

TRAINING AND EMPLOYMENT NOTICE	NO. 34-16
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TO: COMPREHENSIVE AMERICAN JOB CENTER MANAGERS
 AFFILIATE AMERICAN JOB CENTER MANAGERS
 DEPARTMENT OF LABOR EMPLOYMENT AND TRAINING
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 ALL EMPLOYMENT AND TRAINING ADMINISTRATION GRANTEEES

FROM: PORTIA WU /s/
 Assistant Secretary

SUBJECT: New Research Reports and Data Set Tools for the *Green Jobs and Health Care (GJ-HC) Impact Evaluation*

1. Purpose. The Employment and Training Administration (ETA) announces the release and availability of three reports titled: 1) *Green Jobs and Health Care (GJ-HC) Impact Evaluation: Findings from the Implementation Study of Four Training Programs for Unemployed and Disadvantaged Workers*; 2) *GJ-HC Impact Evaluation: Findings from the Impact Study of Four Training Programs for Unemployed and Disadvantaged Workers*; and 3) *GJ-HC Impact Evaluation: Special Topic Paper on Standard Error Estimation in Evaluations with No-Shows*.

In addition, ETA announces the release of the *GJ-HC Impact Evaluation* public-use data files, available to researchers, practitioners, and other members of the public, and *GJ-HC Impact Evaluation* restricted-use data files, available to researchers authorized by ETA, for the purpose of conducting their own analyses with the data related to the evaluation.

2. Background on the GJ-HC Grants and Evaluation. In response to the 2008 recession and as part of the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act of 2009 (the Recovery Act), the Employment and Training Administration (ETA), at the U.S. Department of Labor (DOL), awarded a series of grants (http://www.doleta.gov/business/ARRA_Grants.cfm) to promote training and employment in select high growth sectors of the economy, as required by the legislation.¹ This series included Pathways Out of Poverty grants, which funded training to prepare individuals for employment in industries such as energy efficiency and renewable

¹Information and reporting on ETA initiatives funded by The Recovery Act can be found on a dedicated Web page (<https://www.doleta.gov/recovery/>).

energy; and Health Care and Other High Growth and Emerging Industries grants focused on providing training in healthcare and other high-growth fields. Both grant programs included a career pathways approach, which combines training programs with articulated employment steps targeted to locally in-demand jobs with support services and strong connections to employment. Furthermore, both initiatives provided grants to partnerships of workforce agencies, community colleges, non-profits, and other organizations to offer vocational training designed to improve the employment and earnings of unemployed workers and other individuals facing barriers to employment, such as low-skill levels.

In coordination with ETA, four grantees from the two grant programs were purposively selected for an evaluation, based on their program design and scale. Additionally, ETA sponsored a single rigorous evaluation of these grantees, known as the Green Jobs and Health Care (GJ-HC) Impact Evaluation. This evaluation, which began October 2010 and concluded September 2015, was conducted by Abt Associates and its partner, Mathematica Policy Research, Inc. The GJ-HC Impact Evaluation includes both an implementation study to examine the design and operation of each of the four programs (from the two initiatives) and an impact study that uses experimental research design to determine the effects of each grantee's program on participants' earnings, as well as on other outcomes of interest, including educational attainment.

3. Evaluation Key Findings.

a. Green Jobs and Health Care (GJ-HC) Impact Evaluation: Findings from the Implementation Study of Four Training Programs for Unemployed and Disadvantaged Workers

The **implementation study** report focuses on the period of program operations and describes the design, content, and operation of the job training and related supports (particularly the academic and personal supports, financial assistance, and employment assistance) provided through each grant and the participation patterns for enrollees, including the length of attendance and completion rates.

The key findings and lessons learned from studying the implementation and operation of the programs across the four grantees include:

- The four grantee programs targeted a diverse set of individuals and provided a range of training and other related services and supports to individuals while they were in training, particularly academic and personal supports, financial assistance, and employment assistance. Grantees integrated job readiness and job search skills into the service strategy.
- The grantee programs were successful in reaching disadvantaged populations. Grantees identified a need for a dedicated outreach strategy, and used aggressive marketing and recruitment efforts to identify program participants. This need was compounded by the evaluation design that necessitated a degree of “over recruitment” to establish a control group. Recruitment remained a challenge throughout the grant.

- The strength and nature of grantees’ partnerships with employers varied. Grantees took different approaches to working with employers. Where Grantees made employer partnership a priority, there were opportunities for hands-on experience and the ability to gain employer input into the training curricula to ensure relevance.
 - Organizational partnerships were challenging when responsibilities and expectations were not precisely defined. Partner responsibilities and expectations often were not well defined.
 - For the two Pathways Out of Poverty grants studied, employment in “green” industries did not develop as planned and as a result, grantees made adjustments to keep the training relevant to the needs of employers.
 - Grantees reported sustained institutional benefits from operating the grants. The grantees universally reported that resources were not available to continue program operations after the grant period ended. However, all four grantees reported that they hoped to provide, or even institutionalize, select programmatic elements or practices as part of their ongoing service delivery strategy.
- b. *GJ-HC Impact Evaluation: Findings from the Impact Study of Four Training Programs for Unemployed and Disadvantaged Workers*

The purpose of the **impact study** was to: 1) document the impact of each of the four grant-funded programs on participation in training and receipt of credentials over an 18-month follow-up period; 2) determine the extent to which access to these services resulted in impacts on participants’ employment and earnings, household income, public benefit receipt, and other outcomes over the same period; and 3) discuss implications of the results.

The impact study assesses the four programs’ effectiveness on receipt of training and educational services (including vocational training, basic skills instruction (Adult Basic Education or GED classes), college-level classes, or school or job readiness courses), employment, earnings, and other related outcomes.

The key findings for the impact study of all four grant-funded programs include:

- All four grants had impacts on service receipt and vocational credential attainment 18-months after random assignment,
- One program had an impact on earnings in the fifth and sixth calendar quarter after random assignment, the study’s confirmatory outcome. In addition, there was an impact on weekly earnings, as well as on both hourly wages and hours worked per week. Both wages and hours worked contributed about equally to the earnings impact.

- For the other three grantee programs there was no evidence of statistically significant impacts on employment, earnings, or job characteristics.
- The grantee programs had positive impacts on the receipt of training-related support services, particularly financial assistance, career counseling, and job placement assistance. An important aspect of the career pathways approach is the range of supports provided to those in training to facilitate engagement and completion. The largest impacts detected are for the receipt of financial assistance.
- There was no evidence of statistically significant impacts on other measures of financial and economic stability, including household income, public benefits receipt, and overall financial circumstances, for any grantee.

4. Evaluation Research Design and Analytical Approach. The information in the **implementation study** is based on several data sources, including interviews with program staff and organizational partners, grantee program administrative records on service receipt and completion were used to conduct a descriptive analysis of participation patterns in program activities, including participation levels, completion rates, and length of stay in the programs, and information collected from program enrollees at the time of application to the program when random assignment occurred, which included information on demographic characteristics, education and employment history, and receipt of public assistance.

For the **impact study**, the evaluation used a random assignment research design to determine whether each of the four programs had positive impacts on participation in education and training activities, credential and degree receipt, and employment and earnings. This involved assigning eligible program applicants randomly to one of two groups: 1) a treatment group that is offered the chance to participate in the grant-funded services (whether or not those individuals actually participate) and 2) a control group that cannot participate in the grant-funded services (but can access other services available in the community). The evaluation and random assignment process started in July and August 2011, approximately 18 months after the programs began at each of the four grantees, and continued through the remainder of the operational period of the grant. This evaluation estimates program impacts separately for each grantee program 18 months after random assignment.

The data sources for the impact study were a baseline survey administered to treatment and control group members at the time of random assignment; a follow-up survey administered to members approximately 18 months after random assignment; and quarterly administrative wage record data on employment and earnings, available through the National Directory of New Hires. The study also included site visits to grantees, and an analysis of participation patterns based on program administrative data.

The evaluation also designated a confirmatory outcome in order to prioritize the study findings and indicate program effectiveness. Specifically, prior to conducting any impact analysis, the research team, in conjunction with ETA, designated that *cumulative earnings in the fifth and sixth calendar quarters (13–18 months) after random assignment*, as measured in administrative data, would be the single confirmatory outcome.

The choice of this confirmatory outcome reflects the primary goal of the ETA grant programs: to increase the earnings of program participants and allow individuals to find employment and experience earnings gains given the length of the training programs. On average, across the grantees, training lasted two to three months.

5. Additional GJ-HC Evaluation Resources. Specifically for the benefit of the research community, two supplementary resources also were developed under this initiative:

- The third report, *GJ-HC Impact Evaluation: Special Topic Paper on Standard Error Estimation in Evaluations with No-Shows*, examines treatment group members in randomized experiments who may choose not to participate in program services despite being offered access to these services. This technical paper will be beneficial to applied researchers and other professionals conducting data analyses with an interest in intent-to-treat and treatment-on-the-treated effects of an intervention.
- Two data set tools, *GJ-HC Impact Evaluation Public-Use Data* and *GJ-HC Impact Evaluation Restricted-Use Data*, along with the *GJ-HC Impact Evaluation: User's Guide for Public and Restricted Use Data* are available for further data analysis by interested parties. While the public use data files will be publicly available on the ETA Research Publication Database Web page (http://wdr.doleta.gov/research/eta_default.cfm), the restricted use data file will not be available without restrictions but require authorization from ETA for its use. The GJ-HC data sets contain study participant level data collected from three sources: 1) a Baseline Information Form; 2) an 18-Month Follow-Up Survey, and; 3) program administrative data provided by the grantees. In order to keep individual data private, the public-use and restricted-use data files have been stripped of all personally identifying information (also known as PII).

6. Inquiries. To view abstracts of these publications, as well as to download the executive summaries and full reports in PDF versions, visit the ETA Research Publication Database Web site at: <http://wdr.doleta.gov/research/keyword.cfm>.