to the state in the first year after a participant group exits the program, compared to the state's cost of \$877,000 per year.

Qualitative Studies

Ronald F. Ferguson et al., [*YouthBuild in development perspective: A formative evaluation of the YouthBuild demonstration.*](#) Department of Urban Studies and Planning, Massachusetts Institute of Technology, 1996.

This study, a qualitative and quantitative analysis, examined five demonstration sites for two full cycles. It included pre and post interviews of over 60 students. Comparison with other nationally known youth programs showed that YouthBuild had the highest level of GED achievement. The study defined the observable stages of personal development that students went through to change their identity and relationship to society.

Anne Wright, [The YouthBuild Welfare-to-Work Program: Its Outcomes and Policy Implications.](#) YouthBuild USA, 2001.

This is a study of a three-year grant funded by DOL run from 1998 to 2001 by YouthBuild USA at ten programs. The outcomes of the YouthBuild Welfare-to-Work (WtW) program were higher than those of other WtW programs recruiting under the same eligibility regulations, with 50 percent of all trainees being placed in a job at the end of the program, compared to 44 percent of other WtW program enrollees. YouthBuild graduates earned an average of \$7.91 an hour in their first job placement, compared to \$6.81 an hour for other WtW program participants.

Andrew Hahn, Thomas D. Leavitt, [Life After YouthBuild: 900 YouthBuild Graduates Reflect on Their Lives, Dreams, and Experiences.](#) Heller School at Brandeis University, 2004.

This study combined a 15-page survey of 900 graduates from over 30 programs and in-depth interviews with a cross-section of 57 graduates at eight programs. The interview results showed that YouthBuild graduates are highly positive about their program experiences, appreciating both the family-like environment and the high expectations of the staff. The survey results showed that 75 percent of graduates are either in postsecondary education or in jobs averaging \$10 an hour; 91% of graduates rated their YouthBuild experience highly; 85% are still involved in community activities; and a high percentage are successful and free of government supports using a variety of indicators. Many graduates also felt a need for more assistance with personal or career-related issues after graduation.

Wally Abrazaldo et al, [Evaluation of the YouthBuild Youth Offender Grants.](#) Social Policy Research Associates, 2009.

In 2004, DOL selected YouthBuild USA to participate in its Incarcerated Youth Offender Program, granting \$18.2 million over three years to YouthBuild USA for 34 local YouthBuild programs enrolling over 1200 youth. Outcomes exceeded all but one of the short-term targets, including enrollment, completion, GED/HSD attainment, placement, wages, and recidivism.

DOL engaged Social Policy Research Associates to do a thorough qualitative study of the program in its third year. The evaluation assessed recruitment and enrollment, educational services, vocational training, case management and retention, and youth leadership and community service.

The study found that all the programs adhere to the YouthBuild program design, and beyond that the higher performing programs share certain characteristics: they are usually part of a larger sponsoring agency, have a lower student-to-staff ratio, offer their GED preparation or high school classes onsite with teachers from similar backgrounds as the students, effectively link vocational training to academic instruction, offer industry recognized certifications, have a youth policy council, and offer both rehabilitation and new construction. It found that the intensity of partnerships with other local agencies did not correlate with higher outcomes.

Andy Hahn and Tom Leavitt. [The Efficacy of Education Awards in YouthBuild AmeriCorps Programs.](#) Center for Youth and Communities, Heller School for Social Policy and Management, Brandeis University, 2007

This report looks at the degree to which AmeriCorps Education Awards affect involvement in postsecondary education-related activities, utilizing comparisons between YouthBuild AmeriCorps and other YouthBuild completers. The analysis showed that (1) program completers at YouthBuild AmeriCorps programs were more likely than completers at other YouthBuild programs to have applied to and been accepted to postsecondary education or training institutions, and to be preparing for a variety of postsecondary educational options, and (2) within the AmeriCorps respondent population, those who earned an AmeriCorps Education Award were more likely to accomplish postsecondary education and training criteria—that is, they are more likely to apply to, be accepted to, and be enrolled in such institutions—than those who did not earn an AmeriCorps Education Award. They were also more likely to participate in education preparation activities after completing YouthBuild. Affects were particularly strong among young black men.