

**Beyond a Summer Work
Experience: The Recovery Act
2009 Post- Summer Youth
Employment Initiative**

Final Report

June 13, 2011

Pamela Holcomb
Jessica Ziegler
Elizabeth Laird



MATHEMATICA
Policy Research, Inc.

Contract Number:
DOLQ091A20941

Mathematica Reference Number:
06792.004

Submitted to:
U.S. Department of Labor, Employment
and Training Administration
200 Constitution Ave., NW
Washington, DC 20210-0001
Project Officer: Janet Javar

Submitted by:
Mathematica Policy Research
600 Maryland Ave., SW
Suite 550
Washington, DC 20024-2512
Telephone: (202) 484-9220
Facsimile: (202) 863-1763
Project Director: Pamela Holcomb

**Beyond a Summer Work
Experience: The Recovery Act
2009 Post- Summer Youth
Employment Initiative**

Final Report

June 13, 2011

Pamela Holcomb
Jessica Ziegler
Elizabeth Laird

MATHEMATICA
Policy Research, Inc.

DISCLAIMER

This report was prepared by Mathematica Policy Research for the U.S. Department of Labor (DOL), Employment and Training Administration, Office of Policy Development and Research under contract number DOLQ091A20941. The views expressed are those of the authors and should not be attributed to DOL, nor does mention of trade names, commercial products, or organizations imply endorsement of same by the U.S. government.

ABSTRACT

Through the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act of 2009 (Recovery Act), states received \$1.2 billion in funding for Workforce Investment Act Youth Program activities to provide employment and training activities targeted to disadvantaged youth. In addition to supporting large-scale youth employment activities in the summers of 2009 and 2010, the Recovery Act also gave states the option to continue to fund work experience opportunities for out-of-school youth ages 18 to 24 for an additional six months, spanning a “post-summer” time frame of October 1, 2009, to March 31, 2010.

This study examines how some local areas used their Recovery Act funds to serve youth beyond the 2009 summer months. Using qualitative data collected through visits to eight local sites in seven states, this report describes key features of the sites’ post-summer youth employment initiative, and lessons that may help inform future efforts to provide work experience and other activities to older, out-of-school youth.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

The authors are grateful for the efforts and contributions of many people. We would first like to thank the sites that allowed us to visit their programs in fall 2010 to gather information about their experiences in implementing the 2009 Post-Summer Youth Employment Initiative (Post-SYEI). We greatly appreciate the time, information, and insights provided to us by administrators and frontline staff of these local sites, the youth participants, and employers.

This study also benefited from the advice and guidance of staff from the U.S. Department of Labor (DOL), Employment and Training Administration (ETA). We are indebted to Janet Javar, our project officer, and Bogdan Tereshchenko for their invaluable guidance throughout the study, and to Evan Rosenberg, Sara Hastings, and Charles Modiano from ETA's Youth Office.

At Mathematica, we thank Michelle Badagnani for conducting many of the screening interviews and our site visit team members. In addition to the authors, the site visit team included Premini Sabaratnam and Andrea Mraz Esposito. An additional note of appreciation goes to Andrea Mraz Esposito for her contributions to the evaluation design, site visit protocols, and site visit preparation. Sheena McConnell and Jeanne Bellotti made invaluable contributions as quality assurance reviewers. We are also grateful to Linda Rosenberg for her advice and insights throughout the study. John Kennedy and William Garrett provided thorough editorial services, and Lisa Walls provided production support.

We gratefully acknowledge these many contributions and accept sole responsibility for any errors or omissions in the report.

Pamela Holcomb
Jessica Ziegler
Elizabeth Laird

CONTENTS

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY	xvii
I INTRODUCTION	1
A. Economic and Policy Context	2
B. Relevant Key Recovery Act Youth Provisions and ETA Guidance for Post-SYEI.....	2
C. Setting the Stage for the Post-SYEI: Key Findings from the 2009 SYEI Evaluation	4
D. Study Overview.....	5
1. Scope	5
2. Key Research Questions.....	5
3. Site Selection	5
4. Data Sources	6
5. Analytical Approach and Limitations	6
E. Organization of the Report	7
II THE STUDY SITES	9
A. Study Sites' Socioeconomic Contexts	9
B. Study Site Profiles.....	12
III PROGRAM DESIGN, FUNDING, AND ORGANIZATION.....	21
A. Program Design Features.....	21
1. Recovery Act Provisions and ETA Waivers Reinforced Linking Out-of-School Youth with Paid Work Experiences.....	21
2. Most Sites Extended the Work Experiences of their Older, Out-of-School SYEI Youth.....	23
3. Post-SYEIs Were Substantially Smaller than SYEIs; Sites Had Exhausted Most of Their Recovery Act Youth Funding During the Summer Period	23
4. Half of the Study Sites Leveraged Other Funds to Support Post-SYEIs	24
5. Program Timing and Duration Varied Depending Primarily on Whether Sites Planned to Implement a Post-SYEI.....	26

- B. Organization 29
 - 1. Large-Scale 2009 SYEIs Influenced Sites' Post-SYEI Service Delivery Structure 29
 - 2. Some Sites Partnered with New Providers in their SYEIs and Post-SYEIs 31

- IV THE POST-SYEI YOUTH EXPERIENCE 33
 - A. Youth Recruitment..... 34
 - 1. Sites Employed Multiple Strategies to Recruit Youth..... 34
 - 2. Demand for the SYEI and Post-SYEI Frequently Exceeded Sites' Enrollment Capacity 36
 - B. Employer Recruitment 36
 - 1. Employers Responded Positively to the Post-SYEI..... 37
 - 2. Sites Cast a Wide Net to Engage New Employers, Especially from the Private Sector..... 37
 - 3. Employer Orientations and Handbooks Helped Communicate Expectations..... 38
 - C. Youth Preparation: Work Readiness 39
 - 1. Duration, Intensity, and Type of Work Readiness Activities Varied Across Sites 39
 - 2. All Sites Designed Pre-Post Work Readiness Assessments, and Most Sites Used Standard Work Readiness Measurement Tools 41
 - 3. Most Sites Applied SYEI Methods to Measure Work Readiness in the Post-SYEI..... 41
 - D. Youth Post-SYEI Work Experiences 42
 - 1. Sites Primarily Focused on Work-Based Learning, Not Classroom Activities 42
 - 2. Sites Identified Youth Interests and Goals to Match Youth to Worksites 43
 - 3. Some Sites Developed Programs to Expose Youth to Health Care Jobs and Connected Youth with Worksites in Other High-Growth and High-Demand Industries..... 44
 - 4. Sites Reported Some Success Placing Youth in Green Jobs, Although Sites Defined Green Jobs Differently 46
 - 5. Duration of Work Experiences Varied Considerably, Both Across and Within Sites..... 47
 - 6. Youth Typically Earned Minimum Wage, Although Some Sites Tied Pay to Job Responsibilities and Provided Other Performance Incentives 48

- E. Worksite Monitoring 49
 - 1. Screening and Orienting Employers Was a Critical Component of Worksite Success 49
- F. Youth Pathways and Transitions Following the Post-Summer Period 50
 - 1. Sites Offered Multiple Transition Pathways and Strategies 50
 - 2. Sites Rarely Co-Enrolled Youth in Other WIA Programs Because They Did Not Want to Forfeit Waiver Flexibility 52
- V CONCLUSIONS 55
 - A. Key Findings 55
 - B. Considerations for Future Policy and Programs 57
- REFERENCES 59

TABLES

I.1	Sites Selected for the Study	6
II.1	Post-SYEI Site Characteristics	10
II.2	Bangor, Maine Post-SYEI Profile	12
II.3	Greenville, Mississippi Post-SYEI Profile	14
II.4	Lehigh Valley, Pennsylvania Post-SYEI Profile	15
II.5	Los Angeles, California Post-SYEI Profile	16
II.6	Milwaukee, Wisconsin Post-SYEI Profile	17
II.7	Minneapolis, Minnesota Post-SYEI Profile	18
II.8	Orlando, Florida Post-SYEI Profile	19
II.9	San Bernardino, California Post-SYEI Profile	20
III.1	Recovery Act 2009 SYEI and 2009 Post-SYEI Spending Reported by Study Sites	24
III.2	Program Enrollment Reported by Study Sites	26
III.3	Study Site Post-SYEI Organization	29
IV.1	Post-SYEI Wages, Work Experience Duration, and Program Length Reported by Study Sites	48

FIGURES

III.1	Timing and Target Populations for Study Sites' SYEI and Post-SYEI	28
-------	--	----

BOXES

III.1	Contracting Directly with Employers	30
III.2	Capitalizing on Provider Strengths and Leveraging Funds to Develop Career Pathways into High-Growth and High-Demand Industries for Older Youth	31
IV.1	Partnerships to Recruit and Serve Priority Populations.....	35
IV.2	Connecting with Youth through Social Networking	36
IV.3	Targeted Employer Recruitment.....	38
IV.4	Comprehensive Work Readiness Curriculum	40
IV.5	Youth Practice Interviewing and Employers Evaluate Potential Candidates at Job Summits.....	44
IV.6	Connecting Youth to Health Care Careers and Green Jobs.....	45
IV.7	WIB-Health System Partnership for Developing Youths’ Health Care Careers	46
IV.8	Prescreening Checklists, In-Depth Employer Orientation Process, and Regular On-Site Monitoring to Promote Worksite Success	49
IV.9	Youth Transitions and Pathways from Pre-SYEI to Post-SYEI and Beyond	51
IV.10	Partnerships to Connect Out-of-School Youth with the Workforce Development System and Wrap-Around Services	53

PROVIDER, YOUTH, AND EMPLOYER PERSPECTIVES

Work Readiness Activities.....	40
The Value of Work-Based Learning.....	43
Pathways into Health Care Careers	45
Extended Work Experiences	47

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The recent recession took a steep toll on American workers from all walks of life. The economy lost an estimated 7.9 million jobs between the end of 2007 and fall 2009 (U.S. Department of Labor 2011). Job loss among youth ages 16 to 24 was greater than that experienced by any other age group (Department of Labor 2009a). The number of employed teens declined by nearly 25 percent while the number of employed 20- to 24-year-olds fell by nearly 11 percent, pushing the nation's teen employment rate and the employment rate of young adult males (ages 20 to 24) to the lowest levels recorded since the end of World War II (Sum and McLaughlin 2010).

The unprecedented low rate of youth employment since 2007 follows on the heels of a longer trend of declining labor force attachment among youth. Of particular concern to policymakers are disadvantaged youth between ages 18 and 24 who are not in school or at work—sometimes referred to as disconnected youth. Disconnected youth, and those at greatest risk of disconnection, are disproportionately likely to be African American, Hispanic, or Native American and fall into one of four risk groups: youth in foster care or transitioning out of that system, high school dropouts, unmarried teenage mothers, or youth who have been involved with the juvenile justice system. Joblessness among disconnected youth is a critical issue because the cumulative lack of work experience diminishes youths' prospects for future employability and earnings, and a successful transition into adulthood (Heinrich and Holzer 2010).

The American Recovery and Reinvestment Act of 2009 (the Recovery Act) allocated \$1.2 billion in additional funding to the states for youth employment activities under the Workforce Investment Act (WIA). States and local areas moved quickly in response to the new infusion of funds, launching subsidized work experience employment programs in summer 2009 for youth between ages 14 and 24 on a far larger scale than had been witnessed for many years. Although receiving much less media attention, the Recovery Act, through the U.S. Department of Labor (DOL), Employment and Training Administration (ETA) guidance, also gave states the option to continue to offer paid work experience opportunities for out-of-school youth ages 18 to 24 for up to an additional six months beyond the summer months. For the purposes of this study, these work experience activities are referred to as the 2009 Post-Summer Youth Employment Initiative (Post-SYEI). The Post-SYEI provided a valuable opportunity for states and local areas to build on their prior experiences with summer youth employment and focus their efforts more intensively on providing extended work experiences to older, disconnected youth.

To gain insights into how local workforce investment areas (LWIAs) used their Recovery Act funds to serve youth beyond the 2009 summer months, ETA contracted with Mathematica Policy Research to conduct a study of 2009 post-summer youth activities funded by the Recovery Act. This report describes these Post-SYEIs in eight selected sites, including lessons that might inform future efforts to provide work experiences and other activities to older, out-of-school youth.¹

¹ Two other studies conducted by Mathematica for ETA bookend this evaluation. The first report, *Reinvesting in America's Youth: Lessons from the 2009 Recovery Act Summer Youth Employment Initiative*, provides rich detail on the implementation of large-scale summer youth employment programs following the enactment of the Recovery Act. The second report, *Using TANF Funds to Support Subsidized Youth Employment: The 2010 Summer Youth Employment Initiative*,

Recovery Act Provisions and ETA Guidance for Post-Summer Youth Activities

The Recovery Act sought to ensure that disadvantaged youth—including older, out-of-school youth—were given the opportunity to participate and benefit from the expansion of subsidized employment opportunities. The Recovery Act contained two key provisions for the WIA youth activities funded under it. First, it extended eligibility from youth ages 14 to 21 years to include those ages 22 to 24. Second, it stated that only one key indicator—achievement of work readiness goals—would be used to measure program performance.

Although Congress expressed a strong interest in the Recovery Act funds being used to create employment opportunities for youth in the summer of 2009, these funds could be spent on youth activities up to June 30, 2011. ETA required that states expend a minimum of 30 percent of their Recovery Act funds on out-of-school youth, a requirement that also applies to the regular WIA Youth Program. ETA also encouraged that the Recovery Act funds be “used as much as possible to operate expanded summer youth employment to support summer employment opportunities for youth *and* [italics added] work experiences throughout the year” (U.S. Department of Labor 2009b).

For older youth ages 18 to 24 who participated exclusively in a work experience activity during the post-summer period (October 1, 2009, through March 31, 2010), states were permitted to submit performance reporting and program design waiver requests to use the work readiness indicator as the only measure of performance and to apply the flexibility to determine which, if any, of the 10 required program elements (for example, follow-up services or assessments) would be provided. According to ETA, 44 states received program performance waivers and 31 received program design waivers (U.S. Department of Labor 2010a).

Overview of the Study

The primary objective of this study is to provide information about how local areas used their Recovery Act funds to serve older, out-of-school youth during the post-summer period of October 1, 2009, through March 31, 2010. Because of their close relationship to one another, the study also considers aspects of the Recovery Act 2009 summer youth employment activities when relevant to the design or implementation of the Post-SYEI. Four major research questions guided the study:

- How did the selected study sites build on their 2009 SYEIs to provide Post-SYEI with funding from the Recovery Act?
- How did local areas recruit, enroll, and/or transition the post-summer youth?
- What types of work experiences and program services were offered to post-summer youth?

(continued)

examines how state and local agencies used the Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF) Emergency Fund and other resources to create subsidized jobs for youth in summer 2010.

- What lessons can be drawn from the implementation and operation of the Post-SYEI for future efforts to serve older, out-of-school youth in summer or post-summer work experience programs and transition them into education, employment, or other workforce activities?

Study Sites

The study team conducted site visits to eight Local Workforce Investment Areas (LWIAs) in seven states to address these questions and explore how different localities implemented Post-SYEI (see Table 1). All of the sites were located in states that had obtained an ETA waiver for the WIA Youth performance reporting waiver; five sites were located in states that had also obtained program design requirement waivers.

The study sites differed on an array of contextual characteristics. They were located in different regions of the country and represented different levels of urbanicity. Some of the study sites served single counties or a portion of a single county; others operated in multiple counties. There was also substantial variation in the economic conditions of the local areas. Half of the study sites had unemployment rates higher than the national average and half experienced unemployment rates below the national average. Although unemployment data are not available for counties by age, the study's interviews with administrators, frontline workers, participants, and employers uniformly emphasized the extremely challenging economic conditions facing each of their communities and how the recession had exacerbated the already tenuous to nonexistent ties of many older, disadvantaged youth to the labor market.

Table 1. Sites Selected for the Study

State	Study Site Name
California	City of Los Angeles Workforce Investment Board (Los Angeles)
California	San Bernardino County Department of Workforce Development (San Bernardino)
Florida	Workforce Central Florida (Orlando)
Maine	Tri-County Workforce Investment Board (Bangor)
Minnesota	Minneapolis Employment & Training Program (Minneapolis)
Mississippi	Delta Workforce Investment Area (Greenville)
Pennsylvania	Lehigh Valley Workforce Investment Board, Inc. (Lehigh Valley)
Wisconsin	Milwaukee Area Workforce Investment Board (Milwaukee)

Note: The name in parentheses following each study site name is how the site will be referenced throughout the report.

Key Findings

The Post-SYEI provided a unique opportunity for states and local areas to build on the momentum created by the Recovery Act's SYEIs to provide older, out-of-school youth additional work experience beyond the summer months. Although not representative of Post-SYEI experiences nationwide, this study provides important insights into the feasibility and value of developing a subsidized employment intervention for older, disconnected youth that moves beyond

a strictly “summer” work experience. Key findings that emerged from this study include the following:

The Post-SYEIs in the eight study sites were heavily influenced by the design and implementation of their 2009 SYEIs. Half of the sites planned their SYEI and Post-SYEI concurrently during the spring of 2009; the other half did not initially plan to implement a Post-SYEI because their primary focus was on using Recovery Act funding to provide as many youth as possible with work experiences during the 2009 SYEI. The eight study sites’ Post-SYEI designs included four primary components:

- **Focus on older youth.** As intended, sites took advantage of the Post-SYEI to target and serve older, out-of-school youth. The Recovery Act’s expanded age eligibility criteria coupled with ETA’s emphasis on prioritizing these youth for WIA services led all eight sites to target their initiatives at older, out-of-school youth. There was particularly strong support across the study sites for the Recovery Act’s upward expansion of the regular WIA Youth Program age eligibility boundaries (that is, 14 to 21 years) to include disconnected young adults ages 22 to 24 years.
- **Extended work experience opportunity.** Most sites used the post-summer period to extend the work experiences of youth who were already participating in a summer subsidized work experience, providing older, out-of-school youth additional time to build hard and soft work skills. Although the maximum amount of time that Post-SYEI participants were able to spend in a work experience varied considerably across sites, a Post-SYEI youth who started his or her placement in the summer could potentially work between 6 and 11 consecutive months, compared with the six- to eight week stint typical of summer-only work experiences.
- **Small-scale programs.** Study sites exhausted most of their Recovery Act youth funding during the 2009 summer and consequently scaled back their programs during the post-summer period. The SYEI programs in most of the study sites were between two and six times larger than the Post-SYEIs; in two sites, the SYEIs were more than 10 times larger than the Post-SYEIs.
- **Same basic service delivery structure as the 2009 SYEI.** Sites devoted considerable time and energy in the spring and summer of 2009 to plan and implement their Recovery Act SYEIs. For the Post-SYEI, most sites chose to continue working with a subset of their SYEI providers, youth, and employers to provide a longer work experience to older, out-of-school youth.

Real-life work experience was the cornerstone of the Post-SYEI. Sites focused on connecting youth to meaningful work experiences that aligned closely with their interests and goals, rather than on providing them with training or academic enrichment activities. There was widespread consensus among program staff that the work experience opportunity provided through the Post-SYEI was responsive to the interests and immediate needs of older, out-of-school youth—building work readiness skills, a strong work-based learning experience, connections to area employers, and wages.

Stand-alone paid work experience programs are an effective way to engage disconnected youth. Older, out-of-school youth are often considered harder to reach and engage than youth who are still connected to school and other systems of support. The sites’ Post-SYEI

experiences, particularly when also considering the SYEI, suggest there is a great deal of interest and willingness among older, out-of-school youth to make an initial connection with the workforce system if the offer on the table is an immediate job and wages. It also appears that, at least when the work experience is subsidized, employers are receptive to hosting disadvantaged youth despite their lack of work experience.

The longer-than-typical “summer job” work experience was viewed as the key benefit of the Post-SYEI by youth, employers, and workforce administrative and frontline staff. For older youth, the chance to engage in an extended work experience provided a greatly needed opportunity to move beyond acquiring or brushing up on basic workplace skills. Through the longer work experiences, these youth developed more job-specific hard skills and were entrusted by employers with more responsibility and autonomy—all of the things that make them more marketable to potential permanent employers. It gave employers an opportunity to “try out” youth to evaluate the employee’s ability to perform the job satisfactorily and, regardless of whether the experience ended with a permanent hire, to benefit from participants’ increased ability to carry out tasks and take on greater responsibility over time. For youth service providers involved in operating an SYEI, the extended work experience provided an opportunity to cultivate a stronger relationship with employers than possible during the SYEI. This reportedly helped build positive relationships with the business community and, in some cases, increased interest on the part of employers to be involved in other partnerships with the workforce system.

The Post-SYEI reinforced the importance of providing older youth with work experiences as part of a larger targeted career ladder (rather than “work for work’s sake”) in health care or other high-growth or high-demand industries. Sites noted that the Post-SYEI experience aided in the movement toward sector-based training in high-growth or high-demand industries. During the Post-SYEI, youth interested in pursuing health care careers, for example, were placed at worksites such as dentists’ offices, nursing homes, hospice providers, hospitals, and other medical centers. Building on their Post-SYEI experience, many sites noted plans to continue to develop future career pathway programs, especially in health care.

Sites capitalized on their SYEI and Post-SYEI experiences to forge and strengthen partnerships with different service providers and employers within their communities. The need to first mount a new summer work experience initiative, or greatly expand upon an existing effort, within a short time frame motivated several sites to reach out to service providers with whom they had little to no previous interaction and to continue to build and strengthen these relationships during and beyond the post-summer period. Similarly, the scale of the SYEI led all sites to cast a wide net during employer recruitment; for most sites, this meant connecting with the private sector to a greater extent than ever before and continuing to engage many of these same employers during the Post-SYEI.

Half of the study sites reported leveraging Recovery Act funding with monies from a variety of other sources. Sites utilized WIA Adult formula funds, WIA discretionary grants, Vocational Rehabilitation funds, Energy Efficiency and Conservation Block Grant funds, funds from local school districts, and local government revenues to operate more robust subsidized work experience programs in the summer and post-summer periods than possible by relying solely on Recovery Act funds.

Youth demand for the SYEI and Post-SYEI frequently exceeded sites' enrollment capacity. Sites reported that many more eligible youth were interested in participating in a work experience position under both the SYEI and Post-SYEI than could be served. Sites were able to tap into this demand through successful outreach and recruitment strategies that included successful media campaigns and partnering with other youth-serving community agencies. All the study sites achieved maximum enrollment levels with available funding.

Matching worksites with participants' goals and interests, coupled with frequent in-person monitoring visits by program staff to worksites, maximized the potential for a successful work experience. The Post-SYEI study sites reported that aligning youth and employer interests was a critical ingredient for a mutually satisfying and productive work experience. After the job match was established, workforce staff, youth, and employers in every site also emphasized that frequent on-site monitoring of worksites made a crucial contribution to promoting employers' and participants' overall satisfaction with the work experience. Based on monitoring visits, provider staff could reinforce needed work readiness skills, mediate small issues before they became large problems, help ensure youth safety, and ultimately contribute to both youth and employer satisfaction.

The Post-SYEI model can serve as a useful "bridge" between the youth and permanent employment or transitions into other workforce preparation activities. Provider staff from several sites often initiated, without the benefit of formal policy guidance or under a contractual obligation to do so, a variety of next-step transition strategies that included reviewing participants' options toward the end of the placement period, recruiting youth into other subsidized employment initiatives, encouraging them to pursue postsecondary education options, transitioning them into the regular WIA Adult or Youth programs, or providing information and linkages to other job search assistance resources.

Considerations for Future Policy and Programs

Based on the study sites' experiences, key findings important for consideration for future policy and programs include the following:

Time to design: Tailoring work experience for older, out-of-school youth. Sites' reliance on the basic design and structure of the SYEI to operate their Post-SYEI was a sensible and efficient approach, given the overlapping relationship of the two initiatives in terms of shared funding source and goals, sequential timing, and the knowledge that the one-time funding and waivers were set to expire. However, the add-on and temporary nature of the Post-SYEI might have also limited consideration of possible ways to better target the program design to the needs of older, out-of-school youth and potentially curbed innovation, especially with respect to how to maximize the value of the work experience and foster successful transitions to permanent employment or other workforce activities and educational pathways. Should there be opportunities for similar kinds of initiatives going forward, sufficient planning time could be used to more fully develop year-round work experience program models that take into account differing needs, interests, and options of older, out-of-school youth versus younger, in-school youth.

Not just a summer job: Expanding paid work experience for all seasons. The Post-SYEI was inextricably tied to the Recovery Act SYEI that immediately preceded it. However, the lessons that emerged from the Post-SYEI experience point to the need to consider increasing resources to support a year-round, temporary paid work experience strategy that targets older, out-of-school

youth. With the exception of some seasonal work, employers also stand to benefit as their need for additional labor might not necessarily be tied to the summer months, but might instead fluctuate throughout the course of a year.

Build better bridges: Creating intentional connections and multiple pathways following work experience to promote successful transitions. Although paid work experiences provided through the Post-SYEI (and SYEI) served an important objective, its ultimate value could hinge upon efforts to ensure that the completion of a work experience is not an end unto itself but a jump-start on a longer path toward successful transitioning to becoming self-sufficient adults. An enhanced work experience strategy that explicitly includes comprehensive transition planning and assistance suggests promise and should be further explored.

I. INTRODUCTION

The American Recovery and Reinvestment Act of 2009 (the Recovery Act), signed into law on February 17, 2009, allocated \$1.2 billion in additional funding to the states for youth employment activities under the Workforce Investment Act (WIA). Although the use of these funds was not restricted to offering youth employment opportunities only in summer 2009, Congress and the U.S. Department of Labor (DOL) encouraged states and local areas to provide meaningful work experiences for youth during this time under a Summer Youth Employment Initiative (SYEI).¹ States and local areas moved quickly to design and implement SYEIs in 2009 on a far larger scale than had existed in more than a decade.

The Recovery Act also gave states the option to continue to fund work experience opportunities for out-of-school youth ages 18 to 24 for an additional six months, spanning a “post-summer” time frame of October 1, 2009, to March 31, 2010. Although significantly smaller in scale and receiving far less media attention, this component of the Recovery Act’s funding for youth activities provided a valuable opportunity for states and local areas to build on their SYEI experiences and focus their efforts more intensively on providing extended work experiences to older, out-of-school youth.

To gain insights into how local workforce investment areas (LWIAs) used their Recovery Act funds to serve youth beyond the 2009 summer months, DOL’s Employment and Training Administration (ETA) contracted with Mathematica Policy Research to conduct a study of post-summer 2009 youth activities funded by the Recovery Act. This report describes the 2009 Post-Summer Youth Employment Initiative (referred to as Post-SYEI throughout this report) in eight selected sites, including lessons that may help inform future efforts to provide work experience and other activities to older, out-of-school youth.

Two other studies conducted by Mathematica for ETA bookend this evaluation. The first report, *Reinvesting in America’s Youth: Lessons from the 2009 Recovery Act Summer Youth Employment Initiative*, provides rich detail on the implementation of large-scale summer youth employment programs following the enactment of the Recovery Act.² The second report, *Using TANF Funds to Support Subsidized Youth Employment: The 2010 Summer Youth Employment Initiative*, examines how state and local agencies used Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF) Emergency Funds and other resources to create subsidized jobs for youth in summer 2010.³

¹ U.S. Congress. American Recovery and Reinvestment Act of 2009. Pub. Law No. 111-5, February 17, 2009. Explanatory Statement of the Committee of Conference—Part A and U.S. Department of Labor Training and Employment Guidance Letter No. 14-08. March 18, 2009.

² Bellotti, Jeanne, Linda Rosenberg, Samina Sattar, Andrea Mraz Esposito, and Jessica Ziegler. “Reinvesting in America’s Youth: Lessons from the 2009 Recovery Act Summer Youth Employment Initiative.” Princeton, NJ: Mathematica Policy Research, January 25, 2010.

³ Rosenberg, Linda, Megan Hague Angus, Cassandra Pickens, and Michelle Derr. “Using TANF Funds to Support Subsidized Youth Employment: The 2010 Summer Youth Employment Initiative.” Princeton, NJ: Mathematica Policy Research (forthcoming).

A. Economic and Policy Context

The national economic recession that officially began in December 2007 led to a steep decline in jobs and rapidly rising unemployment. Taking a severe toll on workers, the American economy lost an estimated 7.9 million jobs between the end of 2007 and fall 2009. The unemployment rate rose from 4.5 percent in December 2007 to 9.4 percent in December 2009 (U.S. Department of Labor 2011).

Although many groups experienced high job loss following the onset of the recession, job loss among youth ages 16 to 24 was greater than among all other age groups (Department of Labor 2009a). Over the period October–November 2007 to November–December 2009, the number of employed teens in the United States declined by nearly 25 percent while the number of employed 20- to 24-year-olds fell by nearly 11 percent, pushing the nation’s teen employment rate and the employment rate of young adult males (ages 20 to 24) to the lowest level recorded since the end of World War II (Sum and McLaughlin 2010).

The decline of employment among youth was neither solely confined to the summer months nor solely attributable to the economic downturn, although both deeply exacerbated the already low employment among teens and young adults. The unprecedented low rate of youth employment since 2007 follows on the heels of a longer trend of declining labor force attachment among youth. Employment rates among youth in every age, gender, and racial and ethnic group have decreased steadily since 2000 (Sum and McLaughlin 2010). This has prompted concern because the cumulative lack of work experience diminishes youths’ prospects for future employability and earnings and a successful transition into adulthood (Heinrich and Holzer 2010).

Of particular concern to policymakers are disadvantaged youth ages 18 to 24 who are not in school or at work—sometimes referred to as disconnected youth. Disconnected youth, and those at greatest risk of disconnection, are disproportionately likely to be African American, Hispanic, or Native American and fall into one of four risk groups: youth in foster care or transitioning out of that system, high school dropouts, unmarried teenage mothers, or youth involved with the juvenile justice system. They also often lack connections with networks and supports that provide employment connections, financial assistance, and housing (Fernandes and Gabe 2009).

B. Relevant Key Recovery Act Youth Provisions and ETA Guidance for Post- SYEI

As part of the nation’s economic recovery strategy, the Recovery Act aimed to stimulate the nation’s economy by preserving and creating jobs, pumping money into the economy and encouraging spending, and assisting those most affected by the recession. The Recovery Act funding for youth activities, both during and after summer 2009, provided a burst of funding to address the immediate employment needs of youth, helped strengthen their ties to the labor market, and improved their wage and employment prospects as they transition into adulthood.

The congressional explanatory statement for the Recovery Act made clear that Congress intended for the funds to be used to “create summer employment opportunities for youth” but it did not limit the use of Recovery Act funds to only the summer months (U.S. Congress 2009). The conference report also noted that “year-round youth activities are also envisioned.” In keeping with the spirit and intent of the law, ETA’s Training and Employment Guidance Letter No. 14-08 (U.S. Department of Labor 2009b) expressed strong interest and encouragement for states to spend

Recovery Act funding quickly and for the funds to be “used as much as possible to operate expanded summer youth employment to support summer employment opportunities for youth *and* [italics added] work experiences throughout the year.”

Provisions in the Recovery Act and subsequent ETA Guidance (Department of Labor 2009) of particular relevance for the design and implementation of the Post-SYEI included the following:

- **Funds available through June 30, 2011.** Recognizing that disadvantaged youth are a population particularly adversely affected by the recession and the associated loss of employment opportunities, the Recovery Act allocated \$1.2 billion in grant funding to the states for WIA Youth activities and allowed funds to remain available to states through June 30, 2011.
- **Performance measured by one work readiness indicator.** The Recovery Act specified that the work readiness indicator would be the only indicator required to assess the effectiveness of summer work experience. States were required to report on only one performance measure—the percentage of participants in summer employment who attained a work readiness skill goal. This differed from the regular WIA program, which requires states to track performance using, as applicable, either the seven statutory youth measures or common measures.⁵ During the post-summer period, states were permitted to request a waiver from ETA so that they could continue to report on only the work readiness performance measure. The performance measures waiver applied only to youth ages 18 to 24 who solely participated in work experiences and did not receive additional WIA Youth services during the post-summer period.
- **WIA youth program elements were not required.** In contrast to the regular WIA Youth Program, which requires local areas to make 10 program elements available, local areas were given flexibility to determine which program elements they would provide with Recovery Act funds.⁶ This included flexibility to determine if and when to implement the 12-month follow-up requirement. Local areas were also allowed to determine what type of assessment and individual service strategy (ISS) to complete for each youth instead of the comprehensive assessment and ISS required under the regular WIA Youth program. To facilitate the continued implementation of WIA Youth services under the Recovery Act during the post-summer period, States were permitted to request a waiver from the required WIA youth program elements.

⁵ As performance indicators, WIA enacted seven statutory measures. DOL subsequently added and implemented three common measures—including youth’s placement in work or education, attainment of diplomas or credentials, and improvement in basic skills—that were developed by the Office of Management and Budget (OMB).

⁶ WIA requires local areas to make the following 10 program elements available to all eligible youth: (1) tutoring, study skills training, and instruction leading to secondary school completion; (2) alternative secondary school offerings; (3) summer employment opportunities directly linked to academic and occupational learning; (4) paid and unpaid work experience; (5) occupational skill training; (6) leadership development; (7) supportive services; (8) adult mentoring for at least 12 months; (9) comprehensive guidance and counseling; and (10) follow-up activities for at least 12 months.

- **Emphasis on engaging and serving older, out-of-school youth.** Underscoring the importance placed on using Recovery Act funds to engage and serve older, out-of-school youth both during and after summer 2009, the Recovery Act increased the maximum age limit for youth from 21 to 24 years old “to allow local programs to reach young adults who have become disconnected from both education and the labor market” (U.S. Congress 2009) and made businesses that employed disconnected youth eligible for the Work Opportunity Tax Credit (WOTC). As under WIA, local areas were required to expend a minimum of 30 percent of their Recovery Act youth funds on out-of-school youth. ETA also encouraged states and local areas to focus services on youth most in need, including out-of-school youth, and to consider strategies for engaging older, out-of-school SYEI participants in other services and programs, such as co-enrolling them in WIA Adult training programs, placing them in transitional jobs, or transitioning them into postsecondary education programs.
- **“Meaningful” work experiences encouraged.** Local areas were encouraged to make work experiences age appropriate and lead to youth meeting work readiness goals. ETA encouraged local areas to expose youth to “green” (environmentally friendly) educational and career pathways and suggested that local areas take advantage of local apprenticeship programs to create pre-apprenticeship opportunities.

C. Setting the Stage for the Post- SYEI: Key Findings from the 2009 SYEI Evaluation

In 2009, ETA funded a study on how local areas were planning and implementing their summer youth employment activities. The study on the 2009 SYEI included visits to 20 sites and found that local areas shared a common understanding of the primary goals for the SYEI: spend the Recovery Act allocation quickly, place as many youth as possible in work experiences, and ensure that those work experiences were meaningful to youth. In the few short months between receiving their Recovery Act allocations and ETA guidance, the 20 study sites successfully designed their SYEI programs, recruited youth and employers, and matched youth to work experiences. Although work experiences represented the core of their service offerings, 16 of the 20 SYEI sites required youth to attend work readiness training to provide them with basic workplace skills before placing them with employers.

Nationwide, LWIAs placed 314,000 youth in work experiences during summer 2009 and spent nearly 61 percent of the national \$1.2 billion Recovery Act allocation for WIA Youth services. Sites reached out to community partners (such as social service organizations, foster care agencies, and One-Stop Career Centers) and launched large media campaigns to recruit youth. Despite some eligibility determination challenges, participant recruitment efforts generally were highly successful. Sites also were able to recruit and screen sufficient numbers of employers and an adequate number of worksites. Employers were recruited from all sectors, including private sector employers who had no previous history of involvement with the public workforce system. Implementation challenges reported by a variety of sites included difficulty recruiting youth from priority services groups, such as veterans and—in some sites—out-of-school youth, and confusion over the definition of green jobs.

D. Study Overview

This section presents the scope and focus of the study, the key research questions, site selection criteria and methodology, data sources and methods, and a discussion of the analytic approach and limitations.

1. Scope

This study was designed to provide information about how local areas used their Recovery Act funds to serve youth following the end of the 2009 SYEI. Although the primary focus is on the design and implementation of the Recovery Act youth program activities operating within the post-summer period, the study also looks at the relationship between the SYEI and the Post-SYEI. If, for example, the Post-SYEI was designed to provide an eligible portion of its SYEI participants an extended work experience opportunity with no or minimal disruption between the summer and post-summer periods, then the lens of inquiry was broadened to include more data collection about program features and activities in the summer and post-summer months. Similarly, although the regular WIA Adult and Youth programs are not a focus of this study, the study sought to understand the relationship between the Post-SYEI and the regular programs and any points at which participants transitioned between them.

2. Key Research Questions

Four major research questions guided the study:

- How did the selected study sites build on their 2009 SYEI to provide Post-SYIEs with funding from the Recovery Act?
- How did local areas recruit, enroll, and/or transition the post-summer youth?
- What types of work experiences and program services were offered to post-summer youth?
- What lessons can be drawn from the implementation and operation of the Post-SYIEI for future efforts to serve older, out-of-school youth in summer or post-summer work experience programs and transition them into other education, employment, or workforce activities?

3. Site Selection

To learn about Post-SYIEI implementation, eight local areas were selected to be the focus for data collection and analysis. Local areas that met the following selection criteria were considered for inclusion in the study: (1) operated a 2009 SYEI; (2) received a WIA performance measurement and/or program design waiver to continue to serve youth ages 18 to 24 with Recovery Act funds from October 2009 through March 2010 and operated a substantive 2009 Post-SYIEI that focused on providing work experiences for older, out-of-school youth; and (3) operated a 2010 SYEI, funded through WIA, the TANF Emergency Contingency Fund, or other resources.

ETA requested all six ETA regional offices to nominate local areas in their regions that met these criteria. In August and September 2010, the study team conducted telephone calls with administrators in 18 of the 28 sites nominated by the ETA regional offices to collect more

information about their Post-SYEIs and, because participation in the study was voluntary, determine the feasibility of an in-person site visit in fall 2010. In addition, consideration was given to obtaining a sample of sites that represented a mix of rural, urban, and mid-sized populations and different ETA regions; a range of private, nonprofit, and public employers providing work experience; and at least some sites with the potential to provide individual-level data on participants.

Based on these exploratory discussions and considerations, Mathematica and ETA selected the eight LWIAs described in Table I.1 for inclusion as study sites, three of which (Los Angeles, Minneapolis, and Lehigh Valley) were included in the 2009 SYEI study.

Table I.1. Sites Selected for the Study

State	Study Site Name
California	City of Los Angeles Workforce Investment Board (Los Angeles)
California	San Bernardino County Department of Workforce Development (San Bernardino)
Florida	Workforce Central Florida (Orlando)
Maine	Tri-County Workforce Investment Board (Bangor)
Minnesota	Minneapolis Employment & Training Program (Minneapolis)
Mississippi	Delta Workforce Investment Area (Greenville)
Pennsylvania	Lehigh Valley Workforce Investment Board, Inc. (Lehigh Valley)
Wisconsin	Milwaukee Area Workforce Investment Board (Milwaukee)

Note: The name in parentheses following each study site name is how the site will be referenced throughout the report.

4. Data Sources

The primary source of data for this report is based on in-depth site visits to eight selected study sites. The visits were conducted between September and November 2010. Each visit, conducted by one member of the study team, lasted an average of two days.

To gain a comprehensive picture of each site's experiences from a variety of perspectives, the study team conducted 134 in-person interviews using semistructured discussion guides with 28 Work Investment Board (WIB) or lead agency administrators, 25 youth service provider managers, 30 Post-SYEI youth provider frontline staff, 12 employers of Post-SYEI participants, 34 Post-SYEI participants, and 5 management information system (MIS) staff. Information obtained through interviews was supplemented by documentation provided by the sites, such as copies of contracts with providers, application and ISS plans, worksite monitoring forms, and work readiness assessment tools.

5. Analytical Approach and Limitations

This analysis is descriptive and focuses on themes, patterns, relationships, and notable practices that emerged both within individual sites and across several sites, based on site visits and multiple interviews with key respondents. In this analysis, we considered models of program organization; approaches to transitioning from the 2009 SYEI to the Post-SYEI; similarities among and differences between sites in work experience and other service offerings; and strategies for

transitioning youth into other activities or permanent employment. We also looked across sites at the common lessons learned, challenges faced, and insights for an improved Post-SYEI.

Given the analytic approach, the two most significant limitations of the study are that (1) the site visit data collection process took place six to nine months after the programs had ended and (2) the site visits were not sufficiently comprehensive to include the full range of local providers (especially in large urban sites) or more than a handful of employers and youth participants. Perceptions of key challenges and factors affecting implementation were undoubtedly shaped and tempered by the amount of time that had elapsed between the time of implementation and the site visits, particularly because the sites had more recently gone through an entirely new set of implementation experiences associated with the 2010 SYEI. Despite these limitations, the wide range of perspectives of a large number of diverse respondents in each site can provide an overall rich description of Post-SYEI implementation experiences.

E. Organization of the Report

The remainder of the report presents the study sites and their Post-SYEI experiences as well as youth's experiences in these programs. Chapter II summarizes the economic context within which programs operated and provides brief profiles of each local area's Post-SYEI, including Recovery Act expenditures, enrollment, organizational structure, and service offerings. In Chapter III, the report describes key factors that influenced the basic parameters (for example, target population, program size, timing, and duration) of the Post-SYEI. Chapter IV provides a detailed description of the program, including participant and employer recruitment, youths' worksite activities and wages, and transition activities. Finally, Chapter V summarizes key findings and lessons for consideration that emerged from sites' experiences implementing the Post-SYEI.

II. THE STUDY SITES

To ensure that we collected information on the Post-SYEI implementation experience in different local contexts across the country, we selected the eight study sites to include different regions of the country and varying levels of urbanicity. All the study sites operated an SYEI in summer 2009 and all had obtained an ETA waiver for WIA Youth Program performance requirements. Four sites had also obtained an ETA waiver for WIA Youth program design requirements. The waivers enabled the study sites to continue to use Recovery Act funds to provide stand-alone work experiences to out-of-school youth ages 18 to 24 during the post-summer period from October 2009 to March 2010. In this chapter, we present a brief overview of the socioeconomic context within which the eight study sites operated, followed by site-specific profiles of the Post-SYEI. Subsequent chapters provide a cross-site description of the Post-SYEI as well as additional details about particular aspects of sites' Post-SYEIs.

A. Study Sites' Socioeconomic Contexts

The eight study sites varied in geographic areas, population characteristics, and economic conditions (see Table II.1). Some of the study sites served a single county or a portion of a single county, whereas others operated in multiple counties. For example, Los Angeles operated its Post-SYEI in Los Angeles City and approximately 43 percent of Los Angeles County. In contrast, Greenville served 14 counties across the Delta region in Mississippi.

Six of the eight sites are classified by the U.S. Census as urban areas, but there are rural and suburban areas within these counties. For example, San Bernardino County includes three distinct regions—valley, mountain, and desert—with sparsely populated areas in each of those regions. Two study sites that served multiple counties—Bangor and Greenville—had one population center or cluster surrounded by rural areas.

The size, ethnicity, and education levels of the total population varied considerably among the eight study sites. Four of the study sites—Los Angeles, Minneapolis, Orlando, and San Bernardino—served youth in counties with more than 1 million residents. In contrast, Bangor, the smallest study site, covered three counties for which the combined population totaled approximately 220,000 people. Racial diversity varied across sites and, in some cases, within a site, compared with the national average. For example, the counties served by the Delta Workforce Investment Area (that is, the Greenville study site) ranged from 34.2 to 80.9 percent black, with a significantly lower-than-average Hispanic population of 0 to 3.7 percent (compared with 15.1 percent nationally). Two sites, Los Angeles and San Bernardino, had Hispanic populations that were more than triple the national average and another two sites covering multiple counties—Lehigh Valley (82.8 to 87.9 percent) and Bangor (95.7 to 97.5 percent)—had higher white populations than the national average (74.5 percent).

Education levels, as measured by the percentage of adults with a high school diploma, ranged between 60.2 percent and 92.2 percent. Compared with the national average of 84.6 percent, four of the eight study sites had a higher-than-average percentage of adults that received at least a high school diploma. For example, 92.2 percent of the adult population of Hennepin County, the county surrounding Minneapolis, had a high school diploma.

Table II.1. Post- SYEI Site Characteristics

Site Name	State	County(ies)	Area Classification ^a	Population Estimate ^a	County Demographics ^{a, b} (Percentage)	Adults with High School Diploma ^{a, b} (Percentage)	Families Below Poverty Level ^{a, b} (Percentage)	County Unemployment Rate ^{b, c} (Percentage)
United States	n.a.	n.a.	n.a.	307,006,550	Asian 4.4 Black 12.4 Other 8.7 White 74.5 Hispanic 15.1	84.6	9.9	10.2
Bangor	Maine	Penobscot, Piscataquis, Hancock	Rural counties surrounding one urban area	219,661	Asian 0.3-1.1 Black 0.0-0.7 Other 2.1-2.2 White 95.9-97.5 Hispanic 0.7-1.0	88.1-90.1	6.1-13.5	7.1-10.9
Greenville	Mississippi	Bolivar, Carroll, Coahoma, Holmes, Humphreys, Issaquena, Leflore, Panola, Quitman, Sharkey, Sunflower, Tallahatchie, Tunica, Washington	Rural counties surrounding one urban cluster	296,610	Asian 0.0-0.9 Black 32.4-80.9 Other 0.0-3.3 White 18.1-64.7 Hispanic 0.0-3.7	60.2-74.1	22.4-38.1	10.3-19.3
Lehigh Valley	Pennsylvania	Lehigh, Northampton	Urban	642,509	Asian 2.0-2.8 Black 4.1-4.5 Other 6.0-9.4 White 82.8-87.9 Hispanic 9.1-15.4	85.8-86.6	5.3-8.1	8.9-9.0
Los Angeles ^d	California	Los Angeles	Urban	9,848,011	Asian 13.0 Black 8.8 Other 27.4 White 50.7 Hispanic 47.3	75.5	12.5	12.0
Milwaukee	Wisconsin	Milwaukee	Urban	959,521	Asian 3.1 Black 25.2 Other 7.9 White 63.8 Hispanic 11.5	84.7	13.7	9.2

Table II.1. (continued)

Site Name	State	County(ies)	Area Classification ^a	Population Estimate ^a	County Demographics ^{a, b} (Percentage)	Adults with High School Diploma ^{a, b} (Percentage)	Families Below Poverty Level ^{a, b} (Percentage)	County Unemployment Rate ^{b, c} (Percentage)
Minneapolis ^e	Minnesota	Hennepin	Urban	1,156,212	Asian 5.6 Black 10.3 Other 6.0 White 78.2 Hispanic 6.0	92.2	7.1	7.2
Orlando	Florida	Orange, Osceola, Seminole, Lake, Sumter	Urban	2,160,102	Asian 0.6-4.4 Black 8.7-19.5 Other 5.1-12.2 White 65.0-84.6 Hispanic 8.0-40.6	81.9-90.6	6.3-11.9	9.6-12.8
San Bernardino	California	San Bernardino	Urban	2,017,673	Asian 5.8 Black 8.9 Other 24.1 White 61.2 Hispanic 46.6	77.3	11.4	14.0

Sources: U.S. Census Bureau (2009); U.S. Department of Labor, Bureau of Labor Statistics (2011).

Notes: For LWIAs that include more than one county, the range for all counties within the area is provided.

For those identifying a single race, white = white or Caucasian; black = black or African American; and Asian = Asian. Other = American Indian and Alaska Native, Native Hawaiian or Other Pacific Islander, some other race, and two or more races. Hispanic = Hispanic or Latino for any person identifying as Hispanic regardless of race(s).

^a U.S. Census Bureau (2009).

^b For LWIAs that include more than one county, the range for all counties within the area is provided. For any range provided, the first percentage indicates the lowest percentage for any county in the area, and the second percentage indicates the highest percentage for any county in the area. For example, in Orlando, 65.0 percent of the population in Orange County identified as white, whereas 84.6 percent of the population in Lake County identified as white. In any single-county site, percentages of whites, blacks, Asians, and others might not sum to 100 because of rounding.

^c U.S. Department of Labor, Bureau of Labor and Statistics (2011). Labor force data by county, not seasonally adjusted, October 2009 (preliminary).

^d Figures are for all of Los Angeles County. Data from the U.S. Census Bureau do not make it possible to determine information for the portion of Los Angeles City and County served by the Los Angeles Workforce Investment Board.

^e Figures for all of Hennepin County. Data from the U.S. Census Bureau do not make it possible to determine information for the portion of Hennepin County served by the Minneapolis Employment and Training Program.

n.a. = not applicable.

Economic conditions of the local areas varied substantially. The percentage of families whose incomes fell below the poverty level ranged from 6.3 in Bangor to 38.1 in Greenville. Six of the eight sites had counties with family poverty rates higher than the national average (9.9 percent). In Milwaukee County, for example, 13.7 percent of families lived below the poverty level. In October 2009, the national unemployment rate reached 10.2 percent; half of the study sites had unemployment rates higher than the national average and half experienced unemployment rates below the national average.

Although unemployment data are not available for counties by age, the study's interviews with administrators, frontline workers, participants, and employers uniformly emphasized the extremely challenging economic conditions facing each of their communities and the significant challenges the recession created for youth in general, and for older youth in particular. The recession exacerbated the already tenuous to nonexistent ties of many older, disadvantaged youth to the labor market. To the extent that jobs were available to be filled, those positions went to job seekers with more experience, skills, and longer work histories. Across sites, interviews uniformly underscored the extremely challenging environment facing both youth and employers during this recessionary period.

B. Study Site Profiles

This section presents profiles of each of the eight study sites, including summary information on the local economic context, funding and enrollment, organizational structure and program design, and selected highlights about the program (see Tables II.2–II.9). Because the Post-SYEI was closely aligned with and influenced by the 2009 SYEI, the profiles contain some information about the sites' 2009 SYEIs that is relevant to the 2009 Post-SYEI.

Table II.2. Bangor, Maine Post- SYEI Profile

Study Site Name
Bangor
Lead Agency
Tri-County Workforce Investment Board
Area Served
Penobscot, Piscataquis, and Hancock Counties
High- Growth Industries
Retail trade, leisure services, professional and technical services, wholesale trade, transportation, warehousing, financial services, and green services ^a
Enrollment Post- SYEI Recovery Act
40 youth
Post- SYEI Recovery Act Expenditures
\$303,185
Post- SYEI Organizational Structure
<p>The spring and summer of 2009 represented a period of significant organizational change for the Tri-County Workforce Investment Board (TCWIB). Concurrent with its receipt of Recovery Act funds, TCWIB’s lead agency ended a contract with its long-term WIA Adult and Dislocated Worker services provider and One-Stop Career Center operator and decided to bring services in-house. Because the lead agency was busy hiring staff and refining its new service delivery model, it contracted with an experienced and well-respected youth services organization to operate the SYEI. At the conclusion of the summer, the lead agency assumed responsibility for the Post-SYEI.</p>
Program Design
<p>Eastern Maine Development Corporation (EMDC) viewed the Post-SYEI as a continuation of the SYEI, with the opportunity to revise program elements based on lessons learned during the summer. The Post-SYEI focused on affording the site’s older, out-of-school youth the opportunity to continue developing their hard and soft skills through a work experience learning program that extended from the summer into the post-summer months. The goals of the Post-SYEI remained the same as the SYEI—to provide a safe and productive work experience for these youth. In addition, the Post-SYEI and SYEI aimed to improve the community’s economy through paying youth and developing employer partnerships.</p> <p>At the conclusion of the SYEI, frontline staff met one on one with older, out-of-school youth who wanted to extend their work experiences. If a youth met program expectations during the summer and could benefit from additional work experience and if the youth’s worksite wanted the youth to continue working, the youth could remain at the worksite until March 31, 2010. Of the 40 Post-SYEI participants, approximately 30 continued their work experiences from the SYEI and 10 were new participants.</p> <p>Although program goals and services remained essentially the same between the summer and post-summer periods, the much smaller scale of the Post-SYEI enabled staff to spend more time building relationships with youth, help them set goals and create plans to reach those goals, and conduct assessments. Worksites spanned many different industries, but the site targeted youth in high-growth or high-demand jobs with some success; for example, seven youth weatherized homes.</p> <p>Youth worked between 30 and 40 hours per week and made between \$7.50 and \$8.50 per hour.</p>
Highlights
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Site targeted youth in high-growth industries including health care and weatherization. • Staff capitalized on the small Post-SYEI enrollment (when compared with the SYEI) as an opportunity to spend meaningful one-on-one time with older and out-of-school youth so that they could connect them with workforce system and other community services best suited to their individual needs.

^a <http://www.maine.gov/labor/lmis/publications/lmd/pdf/Sep09.pdf>

Table II.3. Greenville, Mississippi Post- SYEI Profile

Study Site Name
Greenville
Lead Agency
Delta Workforce Investment Area (DWIA)
Area Served
Bolivar, Carroll, Coahoma, Holmes, Humphreys, Issaquena, Leflore, Panola, Quitman, Sharkey, Sunflower, Tallahatchie, Tunica, and Washington Counties
High- Growth Industries
Health care, education, transportation, manufacturing, and agriculture ^a
Enrollment
125 youth
Post- SYEI Recovery Act Expenditures
\$250,000
Post- SYEI Organizational Structure
As the lead WIA agency, DWIA relied on five of its seven WIA Youth providers to operate the site's Post-SYEI. All of these providers had been contracted to operate the 2009 SYEI and DWIA extended their contracts into the post-summer period to continue serving older, out-of-school youth. Four of the providers were community agencies with long histories of serving the community through workforce development and social programming. The fifth provider was a state agency that serves individuals with disabilities and administers the vocational rehabilitation program.
Program Design
DWIA did not initially plan to have a Post-SYEI, concentrating its efforts instead on developing the area's first large-scale summer youth employment program in more than a decade. By August 2010 it became clear that there was an opportunity to extend the SYEI beyond the summer months by staying within the parameters defined by the Post-SYEI waiver and using remaining Recovery Act funding. SYEI providers identified older, out-of-school youth participants who had not found work and had no plans to attend school. If both youth and the worksite employer were interested in extending the work experience past the summer, the youth were seamlessly transitioned into the Post-SYEI. Due to the high levels of interest by youth and employers to continue into Post-SYEI, the site did not have to recruit or enroll new youth or engage new worksites. The Post-SYEI operated until December 31, 2009.
The Post-SYEI (and SYEI) was a stand-alone program with the goal of putting money in the pockets of youth, helping combat the effects of the recession, and providing youth with a meaningful work experience that would improve their employment prospects. The site made a concentrated and successful effort to recruit private sector employers and health care and green jobs worksites. Examples of health care-related worksites included positions at medical offices, hospitals, and nursing homes. Green jobs included landscaping positions at schools, parks, and county offices and the creation of a team of youth, called the "Green Team" by the site, who engaged in community projects, such as building playgrounds and cleaning up parks.
Youth worked 32 hours per week from June through December 2009 and earned \$7.25 per hour.
Highlights
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> To reach and serve youth with disabilities, the site expanded upon its existing partnership with the State Department of Rehabilitation Services (DRS). Graduating high school youth with physical and learning disabilities who were already receiving vocational rehabilitation services were placed in worksites (primarily from the private sector) that had been recruited to participate in the SYEI. Recovery Act funds were used to pay youth wages, whereas vocational rehabilitation funds covered accommodation support services, such as uniforms, when necessary. In the absence of the SYEI and Post-SYEI, many of these youth would have participated in the department's sheltered workshop program.

^a<http://www.mdes.ms.gov/Home/docs/LMI/Publications/Occupations%20on%20Demand/DeltaOccinDemand.pdf>

Table II.4. Lehigh Valley, Pennsylvania Post- SYEI Profile

Study Site Name
Lehigh Valley
Lead Agency
Lehigh Valley Workforce Investment Board, Inc.
Area Served
Lehigh and Northampton Counties
High- Growth Industries
Health care and life sciences, diversified manufacturing and services, business and professional services, information and communication, financial services, and green or energy-related manufacturing and services ^a
Enrollment
65 youth
Post- SYEI Recovery Act Expenditures
\$495,583
Post- SYEI Organizational Structure
<p>The Lehigh Valley Workforce Investment Board, Inc. (WIB) contracts with the Private Industry Council of Lehigh Valley, Inc. (PIC) to serve as its fiscal and administrative agent and to operate its One-Stop Career Centers. The WIB contracted 12 providers to serve youth during summer 2009, and 2 additional providers to serve youth continuously from summer into the post-summer period. The WIB also contracted with the PIC to assist with the program administration and operate as its fiscal agent.</p> <p>In September 2009, the WIB had more Recovery Act funds remaining at the end of the SYEI than had been anticipated. The WIB contracted with the PIC to target out-of-school youth for the Post-SYEI, running from June 1, 2009, to June 30, 2010. The WIB also recontracted with three of its SYEI providers to serve youth from February 2010 until June 2010.</p>
Program Design
<p>One of the WIB's goals when designing its 2009 SYEI was to keep youth, especially older, out-of-school youth, engaged in activities and connected to the CareerLink® Lehigh Valley, the local Pennsylvania One-Stop Career Center. Toward this goal, the WIB partnered with one of the area's largest health systems to serve 12 older, out-of-school youth throughout the summer and into the post-summer period. It also partnered with a local school district to work continuously with 6 older, out-of-school youth with disabilities during both the SYEI and Post-SYEI.</p> <p>The WIB recontracted with providers to implement two additional Post-SYEI programs: (1) the PIC recruited 24 older, out-of-school youth, many from the SYEI, and others who recently solicited help at Pennsylvania CareerLink® Lehigh Valley provided them with work experiences and connections to training from September 2009 through March 2010; and (2) three SYEI providers reconnected with 16 in-school and 7 out-of-school youth who it had served in the SYEI. These youth participated in classroom-based work readiness training targeted toward pre-apprenticeship and green construction jobs throughout spring 2010.</p> <p>In-school youth made \$7.25 per hour and participated in the program for 9 hours per week. Older, out-of-school youth worked between 30 and 35 hours per week and earned \$8.00 per hour.</p>
Highlights
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Partnered with one of the area's largest health systems and employers to provide nine months of work-based learning to 12 out-of-school youth, 7 of whom were hired permanently at the end of the program. • Some providers used social networking tools, such as Facebook, to contact SYEI youth and reengage them in the Post-SYEI, as well as to stay in touch with them after the program and relay information about future services.

^a <http://www.careerlinklehighvalley.org/Portals/1/PDF%20Files/Outlook.pdf>

^b In-school youth served with Recovery Act funds in the Post-SYEI were not covered by program design or performance requirements waivers.

Table II.5. Los Angeles, California Post- SYEI Profile

Study Site Name
Los Angeles
Lead Agency
City of Los Angeles Workforce Investment Board
Area Served
City of Los Angeles and parts of Los Angeles County (43% of the county's residents), subregions as named by the Los Angeles Workforce Investment Board are the Valley; Hollywood and West Los Angeles City; Downtown Los Angeles; East Los Angeles City; South Los Angeles City; and Harbor Gateway.
High- Growth Industries
Education, health care, and social assistance; professional and business services; and government ^a
Enrollment
Post-SYEI: 850; Reconnections Academy: 1,162; Total: 2,012
Post- SYEI Recovery Act Expenditures
Post-SYEI: \$4.7 million; Reconnections Academy initiative: \$2 million of Recovery Act SYEI funds
Post- SYEI Organizational Structure
<p>The Los Angeles Community Development Department (CDD) is the administrative and fiscal authority for the City of Los Angeles Workforce Investment Board (City of LA WIB). CDD oversees operations at the city's 18 WIA Adult and Dislocated Worker WorkSource One-Stop Career Centers and 13 youth OneSource One-Stop Career Centers. The City of Los Angeles has been running a city- and county-funded summer youth employment program in collaboration with the CDD and City of LA WIB since 1999. In 2005 the mayor created an expanded summer youth employment program called Hire LA's Youth. The site placed 14,000 youth in partially subsidized private sector jobs during Hire LA's 2008 summer program.</p> <p>The site contracted with many of its WIA Adult, Youth and Dislocated Worker programs' providers to implement four youth employment programs with Recovery Act funds in 2009 and 2010: (1) the Summer Jump-Start, (2) the 2009 SYEI, (3) the 2009 Post-SYEI, and (4) the Reconnections Academy. The Post-SYEI and the Reconnections Academy provided youth paid work experiences in the post-summer period.</p>
Program Design
<p>The City of LA WIB recruited new older, out-of-school youth for paid work experience in the Post-SYEI and the Reconnections Academy. The Post-SYEI placed youth ages 18 to 24 based on youth preference with private, public, or nonprofit employers from July 1, 2009, to March 31, 2010.</p> <p>The Reconnections Academy is a partnership between the WIA Adult and Youth programs, leveraging funds from these sources in addition to Recovery Act and Energy Efficiency and Conservation Block grant funds. It serves youth ages 21 to 24, provides accredited sector-based training in either green industries (transportation, green retrofit, construction) or health care (certified nurse assistant, home health care, phlebotomy, emergency department aide, pharmacy technician, emergency medical technician, and medical billing and coding), paid work experience, and supports finding permanent employment using Recovery Act WIA Adult funds. The Reconnections Academy was designed as a Post-SYEI and SYEI 2010 and did not operate during the 2009 SYEI. It will serve youth from January 1, 2010, to June 30, 2011.</p> <p>In the Post-SYEI and the Reconnections Academy, youth earned \$8.00 and worked 20 hours per week.</p>
Highlights
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Reconnections Academy leverages Recovery Act, WIA Adult and Youth, and Energy Efficiency and Conservation Block grant funds. It targets high-growth sectors for youth employment. • The City of LA WIB uses remaining Recovery Act WIA Adult funds to provide Reconnections Academy youth with on-the-job training (OJT) opportunities with the goal of finding them permanent unsubsidized employment.

^a [http://www.calmis.ca.gov/file/indproj/LA\\$_highlights.pdf](http://www.calmis.ca.gov/file/indproj/LA$_highlights.pdf)

Table II.6. Milwaukee, Wisconsin Post- SYEI Profile

Study Site Name
Milwaukee
Lead Agency
Milwaukee Area Workforce Investment Board
Area Served
Milwaukee County
High- Growth Industries
Health care, education services, administration and support services, financial services, and green ^a
Enrollment
353 youth
Post- SYEI Recovery Act Expenditures
\$1.14 million in Recovery Act funds (also leveraged WIA Adult and Youth and state general funds)
Post- SYEI Organizational Structure
<p>The Milwaukee Area Workforce Investment Board (MAWIB) has operated the Earn and Learn summer youth employment program for more than 25 years. The program provides 14- to 20-year-olds an eight-week work experience. Administered by MAWIB and primarily funded by the city, Earn and Learn also receives funds from county agencies (for example, County Parks), Milwaukee Public Schools, and Wisconsin state general funds. MAWIB used Recovery Act funds to expand the size of the program and broaden its scope to include older, out-of-school youth.</p> <p>Although MAWIB contracts all of its WIA Adult and Youth programs to providers, it has its own staff to operate the Earn and Learn program. For the 2009 SYEI and Post-SYEI, MAWIB staff provided direct services and administered the program, contracting with employers to hire the youth. MAWIB staff provided case management services and matched youth with employers. During the 2009 SYEI, MAWIB contracted with 95 employers. For the Post-SYEI from October 1, 2009, to March 31, 2010, MAWIB extended the contracts of 3 of the 95 employers. These employers were selected because they were able to employ a large number of youth and had existing relationships with MAWIB.</p>
Program Design
<p>The primary goal of the Earn and Learn Post-SYEI was to provide older, out-of-school youth with more work experience. Although viewed as a continuation of the SYEI, MAWIB staff required that Post-SYEI participants acquire more skills through increased responsibilities at their worksites. MAWIB staff worked with Post-SYEI youth to develop more detailed ISSs, including employment and educational goals. Staff also spent more time with youth to understand their individual needs and connect them with WIB services. The Post-SYEI (and SYEI) experience is credited with increasing MAWIB's awareness of the need to place greater priority on connecting older, out-of-school youth—a group that had not received as much attention before these initiatives—with workforce services and programs.</p> <p>The timing and content of Post-SYEI activities varied across MAWIB's three Post-SYEI employers. For example, in order to combine Recovery Act youth funds with the Transitional Jobs Demonstration Project—created by the Wisconsin Department of Children and Families (DCF) and funded by the Recovery Act—one of the employers did not begin serving youth until January 2010. Because of the outdoor and seasonal nature of one employer's work, it served youth from October 2009 through December 2009 before the winter. Both of these employers focused on providing youth with work experience, whereas the third employer helped youth earn a certification before work.</p> <p>All youth earned between \$7.25 and \$7.75 per hour and worked up to 20 hours per week.</p>
Highlights
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The site leveraged Recovery Act funds with state general funds, Milwaukee Public Schools funds, and WIA formula funds during the SYEI, in order to operate a more robust Post-SYEI. • The site held a job fair in October to recruit older, out-of-school youth for the Post-SYEI. • One employer combined Recovery Act youth funds with Recovery Act funds for a Wisconsin DCF transitional jobs program to place youth in the post-summer period.

^a http://dwd.wisconsin.gov/oea/employment_projections/wisconsin/oea_16379_p.pdf

Table II.7. Minneapolis, Minnesota Post- SYEI Profile

Study Site Name
Minneapolis
Lead Agency
Minneapolis Employment & Training Program (METP)
Area Served
City of Minneapolis
High- Growth Industries
Health care, service industry, marketing, manufacturing, and green services ^a
Enrollment
310 youth
Post- SYEI Recovery Act Expenditures
\$469,909
Post- SYEI Organizational Structure
<p>The Minneapolis Employment and Training Program (METP) is the Minneapolis Workforce Council's administrative and fiscal agent. METP contracts with a series of community-based organizations to provide WIA Adult, Youth, and Dislocated Worker services throughout the city. Although adult customers primarily access employment and training services at centralized One-Stop Career Centers, most youth receive services from agencies with smaller offices throughout the city's neighborhoods.</p> <p>METP has operated the Step Up summer youth employment program since 2003, in partnership with the City of Minneapolis and local employers. The program provides work experience to youth ages 14 to 21. In spring 2009, METP contracted with 11 of its most experienced youth providers to implement the SYEI from May through August 2009. During that time METP also contracted with two additional providers to serve youth in the post-summer period from October 1, 2009, through June 30, 2010. When one of the two post-summer providers opted out of its contract, METP recontracted with seven of its SYEI providers to serve youth again from January through June 2010.</p>
Program Design
<p>METP focused the SYEI program on work experience and work readiness. Because METP wanted as many youth as possible to get work experiences using its Recovery Act funds, it required that Post-SYEI providers recruit new youth during the post-summer period.</p> <p>The site shifted its focus from in-school youth during the SYEI to older, out-of-school youth for the Post-SYEI. METP strongly encouraged Post-SYEI providers to serve at least 75 percent of older, out-of-school youth but permitted providers to serve in-school youth.^b Although most youth worked with employers across a range of industries, METP contracted with one provider to place youth exclusively at health care worksites and contracted with another provider to supply youth with intensive work-based training in the nonprofit sector; including lessons in program administration and mentoring community residents.</p> <p>Youth worked between 10 and 40 hours per week and made between \$7.25 and \$8.50 per hour, depending on the provider.</p>
Highlights
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The site's decentralized, community-based approach to SYEI and Post-SYEI service delivery enabled the program to connect with youth from ethnically diverse neighborhoods and enabled providers to engage small local businesses in the initiative. • Some Post-SYEI providers capitalized on the opportunity to supplement the education, supportive, or other services that youth were receiving through their other programs with Recovery Act Post-SYEI work experiences.

^a <http://www.positivelyminnesota.com/apps/lmi/oid/Results.aspx>

^b In-school youth served with Recovery Act funds in the Post-SYEI, including those served in Minneapolis's Post-SYEI, were not covered by program design and performance requirements waivers.

Table II.8. Orlando, Florida Post- SYEI Profile

Study Site Name
Orlando
Lead Agency
Workforce Central Florida
Area Served
Orange, Osceola, Seminole, Lake, and Sumter counties
High- Growth Industries
Film and digital media; modeling, simulation, and training; optics and photonics; aviation/aerospace; homeland security/defense; financial services technology (fi-tech); information technology; cleantech; and life science/biotechnology and green services ^a
Enrollment
105 youth
Post- SYEI Recovery Act Expenditures
\$718,538 (Site spent 100% of Recovery Act WIA Youth funds during the SYEI and leveraged Recovery Act WIA Adult funds to pay wages of older youth's continued work experiences in the Post-SYEI.)
Post- SYEI Organizational Structure
<p>Workforce Central Florida (WCF) is the WIB for the greater Orlando region, serving five counties. WCF provides direct services for WIA Adult, Dislocated Worker, and Youth services.</p> <p>WCF operated the 2009 SYEI and Post-SYEI. Staff included four customer service representatives, two special projects coordinators, 24 career specialists, and an educational assessment coordinator. Staff provided case management and worksite monitoring. The educational assessment coordinator assisted youth with the development of their portfolios in the first six weeks of the program.</p>
Program Design
<p>WCF developed a two-track system for serving youth during the SYEI and Post-SYEI. These tracks were targeted to youth based on age.</p> <p>Track 1 was intended for younger, in-school youth (ages 16 to 21). The program provided paid youth experience at primarily public and nonprofit employers. This program operated from June to July 2009.</p> <p>Track 2 targeted older, out-of-school youth ages 22 to 24. Although originally designed for this older age group, some 18- to 21-year-olds were admitted into Track 2. WCF designed this program to provide 28 consecutive weeks of work experience, from June 22, 2009, to December 31, 2009. In addition, this program track aimed to connect these older youth with private employers in high-growth and high-demand industries, such as health care; green jobs; and science, technology, engineering, and mathematics (STEM).</p> <p>Youth from both tracks worked 35 hours per week and earned \$8.00 per hour. The program focused solely on work and work readiness and did not include any additional training or education activities.</p>
Highlights
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● The site focused on recruiting private employers in health care, green jobs, and STEM for Track 2, older, out-of-school youth. ● Orlando used wage incentives based on performance evaluations by worksite supervisors to mimic on-the-job performance evaluations. ● The site employed a job summit to match employers with youth. The day-long job summit included break-out groups that rotated to various work readiness workshops and a job fair at which youth were matched with employers. Employers were given "referral sheets" corresponding to the number of positions for which they were approved to hire and youth gave a 30-second pitch to the employers. Employers gave the youth they liked a referral sheet indicating that a "hire" had occurred. The youth were then responsible for turning in that referral sheet to indicate that a match had been made.

^a<http://www.orlandoedc.com/core/file.php?loc=/Solodev/clients/solodev/Enterprise%20Main/Documents/EDC%20Documents/Data%20Center/Metro%20Orlando%20Profile.pdf>

Table II.9. San Bernardino, California Post- SYEI Profile

Study Site Name
San Bernardino
Lead Agency
San Bernardino County Department of Workforce Development
Area Served
San Bernardino County
High- Growth Industries
Education services, health care and social assistance, professional and business services, wholesale trade, leisure and hospitality, transportation and logistics, manufacturing, and green jobs ^a
Enrollment
437 youth
Post- SYEI Recovery Act Expenditures
\$242,351
Post- SYEI Organizational Structure
The San Bernardino Department of Workforce Development (WDD) is the administrative and fiscal agent for the San Bernardino County WIB. WDD contracted with all 11 of its regular WIA Youth providers and four additional providers to serve youth from May through September 2009 to operate its 2009 SYEI. To operate its Post-SYEI, WDD extended the contracts of 10 SYEI providers through a modification. In order to have their contracts extended, providers had to document how SYEI youth would acquire additional skills and benefit from the extended Post-SYEI work experience. WDD staff provided technical assistance to contracted providers in the design of their SYEI programs.
Program Design
The site viewed the Post-SYEI as a continuation of the SYEI and embraced the same goal of providing a meaningful work experience to youth. WDD gave providers considerable flexibility to design their SYEI and Post-SYEI programs. Some focused on operating stand-alone work experience programs, whereas others focused on offering training programs and academic opportunities connected to work or credential programs.
At the end of the SYEI, WDD hosted a youth resource fair (called "Y4") to connect youth to WDD programs, educational opportunities, and employers. At this event, WDD advertised the extension of the SYEI from October 1, 2009, to March 31, 2010, for older, out-of-school youth. Most of the Post-SYEI participants transitioned into the Post-SYEI and continued their subsidized work experience positions.
The site used the Post-SYEI as an opportunity to introduce 22- to 24-year-olds with the Employment Resource Centers (ERCs), San Bernardino's One-Stop Career Centers. All Post-SYEI participants were required to register at an ERC by the conclusion of the program.
Youths' salaries and work hours varied by Post-SYEI provider. For example, one provider paid youth \$9.00 per hour and allowed them to work for 40 hours per week. Another provider paid youth \$8.50 per hour and allowed them to work 20 hours per week.
Highlights
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The site connected youth to the ERCs and transitioned some Post-SYEI participants into WIA Adult and Youth programs. • Providers assisted youth in identifying and following a career pathway, linking work experience to education and certificate programs. Career pathways included hospitality, transportation/logistics, construction, culinary arts, and auto mechanics. • One of the providers used incentives, such as gift cards, to purchase uniforms or work clothes at the start of employment, and other incentives for completion of the work readiness course, or for successful completion of both work readiness and work experience.

^a [http://www.calmis.ca.gov/file/indproj/rive\\$ highlights.pdf](http://www.calmis.ca.gov/file/indproj/rive$ highlights.pdf)

III. PROGRAM DESIGN, FUNDING, AND ORGANIZATION

The major thrust of Recovery Act youth activities in summer 2009 focused on mounting large-scale work experience programs, often from scratch. The Post-SYEI occurred in the immediate wake of the resource-intensive SYEI implementation effort, which greatly influenced the Post-SYEI funding levels, organizational structure, and program content. In this chapter, we describe the basic parameters of the sites and key factors that shaped program designs.

Key Findings

- **Sites welcomed the opportunity to target their Post-SYEIs at serving older, out-of-school youth, and to tailor program services to meet this group’s specific needs.** All eight states responded to the Recovery Act’s expanded age eligibility criteria, coupled with ETA’s emphasis on prioritizing these youth for WIA services, by targeting their programs to older, out-of-school youth. Most sites focused on recruiting private sector worksites and giving these youth real-life work experiences that increased their marketability to future employers and let them earn a pay check.
- **All aspects of the Post-SYEI were heavily influenced by the program design and implementation of the sites’ 2009 SYEI.** Most sites relied on a subset of their SYEI providers, youth, and employers to implement a smaller-scale version of their SYEI in the post-summer period.
- **Half of the study sites reported leveraging Recovery Act funding with monies from a variety of other federal, state, and local funding sources.** Leveraging funding enabled these sites to operate more robust subsidized work experience programs in the summer and post-summer periods than possible by relying solely on Recovery Act funds.
- **Some sites capitalized on their SYEIs and Post-SYEIs to partner with new providers.** The need to mount a new work experience initiative or greatly expand an existing effort within a short time frame motivated some sites to reach out to service providers within the community with whom they had little to no previous interaction and to continue to build on that experience beyond the post-summer period.

A. Program Design Features

1. Recovery Act Provisions and ETA Waivers Reinforced Linking Out-of-School Youth with Paid Work Experiences

The Recovery Act and subsequent ETA guidance sought to ensure that older, out-of-school youth gain access to and benefit from the expansion of subsidized employment opportunities. The waivers available to states for spending Recovery Act youth funding during the post-summer period (October 1, 2009, through March 31, 2010) applied only to older youth ages 18 to 24 who participated exclusively in work experience. For that particular target population engaged in that one type of program activity, ETA extended the same level of flexibility regarding performance measures

and program design requirements that were provided to both in-school and out-of-school youth during the summer period. According to ETA, 44 states received program performance waivers (including all 8 of the study sites' states) and 31 received program design waivers (including 3 of the study sites' states) (U.S. Department of Labor 2010a). The Recovery Act's expansion of the maximum age eligibility to include 22- to 24-year-olds not currently employed or enrolled in postsecondary education further underscored the importance placed on reaching and serving older youth disconnected from the labor market and educational system.

Staff across the eight study sites reported that the waivers were absolutely vital for the continuation of youth programming using Recovery Act funding beyond the summer months. They viewed the opportunity to provide youth with a stand-alone work experience unencumbered by the program elements required under the WIA Youth Program as a positive addition to their regular service offerings. Although some sites provided youth with training or links to other educational opportunities, most used the waiver flexibility to focus on providing high-quality and, in many cases, extended work experiences for participants.

There was widespread consensus among program staff that the work experience opportunity provided through the Post-SYEI was responsive to the interests and immediate needs of older, out-of-school youth—building work readiness skills, a strong work-based learning experience, connections to area employers, and wages—and that it served as a useful bridge between the youth and permanent employment or transitions into other workforce preparation activities. Several sites also noted that the older, out-of-school youth participants were not just high school dropouts; many had diplomas or general equivalency diplomas (GEDs) or were recent graduates of college or other postsecondary training institutions, but still could not find employment during these lean, recessionary times.

There was also strong support across the study sites for expanding the age eligibility upward to include disconnected young adults ages 22 to 24 who are not in school or at work. As an administrator at one site put it, “[22- to 24-year-olds] are no longer youth, but they aren't adults ... they have a tendency to fall through the cracks.” All eight sites targeted older, out-of-school youth, and two sites specifically designed special program components to meet the needs of this population.

- Los Angeles modeled one of its two Post-SYEIs (called “Reconnections Academy”) on a training and work experience program to guide out-of-school youth ages 18 to 21 into health care careers that was developed before the recession and the enactment of the Recovery Act. Upon learning that Recovery Act funding was forthcoming in the spring of 2009, the site accelerated its plans to retarget the program to serve youth ages 21 to 24 and added a target on employment in green industries. Los Angeles' interest in developing effective service strategies targeted to older youth stemmed from a WIB-commissioned report that found that a disproportionate number of the area's youth, 20 percent of 16- to 24-year-olds, were neither in school nor working in the spring of 2000 (Fogg and Harrington 2004), and a 2009 follow-up to the report indicating that this age group was severely affected by the recent recession (Harrington et al. 2009).
- Orlando recruited youth and employers along two different tracks. As originally designed, Track 1 focused on summer youth employment for youth ages 16 to 21, whereas Track 2 included significantly longer work experiences for out-of-school youth ages 22 to 24 that extended from the summer into the post-summer period. When

implemented, the importance of the age criteria diminished somewhat in that out-of-school youth younger than age 22 who were considered good candidates for an extended work “internship” and could be placed in the Track 2 program. Via an online application process, the site identified private sector employers from targeted industries such as health care, green jobs, and Science, Technology, Engineering, and Math (STEM) who were willing to host youth for 28 consecutive weeks. Older, out-of-school Track 2 participants were then connected with these worksites at the site’s job matching summit at the beginning of the SYEI period.

2. Most Sites Extended the Work Experiences of their Older, Out-of-School SYEI Youth

Although older, out-of-school youth were the de facto target group, sites had flexibility to decide whether they would use the post-summer period to serve the SYEI participants for a longer period or if they would use the Post-SYEI as an opportunity to recruit and serve a new cohort of youth. Most sites used the post-summer period to provide their SYEI youth with extended work experiences. As described more fully later in this chapter, some sites were able to provide a set of older youth with one continuous work experience that began in the summer and stretched into the post-summer period without interruption. Other sites stopped the work experience at the end of the summer, then resumed it for a portion of their SYEI participants in the post-summer period. Under either of these scenarios, sites viewed the Post-SYEI as an extension of the SYEI that provided older, out-of-school youth the opportunity to obtain substantial work experiences to put on their resumes and market to potential future employers.

Two sites planned from the outset to recruit only new youth for their Post-SYIEs. Their rationale for targeting new youth was driven by the desire to use the one-time infusion of Recovery Act funds to engage as many youth as possible in a work experience. Engaging new youth not only helped the sites connect with as many youth as possible (and thus introduce them to local youth services and service providers), it also spread the benefits of the Recovery Act funding more widely so that additional older, out-of-school youth could essentially participate in and benefit from the same level and type of work experience afforded youth participants during the summer months. Although both sites targeted and primarily served older, out-of-school youth, providers in these two sites were allowed to include some in-school youth in their Post-SYIEI.

3. Post-SYIEIs Were Substantially Smaller Than SYIEIs; Sites Had Exhausted Most of Their Recovery Act Youth Funding During the Summer Period

The Recovery Act provided a significant one-time infusion of funding available to support subsidized work experiences for youth; the total appropriation for WIA Youth activities in fiscal year 2009 was \$2.1 billion, of which \$1.2 billion was appropriated under the Recovery Act. Although permitted to spend their Recovery Act youth funding through June 30, 2011, states heeded ETA guidance urging states and local areas to “use as much of [their Recovery Act] funds as possible” to provide meaningful work experiences to youth during the summer period (Department of Labor 2009). The earlier 2009 SYEI study found that all 20 sites reported that spending their Recovery Act money quickly was one of their primary goals during summer 2009; in fact, 16 sites planned to spend at least 75 percent of their allocations on summer activities and 8 of these sites intended to spend all of their money by the fall (Bellotti et al. 2010). This meant that only a relatively small share of total Recovery Act youth funding remained available to spend on post-summer youth activities. Consequently, the size of the Post-SYIEIs, as measured in terms of the number of participants enrolled, was also considerably smaller than their summer counterparts.

The sites received between \$900,000 and \$20,300,000 in Recovery Act youth funds in the spring of 2009 (Table III.1). Similar to the 20 sites in the earlier SYEI study, the eight sites in this Post-SYEI study focused on spending their Recovery Act funds during the summer period with six of the eight sites spending approximately 70 percent or more of their allocations by September 30, 2010. Although most of the study sites had approximately 30 percent of their funds remaining with which to implement a Post-SYEI, three had 8 percent or less remaining with which to do so.

Table III.1. Recovery Act 2009 SYEI and 2009 Post- SYEI Spending Reported by Study Sites

	Total Recovery Act Allocation	2009 SYEI Expenditures (Amount/Percentage of Total)	2009 Post-SYEI Expenditures (Amount/Percentage of Total)
Bangor ^a	\$919,114	\$353,084 (38%)	\$303,185 (33%)
Greenville ^b	\$3,600,000	\$3,220,000 (89%)	\$250,000 (7%)
Lehigh Valley ^c	\$1,910,936	\$1,333,324 (70%)	\$495,583 (26%)
Los Angeles ^d	\$20,300,000	\$11,100,000 (55%)	\$6,700,000 (33%)
Milwaukee	\$3,800,000	\$2,660,000 (70%)	\$1,140,000 (30%)
Minneapolis ^e	\$1,649,235	\$1,096,454 (66%)	\$469,909 (28%)
Orlando ^f	\$3,084,245	\$3,084,245 (100%)	—
San Bernardino ^g	\$7,100,000	\$6,857,649 (97%)	\$242,351 (3%)

Note: Expenditures as reported by sites during study site visits in October and November 2010.

^a Site spent the remaining \$262,845 on other youth activities that continued beyond the end of its Post-SYEI.

^b Site reported having approximately \$130,000 in Recovery Act funds remaining as of December 31, 2010.

^c The remaining balance of \$82,029 has been obligated to support other youth programs at the site.

^d Site spent its \$20.3 million in Recovery Act funds on four programs: (1) \$2.5 million on the Summer Jump-Start (May 1, 2009, to June 30, 2009); (2) \$8.6 million on the SYEI (July 1, 2009, to September 30, 2009); (3) \$4.7 million on the Post-SYEI (October 1, 2009, to March 31, 2010); and (4) \$2.0 million on the ongoing Reconnections Academy that began on October 1, 2010. The balance of \$17.8 million underwrites city, program, and administrative costs across programs.

^e Site contributed the remaining \$82,872 to special projects ending no later than June 30, 2011.

^f Site exhausted 100% of its youth Recovery Act funds during the SYEI and leveraged \$718,538 in Adult WIA Recovery Act funds to pay the wages of older youth's continued work experiences in the Post-SYEI.

^g Site provided total allocation and SYEI expenditures; Post-SYEI expenditures were estimated accordingly.

4. Half of the Study Sites Leveraged Other Funds to Support Post-SYEIs

Half of the study sites reported leveraging Recovery Act funding with monies from a variety of other sources, including WIA Adult formula funds, WIA discretionary grants, Vocational

Rehabilitation funding, Energy Efficiency and Conservation Block Grant funds, funds from local government revenues, and funds from local school districts. Leveraging funding enabled these sites to operate more robust subsidized work experience programs in the summer and post-summer periods than possible by relying solely on Recovery Act funds.

- Milwaukee leveraged funds from multiple sources, including a discretionary grant from the governor and city funds from the mayor of Milwaukee, in order to expand its existing summer program to more youth. Milwaukee Public Schools also contributed money to the program to support the summer work experiences of its current students and the County Parks contributed funds to subsidize work experiences at its sites for youth who might not meet WIA's or the Recovery Act's eligibility requirements. Combining funds in this way resulted in the site having Recovery Act money remaining in the fall with which to offer a Post-SYEI. Upon recognizing that it could offer a Post-SYEI, the site was able to leverage additional WIA discretionary funds from the governor and WIA formula funds to support the program's continuation.
- Los Angeles implemented its Reconnections Academy using a combination of funding sources that included WIA Adult and Youth, Recovery Act Adult and Youth, and the Energy Efficiency and Conservation Block Grant. By leveraging funds through a newly established partnership between the WIA Adult and Youth programs, the site prepared youth ages 21 to 24 for careers in health care and green industries.
- Orlando leveraged Recovery Act adult funds in order to offer Track 2 youth ages 22 to 24 work experiences that extended beyond the SYEI. The site used adult Recovery Act funds to pay these youths' wages during the post-summer period.
- Greenville leveraged Vocational Rehabilitation funding to pay for support services, such as appropriate footwear or other work accommodations, for youth with disabilities.

The remaining study sites did not leverage funding from other sources. Administrators from one site noted that they intentionally did not leverage funding because they wanted to “use the [Recovery Act] funds to serve youth who aren't being served through any other funding stream;” staff at another site indicated that there was little incentive to leverage additional funding when the immediate challenge was to mount a program large enough to utilize the new Recovery Act funding fully. One site reported being under the impression—perhaps because Recovery Act expenditures were reported separately from regular WIA program expenditures—that the Recovery Act funds were not supposed to be mixed with other funds.

Regardless of whether sites were able to leverage additional funds for their Post-SYIEs, all served far fewer youth in the post-summer period than they had during the summer (see Table III.2). The number of youth served varied by study site, ranging from 40 youth participants in Bangor to more than 2,000 in Los Angeles. In the eight study sites, approximately 3,374 youth participated in the Post-SYIE. In most sites, SYIE programs were between two and six times larger than the Post-SYIEs, but in two sites the SYIEs were more than 10 times larger than the Post-SYIEs. Most sites reported that they served as many youth as possible in the Post-SYIE with the available funds. For example, Milwaukee reported serving more than 4,500 youth in the SYIE and only about 350 youth during the post-summer period.

Table III.2. Program Enrollment Reported by Study Sites

Site	SYEI	Post-SYEI	Youth Also Participated in SYEI
Bangor	213	40	Yes, most youth
Greenville	1,455	125	Yes
Lehigh Valley	445	65	Yes, most youth
Los Angeles ^a	5,550	2,012	No
Milwaukee ^b	4,580	353	Yes
Minneapolis ^c	452	310	No
Orlando	1,200	105	Yes
San Bernardino	1,836	437	Yes

^a The site served youth through four programs with Recovery Act funds: (1) 1,250 youth in Summer Jump-Start (May 1, 2009, to June 30, 2009); (2) 4,300 youth in the SYEI (July 1, 2009, to September 30, 2009); (3) 850 youth in the Post-SYEI (October 1, 2009 to March 31, 2010); and (4) 1,162 as of October 2010 in the ongoing Reconnections Academy, a program that used some Recovery Act funding and continued beyond the post-summer period.

^b The worksites of approximately 1,800 of the site's 4,580 SYEI participants were paid for with Recovery Act funds. The site funded the additional worksites with money from a discretionary grant from the governor, city funds from the mayor of Milwaukee, money from Milwaukee Public Schools, and funds from the County Parks.

^c The site served an additional 1,300 youth in its annual summer jobs program, Step Up, during summer 2009.

5. Program Timing and Duration Varied Depending Primarily on Whether Sites Planned to Implement a Post-SYEI

Local areas heavily invested staff time and resources into launching and operating SYEIs in their communities. The 2009 SYEI evaluation that included site visits to 20 local areas described in detail the “enormous” effort that it took to launch the SYEI. Sites had only about two or three months between when they received ETA program guidance in mid-March to when they started serving youth in late May or early June (Bellotti et al. 2010). During these initial months sites had to set local priorities, design their programs, contract with providers, and recruit youth and employers. Sites sought to spend all or at least most of their Recovery Act allocation during the 2009 summer months. In comparison, the Post-SYEIs were substantially smaller in size and shorter in duration.

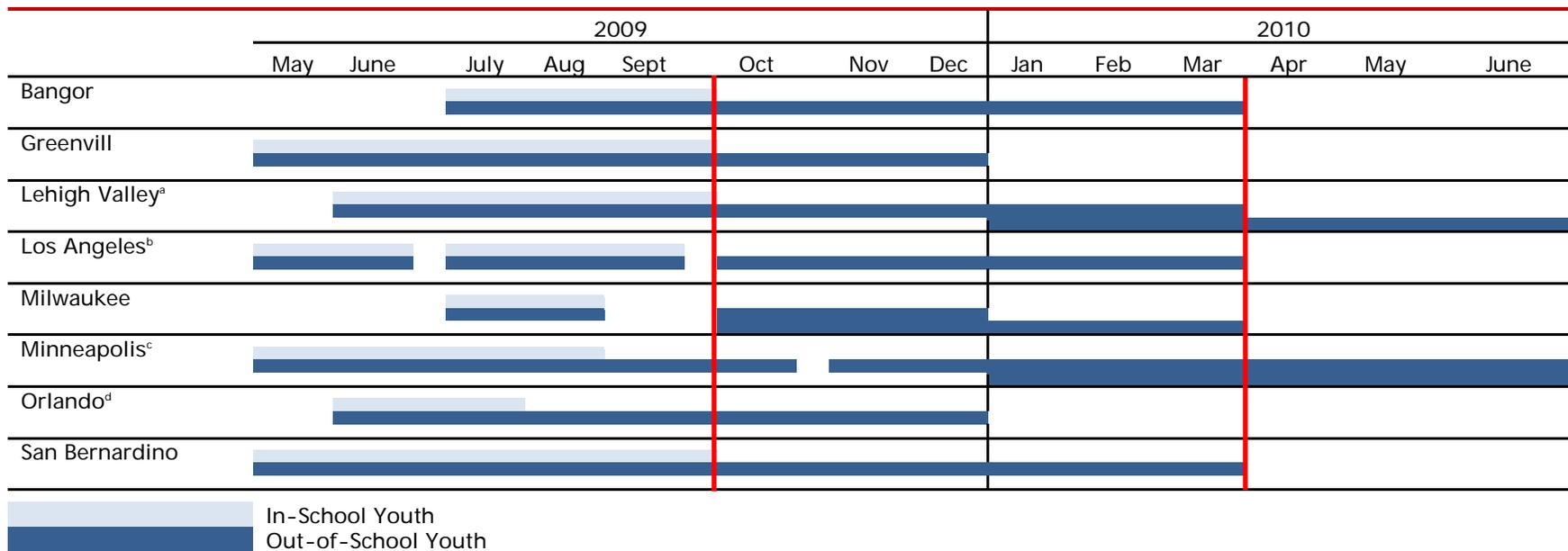
Although ETA defined the Recovery Act post-summer period, for purposes of the waivers, as October 1, 2009, through March 31, 2010, the duration and timing of the Post-SYEI varied considerably across sites and in some instances within sites, in part because sites began to plan for the Post-SYEI at different times and had differing amounts of funding left over from the summer to spend. Half of the sites also planned their Post-SYEIs during the spring of 2009. While planning for their SYEIs, these sites reserved a small portion of funding to support post-summer youth activities and issued requests for proposals and contracts with providers that included working beyond the summer months. Because the remaining four sites intended to spend all of their Recovery Act youth funds during summer 2009, they did not initially plan to implement a Post-SYEI. Their primary focus was on getting the SYEI up and running and on using Recovery Act funding to provide as many youth as possible with work experiences during the summer. Despite successfully mounting large-scale SYEI programs, these sites were still not able to spend their entire

allocations during the summer period. When assessing SYEI program expenditures in July and August, they realized that they would have Recovery Act funds remaining with which to serve youth in the Post-SYEI.

As shown in Figure III.1, older, out-of-school youth from most sites, including some that did not initially plan a Post-SYEI, continued at their SYEI worksites through December 2009, March 2010, or even June 2010. As discussed in more detail in Chapter IV, this meant that some youth worked anywhere from 5 to 11 consecutive months. Some youth, providers, and employers from three sites, however, experienced a programming interruption while their WIBs or lead agencies mobilized to offer a Post-SYEI and a few sites recruited new youth.

Although sites knew by July or August that they would be providing youth with work experiences during the post-summer period, they needed additional planning time. Specifically, they had to determine if all or some of their SYEI service providers would continue to be involved in operating the program, how large the programs would be, and for how long they could operate before running out of funding. The WIBs and lead agencies from two of these sites met with summer providers before the conclusion of the SYEI to gauge their interest in continuing to serve youth in the post-summer months. Providers that were interested in continuing to work with youth submitted brief program narratives outlining their Post-SYEI activities and the number of youth they would serve. This process created an interruption between the end of the SYEI and the beginning of the Post-SYEI; the interruption lasted about four months in one site and about 45 days in another.

Figure III.1. Timing and Target Populations for Study Sites' SYEI and Post- SYEI



Note: The first red line indicates the end of the summer period as defined by ETA (September 30, 2009), the second notes the expiration of the performance reporting waiver (March 31, 2010), and the third marks the end of the Recovery Act youth programs period as defined by ETA (June 30, 2010).

^a Three providers served youth (n = 28) continuously from June 1, 2009, through March 31, 2009. Upon realizing it had Recovery Act Funds available to serve additional youth in the post-summer period, the site recontracted with three additional providers to serve some of their SYEI youth again from December 2009 through March 31, 2010. Most of site's Post-SYEI participants were out-of-school youth, but a few were in-school youth.

^b The site ran four programs with Recovery Act funds: (1) Summer Jump-Start (May 1, 2009, to June 30, 2009); (2) the SYEI (July 1, 2009, to September 30, 2009); (3) the Post-SYEI (October 1, 2009, to March 31, 2010); and (4) the ongoing Reconnections Academy that began on October 1, 2010. The sites recruited new youth for each program.

^c The site contracted with two providers to serve youth in the Post-SYEI. When one of the two providers withdrew from its contract, the site recontracted with its seven SYEI providers to recruit new youth from January 2010 through June 30, 2010. Site administrators strongly encouraged providers to recruit out-of-school youth for the Post-SYEI, but permitted them to enroll some in-school youth in the program as well.

^d In-school youth were recruited into the site's Track 1 program, starting June 22, 2009, and ending July 31, 2009. Older, out-of-school Track 2 youth also started the program on June 22, 2009, but did not complete their work experiences until more than six months later, on December 31, 2009.

B. Organization

1. Large-Scale 2009 SYEIs Influenced Sites' Post-SYEI Service Delivery Structure

The sites largely replicated the organization of their SYEIs to run their Post-SYEIs, but relied on fewer providers to help operate the programs. By the fall, sites had settled into their program operations and used their Post-SYEIs to keep that momentum going; staff from a number of sites shared one administrator's sentiment, "by the fall the dust had settled." There was little time or incentive to make any major changes to the service delivery structure between summer and post-summer other than to scale it down. Only two sites changed their service delivery models between the SYEI and Post-SYEI. The WIBs in the other sites continued to rely on strong partnerships with their summer providers to serve youth or, in two sites, served youth directly.

As with the WIA Youth Program, ETA gave sites flexibility to organize their Recovery Act programs to best suit the needs of youth in their local areas. In the eight Post-SYEI study sites, the Local Workforce Investment Board (LWIB) or its designated administrative agency (referred to as the lead agency) either directly implemented its Post-SYEIs or contracted with one or more providers to do so (see Table III.3). The sites typically used the same model to deliver WIA Youth services.

Table III.3. Study Site Post- SYEI Organization

	No Contracts	Multiple Contracts	SYEI	Post-SYEI
Bangor	✓		1	0
Greenville		✓	7	5
Lehigh Valley		✓	15	6
Los Angeles ^a		✓	16	16
Milwaukee ^b		✓	95	3
Minneapolis		✓	11	8
Orlando	✓		0	0
San Bernardino		✓	15	10

^a The site relied on its WIA Youth providers and many of its WIA Adult Program providers to operate its four Recovery Act youth programs: Summer Jump-Start, SYEI, Post-SYEI, and Reconnections Academy. All 11 of the providers that operate the site's 13 youth One-Stop Career Centers (called Youth One Source Centers) implemented the Post-SYEI. Eight of these providers partnered with eight WIA Adult providers to run the Reconnections Academy.

^b The WIB contracted directly with employers during its SYEI and Post-SYEI.

In most sites, the WIB or lead agency capitalized on its strong existing relationships with community-based organizations, schools districts, and city departments to serve youth during the summer and into the post-summer period. At least some providers in all of these sites were also experienced WIA Adult or Youth program operators. Providers were responsible for nearly all aspects of program operations, including recruiting youth and employers, matching youth to worksites, providing youth with work readiness training, monitoring worksites, and issuing youth paychecks. The WIB in Milwaukee (see Box III.1) recruited youth and tracked their progress, but contracted directly with employers to provide youth with work experiences.

Box III.1. Contracting Directly with Employers

Milwaukee

The Milwaukee Area WIB has been running the *Earn & Learn* youth summer jobs program in partnership with the Milwaukee mayor's office for the past 26 years. Although the WIB contracts with a collection of providers to implement its WIA Youth Program, it directly administers the summer work experience program each year. Each April the WIB solicits worksite proposals from area employers (including nonprofits, community-based organizations, and private employers); it directly contracts with these employers to provide youth with work experiences from June through August. The WIB maintained this long-standing approach to summer programming in summer 2009 and contracted with 95 employers to host more than 4,500 youth. Though most employers put youth to work at their sites, some nonprofits actually served youth in a similar manner as a WIA Youth provider might. These "employer" providers assessed youth and provided them with work readiness training before connecting them with other employers for their work experiences. The WIB extended the contracts of three such employers to continue in this role during the post-summer period.

Providers from two study sites were contracted to offer specific services to particular groups of youth. The WIB in one site contracted with a local technical college, area health system, local labor union and apprenticeship provider, and local arts program to provide targeted work readiness training and work experiences for Post-SYEI youth (and also SYEI youth). For example, the technical college introduced youth to green construction concepts and the labor union provided youth with courses in trades math in preparation for industry tests, such as the apprenticeship exam. At the Los Angeles study site (see Box III.2), the WIB contracted with its WIA Adult providers to connect youth with training providers and contracted with its WIA Youth providers to place them in related work experiences.

Most of the study sites extended the contracts of some of their SYEI providers to implement the Post-SYEI. Because they served fewer youth in the post-summer, sites did not need all of their SYEI providers to continue working with youth in the post-summer period. Sites that contracted with multiple providers had fewer providers in the summer than in the post-summer. These sites extended the contracts of providers who (1) were doing a particularly good job, (2) had not spent all of their money during the summer, or (3) expressed interest in serving youth during the post-summer period. In general, each site contracted between 5 and 13 of these organizations to implement the Post-SYEI.

Only two sites altered the organization of the service delivery structure between the summer and post-summer periods. At one site, the change was made for reasons unrelated to the implementation of Recovery Act initiatives. In the spring of 2009, the WIB's fiscal and administrative agent decided to bring direct service delivery in-house. This change did not go into effect until the end of the summer. In the interim, a provider was contracted to run the SYEI. At the end of the summer, the lead agency assumed responsibility for all program activities (for example, determining eligibility, assessment, ISS, and worksite monitoring) and began to work directly with the youth. Program administrators and frontline staff viewed the decision to move responsibility for carrying out the SYEI in-house positively and agreed that the Post-SYEI ran more smoothly. Although different organizations served youth in the SYEI and Post-SYEI, site staff noted that youth and employers barely noticed a difference.

The WIB from the other site relied heavily on its fiscal and administrative agent to oversee SYEI implementation. In this role, the administrative agent provided technical assistance to contractors, managed youth outreach and intake, matched youth to providers, collected timesheets, and oversaw provider's SYEI contracts. Because the WIB had never contracted with some of the site's SYEI providers before, it viewed the Post-SYEI as an opportunity to cultivate relationships with these providers and closely monitor their performance to inform future contracting decisions. The administrative agent remained involved in program operations during the Post-SYEI, but more so as a provider than as a manager.

2. Some Sites Partnered with New Providers in their SYEIs and Post-SYEIs

In some sites, the implementation of the SYEI and Post-SYEI programs led to new or closer partnerships with service providers and the business community. Two sites contracted with new providers for the first time during the SYEI and continued to cultivate these relationships during the post-summer period. A WIB official in one site commented, "The Recovery Act was a nice test of new providers," and as a result of its performance during the SYEI and Post-SYEI, the site contracted with some of these new providers again in 2010 SYEI. One site also used the Post-SYEI to work more closely with its contracted providers and to become more active in day-to-day program operations, including serving as a worksite for a group of youth while it oversaw overall program operations. Los Angeles used the Recovery Act not as a way to partner with new providers, but as a way to develop a new partnership between its WIA Adult and Youth providers (see Box III.2).

Box III.2. Capitalizing on Provider Strengths and Leveraging Funds to Develop Career Pathways into High-Growth and High-Demand Industries for Older Youth

Los Angeles

Los Angeles' Reconnections Academy offers a particularly interesting example of a newly established partnership between the WIA Adult and Youth programs designed to prepare older youth for careers in health care and green industries. Using a combination of regular WIA Adult and Youth, Recovery Act WIA Adult and Youth, and Recovery Act Energy and Efficiency Block Grant funds, WIA Adult providers place youth in training programs and WIA Youth providers connect these youth to employers for paid work experience. After the paid work experience, providers help the youth find permanent jobs. If youth are unable to find employment, they are connected with an employer for on-the-job training. Before this program, Los Angeles' WIA Adult and Youth programs reportedly operated separately with minimal interaction. WIA Adult providers serve as the lead contractors and WIA Youth providers as subcontractors; WIA Youth provider staff noted that they would have preferred a collaboration that put them "on equal footing." Additionally, staff reported that accounting for all the different funding streams and meeting all the varying performance reporting requirements has been a very laborious process.

IV. THE POST- SYEI YOUTH EXPERIENCE

Most sites used the Post-SYEI to extend SYEI participants' work experiences into the post-summer period, providing older, out-of-school youth additional time to build hard and soft work skills. The longer work experience enabled providers to strengthen their connection and rapport with these youth and expand their network of public, private, and nonprofit employers. This chapter describes all major aspects of the Post-SYEI youth experience, including youth participant and employer recruitment strategies, youth work readiness activities and measures, key features of the worksite and work experience, and youths' transition activities following the end of their Post-SYEI work experience.

Key Findings

- **Youth demand for the SYEI and Post-SYEI frequently exceeded sites' enrollment capacity.** Sites reported that many more eligible youth than could be served were interested in participating in a work experience position under both the SYEI and post-SYEI. Sites were able to tap into this demand through initial successful outreach and recruitment strategies that included successful media campaigns and partnering with other youth-serving community agencies. All the study sites achieved maximum enrollment levels given available funding.
- **Real-life work experience was the cornerstone of the Post-SYEI.** Sites focused on connecting youth to meaningful work experiences that aligned closely with their interests and goals, rather than on providing them with training, or academic enrichment activities. There was widespread consensus among program staff that the work experience opportunity provided through the Post-SYEI was responsive to the interests and immediate needs of older, out-of-school youth—building work readiness skills, a strong work-based learning experience, connections to area employers, and wages—and that it served as a useful bridge between the youth and permanent employment or transitions into other workforce preparation activities.
- **Extending youth work experiences into the post-summer period benefited youth, employers, and providers.** The longer work experience provided an opportunity for youth to gain additional skills and responsibility, for employers to continue training potential future unsubsidized employees, and for providers to strengthen their relationships with youth and worksites.
- **Sites capitalized on the 2009 SYEI and Post-SYEI to engage and build relationships with new employers, particularly with those in the private sector.** The scale of the SYEI forced sites to cast a wide net during employer recruitment; for most sites this meant connecting with the private sector to a greater extent than ever before. Sites did not undertake a new employer recruitment effort for the Post-SYEI, relying instead on continuing to use employers who participated in the SYEI.
- **Placing youth at work sites in high-growth and high-demand industries, specifically health care, was a focus at all sites.** Sites indicated that health care was a high-growth, high-demand industry in their area and placed youth at work sites such as hospitals and physicians offices. Some sites combined health care training with paid work experience to create a defined pathway into the field for out-of school youth.

A. Youth Recruitment

It was not necessary for most study sites to recruit youth for their Post-SYEIs because they transitioned participants—particularly older, out-of-school youth—directly from the SYEI into the Post-SYEI. The only two sites that recruited new youth did not change their recruitment methods from those used during the summer. In sites where participants experienced a gap in time between the SYEI and Post-SYEI, staff employed a variety of strategies to reconnect with these youth and to reengage them in their SYEI work experience position. This section describes site participant recruitment efforts, regardless of when they took place.

1. Sites Employed Multiple Strategies to Recruit Youth

All sites relied on multiple recruitment strategies. Standard recruitment methods already reported in the 2009 SYEI study (Bellotti et al. 2010), included formal media campaigns on local television and radio and distributing flyers around the community in places that youth were likely to frequent (for example, community agencies, schools, and storefronts). Recruitment efforts were also helped by word of mouth to get the news out.

Sites relied on their partnerships with other youth-serving agencies to recruit all types of youth, and found these partnerships to be an especially effective way to connect with youth from the priority service groups. For example, the WIB in one site required providers to contact public agencies such as the Department of Corrections, Department of Children and Families (DCF), and the Department of Veterans Affairs for referrals. Two other sites partnered closely with their state vocational rehabilitation agencies to recruit and serve youth with disabilities (see Box IV.1). One site held resource fairs for out-of-school youth in both August and October 2009 to help connect them with community services, employers, and training programs, including the Post-SYEI.

Many providers also recruited youth from their own programs, including but not limited to regular WIA Adult and Youth programs. At least one (and usually more) of the Post-SYEI providers in seven sites was also a regular WIA Youth provider, and Post-SYEI providers from four sites were also WIA Adult and Dislocated Worker providers. In one site, a few youth service providers ran other youth programs that did not include a work experience component. This site co-enrolled youth in the Post-SYEI to provide these youth with work experience, while they received supportive and education services in the other programs.

Sites also recruited youth through the local One-Stop Career Centers by posting flyers about the program and having One-Stop Career Center staff inform potential participants about this new opportunity. One site incorporated the Post-SYEI into the intake process at its One-Stop Career Center. If a new youth, especially one between 22 and 24 years old, entered a One-Stop Career Center looking for job search help, frontline staff told the youth about the Post-SYEI work experience program along with other programs and services, assessed the youth's goals and interests, and matched him or her to either the Post-SYEI or WIA programs as appropriate. The site recruited 14 of its 24 Post-SYEI youth in this way.

Box IV.1. Partnerships to Recruit and Serve Priority Populations

San Bernardino, Greenville, and Bangor

In the spring of 2009, San Bernardino's Department of Children and Family Services, the county's child abuse and neglect prevention organization, sent the WIB a list of area youth who had or soon would age out of foster care and were likely to benefit from participation in a paid work experience. The WIB targeted these youth when initially recruiting participants in the early summer and then gave them priority to continue their work experience into the post-summer period.

The Delta Workforce Investment Area (DWIA) in Greenville contracted with its State Department of Rehabilitation Services to serve youth with physical and learning disabilities who were about to graduate from high school during the 2009 SYEI and Post-SYEI (and the 2010 SYEI). In the absence of the Recovery Act funding, a typical pathway for many of these youth would have been to participate in the Departments' sheltered workshop program. Instead, employers (mostly from the private sector) were recruited to serve as work sites. Recovery Act funds were used to pay youth wages, whereas vocational rehabilitation funds covered accommodation support services, such as uniforms, when necessary. Staff from the site felt that the Recovery Act program was an excellent addition to the traditional approach, stating "It was good to show [disabled youth] the real world of work, give [them] the experience of having a supervisor ... [and] show them that there are other things they can do than work at a factory."

Providers in Bangor solicited youth referrals from the Bureau of Vocational Rehabilitation Services for their 2009 SYEI. When the referrals came through, however, it became apparent that the providers or employers knew little about accommodating and supporting these youth in the workplace. As a result, the WIB asked the Bureau to discuss best practices for working with youth with disabilities and to describe its services at the 2010 SYEI employer orientation, as well as to serve as an ongoing resource that employers and staff could contact with questions or concerns. Provider staff underscored the value of this closer collaboration and noted that the 2010 SYEI experience serving individuals with disabilities ran much more smoothly as a result.

Social networking sites such as Facebook and craigslist proved to be an especially effective way to recruit new youth and reconnect with youth who were invited to return to their work assignments following a break in programming between the summer and post-summer periods (see Box IV.2). Previously established personal connections also helped sites to reach youth. One site temporarily hired a local teacher to help recruit youth during the summer, some of whom also participated in the Post-SYEI. The teacher was viewed as an extremely effective recruiter who "knew just about every kid in the area." At another site, city parks staff (a Post-SYEI provider) who supervised city recreation facilities relied on their strong rapport with youth to encourage them to participate in the program; they targeted older, out-of-school youth who often idly gathered at their parks and other facilities.

Box IV.2. Connecting with Youth Through Social Networking

Lehigh Valley, Los Angeles, and Milwaukee

A provider in Los Angeles advertised the Post-SYEI on a program Facebook page and a posting on craigslist. The provider noted that these techniques helped it to identify and connect with older, out-of-school youth; many of these youth have Facebook accounts and search for employment opportunities on craigslist's message boards.

A frontline worker in Lehigh Valley explained that youth can be difficult to contact by mail or telephone as their addresses frequently change and their telephones are "cut off," but that "they always seem to find a way to check their Facebook." For this reason, two providers at the site created a Facebook group and sent Facebook email messages to youth from the summer to reengage them in the Post-SYEI. Staff also contacted youth via Facebook's messaging feature if they were absent from class and encouraged them to use Facebook's many communication tools to stay in touch with one another and share news about jobs, education, and community services.

The youth follow-up specialist in Milwaukee, hired as a result of the site's SYEI and Post-SYEI experiences, was developing a social media engagement strategy that included connecting and reengaging youth who participated in the SYEI, Post-SYEI, and other workforce programs through posting information on a program Facebook page and messages, and through an MAWIB youth program's Twitter page. Youth who are "friends" with the program on Facebook and who "follow" it on Twitter receive alerts each time the follow-up specialist posts announcements. This site also used email blasts to update former participants about new resources and programs.

2. Demand for the SYEI and Post-SYEI Frequently Exceeded Sites' Enrollment Capacity

Sites typically enrolled youth into the 2009 SYEI on a first-come-first-served basis, and no site experienced a lack of applicants. In fact, at least half of the sites reported receiving many more applicants for their SYEIs and Post-SYEIs than youth they could serve. One of these sites received up to 6,400 applications for about 1,300 SYEI slots; another received nearly 3,400 applications for a little more than 1,400 positions. One provider reported receiving approximately 80 applications for only 25 Post-SYEI openings. Although sites did not have difficulty reaching overall enrollment targets, staff from two sites identified challenges with recruiting older, out-of-school youth. The staff noted that these youth tend to have more barriers than in-school youth, such as homelessness and being teen parents. Frequently, after staff made successful initial contacts with youth, many did not return to their offices with the required eligibility paperwork or for follow-up appointments.

B. Employer Recruitment

In order to provide youth with meaningful SYEI and Post-SYEI work experiences, local areas recruited employers who would appropriately supervise and mentor youth and who they could trust would impart critical hard and soft skills to participants. The study sites did not engage in a separate employer recruitment effort for the Post-SYEI because efforts to recruit employers for the SYEI had proved so successful and employers were interested in continuing their involvement into the post-summer period. This section describes the employers' motivation for serving as a worksite for youth and key recruitment strategies and methods.

1. Employers Responded Positively to the Post-SYEI

Sites successfully developed worksites and found that employers were eager to participate in the SYEI and Post-SYEI. The poor economy and tight labor market were the primary reasons that employers were interested in becoming and staying involved in these Recovery Act youth initiatives. Employers from all sectors across sites were under significant financial strain and welcomed the opportunity to host temporary subsidized youth workers as a way to catch up on projects and stay on top of workload demands. Another factor contributing to employers' interest in participating in these Recovery Act youth initiatives came from a desire to "give back" to the community. Employers from three sites reported that they participated in the program because they had a genuine interest in developing the skills of their area's future workforce and in helping youth succeed. Overall, the combined opportunity to be involved in an initiative that benefitted youth, the community, and employers themselves proved to be a powerful motivation to participate.

Employers were especially enthusiastic about continuing to work with youth from the SYEI into the post-summer period. According to employers and provider staff, employers who hosted these youth strongly supported the opportunity to provide longer work experiences. Employers had invested a lot of time and effort into training and acclimating youth to their worksites during the SYEI. Because they were inexperienced workers, employers typically relegated them to lower-skill "grunt work" during the summer months. Throughout the SYEI they gradually afforded youth more autonomy and by the post-summer period were assigning them to tasks that required greater responsibility and skill. To ensure this progressive skill development, providers from two sites required employers to explain how the extended experience would increase youth's responsibilities and further their skill development. Employers also approached the longer work experiences as an extended interview of the youth, during which they could determine if they wanted to hire them permanently.

2. Sites Cast a Wide Net to Engage New Employers, Especially from the Private Sector

In order to provide a sufficient number of worksites to accommodate the volume of youth served in the SYEI, providers from most sites had to recruit employers above and beyond those with which they had established relationships through their involvement in other programs. To the extent that sites included work experiences in their regular WIA youth programs, providers typically relied on public and nonprofit agencies to serve as youth worksites. Therefore, in order to "cast a wider net," WIBs and administrative agencies from six sites encouraged providers to reach out to the private sector much more so than they had done before. This was an opportunity for the WIBs in cities such as Minneapolis, Los Angeles, and Milwaukee to build on the private sector engagement work that they were doing in collaboration with city officials in recent summers.

The focus on serving older, out-of-school youth resulted in a greater emphasis on continuing to work with private sector employers during the Post-SYEI. Although sites recruited these employers during the summer period, they specifically recruited them to serve as worksites for their older, out-of-school youth that might be able to extend into the post-summer months. A driving assumption was that private employers would be more likely to hire youth permanently at the end of a program than those in the public and nonprofit sectors; therefore, sites targeted these worksites for their older, out-of-school youth who could capitalize on their longer work experiences to develop relationships with these employers. Furthermore, recruiting private employers helped sites begin cultivating relationships in high-growth and emerging industries.

Engaging with the private sector was also consistent with the sites' understanding that the Recovery Act was intended not only to help youth by putting money directly into their pockets, but also to stimulate the economy and help the business community. For all of these reasons, one site developed an online employer application and screening process that enabled it to target and isolate private employers in high-growth and high-demand industries (see Box IV.3). With the exception of one site that had been relying on a well-developed network of public and nonprofit worksites to operate a summer youth employment program for many years, sites reported working with many more private employers during their Recovery Act programs than they had in the past.

The study sites used multiple strategies to recruit employers across sectors. General outreach efforts to inform and enlist employers commonly included print and radio ads to advertise the program. Three sites reported that they found that making presentations at their local chambers of commerce and other business-related associations, such as Rotary Club, was an excellent way to connect with new private sector employers. In-person visits and personal appeals to employers were also cited as particularly effective ways to engage new employers in the program. Sites also solicited worksite suggestions from youth and their parents and reached out to employers they had worked with during other programs.

Box IV.3. Targeted Employer Recruitment

Orlando

Orlando required employers to apply to be youth worksites via its website. The application asked employers to identify their sector; indicate if they were from a target industry (including health care, green jobs, and STEM); and note if they were willing to host older, out-of-school youth for an extended period (through December 2009). After prescreening the applications, staff visited employers that appeared would provide good worksites for youth, particularly those that met the three criteria listed above. The site received 429 employer applications for the SYEI and Post-SYEI; 225 became worksites, 40 of which were private employers that served older, out-of-school youth ages 22 to 24 over a 28-week period. The site reported that most of the employers were from one of its target industries.

Although most sites successfully engaged private sector employers, individual providers from two sites initially found it difficult to do so. These providers stated that most private employers were very selective and had their own application and eligibility requirements. For example, they might require youth to complete a series of background checks or get certain immunizations before starting work. The providers could accommodate these hiring requirements, but they also wanted to put youth to work as soon as possible and frequently ended up connecting youth with a public sector employer with which they had an established relationship. One provider added that the youth participants needed more mentorship and training at their worksites than private employers were either willing or able to provide.

3. Employer Orientations and Handbooks Helped Communicate Expectations

Most sites conducted employer orientations to ensure they understood their roles and responsibilities. These orientations were primarily informal one-on-one conversations between the frontline staff and employers during which the staff outlined program rules and expectations and provided employers with supervisor manuals to reinforce the information that they provided during visits and orientations. One site "brought the supervisor manual to life" through an online webinar. Program staff credited this streamlined service delivery method as a way to ensure that worksites

were prepared for any internal staff attrition that could occur over the course of the initiative and allowed new staff to thoroughly understand program guidelines and worksite supervisory roles. Another site subsequently posted its supervisory materials on its website in the summer of 2010 so that employers could easily access them, and at least two sites required employers to sign worksite agreements acknowledging that they had read and understood worksite policies and procedures.

C. Youth Preparation: Work Readiness

ETA guidance recommended that local areas offer youth work readiness instruction before placing them at worksites and provided flexibility to design and implement these activities at the local level. As a result, sites employed varying work readiness approaches. Although a few sites integrated work readiness activities throughout the summer, most sites provided the bulk of their work readiness activities before a youth's work experience began (typically in the early weeks of the SYEI). All sites required youth to attend work readiness training in the SYEI, but did not require youth transitioning into the Post-SYEI to repeat work readiness training activities; instead, sites encouraged youth to continue practicing these skills during the post-summer period. New Post-SYEI participants who were required to complete work readiness training typically used the same model implemented in the SYEI. All eight study sites received a waiver to use work readiness as the only performance measure for the Post-SYEI and adopted different approaches and developed different tools to measure youths' work readiness.

1. Duration, Intensity, and Type of Work Readiness Activities Varied Across Sites

The duration and intensity of work readiness activities ranged across sites from brief work readiness sessions at program orientations to extensive portfolios and 25-hour courses. Half of the sites required extensive coursework to complete work readiness training; others provided work readiness activities at orientation or short workshops. For example, one site offered youth work readiness workshops before a job fair and then required weekly portfolio submissions.

Work readiness activities also varied within a site, depending on the provider and employer. One site allowed providers to design their work readiness activities and did not require a standard measure to guide those activities. Another provider had employers conduct work readiness sessions on the job on a bimonthly basis. Some providers offered comprehensive work readiness training (see Box IV.4) and offered financial incentives to youth upon its completion.

With one exception, sites that contracted providers for services did not develop a standard work readiness curriculum or set of activities. However, one site required providers to select three work readiness activities from a list of 10 key activities developed by the WIB. Although providers were given the flexibility to choose those three activities, the lead agency made clear that all youth participants were expected to participate in a basic work readiness activities.

Only one site made a significant change to its work readiness activities between the SYEI and the Post-SYEI. This site reorganized its service delivery model between the summer and post-summer periods and the WIB decided to restructure the work readiness activities for the Post-SYEI. Instead of weekly work readiness training sessions that were used in the SYEI, the Post-SYEI new participants attended a 20-hour training before placement at the work site. The training included mock interviews, resume writing, appropriate dress, and communication skills. Sites included these activities to prepare youth for workforce norms and behaviors. For example, an employer at one site mentioned that youth initially lacked communication skills and did not know how to express

themselves with their supervisors. The communication work readiness activities trained youth on how to communicate constructively with supervisors and coworkers.

Box IV.4. Comprehensive Work Readiness Curriculum

San Bernardino

San Bernardino allowed providers to design their own work readiness activities and measures. One of the largest providers in the site used the *California Career Planning Guide*, developed by the California Career Resource Network, in conjunction with a portfolio. Youth completed the 25-hour guide on their own time, with little assistance from staff members. The self-directed guide includes information on the career planning process, self-assessment, the world of work, education and training options, and career action plans. In addition, youth worked with staff members, called career mentors, to develop a resume; prepare for interviews; write cover letters, thank you notes, and characteristics of a promotable employee; review job descriptions; schedule and complete an informational interview in their chosen career path; and develop a career action plan with short- and long-term educational goals. The provider offered youth incentives for the completion of their work readiness activities, as well as for completing at least eight weeks of work experience.

Common work readiness activities included sessions on punctuality, communication skills, dressing for success, and conflict resolution. One site's staff commented that these topics were especially important for older, out-of-school youth. Although these youth might have held previous employment, many of the older, out-of-school youth were unfamiliar with work culture and employer expectations of behavior. Staff stated that older, out-of-school youth, more than in-school youth, needed a refresher on how to behave as employees.

Provider, Youth, and Employer Perspectives: Work Readiness Activities

Provider. Interviews with staff and youth yielded diverse responses on work readiness activities in the Post-SYEI. Staff in Minnesota mentioned that the site's use of a standard list of key work readiness curriculum ensured that providers were administering work readiness training, but also afforded them the freedom to select curriculum that best suited their program and particular youth. Staff from another site, with more flexibility to providers, stated that the method "allowed providers to meet the needs of their kids."

Youth. Several sites noted that older, out-of-school youth required different types of work readiness activities from the in-school youth. Staff in Milwaukee mentioned that these youth "had more barriers and were more difficult to place and maintain employment." For example, the older, out-of-school youth did not have access to school career planning services and, in most cases, had not written a resume or cover letter for several years.

Employer. Employer responses on the effectiveness of work readiness activities were mixed. Some employers felt that youth received the appropriate work readiness training before starting in the summer. Other employers mentioned that the work readiness was a work in progress and continued throughout youths' experiences on the job. An employer in Orlando mentioned that the youth were ill-prepared for the work experience, commenting that their writing ability was not adequate for the workplace.

2. All Sites Designed Pre-Post Work Readiness Assessments, and Most Sites Used Standard Work Readiness Measurement Tools

The work readiness outcome measure is intended to capture “a measurable increase in work readiness skills” (U.S. Department of Labor 2009b).⁷ All of the study sites performed pre-post work readiness tests of youth in which youth’s work readiness skills were assessed initially as a baseline near the start of their participation and reassessed at a later stage. In sites that transitioned their SYEI participants into the Post-SYEI, the pre-test (and sometimes the post-test) took place over the course of the SYEI. Five sites designed these assessments as employer evaluations. For example, one site used a pre-post employer evaluation that measured indicators from the Secretary’s Commission on Achieving Necessary Skills (SCANS).⁸ Another site used two types of pre-post assessments in its employer evaluation: (1) basic workplace skills and (2) high-demand skill sets. Two sites relied on a provider’s assessment of a youth’s work readiness with a pre-post assessment tool. One site required providers to develop their own pre-post assessment tools. Although these assessments were the only official tool used to measure work readiness, many providers developed additional measures to evaluate their youth, such as portfolios, interviews, and self-assessments. In some cases, employers were responsible for the completion and submission of work readiness documents.

All but one site used a standard work readiness measure for all Post-SYEI participants. The site that was the exception chose to give its providers flexibility to develop their own work readiness measures. Staff from this site believed that the populations served were “too diverse” to use a standard measure, although all still opted to use a pre-post assessment. Although the site allowed providers to develop their own measures, it encouraged communication between the providers to learn from one another and adopt tools that worked. Even with the flexibility, this site also reported use of a pre-post assessment tool.

Across the sites, work readiness measures most often assessed youths’ attendance, punctuality, quality of work, response to supervision, attitude, and teamwork. Some sites also evaluated youths’ portfolio development (for example, resume, application, and computer skills) and knowledge relevant for future employment (for example, career decision making and interviewing).

3. Most Sites Applied SYEI Methods to Measure Work Readiness in the Post-SYEI

Most study sites continued to use the work readiness measures developed and implemented for the SYEI and administered a post-test only once, even if a participant subsequently extended his or her work experience. One site that recruited all new youth for the Post-SYEI used the same work readiness measure from the SYEI. Conversely, another site developed a new work readiness measure for the Post-SYEI new participants. In the SYEI, the site’s provider measured work readiness as attendance at or completion of work readiness training sessions. For the Post-SYEI, site staff developed a new supervisor evaluation rating form to assess work readiness. Although the

⁷ ETA has released two Training and Employment Guidance Letters (TEGLs) after the post-summer period. Guidance provided by these TEGLs, numbers 27-09 and 07-10, indicates that local areas should incorporate employer evaluations of youth performance into their work readiness indicators.

⁸ For more information on SCANS, go to <http://www.cteonline.org/portal/default/Standards/Browser?action=2&view=level&id=17825>.

measure changed between the SYEI and Post-SYEI, the work readiness goal remained the same between these two periods.

D. Youth Post- SYEI Work Experiences

The core of the Post-SYEI was work. The primary goal across sites was to provide older, out-of-school youth with a work experience that would build their skills, put money in their pockets, and increase their short- and long-term employability. To varying degrees, the sites tried to provide work experiences that aligned with youths' interests or career goals, or provided them an entry into high-growth or high-demand industries.

1. Sites Primarily Focused on Work-Based Learning, Not Classroom Activities

ETA gave local areas the flexibility to integrate academic learning experiences into their Recovery Act SYEIs, but noted that “work experience activities where the learning of work readiness skills acquired on the job” might be more appropriate for older youth who “already possess the necessary academic skills.” Whereas two-thirds of the 20 SYEIs visited for the 2009 study (Bellotti et al. 2010) incorporated academics and classroom-based learning into their programs, all of the Post-SYEI study sites focused primarily on providing their older youth participants with real-life work experiences.

During the post-summer period, all eight study sites concentrated their Post-SYEIs on providing older, out-of-school youth with meaningful work experiences and on getting resources into the community through youth wages.⁹ For example, one site placed a group of older, out-of-school youth with a local youth-serving nonprofit to work as program assistants. The employer required youth to perform job tasks identical to their regular full-time employees and sent them to department-wide professional development sessions. Frontline staff from this and other sites explained that it was beneficial for youth to be treated like “regular employees” so that they not only learned important hard skills but so that employers reinforced summer work readiness lessons, such as professionalism and punctuality in the context of a real job.

Although not generally a priority of their local area's Post-SYEI, individual providers from four sites reported they connected some youth with training opportunities. For example, a provider from one site helped youth obtain a food handler's certificate before placing them at food service industry worksites. Provider staff from another two sites connected youth with their training partners on a case-by-case basis; one provider helped youth obtain Individual Training Accounts (ITAs) if their worksite supervisor determined that the youth needed additional training. Some sites also provided youth with supportive services, most commonly in the form of transportation assistance or funds to purchase suitable work clothing.

As discussed below, because worksite placement was driven by youth interest and employer need, youth from across sites worked in a number of different industries and occupations, from hardware stores to community colleges. Providers from every site noted that day care centers, parks and recreation facilities such as playgrounds, and retail outlets were common placements.

⁹ A few sites also served some in-school youth during the Post-SYEI period.

2. Sites Identified Youth Interests and Goals to Match Youth to Worksites

Staff considered the interests of youth first and foremost when matching youth to worksites at the beginning of the program, typically at the beginning of the summer period, but also at the start of the Post-SYEI for some youth. The WIBs in all but one site required providers to complete an ISS outlining youth skills, goals, and interests for each participant when they started the program. Although not required to do so, the providers in the eighth site also completed ISSs with all youth. According to staff, the overall purpose of the ISS was to identify youths' goals, skills, and interests so that they could be matched to worksites that aligned with their existing aptitudes and offer the opportunity to gain new skills and make them more marketable to employers in their future careers. Frontline staff from across sites reported completing ISSs with youth in groups or one on one, and using the ISS to guide worksite matching conversations in the beginning of the program. Sites also typically required youth to take basic skills tests and complete interest inventories only when they were enrolled into the Recovery Act program. Assessments included the Test of Adult Basic Education (TABE) and personality profiles.

Youth Perspectives: The Value of Work-Based Learning

A 19-year-old recent high school graduate said that she primarily did data entry during the beginning of her work experience and slowly progressed into doing accounting work for her employer. "I learned that I actually like to do accounting work and that I can actually do it ... so I started the accounting program [at the local community college]."

A 24-year-old youth who helped create advertising materials and a brochure for a local charter school during the Post-SYEI said that the "most valuable part of the program was all of the job connections." The provider connected him with a local camera store for which he now does contract work and also helped him become a part-time youth instructor at a local arts program.

Although staff uniformly reported that they primarily matched participants to worksites based on their interests and goals, sites also considered employer requirements and youth transportation needs when selecting worksites for youth. One site, Orlando, introduced youth to employers at the beginning of the summer via a series of job summits (see Box IV.5).

Providers from half the sites also used youth ISSs to guide conversations with youth throughout the SYEI and Post-SYEI. They explained that it is important to check in with youth periodically and gauge their progress in attaining work-related goals during the program, especially during their Recovery Act programs that lasted for many consecutive months. For this reason, the WIB from one site required provider staff to meet with youth every 90 days to review their ISSs and ensure that they were getting the services that would support their success in the program. Frontline staff from two other sites noted that ISSs were much more useful during the post-summer period than in the summer when they were serving many more youth in a much shorter time frame.

**Box IV.5. Youth Practice Interviewing and
Employers Evaluate Potential Candidates at Job Summits**

Orlando

Workforce Central Florida (WCF) hosted a series of job summits at the beginning of its SYEI to match youth to employers. The summits gave youth the opportunity to meet one-on-one with prospective worksite employers immediately after having rotated through a series of work readiness workshops. During their work readiness sessions, youth learned how to approach employers and give them a 30-second pitch of their skills, experience, and interests. WCF positioned employers in rooms based on whether they were looking for short-term summer employees or if they were interested in continuously hosting older, out-of-school youth during the summer and post-summer periods, and based on what industry and sector they represented. After equipping youth with a list of attending employers and job descriptions, staff encouraged the youth to pitch themselves to employers for whom they were interested in working. If the employer was interested in working with the youth after a brief interview, the employer provided the youth with a referral slip to give to the frontline staff indicating that a match had been made. Although employers appreciated the opportunity to interview and select youth, some noted that they would have preferred having extra time to consider candidates as opposed to having to make on-the-spot hiring decisions.

3. Some Sites Developed Programs to Expose Youth to Health Care Jobs and Connected Youth with Worksites in Other High-Growth and High-Demand Industries

Although sites primarily placed youth at worksites based on their individual interests and goals, there was an effort across sites to expose youth to careers in high-growth and high-demand industries, particularly health care. WIBs, lead agencies, and providers across sites emphasized the importance of using the initiative to launch youths' careers rather than just to place them at temporary jobs. Noting that they were deliberately attempting to avoid "training for training's sake," the WIB from one site explained that it strongly encouraged providers to use research on local industries and occupations to inform conversations with youth about training and employment, as well as to target employer recruitment. Although this site was already moving toward sector-based training before the recession, the Recovery Act SYEI and Post-SYEI further motivated the site to build partnerships with new private sector employers to help accelerate this change. Most sites tried to match individual youth to jobs in local high-growth or high-demand industries; however, many also acknowledged that larger site-wide systematic training and career ladder programs were still in the early stages of development.

All of the sites identified health care as a high-growth and high-demand industry in their local areas. Frontline staff identified youth who were interested in pursuing health care careers and placed them at worksites such as dentists' offices, nursing homes, hospice providers, hospitals, and other medical centers. The WIB in one of these sites connected 10 recent health care training graduates to work experiences in hospitals and nursing homes. Another site used an online worksite application to identify health care employers who wanted to host youth and placed older, out-of-school youth accordingly (see Box IV.3). Worksites included a family medical practice that hosted two youth who performed tasks ranging from front desk reception to billing, clerking, and information technology. Staff acknowledged that many youth do not have the requisite training and skills to work in a health care job, but also noted that some older, out-of-school have attended health care training and earned

industry certificates, but had not been able to parlay their training into a job because they lacked relevant work experience.

Youth Perspectives: Pathways into Health Care Careers

“Dentistry opened up doors to me and exposed me to something totally different... [Without the program I] probably would have gone back to school but without a plan or a goal.”

“[The provider] gave me guidance ... and helped with my personal and professional issues... [The program] helped me grow a lot. I knew that it was only for nine months, so I pushed myself to get hired in that time. I requested to go to every training that I could. I really wanted to be trained for everything, like patient registration, scheduling, taking vitals, and CPR. The program helped me transition from just having a job to starting my career.”

Two sites developed focused health care career development work experience programs in their SYEIs and Post-SYEIs. Perhaps the best example of this is the Reconnections Academy in Los Angeles, a partnership between WIA Adult and Youth providers that offered some older youth during the post-summer period a training, work experience, and job placement program in the health care field (see Box IV.6).

Box IV.6. Connecting Youth to Health Care Careers and Green Jobs

Los Angeles

Los Angeles’ Reconnections Academies develop pathways for youth into health care and green jobs through combining training, paid work experience, and job placement.. Youth are placed in a health care or green jobs training programs, many of which help them earn a credential, and are connected with health care or green jobs employers for a paid work experience. Providers then help youth find permanent jobs or connect them with employers for on-the-job training. The three green programs targeted jobs in transportation, such as hybrid and electric car repair, and construction, such as weatherization. The five health care programs focused on occupations such as certified nurse assistant, home health aide, pharmacy technician, and medical coding and billing. Youth participants noted that they were interested in the program because they see health care as “recession-proof” and as an industry in which they can build lifelong careers from which they will eventually retire.

Lehigh Valley provides another interesting example of how the Post-SYEI built upon the SYEI to connect youth with health care organizations and employers who were committed to providing them with opportunities for work-based learning (see Box IV.7).

**Box IV.7. WIB–Health System Partnership for Developing Youths’
Health Care Careers
Lehigh Valley**

The Lehigh Valley WIB contracted directly with the area’s largest health system to place 12 older, out-of-school youth in health care jobs for nine consecutive months with the goal of getting them permanent jobs with the same employer by the end of the program. Although the provider recruited many of these youth from other area youth programs, the health system’s human resources department referred two youth to the program who had applied for jobs via its recruitment website and had the basic requisite skills, but were overlooked for jobs because they lacked experience. The provider placed youth in a variety of departments, from medical coding and billing to patient registration at doctors’ offices. During the summer, worksite supervisors focused on mentoring and training youth. In the fall and winter, they increasingly provided youth with autonomy, until the youth eventually functioned as independent employees. Also, when possible and appropriate, the worksite supervisors referred the youth to departmental trainings and professional development. Seven of the 12 participants placed with the employer were hired permanently by the end of the program.

4. Sites Reported Some Success Placing Youth in Green Jobs, Although Sites Defined Green Jobs Differently

ETA’s Recovery Act guidance explicitly emphasized the importance of targeting opportunities for youth in green jobs and industries. Although more than half of the 20 sites in the 2009 study incorporated green worksites into their SYEIs, many noted confusion over what constituted green jobs and classified a wide range of jobs in that category (Bellotti et. al 2010). Post-SYEI sites similarly described many different jobs that they considered “green.”¹⁰ One site made a distinction between “hard green” jobs, such as solar power installation and wind turbine construction, and “soft green” jobs that include jobs within existing industries that can be done in a “green way.”

Only one site targeted green jobs through a training and work experiences program (see Box IV.6). Another site partnered with YouthBuild to weatherize homes for low-income families in both the SYEI and Post-SYEI. Three additional sites encouraged and successfully developed work experiences that exposed some youth to green jobs or jobs that had “greening activities.” These included attending green workshops and participating in greening activities, such as park clean-up and reclamation, and contracting with a local technical college to teach youth construction and maintenance skills. Instructors incorporated green concepts into the curriculum, including lessons on weatherization and recycling.

¹⁰ Green jobs, as defined by the Bureau of Labor Statistics (at <http://www.bls.gov/green/#definition>), are either: jobs in businesses that produce goods or provide services that benefit the environment or conserve natural resources, or jobs in which workers’ duties involve making their establishment’s production processes more environmentally friendly or use fewer natural resources. The Post-SYEI began in many sites before the Bureau of Labor Statistics release of this definition in September 2010.

5. Duration of Work Experiences Varied Considerably, Both Across and Within Sites

The maximum amount of time that Post-SYEI participants were able to spend in a work experience varied considerably across and, in some instances, within sites. Among those sites that planned from the start to implement both an SYEI and a Post-SYEI, youth could potentially work between 6 and 11 consecutive months. Youth from two sites that did not initially plan to implement a Post-SYEI could work between 5 and 10 months, but experienced six- to eight-week interruptions in their worksites while WIBs, lead agencies, and providers finalized their Post-SYEI plans. A few sites that did not transition youth from the SYEI to the Post-SYEI offered Post-SYEI work experiences that lasted only six to eight weeks. Regardless of the length of the work experience, sites typically required youth to work between 30 and 40 hours per week to mimic a typical work week.

Managers and staff from across the sites emphasized that the longer, continuous work experiences helped youth develop additional hard and soft workplace skills. Youth could also continue to cultivate relationships with their employers, increasing the likelihood that employers might hire them permanently at the end of the program. Frontline staff from most of these sites met one-on-one with the youth toward the end of the SYEI to discuss their goals and progress at their worksite. If the youth wanted to keep working, the provider thought they would benefit from an extended experience, and the employer agreed to keep them, then the youth was transitioned into the Post-SYEI.

Provider, Youth, and Employer Perspectives: Extended Work Experiences

Provider. In comparison with the large-scale and relatively short-term SYEI, providers across sites found that the smaller Post-SYEIs, particularly when combined with extending the length of the participants' work experience, gave sites the ability to develop a stronger connection with the participants. This, in turn, provided more opportunity to work with the youth to help them succeed in their work experience and provide additional guidance regarding their choices and options going forward.

Youth. A 22-year-old youth working at a community-based organization explained that she spent the summer filing papers and functioning as a general office clerk. When her worksite experience extended into the post-summer, the employer expanded her responsibilities and tasks to customer service and helping with program intakes. She was eventually hired permanently due to her outstanding performance throughout the program. When reflecting on her experience she said, “[The program] taught me how to be a professional... I’m a responsible grown-up now.”

Employer. An employer, an engineering designer from an automotive track system company, reflected that, because he knew he would be hosting a youth for six months, he was more deeply invested in training the youth to do the job. Also, a family medical practice manager was grateful to the program for helping to alleviate some of its recruiting and hiring burden. She also noted that without the opportunity to work with the youth for so many months, she would have most likely not considered hiring them because they had so little previous work experience.

6. Youth Typically Earned Minimum Wage, Although Some Sites Tied Pay to Job Responsibilities and Provided Other Performance Incentives

Although youth typically earned the federal minimum wage (\$7.25/hour), providers in at least three sites aligned some youth wages with job responsibilities and one site increased youth pay after a successful mid-program performance evaluation (see Table IV.1). Providers from three sites paid youth higher wages if their jobs involved higher-skilled tasks. For example, crew leaders (older youth supervising the work of younger youth) in one site earned \$0.50 more per hour than other participants. If older youth in one site received a positive performance rating from their worksite supervisor after six weeks in the program, they received a \$0.50 hourly wage increase (from \$8.00 to \$8.50 an hour). The rationale for implementing the wage increase was to mirror merit-based pay systems from the “real world of work.” These youth also received gift cards as performance awards if they earned an overall positive rating on a performance evaluation completed by worksite supervisors four months into the program. Two sites decided to pay the same hourly rate, \$7.25, to all SYEI and Post-SYEI participants for administrative simplicity.

Table IV.1. Post-SYEI Wages, Work Experience Duration, and Program Length Reported by Study Sites

Site	Hourly Wages	Maximum Duration (Weeks)	Program Length
Bangor	\$7.25–\$8.50	30–40	Most youth worked continuously from July 1, 2009, through March 31, 2010; some started the program on October 1, 2010
Greenville	\$7.25	32	Youth worked continuously from May 1, 2009, through December 31, 2009
Lehigh Valley	\$7.25	30–35	Length of work experience varied by and sometimes within provider; some youth worked from June 1, 2009, through March 31, 2010; others worked from January 1, 2010, through June 30, 2010
Los Angeles	\$8.00	7.5–15	Post-SYEI youth worked from October 1, 2009, through March 31, 2010 for 150 to 200 hours; Reconnections Academy youth enter the program in cohorts and participate for 250 to 300 hours
Milwaukee	\$7.25–\$7.75	20	Youth worked from June 16, 2009, to August 13, 2009, then again from October 1, 2009, or January 1, 2010, through December 31, 2009, or June 30, 2010
Minneapolis	\$7.25–\$12.00	17	Depending on the provider, youth worked from September 1, 2009, or January 1, 2010 to June 30, 2010.
Orlando	\$8.00–\$8.50	35	All youth worked from June 22, 2009, through December 31, 2009
San Bernardino	\$8.50–\$9.00	40	Youth worksites lasted from May 1, 2009, through March 31, 2010

Providers from two sites also rewarded youth with innovative performance incentives for achieving program milestones. A provider from one site gave participating youth an incentive for completing a 25-hour work-readiness packet and gave them a reward if they also completed 160 hours of work experience. Staff noted that youth would not have completed the work readiness

packet absent the incentive. Provider staff at this site mentioned that these incentives served as powerful motivators to complete the work readiness training and work experiences. A provider from another site gave youth donated Olympus cameras at the conclusion of an SYEI program that focused on photography and design.

E. Worksite Monitoring

Sites took a variety of steps to ensure that the work opportunities were appropriate and meaningful for youth and positive experiences for employers. To accomplish this, providers thoroughly screened employers for appropriateness, provided them with in-depth orientations, and monitored worksites on an ongoing basis.

1. Screening and Orienting Employers Was a Critical Component of Worksite Success

Sites screened each employer before the start of a youth work experience through a combination of methods, including reviewing applications and visiting to help ensure that the worksites were safe and suitable. Sites dedicated much time and effort to visiting work sites to ensure that youth were learning on the job and that employers were satisfied with youth performance. Frontline staff from individual providers in all but two sites visited worksites on a weekly or biweekly basis to monitor youth performance and observe worksite conditions. Visits typically consisted of informal check-ins with both employers and youth and often occurred in conjunction with collecting youth timesheets. One site also asked employers to complete short evaluations of youth performance on each timesheet; another implemented an even more formal monitoring approach (see Box IV.8). Providers, youth, and employers alike viewed these visits as a critical element of a successful work experience program. Youth appreciated the feedback on their job performance and employers were happy to have someone to identify and mediate minor worksite issues before they grew into larger conflicts.

Box IV.8. Prescreening Checklists, In-Depth Employer Orientation Process, and Regular On-Site Monitoring to Promote Worksite Success
Orlando

Workforce Central Florida (WCF) implemented a structured worksite pre-inspection and monitoring process to help ensure the safety, security, and appropriateness of each worksite before employers were approved to participate in the program. After reviewing an employer's application, program staff visited the worksite to complete safety and suitability checklists and to review program expectations with employers. The site also convened an hour-long group orientation for all participating employers at the beginning of the program to review procedures, reinforce expectations, and answer questions. Staff monitored worksites on a weekly basis throughout the program and completed one of six structured checklists during each visit. Although time consuming, staff credited the combination of the pre-inspection visit, the employer orientation, and frequent structured on-site monitoring visits with helping them avoid problems at the worksite and contributing to the overall success of the work experience for participants and employers alike. Employers appreciated the visits, noting that they and their youth participants found the regular communication with program staff to be extremely helpful in quickly resolving any number of work site issues that arose during the program.

One site found it useful to implement a second layer of monitoring. In addition to weekly visits by frontline staff, the WIB program manager visited each worksite and met with supervisors and youth during the post-summer period. A brief report on the findings of the review was written following each visit and the program manager instructed frontline staff to follow up on any issues identified in the report. Although these visits rarely uncovered any serious issues, the program manager liked having a “formal second set of eyes” and the site hired someone whose sole job it was to monitor sites in 2010 SYEI. This site noted that its SYEI and Post-SYEI experience heightened its awareness of the importance of worksite monitoring and, as a result, it hired a dedicated worksite monitor and attributed significantly higher program completion rates in its 2010 SYEI to the increased focus on and frequency of worksite monitoring. Staff credited the increased monitoring with higher retention rates in the 2010 SYEI than in the 2009 SYEI.

F. Youth Pathways and Transitions Following the Post- Summer Period

Several sites noted that the opportunity to participate in a Post-SYEI (and SYEI) paid work experience provided an effective hook to make an initial connection with youth, particularly older, out-of-school youth, and “get them in the door.” In addition, all sites recognized the potential to transcend the “stand-alone” nature of these initiatives by using them as a bridge program to regular WIA programs or other training and education opportunities.

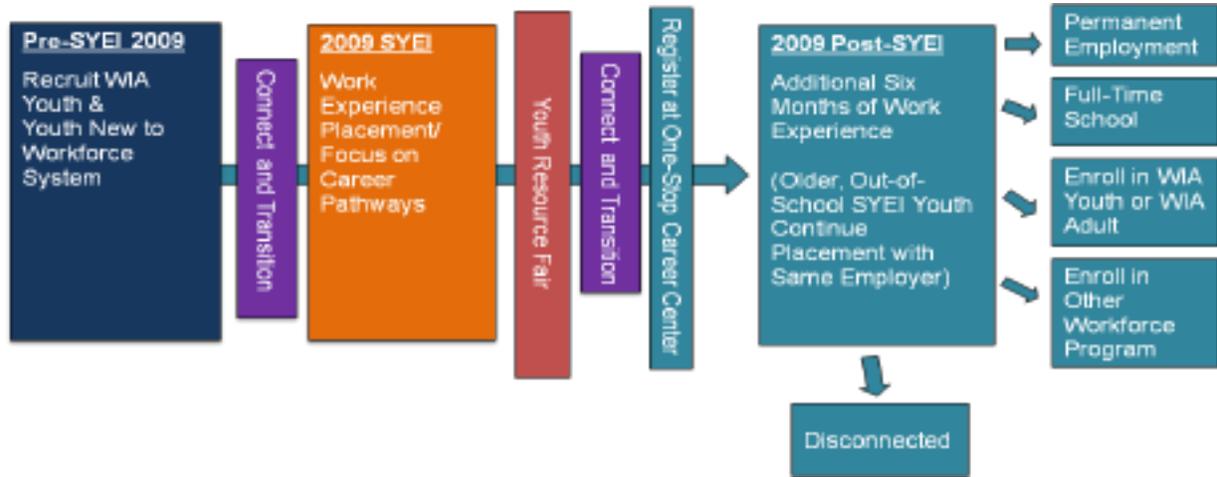
Although program administrators and staff in the study sites uniformly supported the concept of transitioning youth upon the completion of their work experience, the methods and extent to which sites actively sought to facilitate these transitions varied. As described in the following section, sites helped Post-SYEI participants’ transition from their work experience into other activities that could improve their employability and labor market outcomes (see Box IV.9). However, these transition-focused efforts were peripheral to the core objective of providing participants a meaningful work experience and often were administered on an ad-hoc basis. With the exception of the Los Angeles Reconnections Academy, there were no formal policies regarding transition approaches or strategies and they were not part of service providers’ contracted responsibilities.

1. Sites Offered Multiple Transition Pathways and Strategies

Most commonly, frontline staff reported that they encouraged youth to pursue different types of employment or education and training opportunities before they exited the program and gave them information about various options available to them. Two sites organized resource fairs to expose youth to services provided through WIA and other employment services, One-Stop Career Centers, and related community services and programs, and to connect older, out-of-school youth to the site’s Post-SYEI. These and other sites reported that they encouraged participants to visit their local One-Stop Career Centers for assistance in finding a job and to learn about other workforce preparation programs. Five sites reported they informed participants about One-Stop Career Centers. Three took participants on field trips to a local One-Stop Career Center and four required older youth to register with the Employment Service.

All eight study sites viewed paid work experience as a natural stepping stone for transitioning youth into unsubsidized employment. Some, but not all, kept statistics on how many Post-SYEI youth were placed in permanent employment with their worksite employer. Each study site had a handful of success stories to share in which participants had gone on to part- or full-time employment, either with their worksite employer or sometimes based on a referral to another job

Box IV.9. Youth Transitions and Pathways from Pre-SYEI to Post-SYEI and Beyond
San Bernardino



San Bernardino treated the 2009 SYEI and the 2009 Post-SYEI as a unique opportunity to engage youth, many but not all of whom had little or no previous involvement in the workforce system, through a meaningful work experience and connections to other workforce and education activities to improve their employability and labor market outcomes.

The San Bernardino County Department of Workforce Development (the lead agency) contracted with multiple providers, many of which were providers for the WIA Youth Program to operate the SYEI and Post-SYEI. They viewed the new SYEI as a “perfect opportunity to provide these youth with work experiences related to their WIA training programs” and co-enrolled many of their WIA youth in SYEI during the first three months of the program. For example, one youth received training as an office assistant during the WIA program. That youth transitioned into the SYEI, working in an office setting to develop the skills learned in training. In addition to youth already enrolled in WIA, the site successfully recruited youth from the local area and enrolled a total of 1,836 youth in its SYEI program. Private sector worksites were successfully recruited in industries and occupations identified as providing career pathways. A youth resource fair was held at the end of the summer with the objective of helping youth transition from the SYEI.

When it became clear that there was sufficient funding to offer a Post-SYEI, older participants from the SYEI who did not have permanent employment or were leaving for college were contacted and invited to continue their work experience. Those who accepted the offer (364 youth) were required to visit and register at the One-Stop Career Center in their area. Providers reported that the extended work experience enabled them to play a more significant role in helping the youth make future decisions about short- and long-term career plans. Several providers helped youth transition from Post-SYEI to full-time enrollment at community colleges. Other youth gained full-time employment with a different employer. Many of the WIA providers transitioned Post-SYEI youth into the regular WIA Adult or Youth program—one reported that 32 of its 78 Post-SYEI participants rolled into its regular WIA program. Some youth transitioned into an internship program. One provider will continue to follow up with its Post-SYEI participants for one year after the program, sending email blasts of job opportunities and new program offerings.

from that employer. Although staff acknowledged that they would have preferred to have larger numbers of youth employed at the end of the work experience than they did, they also recognized that the recession limited the ability of employers to offer permanent employment. Several employers interviewed in the study sites had hired youth when their subsidized work employment ended and others said they would have considered hiring them had it not been for the poor economy.

Although providers in a few sites appeared very proactive in their efforts to help youth find employment as their work experience neared completion, most were not directly involved in providing job search assistance. In one site, the agency manager of one provider reported spending a great deal of time helping youth with their job search skills, including working with each to develop a professional resume, counseling youth on interviewing skills and effective job search techniques. Some providers in other sites mentioned that they might help a youth with a resume or generally discuss employment options and opportunities, but this was not a formal aspect of the program and was not part of their contracted responsibilities.

Provider staff in most sites discussed postsecondary education options with participants in conjunction with their employment interests and goals, but only two sites assisted youth in registering for community college classes. These sites credited the longer Post-SYEI work experience period for providing the opportunity to work with youth long enough to connect with them; understand their career goals; and be in a better position to assess, recommend, and assist youth in getting registered for community college.

Transition strategies in two sites included reengaging Post-SYEI (and SYEI) youth for other employment programs and initiatives in their sites. One site reported plans to continue to inform former SYEI and Post-SYEI youth about other workforce services and use them as a pool from which to recruit potential participants into a transitional jobs program for a new health career pathways grant program. The WIB in this site hired a follow-up specialist to develop and implement effective reconnection strategies. Similarly, providers in another site recontacted their SYEI and Post-SYEI participants to see if they would be interested in and eligible to participate in their WIA Youth Program. If youth were not eligible for the youth program, providers referred them to the WIA Adult Program. In six sites, extending or resuming a SYEI participant's work experience during the post-summer period was in and of itself a transition activity.

2. Sites Rarely Co-Enrolled Youth in Other WIA Programs Because They Did Not Want to Forfeit Waiver Flexibility

Because older youth ages 18 to 21 might be eligible for both WIA Adult and Youth Program services and youth ages 22 to 24 are eligible for the WIA Adult Program, co-enrollment of Post-SYEI participants in either of these programs would connect participants with the workforce system that could continue after the post-summer period. With one exception, sites did not attempt to co-enroll their Post-SYEI (or 2009 SYEI) participants in either WIA Adult or Youth programs. According to administrators, the primary reason for not pursuing co-enrollment was to enable the site to take full advantage of the flexibility afforded through its Post-SYEI waivers. If, for example, a participant was co-enrolled in a WIA Youth Program, the site would be required to apply more costly and time-intensive requirements of the WIA Youth Program to that participant, including tracking performance on key outcome measures and providing youth with a full range of services, including an assessment, development of a comprehensive ISS, and follow-up for 12 months. Although they did not co-enroll youth during the Post-SYEI, some sites made a special effort to encourage youth to enroll in either the WIA Adult or Youth programs at the conclusion of their

work experience. One of these sites reported that slightly more than half of its Post-SYEI participants were transitioned into either the WIA Adult or Youth programs at the end of the Post-SYEI. Los Angeles credited its Recovery Act experience with forcing it to think creatively about ways to engage out-of-school youth in the workforce development system and initiated a new partnership with the local school district to target these youth (see Box IV.10).

Box IV.10. Partnerships to Connect Out-of-School Youth with the Workforce Development System and Wrap-Around Services

Los Angeles

Los Angeles launched *Youth Recovery Day* in September 2010. Teams of WIA Youth provider staff, Los Angeles Unified School District (LAUSD) personnel, and human services agency representatives partnered on a door-to-door campaign, going to the homes of youth from LAUSD's "dropout list" to find out why they were not attending school. The teams encouraged these youth, who were not attending school during the current term or absent for much longer, to return to school and also connected them with workforce development and community wrap-around services as appropriate. As a result of their efforts, 900 youth either returned to school or pursued other education, training, or work experience through the WIA providers. The site plans to hold its second *Youth Recovery Day* during the fall of 2011.

V. CONCLUSIONS

A. Key Findings

The Post-SYEI provided a unique opportunity for states and local areas to build on the momentum created by the Recovery Act’s revitalized SYEIs to provide older, out-of-school youth additional work experience beyond the summer months. Although not representative of Post-SYEI experiences nationwide, this study provides important insights into the feasibility and value of developing a subsidized employment intervention for older, disconnected youth that moves beyond a strictly “summer” work experience. Key findings that emerged from this study include the following:

Real-life work experience was the cornerstone of the Post-SYEI. Sites focused on connecting youth to meaningful work experiences that aligned closely with their interests and goals, rather than on providing them with training or academic enrichment activities. There was widespread consensus among program staff that the work experience opportunity provided through the Post-SYEI was responsive to the interests and immediate needs of older, out-of-school youth—building work readiness skills, a strong work-based learning experience, connections to area employers, and wages.

Stand-alone paid work experience programs are an effective way to engage disconnected youth. Older, out-of-school youth are often considered harder to reach and engage than youth who are still connected to school and other systems of support. The sites’ Post-SYEI experiences, particularly when also considering the SYEI, suggest there is a great deal of interest and willingness among older, out-of-school youth to make an initial connection with the workforce system if the offer on the table is an immediate job and wages. It also appears that, at least when the work experience is subsidized, employers are receptive to hosting disadvantaged youth despite their lack of work experience.

The longer-than-typical “summer job” work experience was viewed as the key benefit of the Post-SYEI by youth, employers, and workforce administrative and frontline staff. For older youth, the chance to engage in an extended work experience provided a greatly needed opportunity to move beyond acquiring or brushing up on basic workplace skills. Through the longer work experiences, these youth developed more job-specific hard skills and were entrusted by employers with more responsibility and autonomy—all of the things that make them more marketable to potential permanent employers. It gave employers an opportunity to “try out” youth to evaluate the employee’s ability to perform the job satisfactorily and, regardless of whether the experience ended with a permanent hire, to benefit from participants’ increased ability to carry out tasks and take on greater responsibility over time. For youth service providers involved in operating an SYEI, the extended work experience provided an opportunity to cultivate a stronger relationship with employers than possible during the SYEI. This reportedly helped build positive relationships with the business community and, in some cases, increased interest on the part of employers to be involved in other partnerships with the workforce system.

The Post-SYEI reinforced the importance of providing older youth with work experiences as part of a larger targeted career ladder (rather than “work for work’s sake”) in health care or other high-growth or high-demand industries. Sites noted that the Post-SYEI experience aided in the movement toward sector-based training in high-growth or high-demand

industries. During the Post-SYEI, youth interested in pursuing health care careers, for example, were placed at worksites such as dentists' offices, nursing homes, hospice providers, hospitals, and other medical centers. Building on their Post-SYEI experience, many sites noted plans to continue to develop future career pathway programs, especially in health care.

Sites capitalized on their SYEI and Post-SYEI experiences to forge and strengthen partnerships with different service providers and employers within their communities. The need to first mount a new summer work experience initiative, or greatly expand upon an existing effort, within a short time frame motivated several sites to reach out to service providers with whom they had little to no previous interaction and to continue to build and strengthen these relationships during and beyond the post-summer period. Similarly, the scale of the SYEI led all sites to cast a wide net during employer recruitment; for most sites, this meant connecting with the private sector to a greater extent than ever before and continuing to engage many of these same employers during the Post-SYEI.

Half of the study sites reported leveraging Recovery Act funding with monies from a variety of other sources. Sites utilized WIA Adult formula funds, WIA discretionary grants, Vocational Rehabilitation funds, Energy Efficiency and Conservation Block Grant funds, funds from local school districts, and local government revenues to operate more robust subsidized work experience programs in the summer and post-summer periods than possible by relying solely on Recovery Act funds.

Youth demand for the SYEI and Post-SYEI frequently exceeded sites' enrollment capacity. Sites reported that many more eligible youth were interested in participating in a work experience position under both the SYEI and Post-SYEI than could be served. Sites were able to tap into this demand through initial successful outreach and recruitment strategies that included successful media campaigns and partnering with other youth-serving community agencies. All the study sites achieved maximum enrollment levels with available funding.

Matching worksites with participants' goals and interests, coupled with frequent in-person monitoring visits by program staff to worksites, maximized the potential for a successful work experience. The Post-SYEI study sites reported that aligning youth and employer interests was a critical ingredient for a mutually satisfying and productive work experience. After the job match was established, workforce staff, youth, and employers in every site also emphasized that frequent on-site monitoring of worksites made a crucial contribution to promoting employers' and participants' overall satisfaction with the work experience. Based on monitoring visits, provider staff could reinforce needed work readiness skills, mediate small issues before they became large problems, help ensure youth safety, and ultimately contribute to both youth and employer satisfaction.

The Post-SYEI model can serve as a useful "bridge" between the youth and permanent employment or transitions into other workforce preparation activities. Provider staff from several sites often initiated, without the benefit of formal policy guidance or under a contractual obligation to do so, a variety of next-step transition strategies that included reviewing participants' options toward the end of the placement period, recruiting youth into other subsidized employment initiatives, encouraging them to pursue postsecondary education options, transitioning them into the regular WIA Adult or Youth programs, or providing information and linkages to other job search assistance resources.

B. Considerations for Future Policy and Programs

Based on the study sites' experiences, key findings important for consideration for future policy and programs include the following:

Time to design: Tailoring work experience for older, out-of-school youth. Sites' reliance on the basic design and structure of the SYEI to operate their Post-SYEI was a sensible and efficient approach, given the overlapping relationship of the two initiatives in terms of shared funding source and goals, sequential timing, and the knowledge that the one-time funding and waivers were set to expire. However, the add-on and temporary nature of the Post-SYEI might have also limited consideration of possible ways to better target the program design to the needs of older, out-of-school youth and potentially curbed innovation, especially with respect to how to maximize the value of the work experience and foster successful transitions to permanent employment or other workforce activities and educational pathways. Should there be opportunities for similar kinds of initiatives going forward, sufficient planning time could be used to more fully develop year-round work experience program models that take into account differing needs, interests, and options of older, out-of-school youth versus younger, in-school youth.

Not just a summer job: Expanding paid work experience for all seasons. The Post-SYEI was inextricably tied to the Recovery Act SYEI that immediately preceded it. However, the lessons that emerged from the Post-SYEI experience point to the need to consider increasing resources to support a year-round, temporary paid work experience strategy that targets older, out-of-school youth. With the exception of some seasonal work, employers also stand to benefit as their need for additional labor might not necessarily be tied to the summer months, but might instead fluctuate throughout the course of a year.

Build better bridges: Creating intentional connections and multiple pathways following work experience to promote successful transitions. Although paid work experiences provided through the Post-SYEI (and SYEI) served an important objective, its ultimate value could hinge upon efforts to ensure that the completion of a work experience is not an end unto itself but a jump-start on a longer path toward successful transitioning to becoming self-sufficient adults. An enhanced work experience strategy that explicitly includes comprehensive transition planning and assistance suggests promise and should be further explored.

REFERENCES

- Bellotti, Jeanne, Linda Rosenberg, Samina Sattar, Andrea Mraz Esposito, and Jessica Ziegler. “Reinvesting in America’s Youth: Lessons from the 2009 Recovery Act Summer Youth Employment Initiative.” Submitted to the U.S. Department of Labor, Employment and Training Administration. Princeton, NJ: Mathematica Policy Research, February 2010.
- Employment Development Department, State of California. “2008–2018 Los Angeles County Projection Highlights.” Sacramento, CA: Employment Development Department, State of California. October 2010a. Available at [http://www.calmis.ca.gov/file/indproj/LA\\$highlights.pdf](http://www.calmis.ca.gov/file/indproj/LA$highlights.pdf). Accessed on March 27, 2011.
- Employment Development Department, State of California. “2008–2018 Riverside and San Bernardino County Projection Highlights.” Sacramento, CA: Employment Development Department, State of California. October 2010b. Available at [http://www.calmis.ca.gov/file/indproj/rive\\$highlights.pdf](http://www.calmis.ca.gov/file/indproj/rive$highlights.pdf). Accessed on March 27, 2011.
- Fernandes, Adrienne L., and Thomas Gabe. “Disconnected Youth: A Look at 16- to 24-Year-Olds Who Are Not Working or In School.” Washington, DC: Congressional Research Service, 7-5700, April 22, 2009.
- Fogg, Neeta P., and Paul E. Harrington. “The Teen Disconnection in Los Angeles and Its Neighborhoods.” Center for Labor Market Studies, Northeastern University. Boston, MA: Center for Labor Market Studies, November 2004.
- Harrington, Paul, Neeta P. Fogg, and Ishwar Khatiwaada. “Update: One Out of Five.” Executive Summary. Center for Labor Market Studies, Northeastern University. Boston, MA: Center for Labor Market Studies, Fall 2009.
- Heinrich, Carolyn J., and Harry J. Holzer. “Improving Education and Employment for Disadvantaged Young Men: Proven and Promising Strategies.” Washington, DC: Urban Institute, May 2010. Available at <http://www.urban.org/UploadedPDF/412086-disadvantaged-young-men.pdf>. Accessed on April 17, 2011.
- Maine Department of Labor. “Labor Market Digest.” Augusta, ME: Maine Department of Labor, Center for Workforce Research and Information, November 2009. Available at <http://www.maine.gov/labor/lmis/publications/lmd/pdf/Sep09.pdf>. Accessed on March 27, 2011.
- Metro Orlando Economic Development Commission. “Metro Orlando Profile.” Orlando, FL: Metro Orlando Economic Development Commission, Revised March 2011. Available at <http://www.orlandoedc.com/core/file.php?loc=/Solodev/clients/solodev/Enterprise%20Main/Documents/EDC%20Documents/Data%20Center/Metro%20Orlando%20Profile.pdf>. Accessed on March 27, 2011.
- Minnesota Department of Employment and Economic Development. “OID (Occupations in Demand).” Available at <http://www.positivelyminnesota.com/apps/lmi/oid/Default.aspx>. Accessed on March 27, 2011.

- Mississippi Department of Economic Security. "Delta WIA 2009 Occupations in Demand: Top 100 Occupations, 50 Hottest Jobs, High Demand Occupations." Jackson, MS: Mississippi Department of Economic Security, Labor Market Information Department, 2009. Available at <http://www.mdes.ms.gov/Home/docs/LMI/Publications/Occupations%20on%20Demand/DeltaOccinDemand.pdf>. Accessed on March 27, 2011.
- Pennsylvania CareerLink® Lehigh Valley. "Job and Labor Market Outlook: Lehigh Valley, PA." Lehigh Valley, PA: Pennsylvania CareerLink® Lehigh Valley, April 2011. Available at <http://www.careerlinklehighvalley.org/JobSeekers/LaborMarketData.aspx>. Accessed on April 1, 2011.
- Rosenberg, Linda, Megan Hague Angus, Cassandra Pickens, and Michelle Derr. "Using TANF Funds to Support Subsidized Youth Employment: The 2010 Summer Youth Employment Initiative." Draft Report. Submitted to the U.S. Department of Labor, Employment and Training Administration. Princeton, NJ: Mathematica Policy Research, March 2011.
- Sum, Andrew, and Joseph McLaughlin. "Dire Straits for Many America Workers: The Economic Case for New Job Creation Strategies in 2010 for the Nation's Teens and Young Adults (20-24)." Center for Labor Studies, Northeastern University. Boston, MA: Center for Labor Studies, January 2010.
- U.S. Census Bureau. *2005–2009 American Community Survey 5-Year Estimates*. 2009. Available at <http://factfinder.census.gov/home/saff/main.html?lang=en>. Accessed on March 25, 2011.
- U.S. Congress. "American Recovery and Reinvestment Act of 2009." Pub. Law No. 111-5, February 17, 2009. Explanatory Statement of the Committee of Conference-Part A. Available at www.internet2.education.gov/government/arra.html. Accessed on March 18, 2011.
- U.S. Department of Labor, Bureau of Labor Statistics. "Local Area Unemployment Statistics Map: Counties." Available at <http://data.bls.gov/map/MapToolServlet?state=51&datatype=unemployment&year=2010&period=M06&survey=la&map=county&seasonal=u>. Accessed on March 25, 2011.
- U.S. Department of Labor, Bureau of Labor Statistics. "Summer Youth Labor Force News Release." Washington, DC: DOL, 2009a.
- U.S. Department of Labor, Employment and Training Administration. "Workforce Investment Act (WIA) Waiver Summary Report Program Year 2009 (July 1, 2009–June 30, 2010)." Washington, DC: DOL, last updated January 25, 2010a.
- U.S. Department of Labor. "Training and Employment Guidance Letter No. 14-08." Washington, DC: DOL, March 18, 2009b.
- U.S. Department of Labor. "Training and Employment Guidance Letter No. 27-09." Washington, DC: DOL, January 29, 2010b.
- U.S. Department of Labor. "Training and Employment Guidance Letter No. 07-10." Washington, DC: DOL, August 19, 2010c.
- U.S. Department of Labor, Bureau of Labor Statistics. "The Employment Situation." Washington, DC: DOL, 2011.

Wisconsin Department of Workforce Development. "Wisconsin Jobs 2018: 2008-2018 Wisconsin Employment Projections." Madison, WI: Wisconsin Department of Workforce Development. Available at http://dwd.wisconsin.gov/oea/employment_projections/wisconsin/oea_16379_p.pdf. Accessed on April 1, 2011.

MATHEMATICA
Policy Research, Inc.

www.mathematica-mpr.com

Improving public well-being by conducting high-quality, objective research and surveys

Princeton, NJ ■ Ann Arbor, MI ■ Cambridge, MA ■ Chicago, IL ■ Oakland, CA ■ Washington, DC

Mathematica® is a registered trademark of Mathematica Policy Research