

# An Evaluation of Local Investments in Workforce Development: 2013 Update



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December 2013

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RAY MARSHALL CENTER  
for the Study of Human Resources

THE UNIVERSITY OF TEXAS AT AUSTIN  
**Lyndon B. Johnson School of Public Affairs**

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## INTRODUCTION

Travis County, Texas, is home to the state capital, Austin, and has a long history of investing local tax dollars in workforce development services for poor and disadvantaged residents. For more than fifteen years, Travis County and the City of Austin have both contracted with job training, placement, and support programs to help adults and youth gain the skills needed to meet the demands of the local economy. The level of investment and number of providers changes year-to-year. In recent years, the County's workforce development contracts totaled between \$1.5 to \$2 million, distributed across eight to ten local providers.<sup>1</sup>

Many of the County contracts support short-term training in a variety of fields, including: general office and computer skills; general construction and "green" skills in housing construction; computer repair and recycling; and park land conservation. Jobs in these fields, which often require a high school diploma or GED in addition to training certificates, typically pay at least a living wage (defined locally as \$9-10 per hour). The County also invests in long-term training, leading to certifications and associate's degrees for nursing and allied health professions, information and electronic technologies, skilled trades, and other occupations paying at least \$16 or more per hour.

Seven providers with long-standing County contracts have been the focus of an ongoing evaluation of local workforce services investments led by the Ray Marshall Center since 2006:

1. American YouthWorks
2. Austin Academy
3. Austin Area Urban League
4. Goodwill Industries of Central Texas
5. Skillpoint Alliance
6. Workforce Solutions–Capital Area Workforce Board
7. Capital IDEA

The first six providers on the list primarily offer short-term occupational and basic skills training.

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<sup>1</sup>The evaluation excludes 2009 and 2010 programs through Easter Seals Central Texas and Vaughn House, Inc.; a 2010 and 2011 program through Austin Community College; and a 2011 program at Travis County Emergency Services District 4 (Community Impact Reports, 2009, 2010, and 2011).

The seventh provider is the only one to offer longer-term training for higher-skilled occupations.

The evaluation examines outcomes and impacts for participants in community-based workforce programs over time. This outcomes report is the thirteenth publication to date in the evaluation. This report has three objectives: to extend the labor market outcomes analysis for 2009-2010 participants from all seven providers; to add 2011 participants for each provider to the evaluation; and to provide longer-term tracking of labor market outcomes for Capital IDEA's 2003-2008 participants. A subsequent report will examine impacts resulting from participation in some of these programs.

An overview of the evaluation questions and research methods follows this introduction. The report then includes separate sections for each of the seven providers examined. Each section includes a brief profile of the provider and its workforce development program(s), and details outcomes for participants from calendar years 2009 through 2011.<sup>2</sup> All findings examine results in the post-service period through March 2013. It is important to note that this time frame spans the Great Recession<sup>3</sup> and the following period which has been marked for its "jobless recovery" and lingering high unemployment, particularly for youth and low-skilled adults. The employment outcomes, particularly for short-term training programs targeting general or less-skilled occupations, are likely to be lower than findings for previous cohorts.

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<sup>2</sup> Findings for the Capital IDEA program are presented for participants from 2003-2011.

<sup>3</sup> The Great Recession spanned from December 2007 through June 2009. Many parts of Texas, however, were unaffected through most of 2008. By 2009, the impact of the recession was widespread throughout the state and most major industries. The Austin-Round Rock metropolitan statistical area was less affected by the Great Recession than other regions and has had reasonably strong job growth during the recovery period.



## EVALUATION OVERVIEW

The purpose of Travis County's investment in local workforce development services is to help disadvantaged residents build the skills needed for employment. Accordingly, each program is evaluated based on its participants' outcomes. Output and outcome performance goals are established for each provider in its contract with the County. Among the various performance measures utilized, three are shared across the majority of providers:

- Number of unduplicated clients served
- Percentage of clients who retained employment for 6 months
- Average wage at entry

Other performance measures are based on the type of service provided, for example:

- Number of clients who entered basic education skills training (GED, ESL)
- Number of clients who entered job training
- Number of clients who complete training program
- Percentage of clients receiving job placement services
- Percentage of clients who obtained employment

Performance results of workforce and other social service investments are detailed annually in the *Community Impact Report* prepared by the Travis County Health and Human Services and Veterans' Services Department. While that report assesses how a provider or program fared in relation to the contractually-established performance goals, its focus is primarily on immediate and near-term objectives (e.g., wage at entry, two calendar quarters of employment).

The Ray Marshall Center's evaluation extends the analysis of Travis County's workforce investments by examining participants' labor market experiences prior to entering the program and then tracking their labor market outcomes following training. The Local Workforce Services Evaluation draws on multiple data sources to answer the following questions:

- Are services being delivered as planned?
- Who is being served?
- What outcomes are achieved?
- What are the impacts of the investment?

The outcomes evaluation focuses on four key labor market measures:

1. Average quarterly employment
2. Average quarterly earnings of those employed
3. The share meeting monetary eligibility requirements for Unemployment Insurance (UI) benefits quarterly
4. The share filing a claim for UI benefits quarterly

It should be noted that the third measure is a proxy measure for employment stability. In Texas, monetary UI eligibility is based on the claimant earning sufficient wages in at least two consecutive quarters of the five quarters prior to filing a claim for benefits. For the 2009-2011 participant groups, labor market outcomes are examined in the four quarters prior to program entry, the last quarter of participation in provider services, and at the 2<sup>nd</sup> and 4<sup>th</sup> post-service quarters (6 months and 1 year after the participant left the program). Post-service outcomes for the 8<sup>th</sup> quarter (2 years after program exit) are available for the 2009 and 2010 groups, and 12<sup>th</sup> post-service quarter (3 years) outcomes are available for the 2009 participants. For the earlier Capital IDEA cohorts (2003-2008 participants) outcomes are tracked for up to nine years post-service. The report also summarizes participants' labor market outcomes across all post-service quarters through March 2013.

### ***Data Sources***

The evaluation of Travis County-funded workforce development programs draws from multiple data sources, including participant records maintained by individual programs, UI wage records and benefits claim files<sup>4</sup>, The Workforce Information System of Texas (TWIST) records, Work in Texas records, interviews with program administrators and staff, program documents, provider websites, and published reports.

Three caveats should be noted about the data used for this evaluation. First, incomplete participant records resulted in a number of individuals served by County-funded workforce programs being dropped from the analysis. Second, UI wage records have known coverage gaps. Workers in industries with high-levels of self-employment or independent

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<sup>4</sup> While UI benefit data is collected and reported weekly, the outcomes are examined on a quarterly basis to mirror UI wage records.

contracting, such as construction and truck driving, are less likely to be in a UI-covered position. Researchers therefore acknowledge that the outcomes reported here for some programs that train for construction and truck driving occupations likely undercount actual labor market outcomes. Third, UI wage records are subject to review and correction by workers and employers as part of the claims determination process for UI benefits. Therefore, numbers reported here are based on the most recently available records and may not be fully consistent with prior reports.

A total of 5,263 unduplicated participants were included in the dataset for this report.<sup>5</sup> Some participants were clients of more than one Travis County-funded workforce development service during the same year: 203 were found in two programs, and seven individuals participated in three programs. Outcomes for these participants are documented for each program in which they were enrolled.

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<sup>5</sup> Seventy-two records were removed from analyses due to missing Social Security numbers. Six records were removed due to questionable Social Security numbers.

The mission of American YouthWorks is to empower “at-risk youth through education, service and green jobs training.”\*

The program operates a charter public high school and job training programs based on a service learning model which combines academic instruction with occupational skills development and community service projects.

Travis County invested \$201,992 annually in workforce training through American YouthWorks in 2009 - 2011. The 2009 contract included an additional \$83,300 for parks improvement work with the E-Corps program.

\*[www.americanyouthworks.org/about-american-youthworks](http://www.americanyouthworks.org/about-american-youthworks). Accessed: 10.19.2013



For more information visit:  
[www.americanyouthworks.org](http://www.americanyouthworks.org)

## AMERICAN YOUTHWORKS

Travis County funds multiple training programs through American YouthWorks, including Casa Verde Builders, Environmental Corps (E-Corps), Youth Media Corps, and the Clean Energy Service Corps. Each of these programs uses a Service Learning Academy model to combine occupational skills training and academic instruction with community service projects. Students often switch from one training program to another and may complete multiple programs over time. The two largest programs, Casa Verde Builders and E-Corps, served over half (61%) of American YouthWorks participants in 2009-2011.

Casa Verde Builders is part of the national YouthBuild initiative led by the U.S. Departments of Labor and Housing & Urban Development. Students learn “green” construction skills while constructing energy efficient, affordable homes, primarily in East Austin. Participants in the Casa Verde program typically range in age from 17-24 years old. The Casa Verde training takes approximately nine months to complete and is generally reserved for high school seniors or those who will earn a high school credential within the year. Participants earn 18 credit hours at Austin Community College at the completion of the construction training. Participants also earn certifications through the Occupational Safety and Health Administration (OSHA) and the Home Builders Association.

The E-Corps program trains youth to build, restore, and maintain the natural environment. Through work in parks, nature trails, and wildlife habitats, participants learn

environmental management and safety practices. A key area of focus is invasive species management. Contracts with Travis County, the City of Austin, the Texas Parks and Wildlife Department, and the National Parks Service, among others, give participants real work experience while creating benefits for the broader community.

Beyond the academic and occupational skills training, American YouthWorks participants also receive training in soft skills, job search, and resume building. For participants who are interested in pursuing higher education, the program has recently added college access and persistence services.

### **Wrap-Around Support Services**

In addition to job training and high school academy, American YouthWorks provides a number of wrap-around support services to help individuals succeed. Participants in both Casa Verde Builders and E-Corps receive bi-weekly stipends to help cover their living expenses while in training. The program also provides uniforms and safety equipment, tools, clothing for interviews, bus passes, on-site childcare, and emergency assistance for food, diapers, and other necessities.

American YouthWorks has dedicated staff to help participants with the job search process and internships, as well as full-time counselors to help participants overcome other obstacles to success. The program partners with the local One-Stop Career Center to connect participants with other training opportunities and support services.

### **Participant Profile**

Participants in most American YouthWorks training programs must be between 17-24 years of age at program entry and have a family income at or below 200% of the Federal Poverty Income Guideline level. Many also have significant barriers to employment, such as homelessness, or prior criminal justice system involvement.

The majority of Austin YouthWorks participants are White or Hispanic. Just over half of the participants studied were male, with an average age of 20 years old. Most participants lived in South, Southeast, or East Austin at the time of enrollment.

## Participant Outcomes

Table 1 presents outcomes over time for 2009-2011 American YouthWorks participants. There are 419 participants in the outcomes evaluation<sup>6</sup>.

**Table 1. American YouthWorks 2009-2011 Participant Outcomes**

Outcome measure	Four Qtrs Before Service	Last Qtr of Service	2 <sup>nd</sup> Qtr After Service	4 <sup>th</sup> Qtr After Service	8 <sup>th</sup> Qtr After Service	12 <sup>th</sup> Qtr After Service	All Qtrs After Service Ends
2009 Quarterly Employment <sup>a</sup>	25.3%	15.4%	28.2%	36.5%	47.4%	48.2%	41.3%
2010 Quarterly Employment <sup>a</sup>	23.3%	21.4%	36.2%	40.5%	54.3%	.	42.1%
2011 Quarterly Employment <sup>a</sup>	19.4%	34.9%	43.7%	42.4%	.	.	43.6%
Overall Quarterly Employment <sup>a</sup>	22.7%	23.9%	35.8%	39.5%	49.6%	47.2%	42.0%
2009 Average Qtrly Earnings	\$1,605	\$1,387	\$2,926	\$2,793	\$3,527	\$4,502	\$3,641
2010 Average Qtrly Earnings	\$1,918	\$2,326	\$2,783	\$2,838	\$4,234	.	\$3,305
2011 Average Qtrly Earnings	\$2,272	\$1,985	\$2,804	\$2,733	.	.	\$2,543
Overall Average Qtrly Earnings	\$1,893	\$1,927	\$2,834	\$2,787	\$3,701	\$4,502	\$3,331
2009 Qualified for UI Benefits	16.0%	.	.	23.1%	32.7%	41.7%	32.3%
2010 Qualified for UI Benefits	15.2%	.	.	30.2%	37.1%	.	28.9%
2011 Qualified for UI Benefits	8.2%	.	.	33.1%	.	.	28.2%
Overall Qualified for UI Benefits	13.1%	.	.	28.2%	34.2%	40.9%	31.4%
2009 Filed UI Claim	0.16%	0.00%	0.00%	1.92%	1.28%	0.00%	0.86%
2010 Filed UI Claim	0.43%	0.00%	0.86%	0.86%	1.43%	.	0.42%
2011 Filed UI Claim	0.17%	0.00%	1.41%	0.00%	.	.	0.53%
Overall Filed UI Claim	0.24%	0.00%	0.72%	1.03%	1.28%	0.00%	0.68%

Source: American YouthWorks participant records and Texas Workforce Commission UI wage and claim records.

Note: A dot represents too few participants, no data to report, or insufficient time passing to report for that timeframe.

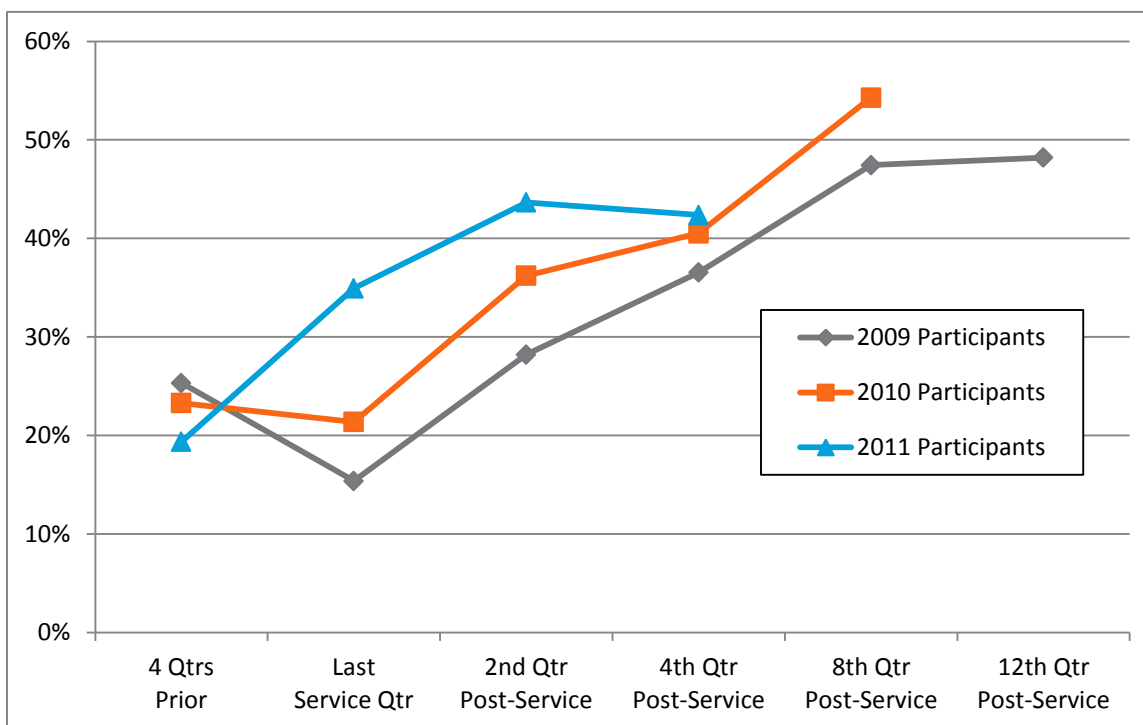
<sup>a</sup> Participants were counted as employed if they were found in Texas UI wage records. Those who were not found may be unemployed, employed outside of Texas, or employed in Texas in a position that is not reported to TWC.

Overall, in the four quarters prior to entering the program, roughly 23% of the youth served by American YouthWorks were employed in a UI-covered job in Texas. About one-quarter were employed during their last quarter of participation in American YouthWorks. For each group of American YouthWorks participants examined, the share employed grew at the second and fourth post-service quarters. Available data also show longer-term employment growth for the 2009 and 2010 groups at the eighth and twelfth (2009 group only) post-service quarters. Figure 1 illustrates these employment findings. It is important to note that these

<sup>6</sup> Forty records were removed from analyses due to missing Social Security numbers.

employment levels were likely affected by the Great Recession, which hit youth employment particularly hard. Across all post-service quarters through March 2013, approximately 42% of 2009-2011 American YouthWorks participants were employed.

**Figure 1. Average Quarterly Employment<sup>a</sup> of American YouthWorks 2009-2011 Participants Over Time**

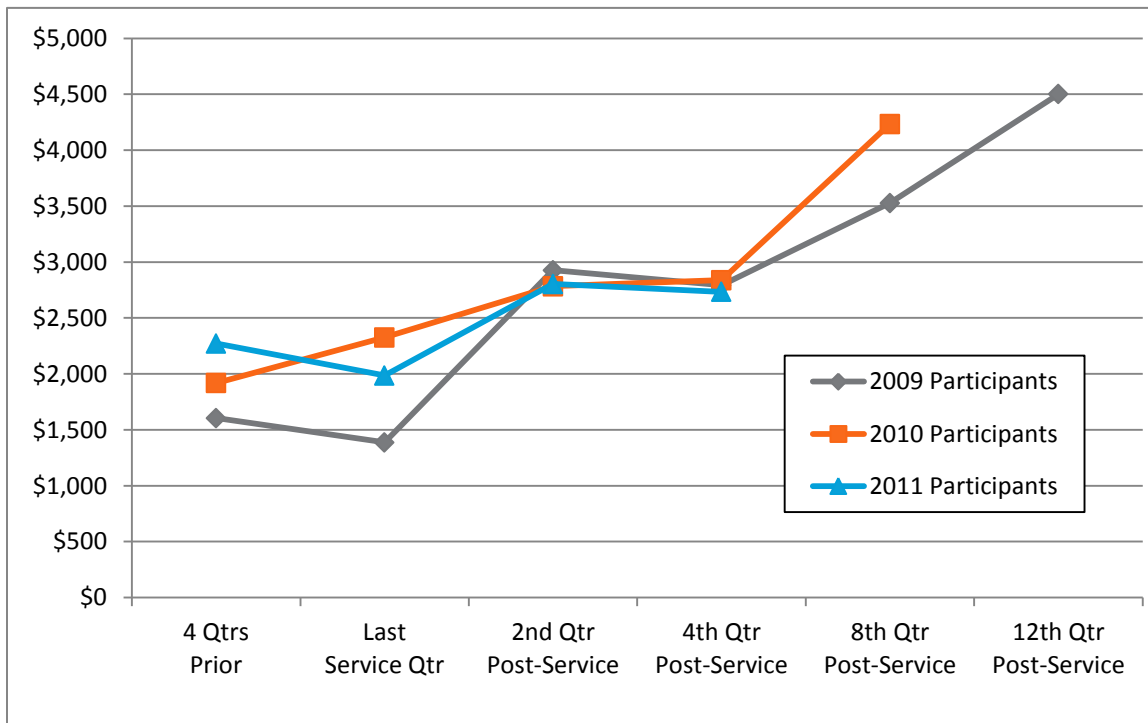


<sup>a</sup> Participants were counted as employed if they were found in Texas UI wage records. Those who were not found may be unemployed, employed outside of Texas, or employed in Texas in a position that is not reported to TWC.

Pre-program earnings overall averaged about \$1,900 a quarter for those employed in the year prior to entry. In the second quarter after service, average earnings rose by about \$1,000 dollars to \$2,834. However, earnings flattened between the second and fourth post-service quarters, to an average of \$2,787. The 2009 participant group has shown steady earnings growth, with those employed earning an average of \$4,502 in the twelfth post-service quarter (three years after leaving the American YouthWorks program). The 2010 and 2011 groups follow similar patterns so far, having a slight increase in earnings at two quarters after

the end of services and similar earnings at four quarters post-services. The 2010 group saw a nearly 50% increase in earnings at the eighth post-service quarter.

**Figure 2. Average Quarterly Earnings of Employed American YouthWorks  
2009-2011 Participants Over Time**



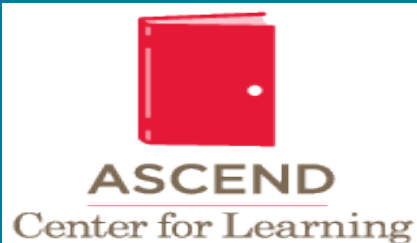
Prior to entering American YouthWorks, approximately 13% of participants overall had sufficient employment and earnings histories to meet the monetary eligibility requirements for UI benefits. A year after leaving training, almost 30% met the requirements for eligibility. This measure is a proxy measure for examining employment stability. Across all post-service quarters, 31% of American YouthWorks participants met UI monetary eligibility requirements. Very few participants (less than 1%) filed a claim for UI benefits in the period examined, which included the Great Recession and subsequent recovery period in Austin.



Austin Academy became the Ascend Center for Learning in 2011. The mission of the organization has remained the same: to help people missed by the traditional school system catch up and succeed in education and the workplace.

The program offers GED preparation, basic computer literacy classes, and occupational skills training.

Travis County invested \$43,609 annually during the 2009-11 period in what was then Austin Academy.



For more information visit:  
[www.ascendaustin.org](http://www.ascendaustin.org)

## **ASCEND CENTER FOR LEARNING (AUSTIN ACADEMY)**

This report includes the last two groups of students who attended Austin Academy in 2009-2010, and the first group of students to attend the Ascend Center for Learning in 2011. Austin Academy offered a broad-based Workplace Competency Training Program to build literacy and basic office skills, as well as a GED preparation program for individuals testing at a minimum of the 7<sup>th</sup> grade math and 9<sup>th</sup> grade reading level. The Workplace Competency program included training in workplace communications, job search, and resume development. The computer literacy training helped individuals build skills in basic computer operations (e.g., keyboarding, Internet basics, file sharing, email) and Microsoft Office applications. All training was provided by program staff.

With the transition to the Ascend Center for Learning in 2011, program offerings were updated. The Job Readiness Program, with a more time-intensive curriculum, replaced the Workplace Competency Program. In addition, Ascend launched a new adult education program for individuals with skills as low as the 3<sup>rd</sup> grade level. This program is the result of a new partnership with Austin Community College and AmeriCorps, where a full-time volunteer teacher works with a small (no more than 15 students) class in an intensive curriculum that requires daily attendance over the course of approximately one year. The program also began a new participant tracking system in 2011.

Participants take the Test for Adult Basic Education (TABE) at the beginning of the program to identify skill strengths and weaknesses. Participants are then tested after every 40 hours of instruction.

The Ascend Center for Learning program includes both daytime and evening options. The day program runs from 8:30am-3:00pm five days a week. The evening program runs from 5:30-9:00pm Monday-Thursday for employed participants. Ascend operates an open enrollment program which has no set semesters. Because the training is individualized for each participant, the amount of time an individual is in training varies but averages approximately four to six months. The structure and program offerings encourage participants to return for additional training or job search services when they were ready.

### **Wrap-Around Support Services**

Ascend employs a full-time case manager who makes referrals to organizations throughout Travis County based on the participant's needs. For example, parenting participants may be referred to Workforce Solutions–Capital Area to access childcare development funds. The organization finds that a lack of childcare is a significant barrier to participation.

Ascend addresses another significant participation barrier by providing transportation assistance, primarily in the form of bus passes. The organization also provides emergency rent or utility assistance on a case-by-case basis. Ascend partners with a number of community organizations to provide additional classes to participants on a variety of topics. These include financial literacy classes through Frameworks, healthy relationships training through Safe Place, parenting skills through Any Baby Can, smoking cessation classes through YWCA, and courses on safe sex practices through AIDS Services Austin.

### **Participant Profile**

Ascend Center for Learning participants must meet eligibility criteria, including a requirement of family income at or below 200% of the Federal Poverty Income Guidelines. The program intentionally seeks out participants who may face barriers to employment, including disabled veterans, public housing residents, high school dropouts, and victims of violent crimes.

The majority of Ascend participants were Hispanic (47%) or White (25%), 20-29 years old, and resided in East or South Austin.

## Participant Outcomes

A total of 428 participants from Ascend Center for Learning's 2009-2011 cohorts are included in the outcomes evaluation<sup>7</sup>. Table 2 provides an overview of participant outcomes across the four evaluation measures.

**Table 2. Ascend Center for Learning 2009-2011 Participant Outcomes**

Outcome measure	Four Qtrs Before Service	Last Qtr of Service	2 <sup>nd</sup> Qtr After Service	4 <sup>th</sup> Qtr After Service	8 <sup>th</sup> Qtr After Service	12 <sup>th</sup> Qtr After Service	All Qtrs After Service Ends
2009 Quarterly Employment <sup>a</sup>	40.8%	31.5%	38.6%	43.3%	48.8%	48.0%	44.5%
2010 Quarterly Employment <sup>a</sup>	38.2%	26.1%	34.5%	43.7%	45.2%	.	43.2%
2011 Quarterly Employment <sup>a</sup>	35.3%	34.6%	42.3%	45.1%	.	.	44.4%
Overall Quarterly Employment <sup>a</sup>	37.7%	31.3%	39.0%	44.2%	47.5%	45.8%	44.1%
2009 Average Qtrly Earnings	\$3,227	\$2,487	\$3,164	\$3,096	\$4,036	\$4,307	\$3,881
2010 Average Qtrly Earnings	\$4,013	\$3,069	\$3,700	\$3,508	\$4,060	.	\$3,995
2011 Average Qtrly Earnings	\$3,379	\$3,125	\$3,203	\$3,586	.	.	\$3,492
Overall Average Qtrly Earnings	\$3,509	\$2,922	\$3,314	\$3,422	\$4,109	\$4,654	\$3,812
2009 Qualified for UI Benefits	34.7%	.	.	33.1%	40.9%	41.7%	37.8%
2010 Qualified for UI Benefits	34.5%	.	.	26.9%	39.1%	.	33.9%
2011 Qualified for UI Benefits	28.9%	.	.	34.1%	.	.	39.2%
Overall Qualified for UI Benefits	32.1%	.	.	31.8%	40.2%	40.5%	36.6%
2009 Filed UI Claim	2.95%	3.15%	0.79%	2.36%	2.36%	0.79%	1.26%
2010 Filed UI Claim	3.57%	6.72%	1.68%	1.68%	1.74%	.	1.58%
2011 Filed UI Claim	2.88%	2.20%	3.85%	3.30%	.	.	2.26%
Overall Filed UI Claim	3.10%	3.74%	2.34%	2.57%	1.92%	0.60%	1.62%

Source: Austin Academy participant records and Texas Workforce Commission UI wage and claim records.

Note: A dot represents too few participants, no data to report, or insufficient time passing to report for the timeframe.

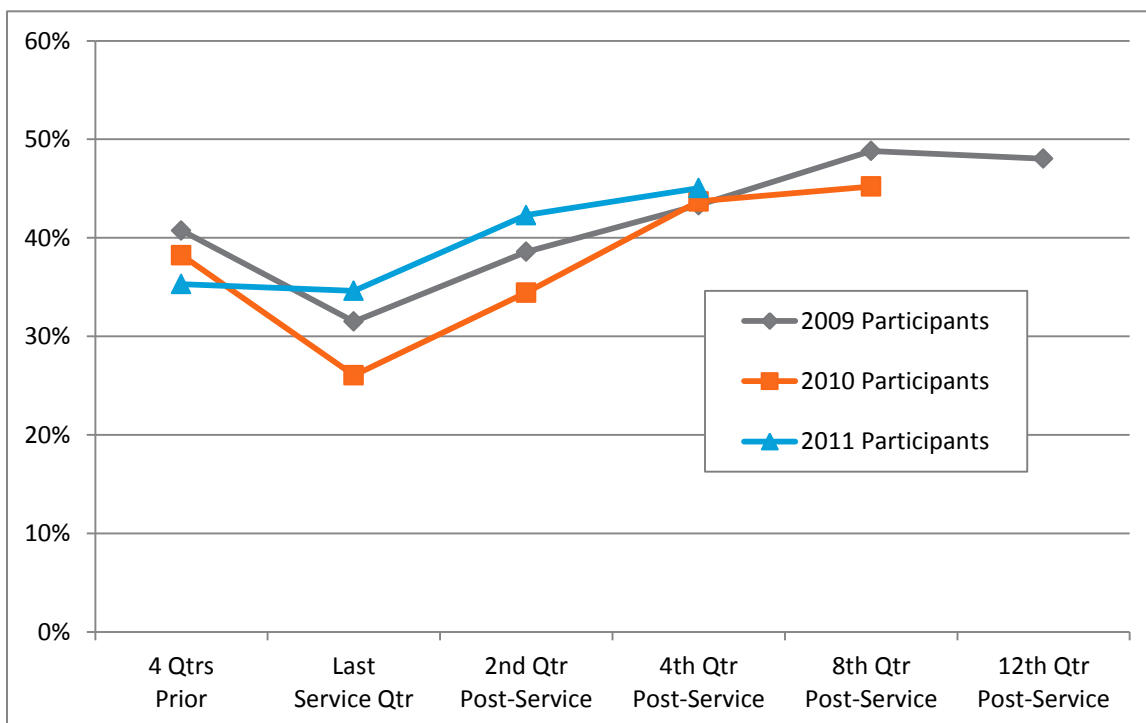
<sup>a</sup> Participants were counted as employed if they were found in Texas UI wage records. Those who were not found may be unemployed, employed outside of Texas, or employed in Texas in a position that is not reported to TWC.

In the four quarters prior to entering the Ascend program, roughly 38% of participants were employed in a UI-covered job in Texas. Following a drop during the in-training period, employment rebounded slowly, reaching roughly 44% by the fourth post-service quarter. In all

<sup>7</sup> Twenty-four records were removed from analyses due to missing Social Security numbers.

post-service quarters through March 2013, employment averaged approximately 44%. Figure 3 below illustrates quarterly employment outcomes for Ascend participants.

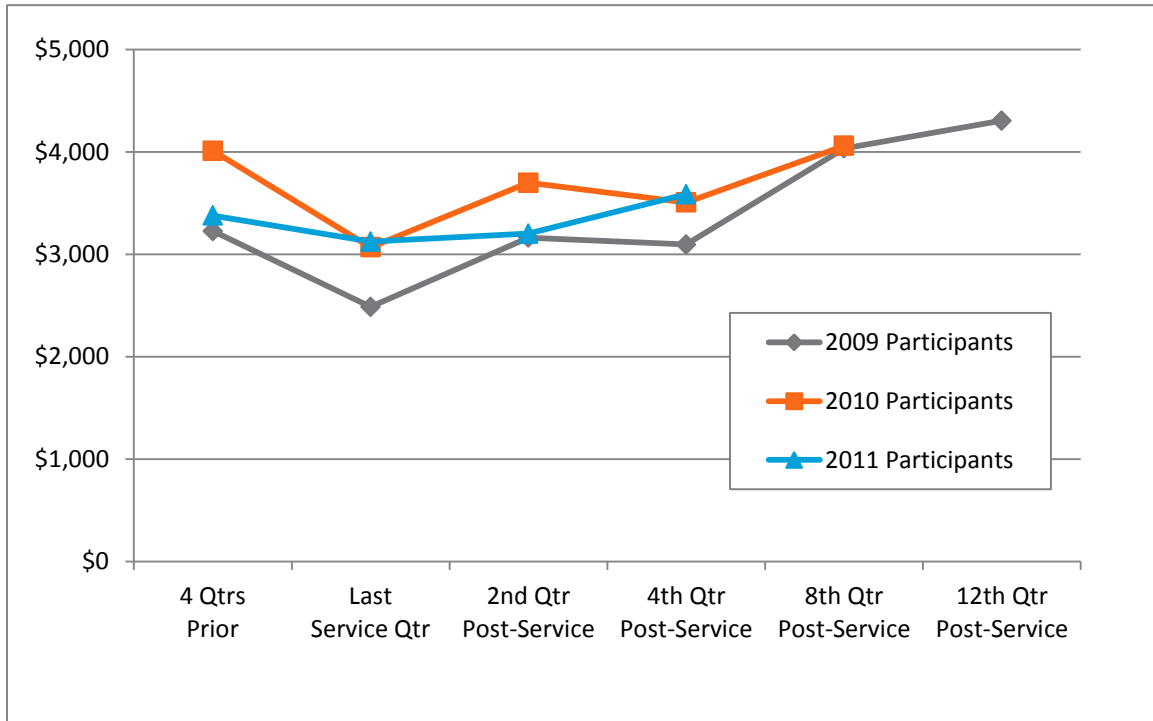
**Figure 3. Average Quarterly Employment<sup>a</sup> of Ascend Center for Learning 2009-2011 Participants**



<sup>a</sup> Participants were counted as employed if they were found in Texas UI wage records. Those who were not found may be unemployed, employed outside of Texas, or employed in Texas in a position that is not reported to TWC.

Average quarterly earnings in the four quarters prior to entering training were \$3,509 across all annual cohorts. One year after leaving the Ascend program, average quarterly earnings were about the same as pre-service earnings (\$3,422). However, the groups for which longer-term data are available show increased earnings over time. For 2009 participants who were employed in the twelfth quarter post-service (three years after leaving training), average quarterly earnings rose to \$4,307. Across all post-service quarters through March 2013, quarterly earnings for employed participants averaged roughly \$3,812. Figure 4 illustrates the average quarterly earnings of Ascend’s 2009-2011 participants.

**Figure 4. Average Quarterly Earnings of Employed Ascend Center for Learning 2009-2011 Participants**



Almost one-third of Ascend’s 2009-2011 participants met the monetary eligibility requirements for UI benefits based on their earnings and employment history in the four quarters prior to entry. In the fourth post-service quarter, roughly 32% of all participants met the monetary eligibility requirements. The percent that met these requirements continued to rise for the 2009 and 2010 participants, up to an average of about 40%. Across all post-service quarters, almost 37% of Ascend Center for Learning participants met the requirements based on earnings and employment.

In the year prior to entering the program, roughly 3% of Ascend participants filed a claim for UI benefits. Almost 7% of 2010 participants filed a UI claim in the last quarter of training, far above the rate for other time periods and other groups in the same time period. Across all post-service quarters, only 1.6% of participants had filed a UI benefit claim.

The mission of the Austin Area Urban League is to assist African-Americans and other under-served residents in the achievement of societal and economic equality by focusing on educational improvement, employment readiness, health and wellness, and the preservation of affordable housing.

AAUL has recently revamped its workforce training program with a new emphasis on helping individuals attain certifications and credentials valued by employers.

Travis County invested \$45,744 annually in AAUL during the 2009-11 period.



For more information visit:  
<http://www.aaul.org/>

## AUSTIN AREA URBAN LEAGUE

The Austin Area Urban League (AAUL) offers four main programs through its contract with Travis County: Essential Office Skills (EOS) classes; GED exam preparation classes; life skills workshops; and job placement assistance. The approach of the AAUL program is to “meet the participant where they are” and help them to build the skills they need for employment.

Essential Office Skills classes focus on developing computer skills, with a particular focus on the Microsoft Office software suite and Internet/email basics. The curriculum includes Workplace Literacy training, such as business math and business communications (both verbal and written). The training also exposes participants to office technology, such as multi-line phone systems and fax/copy machines.

Life skills workshops focus on soft skills to “assist youth and adults in altering those negative patterns of behaviors that create barriers to their success.”<sup>8</sup> The Job Resource Center provides resume writing, interviewing, and job search best practices training, as well as job leads and referrals. While AAUL does not target any particular industry or occupation, the organization has established relationships with hiring managers in healthcare, insurance, customer service, construction, and education among other fields.

Participants are typically engaged for several weeks in an AAUL program. The computer classes are offered in 6-week sessions – five hours daily for the daytime classes; three

<sup>8</sup> Austin Area Urban League. <http://www.aaul.org/programs/workforce-development.html>. Accessed: 10.28.2013.

hours daily for the evening classes. Life skills workshops are offered every Wednesday during the daytime computer class for one to two hours each session. The GED program is a three-day per week, 3.5 hours each day program.

### **Wrap-Around Support Services**

AAUL works to connect participants with resources in the community, including Dress for Success for female participants and various faith-based agencies for interview and work clothes for male participants. Born Again Ministries is a key resource for transitional housing for men who have been released from incarceration. Bus passes are also provided if funding is available.

### **Participant Profile**

AAUL participants must be residents of Travis County and have a family income at or below 200% of the Federal Income Poverty Guideline Level. A little more than half (51%) of the 1,903<sup>9</sup> participants in the evaluation for the 2009-2011 period were male. Approximately 67% of participants were Black or African-American. The average age of participants was 36. Participants served were primarily from East, Northeast, and North Austin.

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<sup>9</sup> Two records were removed from analyses due to missing Social Security numbers; six were removed due to questionable Social Security numbers.

## Participant Outcomes

Table 3 provides an overview of AAUL participant outcomes.

**Table 3. Austin Area Urban League 2009-2011 Participant Outcomes**

Outcome measure	Four Qtrs Before Service	Last Qtr of Service	2 <sup>nd</sup> Qtr After Service	4 <sup>th</sup> Qtr After Service	8 <sup>th</sup> Qtr After Service	12 <sup>th</sup> Qtr After Service	All Qtrs After Service Ends
2009 Quarterly Employment <sup>a</sup>	52.2%	48.5%	52.2%	51.8%	53.5%	53.6%	53.0%
2010 Quarterly Employment <sup>a</sup>	46.5%	51.8%	57.1%	56.7%	55.8%	.	56.4%
2011 Quarterly Employment <sup>a</sup>	42.7%	42.7%	50.8%	53.1%	.	.	51.9%
Overall Quarterly Employment <sup>a</sup>	48.3%	48.2%	53.4%	53.6%	54.2%	53.7%	53.9%
2009 Average Quarterly Earnings	\$4,183	\$3,672	\$4,347	\$4,340	\$4,898	\$5,320	\$4,834
2010 Average Quarterly Earnings	\$4,320	\$3,387	\$4,062	\$4,718	\$5,030	.	\$4,764
2011 Average Quarterly Earnings	\$4,156	\$3,027	\$3,762	\$4,175	.	.	\$4,101
Overall Average Quarterly Earnings	\$4,218	\$3,448	\$4,127	\$4,427	\$4,956	\$5,317	\$4,712
2009 Qualified for UI Benefits	47.2%	.	.	46.4%	46.9%	49.1%	47.5%
2010 Qualified for UI Benefits	45.9%	.	.	50.3%	50.7%	.	50.4%
2011 Qualified for UI Benefits	37.9%	.	.	40.1%	.	.	39.2%
Overall Qualified for UI Benefits	44.7%	.	.	46.2%	48.3%	48.2%	47.8%
2009 Filed UI Claim	5.44%	3.06%	2.38%	3.96%	2.84%	1.19%	3.06%
2010 Filed UI Claim	5.48%	4.07%	2.89%	3.23%	4.91%	.	3.21%
2011 Filed UI Claim	4.58%	6.03%	3.02%	2.78%	.	.	2.88%
Overall Filed UI Claim	5.25%	4.05%	2.68%	3.47%	3.36%	1.08%	3.08%

Source: Austin Area Urban League participant records and Texas Workforce Commission UI wage and claim records.

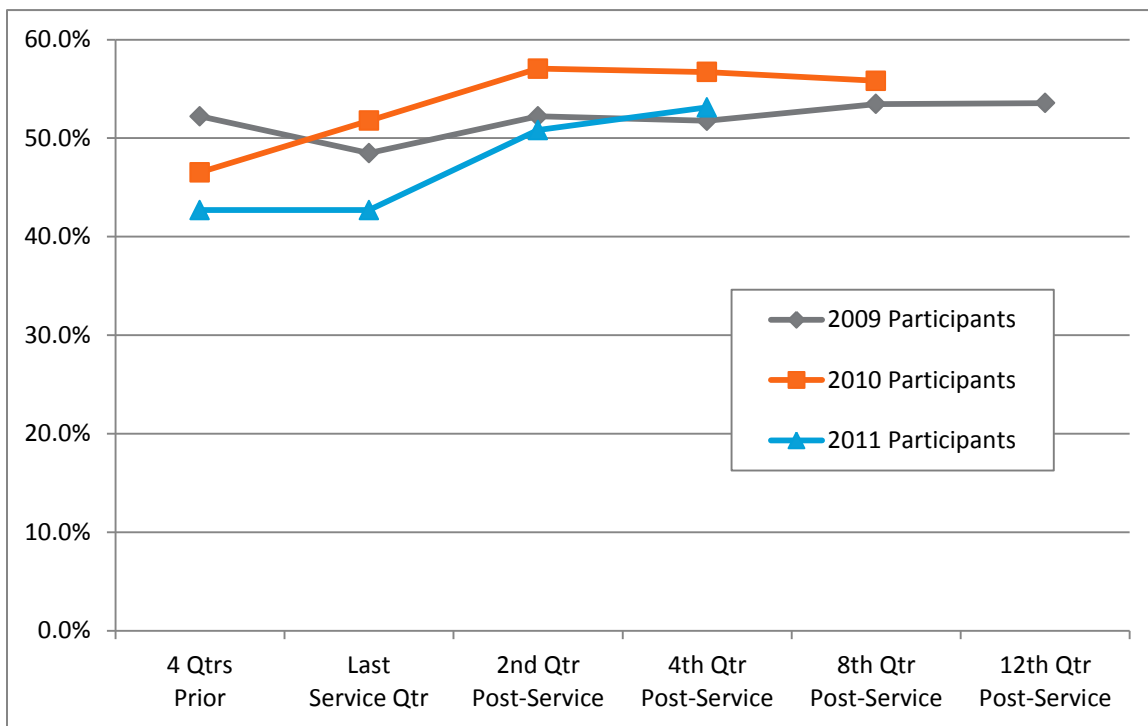
Note: A dot represents too few participants, no data to report, or insufficient time passing to report for the timeframe.

<sup>a</sup> Participants were counted as employed if they were found in Texas UI wage records. Those who were not found may be unemployed, employed outside of Texas, or employed in Texas in a position that is not reported to TWC.

Approximately 48% of AAUL participants were employed in a UI-covered job in Texas in the four quarters prior to program entry. For 2009 participants, the share employed remained relatively flat across all studied time periods, reaching about 54% in the twelfth post-service quarter. Other cohorts started with lower percentages of participants employed prior to services but increased in the second and fourth quarters post-services; the 2010 group reached nearly 57% employed and the 2009 group reached 53% employed. Across all post-service quarters, 54% of AAUL participants were employed. Figure 5 illustrates the employment outcomes of 2009-2011 AAUL participants.



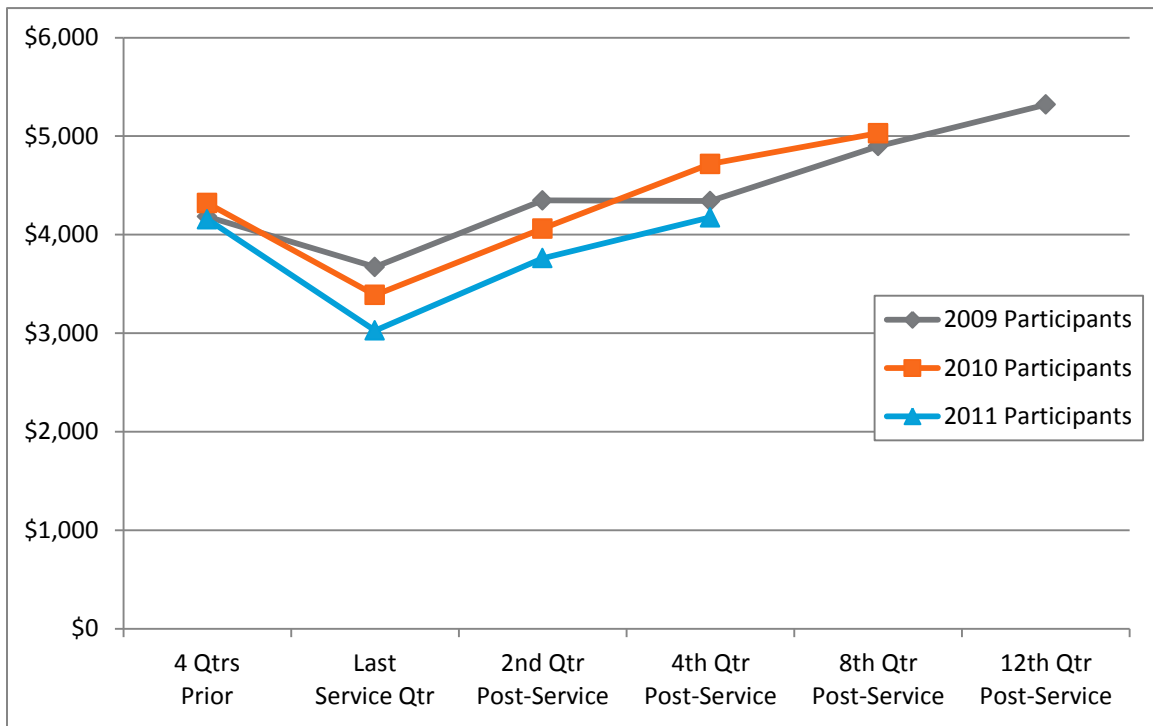
**Figure 5. Average Quarterly Employment<sup>a</sup> for 2009-2011 AAUL Participants**



<sup>a</sup> Participants were counted as employed if they were found in Texas UI wage records. Those who were not found may be unemployed, employed outside of Texas, or employed in Texas in a position that is not reported to TWC.

Average quarterly earnings of employed AAUL participants were up slightly in all post-service quarters in comparison to the pre-service period. Figure 6 below illustrates the earnings outcomes of AAUL's 2009-2011 participants.

**Figure 6. Average Quarterly Earnings of Employed AAUL Participants**



Also up slightly in the post-service period was the share of AAUL participants meeting monetary eligibility requirements for UI benefits. In the twelfth post service quarter, nearly 50% of 2009 participants met the requirement, while 51% of 2010 participants met the requirement in the eighth post-service quarter.

Prior to entering the AAUL training program, approximately 5% of participants had filed a claim for UI benefits in the previous four quarters. Across all post-service quarters, approximately 3% of participants filed a UI claim.

Goodwill Industries of Central Texas has defined a key role for services to ex-offenders, the homeless, individuals with disabilities, and others who face barriers in the labor market. Its mission is to help individuals generate lifelong connections to work.

Workforce programs at Goodwill include Ready to Work, Job Source, Community Rehabilitation, and WIA Youth.

From 2009 to 2011, Travis County invested \$137,439 annually in Goodwill's Ready to Work program.



For more information visit:  
[www.austingoodwill.org/wds/services.html](http://www.austingoodwill.org/wds/services.html)

## **GOODWILL INDUSTRIES OF CENTRAL TEXAS**

Goodwill's Ready-to-Work program is available throughout Travis County. Adults can access this program through many service points, including the County's Community Centers. While both Travis County and the City of Austin support the program, Travis County funding is primarily targeted to support ex-offenders while city funding is used to support homeless individuals. In 2011, about 60% of Ready-to-Work participants were ex-offenders.

The Ready-to-Work program is focused on helping individuals develop occupational skills necessary to earn growing wages. The training includes both soft and hard skills training. Soft skills training includes job search, resume, computers, and interview techniques. Hard skills training is more occupationally focused, with individuals earning certifications such as a Travis County Food Handler permit, or a Texas Commercial Driver's License (CDL). Other training prepares individuals for work in Heating, Ventilation, and Air Conditioning (HVAC) systems, office administration, and basic life-saving cardiopulmonary resuscitation (CPR) certifications.

Since 2004, Goodwill's workforce development emphasis has grown exponentially. From a staff of 7 in 2004, the team now has 70 full-time employees. During the 2009-2010 period, Goodwill was shifting away from one-on-one services towards a more cohort-based approach. In a cohort model, a group of individuals start and complete training together, allowing for the

development of peer support. The work process was also re-organized by population of focus to help staff build a stronger knowledge base. Goodwill created taskforce teams that focus on specific types of offenses (for example, a sex offenders team that focuses on identifying job opportunities that meet probation/parole requirements). All Goodwill workforce staff members are certified in Offender Employment Services.

Goodwill focuses on making participants marketable. With many participants coming from prison, there is a struggle to balance their immediate need for employment with intensive case management and longer-term occupational training. Placement specialists help participants to understand that work is a way out of poverty and get their buy-in for starting the pathway to earning money and building skills. Goodwill also works with ex-offenders to develop strategies for responding to employers' questions about their criminal background. The program conducts a background check on all participants and shares the results with the participants to help them understand the information that is available to a potential employer.

The Ready-to-Work program offers classes pre and post-release focused on peer support and mentoring. This is part of the effort towards simplifying reentry into the community. Job readiness training for ex-offenders includes information on the federal bonding program, understanding career options and limitations, and developing letters of explanation for their crimes. Goodwill also conducts outreach to employers to understand what participants need to be able to demonstrate to gain employment. Companies often have vague policies around hiring ex-offenders, and participants who try for employment but are unsuccessful may feel defeated or overwhelmed. Goodwill works to provide some hope to these individuals and develop a plan for moving forward. Goodwill helps participants recognize that there are legal work opportunities; it just takes time to pursue them.

### **Wrap-Around Support Services**

As part of the program, individuals can earn \$25 from Goodwill for every 30 days of employment retention. This helps to keep individuals connected to the program and involved in case management. Case managers may also provide Goodwill/Simon gift cards at their discretion. Case managers help individuals develop housing stability plans, and individuals may receive up to \$2,000 annually in housing supports. Other services offered to Ready-to-Work

participants, based on their individual needs, include transportation, help in obtaining identification cards, child care referrals, connections to food pantries, and resources for work/interview clothes.

As a result of its partnership with United Way, Goodwill has incorporated more financial education into its programs. Ready-to-Work participants are offered classes and one-on-one sessions with a financial literacy trainer, focusing on topics such as budgeting, credit repair, and the dangers of payday loans. Through its co-location with multiple partner programs around Austin, including Caritas, Any Baby Can, Safe Place, Austin-Travis County Assistance Centers, and others, Goodwill is able to help its staff build knowledge and connections that enhance referrals and supports for participants.

### **Participant Profile**

A Goodwill participant must have a documented barrier to employment, be a County resident with income at or below 200% of the Federal Poverty Income Guideline Level, and be ready to work. The challenge is that many participants have multiple, overlapping barriers to employment, including multiple required appointments for probation, unstable housing, lack of technology skills, and lack of identification (as noted by staff, a state prison ID card is not a good employment tool).

Of the 896<sup>10</sup> participants in the outcomes evaluation, there were roughly equal shares of White (39%) and Black (40%) and a lower share of Hispanic (17%) participants. More than half were between 30-50 years old.

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<sup>10</sup> Four records were removed from analyses due to missing Social Security numbers; six were removed due to questionable Social Security numbers.

## Participant Outcomes

Table 4 provides an overview of Goodwill's 2009-2011 participant outcomes.

**Table 4. Goodwill 2009-2011 Participant Outcomes**

Outcome measure	Four Qtrs Before Service	Last Qtr of Service	2 <sup>nd</sup> Qtr After Service	4 <sup>th</sup> Qtr After Service	8 <sup>th</sup> Qtr After Service	12 <sup>th</sup> Qtr After Service	All Qtrs After Service Ends
2009 Quarterly Employment <sup>a</sup>	43.5%	60.4%	60.1%	57.3%	54.1%	48.2%	54.8%
2010 Quarterly Employment <sup>a</sup>	34.2%	50.7%	59.2%	53.5%	53.7%	.	53.9%
2011 Quarterly Employment <sup>a</sup>	35.5%	59.8%	61.7%	55.9%	.	.	58.6%
Overall Quarterly Employment <sup>a</sup>	38.0%	57.0%	60.3%	55.6%	53.9%	45.9%	55.0%
2009 Average Quarterly Earnings	\$3,462	\$3,483	\$4,136	\$4,250	\$4,926	\$5,105	\$4,612
2010 Average Quarterly Earnings	\$3,034	\$2,404	\$3,320	\$3,840	\$4,529	.	\$4,028
2011 Average Quarterly Earnings	\$3,100	\$3,904	\$4,071	\$4,491	.	.	\$4,240
Overall Average Quarterly Earnings	\$3,234	\$3,302	\$3,851	\$4,165	\$4,759	\$5,535	\$4,352
2009 Qualified for UI Benefits	41.4%	.	.	50.9%	48.2%	43.6%	47.6%
2010 Qualified for UI Benefits	35.4%	.	.	45.8%	48.9%	.	47.9%
2011 Qualified for UI Benefits	31.4%	.	.	57.0%	.	.	.
Overall Qualified for UI Benefits	36.4%	.	.	50.5%	48.5%	42.6%	47.6%
2009 Filed UI Claim	4.31%	3.02%	3.63%	5.15%	3.88%	1.54%	3.22%
2010 Filed UI Claim	2.98%	2.38%	3.74%	5.59%	4.29%	.	3.39%
2011 Filed UI Claim	4.06%	2.58%	2.68%	2.69%	.	.	2.65%
Overall Filed UI Claim	3.79%	2.68%	3.39%	4.74%	4.02%	1.24%	3.20%

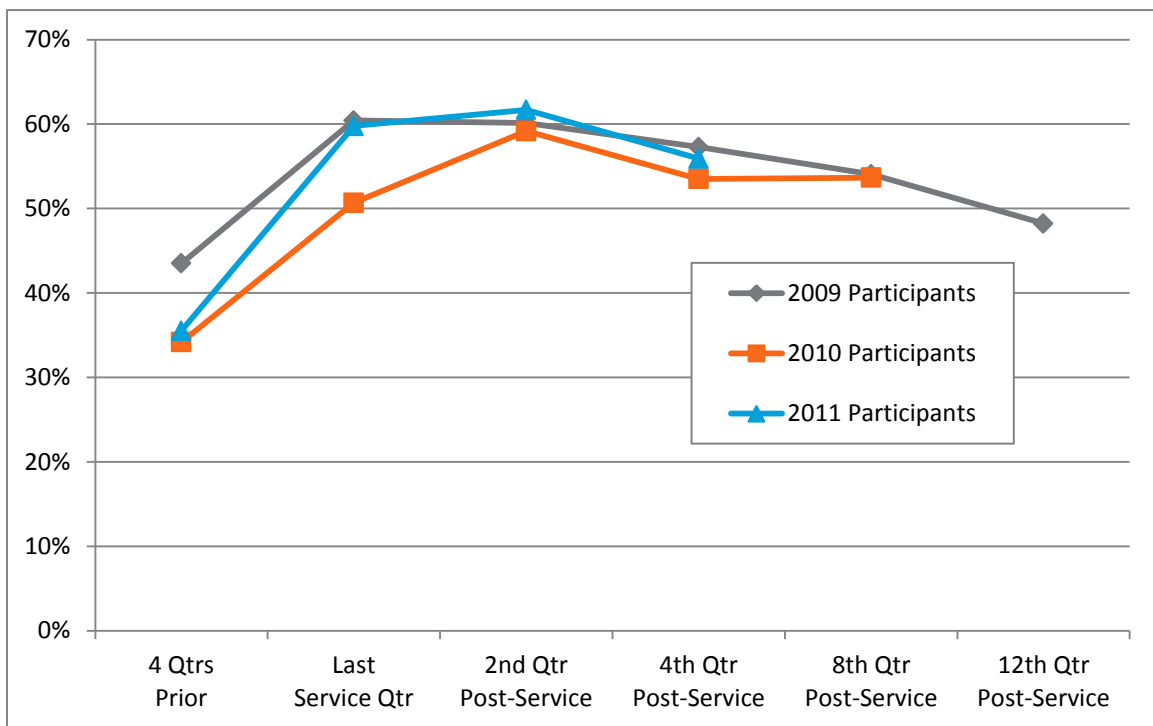
Source: Goodwill participant records and Texas Workforce Commission UI wage and claim records.

Note: A dot represents too few participants, no data to report, or insufficient time passing to report for the timeframe.

<sup>a</sup> Participants were counted as employed if they were found in Texas UI wage records. Those who were not found may be unemployed, employed outside of Texas, or employed in Texas in a position that is not reported to TWC.

Goodwill's 2009 participants had higher pre-program employment levels than the 2010 or 2011 groups. Participants in each year had large employment gains in the last quarter of service (roughly a 20% point increase in quarterly employment). This jump in employment rates while still in training may be attributed to the program's focus on helping individuals find immediate employment and then transitioning to longer-term employment through better skills. While the 2009 and 2011 groups remained flat in the second quarter post-service, the 2010 cohort's share employed rose to 59% that quarter. Across all post-service quarters, approximately 55% of Goodwill's 2009-2011 participants were employed. Figure 7 illustrates the employment outcomes for Goodwill participants.

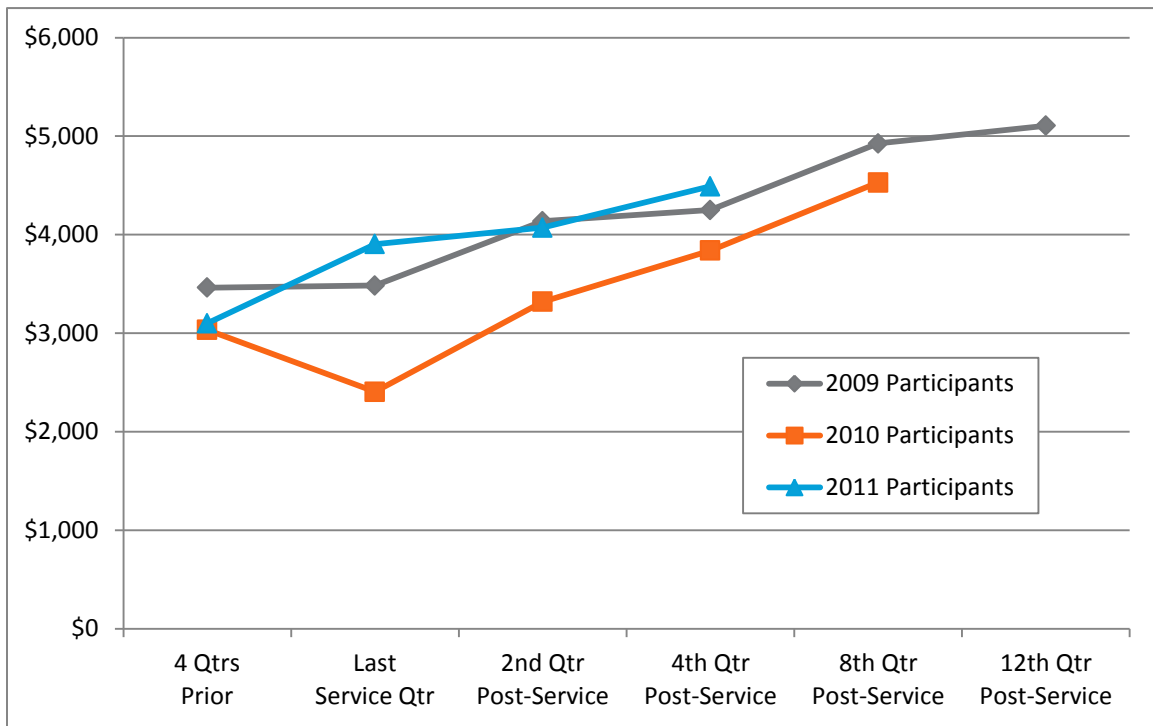
**Figure 7. Average Quarterly Employment<sup>a</sup> for Goodwill's 2009 – 2011 Participants**



<sup>a</sup> Participants were counted as employed if they were found in Texas UI wage records. Those who were not found may be unemployed, employed outside of Texas, or employed in Texas in a position that is not reported to TWC.

Figure 8 illustrates the average quarterly earnings of employed Goodwill participants. The 2010 participants who were employed experienced, on average, a sizeable drop in wages during the last quarter of services, which is a different experience than the other two cohorts. Earnings for all groups showed gains in the post-service period, although the 2010 participants continue to be earning slightly less than the other groups.

**Figure 8. Average Quarterly Earnings of Employed Goodwill 2009-2011 Participants**



Roughly 36% of Goodwill participants qualified for UI benefits based on their employment and earnings histories in the pre-service period. Across all post-service quarters, the share monetarily eligible for UI benefits grew by approximately 11 percentage points.

Approximately 4% of Goodwill participants filed a claim for UI benefits in the four quarters prior to entering Goodwill training. In the post-service period, there was a slight drop in the share filing claims to approximately 3.2%.



Skillpoint Alliance is a regional workforce intermediary based in Austin, Texas. Skillpoint connects individuals, training providers, employers, and other community organizations together to meet identified workforce skills gaps.

Skillpoint offers short-term occupational skills training through its Gateway program.

From 2009 to 2011\*, Skillpoint Alliance received \$244,965 from Travis County for two programs: Youth College & Career and Gateway. The evaluation only examines the Gateway workforce training program.

\*In October 2011, Skillpoint received an additional \$150,000 for the Gateway program for the period October 2011 through December 2012.



For more information visit:  
[www.skillpointalliance.org](http://www.skillpointalliance.org)

## SKILLPOINT ALLIANCE

The mission of Skillpoint Alliance's Gateway program is to get people employed in high-demand occupations at a livable wage. The Gateway program is defined by fairly rapid training. Depending on the occupation targeted, full-time training may range from three to ten weeks. The curricula emphasize hands-on learning opportunities, with the program shifting more class time away from lectures towards active skill development in recent years.

In 2010, Skillpoint renewed its focus on employer engagement. Gateway program administrators recognized a need to better engage employers in a dialogue to understand their workforce needs and to give employers and industry groups a bigger role in shaping the Gateway training programs. The new focus is to match training to the demands of employers so that individuals have the skills they need to gain employment.

The Gateway program expanded from training in one field (general construction) in 2009 to three fields in 2010 (adding electrical and allied health). In 2011, Gateway added training opportunities in nurse aide and plumbing. As the program has grown, Skillpoint Alliance has worked with its training providers to develop a core curriculum that serves as the first step in the training sequence for a number of career paths. For example, a 4-week construction core class is now the entry point for additional training in electrical work or plumbing. The new emphasis on specialty skills is intended to better prepare participants for available employment opportunities.

Professional development became a more formal activity in the Gateway program in 2010. While participants have always developed resumes early in the training sequence, most employment services were offered after the occupational skills training ended. In the new structure, 12 hours of professional development and soft skills training is integrated with the occupational training coursework. Topics include targeted job search, interviewing, and conversational skills. Individual sessions with a workforce development specialist are still offered following training to target participants' specific employment needs.

Many of the Gateway training programs lead to industry-recognized credentials. For example, the construction training program leads to NCCER certifications and apprentice "Level 1" licenses. In 2009, all training was provided through Austin Community College. In 2010, the Associated Builders and Contractors of Central Texas joined as a training provider for the Gateway Electrical training program. Since 2011, Gateway has expanded into other Central Texas counties, often through training partnerships with apprenticeship programs or unions.

### **Wrap-Around Support Services**

In addition to covering the full cost of the training and professional development activities noted above, Skillpoint also provides wrap-around support services to help participants manage the travel, equipment, and clothing requirements of the program. Services include bus passes, parking passes for the community college, tools, work clothes, shoes, and books. Child care assistance may be included on a case-by-case basis.

Skillpoint also connects Gateway participants with other resources in the community. For example, participants are referred to Workforce Solutions Career Centers for workshops on job search skills and other topics. Participants receiving SNAP or TANF are also encouraged to take advantage of the resources available through those programs.

### **Participant Profile**

Skillpoint has established different minimum entry-level skill requirements by occupational program. For example, in construction, participants must have at least a 7<sup>th</sup> grade skill level in reading and math. For the electric program, participants must have at least a 9<sup>th</sup> grade English skills level and a 10<sup>th</sup> grade math skill level. For allied health, participants must

have 10<sup>th</sup> grade skills in both subjects. In 2011, the program began using the GAIN (Global Appraisal of Individual Needs) assessment to identify participants' strengths and weaknesses in reading and math to better target support services.

Gateway administrators noted that the intake process has become more rigorous in recent years, with eligibility interviews focused on identifying candidates who are actually interested in working in the selected field rather than simply participating in training. Interviews are intended to help staff understand the applicant's motivation for training, the individual's attitude and "coach-ability". Staff noted that as the intake process has improved, so too have the employment numbers following training. Approximately 19% of applicants are accepted into a Gateway training program; the number trained each year is driven by space limitations of the training partner, funding limitations, and eligibility.

For Gateway, 343 participants served in the 2009-2011 period were included in the analyses.<sup>11</sup> Approximately 60% were between 20-39 years old, with an average participant age of 34.

### **Participant Outcomes**

At the outset, it is important to note that the construction industry has significant shares of self-employed and independent contractors - workers who would not appear in UI wage records. Therefore, the outcomes presented here likely under-estimate actual outcomes for Gateway participants. Table 5 provides an overview of Gateway participant outcomes.

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<sup>11</sup> One record was removed from analyses due to missing Social Security number.

**Table 5. Skillpoint Alliance's Gateway Program 2009-2011 Participant Outcomes**

Outcome measure	Four Qtrs Before Service	Last Qtr of Service	2 <sup>nd</sup> Qtr After Service	4 <sup>th</sup> Qtr After Service	8 <sup>th</sup> Qtr After Service	12 <sup>th</sup> Qtr After Service	All Qtrs After Service Ends
2009 Quarterly Employment <sup>a</sup>	14.6%	33.0%	37.2%	36.2%	36.2%	37.2%	38.4%
2010 Quarterly Employment <sup>a</sup>	31.8%	30.9%	52.7%	52.7%	53.6%	.	52.0%
2011 Quarterly Employment <sup>a</sup>	37.6%	40.3%	65.5%	64.8%	.	.	62.5%
Overall Quarterly Employment <sup>a</sup>	29.5%	35.3%	53.6%	53.1%	45.9%	39.5%	49.4%
2009 Average Quarterly Earnings	\$3,195	\$1,258	\$2,645	\$4,032	\$4,589	\$5,180	\$4,318
2010 Average Quarterly Earnings	\$7,593	\$4,348	\$6,032	\$6,426	\$7,072	.	\$6,358
2011 Average Quarterly Earnings	\$3,266	\$2,144	\$4,520	\$4,731	.	.	\$4,661
Overall Average Quarterly Earnings	\$4,756	\$2,536	\$4,640	\$5,141	\$6,204	\$5,097	\$5,173
2009 Qualified for UI Benefits	12.0%	.	.	29.8%	29.8%	26.6%	31.3%
2010 Qualified for UI Benefits	31.6%	.	.	43.6%	52.7%	.	46.9%
2011 Qualified for UI Benefits	33.1%	.	.	61.2%	.	.	55.4%
Overall Qualified for UI Benefits	26.8%	.	.	46.9%	43.4%	29.4%	39.7%
2009 Filed UI Claim	1.33%	2.13%	1.06%	2.13%	1.06%	1.06%	1.49%
2010 Filed UI Claim	3.86%	2.73%	0.91%	6.36%	0.91%	.	2.13%
2011 Filed UI Claim	3.06%	5.76%	0.00%	2.16%	.	.	1.25%
Overall Filed UI Claim	2.84%	3.79%	0.58%	3.50%	0.86%	1.68%	1.65%

Source: Skillpoint Alliance participant records and Texas Workforce Commission UI wage and claim records.

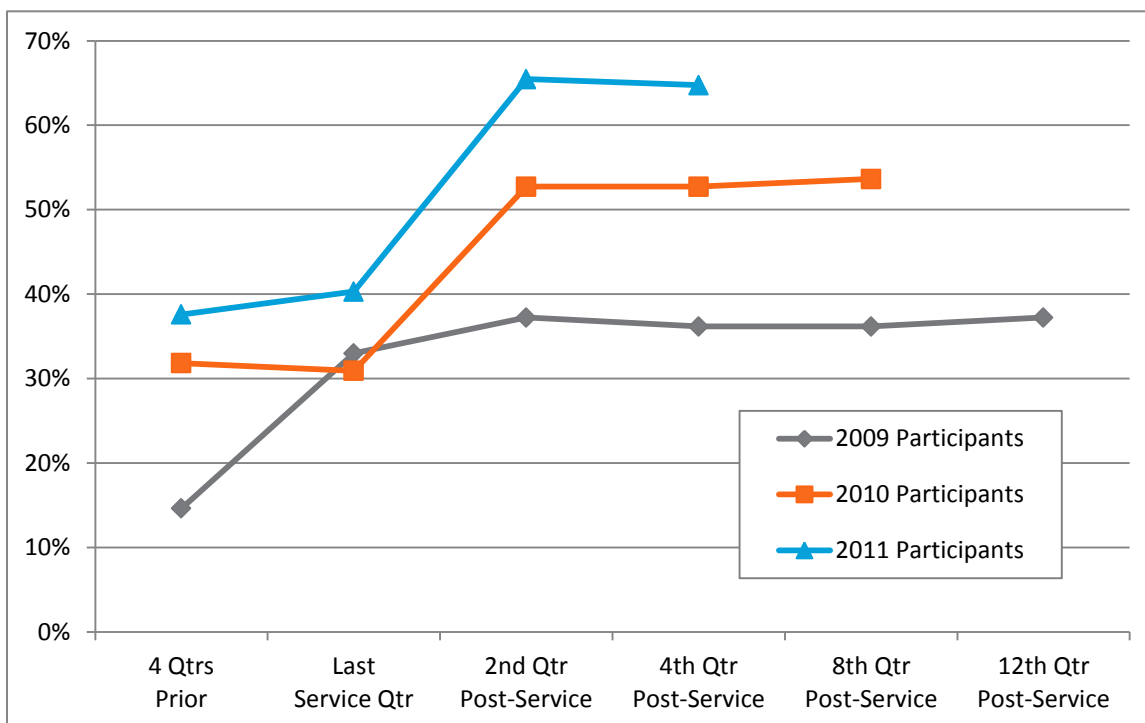
Note: A dot represents too few participants, no data to report, or insufficient time passing to report for the timeframe.

<sup>a</sup> Participants were counted as employed if they were found in Texas UI wage records. Those who were not found may be unemployed, employed outside of Texas, or employed in Texas in a position that is not reported to TWC.

In the four quarters prior to entry, approximately 30% of Skillpoint Alliance's Gateway participants were employed in a UI-covered job in Texas. The employment rate for the 2009 participants started out much lower than the rate for other cohorts, at about 15% compared to over 30%. However, employment for 2009 participants reached nearly 37% in the twelfth quarter post-service (three years after leaving training.) Employment rates for the 2010 and 2011 participants remained stable between pre-services and the last quarter of services but jumped by about 66% to 74% by the second post-service quarter. Employment for 2010 participants reached 53% in the second and fourth quarters after service. For 2011 participants, employment surged to about 66% in the second post-service quarter (six months after leaving training) and held around 65% in the fourth post-service quarter. Across all post-service quarters, almost half of the Gateway program's participants (49%) were employed.

Figure 9 illustrates the quarterly employment outcomes for 2009 through 2011 Gateway program participants.

**Figure 9. Average Quarterly Employment<sup>a</sup> for 2009-2011 Skillpoint Alliance's Gateway Program Participants**

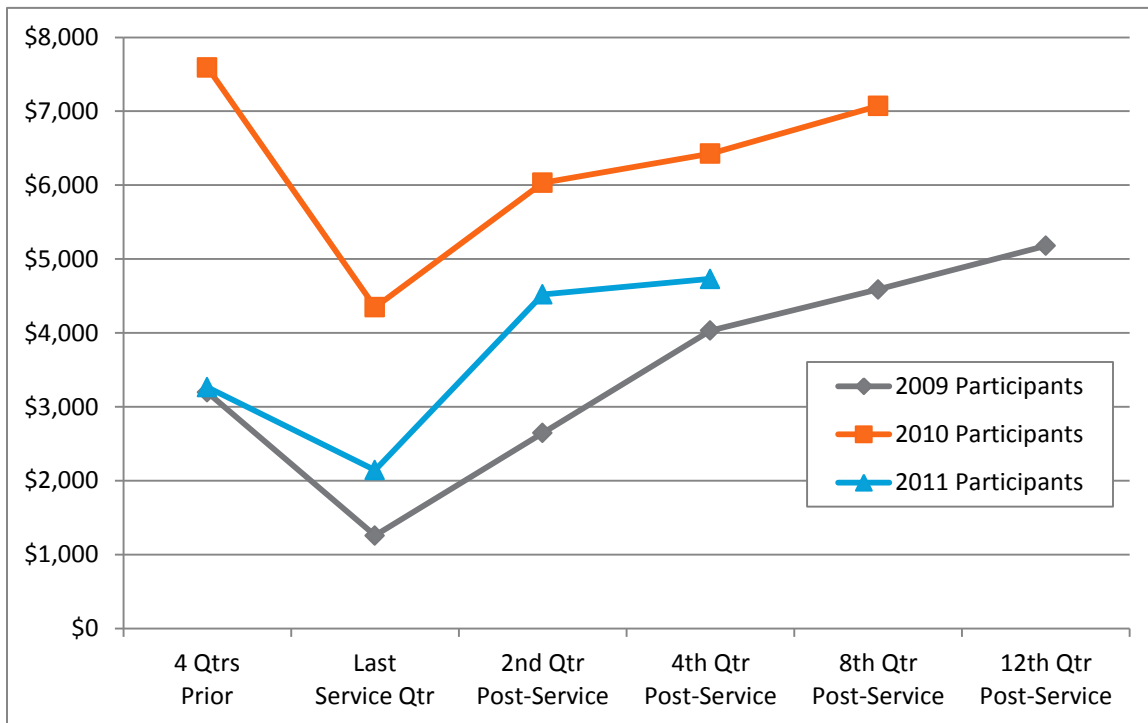


<sup>a</sup> Participants were counted as employed if they were found in Texas UI wage records. Those who were not found may be unemployed, employed outside of Texas, or employed in Texas in a position that is not reported to TWC.

The earnings trajectories of Gateway program participants have varied considerably across annual groups of participants, as illustrated in Figure 10. For 2009 participants, earnings took an expected dip in the last quarter of training. Although their average quarterly earnings doubled between the last quarter of services and the second post-service quarter, earnings were still not as high as pre-service earnings. However, the earnings of employed 2009 participants increased by nearly 60% from before services to three years after services. The 2010 participants started out with much higher wages than the other year's participants (over double the average quarterly earnings of the 2009 and 2011 participants), and while their earnings increased after the expected drop during services, earnings remained slightly lower

than pre-service levels as of two years after services. The 2011 Gateway program participants achieved a 45% earnings gain by their fourth post-service quarter (one year after leaving training).

**Figure 10. Average Quarterly Earnings for Employed 2009-2011 Skillpoint Alliance's Gateway Program Participants**



Only 12% of 2009 participants met the monetary eligibility requirements for UI benefits in the four quarters prior to entering Gateway, compared to over 30% of the 2010 and 2011 participants. The share of participants that met the monetary eligibility requirements rose for each group over time. For the 2009 group, that share rose to 31% across all post-service quarters. Across all post-service quarters, 47% of 2010 participants and 55% of 2011 participants met the monetary eligibility standard. Less than 3% participants filed a UI benefit claim before entering training, and less than 2% filed a claim in any post-service quarter.

Workforce Solutions – Capital Area is the local Workforce Investment Board for Travis County. It is one of 28 local boards in Texas. The board oversees federal and state employment and training programs. The Capital Area Board also raises funds through active grant and contract development efforts for targeted workforce development services.

Travis County funded the Rapid Employment Model (REM) project as a regular workforce services program in 2010 and 2011 for \$244,275; prior to that REM operated as a pilot demonstration project.



For more information visit:  
[www.wfscapitalarea.com](http://www.wfscapitalarea.com)

## **WORKFORCE SOLUTIONS—CAPITAL AREA WORKFORCE BOARD**

Workforce Solutions—Capital Area Workforce Board operates the Travis County-funded Rapid Employment Model (REM) program, which launched in 2006 as a pilot demonstration project then transitioned to regular workforce program operations in 2010.

### **Rapid Employment Model**

The purpose of the REM program is to accelerate the time it takes for individuals to become reemployed with new skills and a marketable credential. Services are specifically targeted at disadvantaged County residents, in particular ex-offenders, welfare recipients (TANF-Choices), and those receiving food stamp (SNAP) benefits.

Workforce Solutions contracts with a number of training providers to serve REM participants, which during the studied timeframe included the Ascend Center for Learning, Skillpoint Alliance's Gateway program, Austin Community College, Express Training Services, Ventana Del Sol, and New Horizons. Participants select from a number of occupations requiring two to eight weeks of training. These include: general construction, electric and plumbing; clerical, office work, computer training; line cook; certified nurse aide; and truck driving.

In 2010, Workforce Solutions developed a Job Preview Exercise to help participants think through the training program and next steps for obtaining a job. The Exercise focuses on barriers to employment, participant's needs and goals for employment, working conditions, and other factors

related to target occupations. The Exercise also asks participants to develop a job search plan that includes identifying three potential job leads. The program specialist then uses the exercise as a framework for discussing training options and opportunities with each participant. The program specialists report that the Exercise has been helpful in keeping the focus on employment rather than training.

### ***Wrap-Around Support Services***

REM participants during the 2009-2010 period received a \$100 per week incentive for perfect attendance, as well as a \$50 bonus for reporting employment to their program specialist. In 2011, the incentive model changed. While participants can still earn \$100 per week for perfect attendance and participation in training activities, only \$50 of the incentive is paid directly to the participant each week. The remaining \$50 is held in reserve and paid to the participant when job placement information is verified by the program specialist. Employment must be for a minimum of 20 hours per week, training-related, and obtained within 12 weeks of training completion. Participants that continue to be employed for six months are eligible to earn an additional \$50 bonus.

REM participants primarily are referred to the program through another workforce training service at the board, such as Project RIO<sup>12</sup> (64% of those included in this analysis) which serves ex-offenders, TANF Choices (11% of those included in this analysis) which serves those on public assistance, and SNAP Employment & Training (8% of those include in this analysis) which serves those receiving food assistance. These programs primarily provide the wrap-around support services participants need to be successful in REM.

### ***Participant Profile***

During the 2009-2011 period, 133 of 225 REM participants were also identified as clients of another workforce program or provider in this evaluation.<sup>13</sup> The majority of REM participants

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<sup>12</sup> Project RIO ended in November 2011.

<sup>13</sup> Among those who were served by another studied agency during the study timeframe, most (56%) had received services at Gateway. About 35% had received services at Ascend Austin, about 4% at Austin Area Urban League, 4% at Goodwill and less than 2% at Capital IDEA.



included in the analysis were male (63%). Approximately 41% were Black, 28% Hispanic, and 24% White.

### **REM Participant Outcomes**

Given the large number of participants who were in construction training, it is likely that the outcomes reported here undercount the actual employment levels reached by REM participants due to the UI coverage issue noted earlier. Table 7 below provides an overview of the labor market outcomes of REM 2009-2011 participants.

**Table 6. REM 2009-2011 Participant Outcomes**

Outcome measure	Four Qtrs Before Service	Last Qtr of Service	2 <sup>nd</sup> Qtr After Service	4 <sup>th</sup> Qtr After Service	8 <sup>th</sup> Qtr After Service	12 <sup>th</sup> Qtr After Service	All Qtrs After Service Ends
2009 Quarterly Employment <sup>a</sup>	13.7%	29.9%	37.1%	33.0%	34.0%	37.1%	34.8%
2010 Quarterly Employment <sup>a</sup>	28.3%	38.0%	52.2%	45.7%	38.0%	.	46.6%
2011 Quarterly Employment <sup>a</sup>	22.2%	19.4%	41.7%	55.6%	.	.	50.0%
Overall Quarterly Employment <sup>a</sup>	21.0%	31.6%	44.0%	41.8%	36.1%	35.3%	40.6%
2009 Average Quarterly Earnings	\$1,653	\$1,241	\$2,793	\$3,558	\$3,176	\$3,826	\$3,247
2010 Average Quarterly Earnings	\$8,078	\$3,665	\$5,578	\$5,849	\$7,493	.	\$5,823
2011 Average Quarterly Earnings	\$2,924	.	.	\$4,117	.	.	\$3,981
Overall Average Quarterly Earnings	\$5,404	\$2,483	\$4,305	\$4,701	\$5,261	\$4,047	\$4,464
2009 Qualified for UI Benefits	12.1%	.	.	30.9%	26.8%	23.7%	27.0%
2010 Qualified for UI Benefits	29.1%	.	.	42.4%	35.9%	30.8%	38.4%
2011 Qualified for UI Benefits	25.0%	.	.	33.3%	.	.	41.0%
Overall Qualified for UI Benefits	21.1%	.	.	36.0%	31.4%	25.7%	31.6%
2009 Filed UI Claim	0.52%	1.03%	0.00%	2.06%	1.03%	2.06%	1.26%
2010 Filed UI Claim	3.80%	3.26%	1.09%	4.35%	1.09%	.	2.13%
2011 Filed UI Claim	2.78%	2.78%	2.78%	2.78%	.	.	1.40%
Overall Filed UI Claim	2.22%	2.22%	0.89%	3.11%	1.03%	1.47%	1.61%

Source: REM participant records and Texas Workforce Commission UI wage and claim records.

Note: A dot represents too few participants, no data to report, or insufficient time passing to report for the timeframe.

<sup>a</sup> Participants were counted as employed if they were found in Texas UI wage records. Those who were not found may be unemployed, employed outside of Texas, or employed in Texas in a position that is not reported to TWC.

The quarterly employment trajectory of REM participants varied widely across annual groups, as illustrated in Figure 11. For the 2009-2010 cohorts, employment peaked in the second quarter after service (six months later) reaching 37% for the 2009 participants and 52%

for 2010 participants. For 2011 participants, however, the share employed continued to show an increase in the fourth post-service quarter (one year after leaving training). Across all post-service quarters approximately 41% of REM 2009-2011 participants were employed.

**Figure 11. Average Quarterly Employment for 2009-2011 REM Participants**

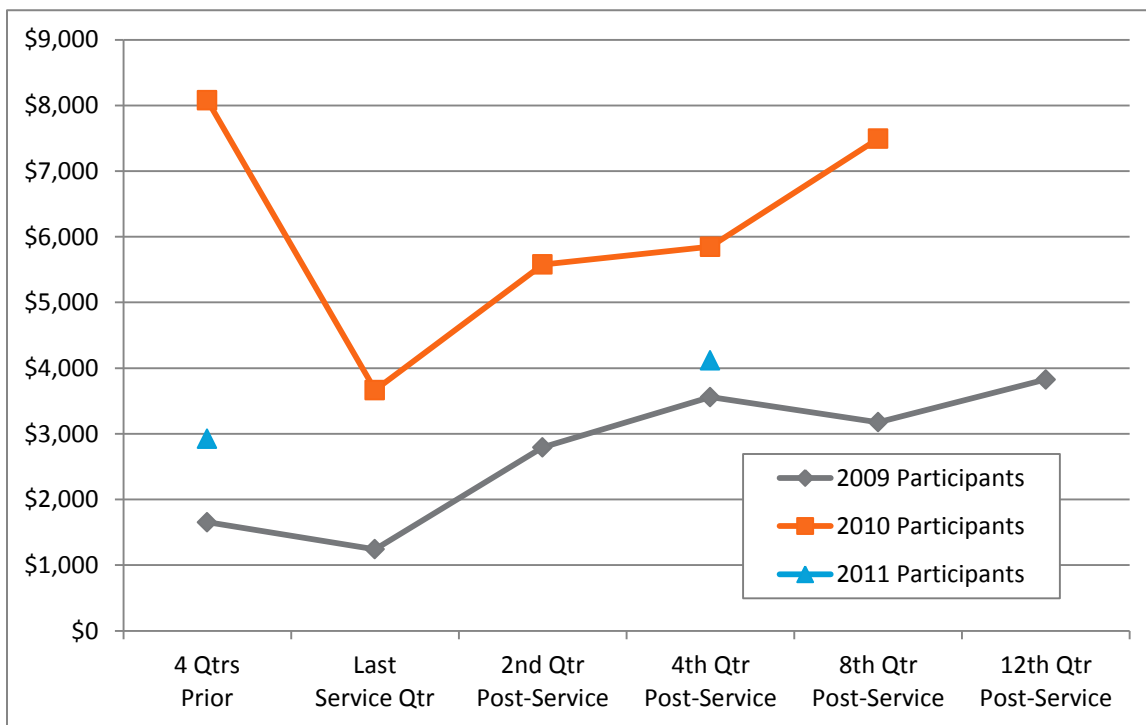


<sup>a</sup> Participants were counted as employed if they were found in Texas UI wage records. Those who were not found may be unemployed, employed outside of Texas, or employed in Texas in a position that is not reported to TWC.

Figure 12 illustrates that the average quarterly earnings of employed REM participants varied by annual groups. Average quarterly earnings for 2010 participants employed in the four quarters prior to entering REM were significantly larger than 2009 and 2011 participant earnings in the same period. The 2009 participants earned on average \$1,653 in the pre-service period, rising to an average of \$3,826 in the twelfth quarter post-service (three years after leaving training) and an average \$3,247 across all post-service quarters. Participants in 2010 earned an average of \$8,078 in the pre-service period. While those 2010 participants earned an average of \$7,493 in the eighth quarter post-service, earnings across all post-service quarters averaged only \$5,823. The 2011 REM participants earned \$2,924 in the year prior to

entering training. Across all quarters in the post service period, earnings for all cohorts averaged \$4,464.

**Figure 12. Average Quarterly Earnings of Employed REM 2009-2011 Participants**



The share of participants who met monetary eligibility requirements for UI benefits in the pre-service period also differed greatly. Twelve percent of 2009 participants met that standard in the four quarters prior to entry; across all post-service quarters that share rose to 27%. For 2010 participants, 29% met the UI monetary eligibility standards in the pre-service period; that share rose to 38% in all post-service quarters. One-quarter of 2011 REM participants met the monetary qualifications for UI benefits in the year prior to training; that share rose to 41% across all post-service quarters. Few participants filed a claim for UI benefits before or after their REM training.

Capital IDEA provides long-term training in high-wage, high-demand occupations. The mission of the organization is to “sponsor educational opportunities for low-earning adults that lead to life-long financial independence.”\*

As a sectoral workforce development program, Capital IDEA collaborates with employers and training providers to help prepare participants for good jobs with family-supporting wages and benefits

In 2009 and 2010, Travis County invested \$700,213 annually in Capital IDEA.

\*Capital IDEA 2012 flyer.



For more information visit:  
[www.capitalidea.org](http://www.capitalidea.org)

## CAPITAL IDEA

Capital IDEA is a sectoral workforce development program, offering training in nursing, allied health, skilled trades, utilities, information and electronic technologies, and other fields. Approximately 75% of the training is in healthcare. Each program supported at Capital IDEA is one identified by employers as an occupation in high-demand paying \$16 or more per hour.

Capital IDEA carefully screens applicants for suitability with its intensive program design. Programming includes the College Prep Academy (described below), weekly group sessions with a Career Navigator (case manager/counselor) and other participants, and occupational skills training. Eligibility for the program includes at least a 5<sup>th</sup> grade skill level in reading and math and a high school diploma or GED. The College Prep Academy is an intensive 6.5 hour per day, five-day a week program to build math, reading, writing, and study skills. Less than 10% of participants require more than one semester of the academy; those that do repeat typically need additional support in math. Twice a week, time is dedicated to tutoring, advising, or other activities.

One of the primary activities in Capital IDEA is the weekly one-hour peer support group session led by a Career Navigator. Topics for these sessions are driven by student needs and their ability to navigate the college experience. Navigators meet individually with participants at the start of each semester to make sure they get off on the right track.

Capital IDEA covers all tuition, fees and books, and provides financial assistance towards the costs of childcare. The program also covers the cost of uniforms, shoes, tools, training software, and anything required on a class syllabus. Participants are encouraged to manage their own self-sufficiency by working part-time during training. Financial literacy is a core skill participants develop through Capital IDEA. Financial aid and budgeting are important topics that help participants stay focused on the training plan.

### **Wrap-Around Support Services**

The majority of Capital IDEA training is delivered by Austin Community College (ACC). ACC students have a “green pass” which entitles them to free bus, rail, and Express Bus services in the region for the entire semester. College Prep Academy participants, who are not ACC students, are provided bus passes or emergency gas cards if they have a particularly lengthy commute.

Participants receive Wal-Mart gift cards to purchase school supplies including backpacks, printer ink, and paper. The program also covers the cost of other services important to learning, such as eye examinations and eyeglasses, if needed. Emergency utility vouchers, and mortgage and rent assistance are also available on a case-by-case basis.

Capital IDEA refers participants to Workforce Solutions for child care services. For parents who do not receive support through Workforce Solutions, Capital IDEA offers the following support based on income level: If the participant’s family income is under 100% of the Federal Poverty Level, then Capital IDEA covers 100% of allowable childcare cost; if the participant’s family income is over 100% of FPL, then parents pay 20% of the allowable childcare cost, plus any difference above allowable cost. Many of the participant parents have school-aged children, so the required care is typically before/after school rather than full-day.

Capital IDEA has a robust network of informal and formal relationships with social service providers. Participants in need of mental health counseling may be referred to the Samaritan Center. Other partners include Dress for Success and other sources for interview clothes, Blue/Brown Santa, food bank, Housing Authority and Foundation Communities, SafePlace, and many others. Co-location at the ACC Eastview Campus Workforce Center has

improved connections between the local WIA program and Capital IDEA and helps to build partnerships and resource connections.

### **Participant Profile**

Over three-fifths of Capital Idea participants included in this report were female (63%). About one-quarter of the participants whose race/ethnicity are known were Hispanic (27%) and about 20% were Black (race/ethnicity is unknown for 37% of participants). About half were between 20 and 29 years of age.

### **Participant Outcomes**

Table 7 below provides an overview of labor market outcomes for Capital IDEA participants. The evaluation includes participants who started in Capital IDEA between 2003 and 2011 who either completed training or who left prior to completion. Some Capital IDEA completers can be in the program for four or more years; non-completers were typically in the program for more than one quarter. Therefore, participants from recent years who are included in this report are more likely to be ones who dropped out of the program rather than those who completed training. Given changes in the Austin-area labor market, the evaluation of longer-term outcomes from Capital IDEA participation is further divided into two groups in the following analysis: participants who entered training prior to the Great Recession (2003-2008), and those who entered afterwards (2009-2011).

**Table 7. Capital IDEA 2003-2011 Participant Outcomes**

Outcome measure	Four Qtrs Before Service	Last Qtr of Service	2 <sup>nd</sup> Qtr After Service	4 <sup>th</sup> Qtr After Service	8 <sup>th</sup> Qtr After Service	12 <sup>th</sup> Qtr After Service	16 <sup>th</sup> Qtr After Service	20 <sup>th</sup> Qtr After Service	24 <sup>th</sup> Qtr After Service	28 <sup>th</sup> Qtr After Service	32 <sup>nd</sup> Qtr After Service	36 <sup>th</sup> Qtr After Service	All Qtrs After Service Ends
2003 Quarterly Employment <sup>a</sup>	67.7%	76.0%	74.7%	78.2%	80.0%	79.7%	76.1%	72.7%	67.4%	65.7%	65.3%	60.0%	73.0%
2004 Quarterly Employment <sup>a</sup>	65.7%	77.3%	75.5%	79.1%	78.0%	72.3%	74.2%	68.8%	66.7%	63.5%	.	.	72.7%
2005 Quarterly Employment <sup>a</sup>	68.9%	84.6%	86.9%	84.0%	79.4%	79.1%	79.5%	73.5%	66.7%	56.5%	.	.	78.4%
2006 Quarterly Employment <sup>a</sup>	71.9%	80.6%	78.4%	81.4%	75.9%	67.6%	70.0%	69.6%	65.0%	.	.	.	73.2%
2007 Quarterly Employment <sup>a</sup>	64.6%	67.7%	68.5%	65.1%	66.7%	61.5%	69.7%	51.7%	.	.	.	.	64.5%
2008 Quarterly Employment <sup>a</sup>	60.9%	65.3%	62.1%	61.3%	63.3%	62.7%	.	.	.	.	.	.	62.2%
2009 Quarterly Employment <sup>a</sup>	66.4%	70.2%	72.1%	70.6%	63.2%	67.7%	.	.	.	.	.	.	69.3%
2010 Quarterly Employment <sup>a</sup>	65.5%	71.4%	71.9%	72.0%	75.0%	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	73.4%
2011 Quarterly Employment <sup>a</sup>	65.6%	79.2%	70.0%	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	78.0%
Overall Quarterly Employment <sup>a</sup>	67.1%	75.2%	74.7%	75.3%	73.8%	71.9%	74.5%	70.2%	66.5%	64.3%	64.7%	60.6%	72.0%
2003 Average Qtrly Earnings	\$4,356	\$7,293	\$7,393	\$7,785	\$8,326	\$7,698	\$8,447	\$8,113	\$7,843	\$7,695	\$8,302	\$9,316	\$8,033
2004 Average Qtrly Earnings	\$4,233	\$6,291	\$7,100	\$6,785	\$7,416	\$7,956	\$8,120	\$7,602	\$6,798	\$8,045	.	.	\$7,455
2005 Average Qtrly Earnings	\$4,749	\$6,818	\$7,472	\$8,068	\$8,105	\$8,411	\$7,881	\$7,499	\$7,138	.	.	.	\$7,864
2006 Average Qtrly Earnings	\$4,437	\$7,104	\$7,655	\$7,391	\$7,810	\$7,197	\$7,064	\$7,617	\$7,441	.	.	.	\$7,431
2007 Average Qtrly Earnings	\$4,549	\$6,933	\$6,969	\$7,299	\$7,180	\$6,462	\$6,782	.	.	.	.	.	\$7,063
2008 Average Qtrly Earnings	\$4,259	\$4,548	\$5,342	\$5,388	\$5,934	\$6,021	.	.	.	.	.	.	\$5,673
2009 Average Qtrly Earnings	\$4,792	\$5,192	\$4,967	\$5,078	\$5,498	\$6,825	.	.	.	.	.	.	\$5,476
2010 Average Qtrly Earnings	\$4,569	\$5,549	\$4,974	\$4,808	\$6,300	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	\$5,876
2011 Average Qtrly Earnings	\$4,510	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	\$5,203
Overall Avg Qtrly Earnings	\$4,504	\$6,408	\$6,742	\$6,909	\$7,426	\$7,456	\$7,779	\$7,768	\$7,434	\$7,633	\$8,312	\$9,103	\$7,348

Source: Capital IDEA participant records and Texas Workforce Commission UI wage records.

Note: A dot represents too few participants, no data to report, or insufficient time passing to report for the timeframe.

<sup>a</sup> Participants were counted as employed if they were found in Texas UI wage records. Those who were not found may be unemployed, employed outside of Texas, or employed in Texas in a position that is not reported to TWC.

**Table 7. Capital IDEA 2003-2011 Participant Outcomes continued**

Outcome measure	Four Qtrs Before Service	Last Qtr of Service	2 <sup>nd</sup> Qtr After Service	4 <sup>th</sup> Qtr After Service	8 <sup>th</sup> Qtr After Service	12 <sup>th</sup> Qtr After Service	16 <sup>th</sup> Qtr After Service	20 <sup>th</sup> Qtr After Service	24 <sup>th</sup> Qtr After Service	28 <sup>th</sup> Qtr After Service	32 <sup>nd</sup> Qtr After Service	36 <sup>th</sup> Qtr After Service	All Qtrs After Service Ends
2003 Qualified for UI Benefits	67.0%	.	.	72.9%	74.9%	75.6%	73.9%	73.3%	66.0%	63.4%	62.2%	57.1%	70.7%
2004 Qualified for UI Benefits	61.6%	.	.	74.6%	78.0%	74.3%	71.9%	68.8%	66.7%	67.3%	.	.	70.7%
2005 Qualified for UI Benefits	61.1%	.	.	81.7%	78.2%	77.0%	76.8%	73.5%	68.5%	52.2%	.	.	76.7%
2006 Qualified for UI Benefits	63.3%	.	.	77.7%	75.4%	67.0%	65.7%	70.6%	65.0%	.	.	.	69.5%
2007 Qualified for UI Benefits	55.2%	.	.	65.1%	63.3%	62.5%	65.2%	44.8%	.	.	.	.	59.7%
2008 Qualified for UI Benefits	53.4%	.	.	60.5%	56.4%	57.8%	.	.	.	.	.	.	56.2%
2009 Qualified for UI Benefits	60.9%	.	.	69.3%	66.7%	61.3%	.	.	.	.	.	.	66.7%
2010 Qualified for UI Benefits	63.5%	.	.	64.0%	71.9%	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	70.3%
2011 Qualified for UI Benefits	41.7%	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.
Overall Qualified for UI Benefits	61.0%	.	.	72.2%	71.7%	70.0%	71.3%	70.2%	66.2%	62.9%	62.1%	57.8%	69.4%
2003 Filed UI Claim	5.44%	1.78%	1.33%	1.33%	2.33%	1.52%	1.06%	3.49%	2.08%	2.99%	4.08%	2.86%	2.14%
2004 Filed UI Claim	2.95%	3.64%	1.82%	1.82%	2.75%	0.00%	0.00%	1.30%	2.90%	1.92%	.	.	2.24%
2005 Filed UI Claim	3.14%	3.43%	4.00%	2.96%	3.03%	2.03%	4.46%	4.82%	5.56%	0.00%	.	.	2.72%
2006 Filed UI Claim	2.31%	1.32%	2.64%	1.86%	2.42%	2.23%	1.43%	0.00%	0.00%	.	.	.	2.57%
2007 Filed UI Claim	2.31%	0.77%	3.08%	4.76%	5.83%	2.08%	1.52%	0.00%	.	.	.	.	2.24%
2008 Filed UI Claim	2.82%	2.42%	3.23%	1.68%	4.27%	2.41%	.	.	.	.	.	.	2.41%
2009 Filed UI Claim	5.85%	1.60%	1.12%	3.07%	3.51%	1.61%	.	.	.	.	.	.	2.47%
2010 Filed UI Claim	6.35%	0.00%	5.26%	2.00%	0.00%	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	1.98%
2011 Filed UI Claim	5.21%	0.00%	10.0%	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	2.75%
Overall Filed UI Claim	3.87%	1.90%	2.65%	2.35%	3.14%	1.71%	1.61%	2.38%	2.44%	2.38%	4.31%	2.82%	2.37%

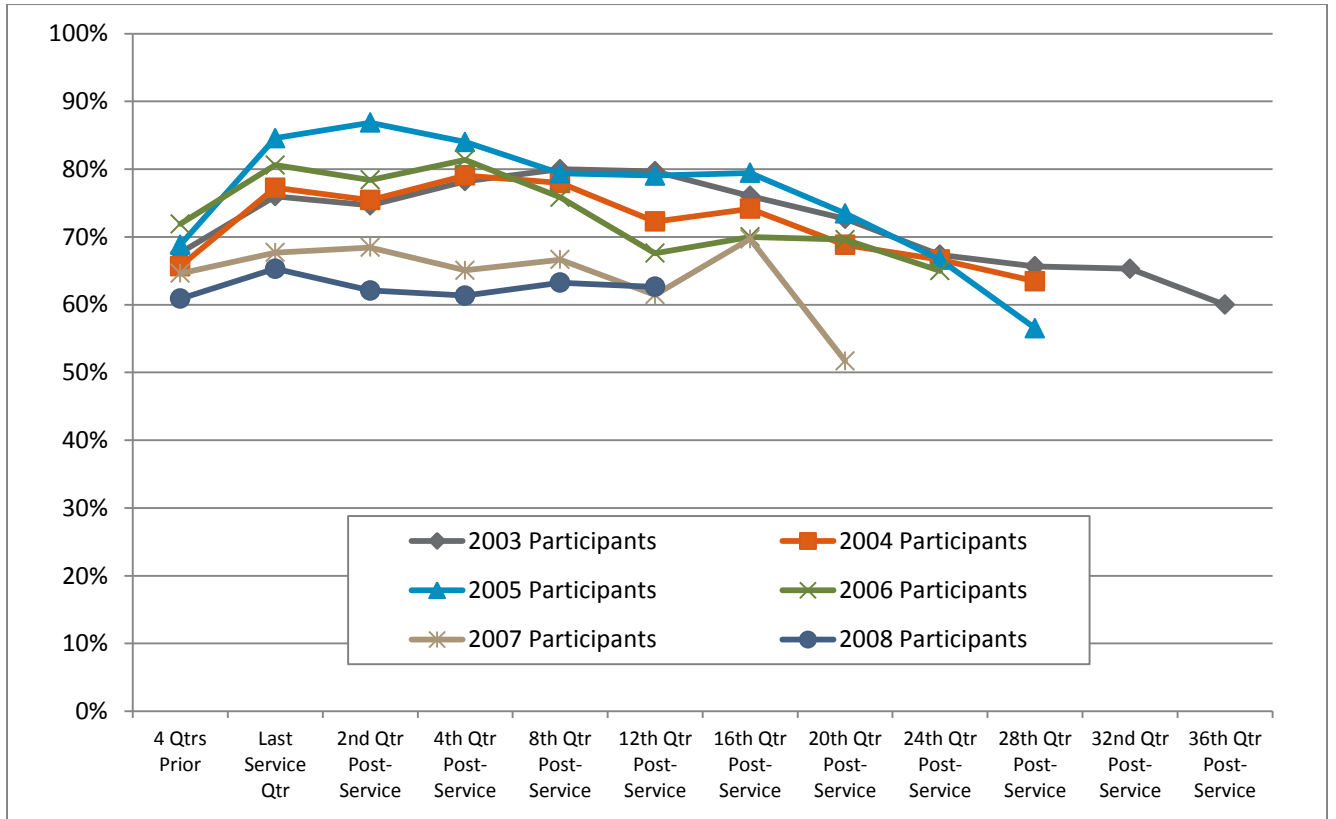
Source: Capital IDEA participant records and Texas Workforce Commission UI wage and claim records.

Note: A dot represents too few participants, no data to report, or insufficient time passing to report for the timeframe.



In the four quarters prior to enrolling in Capital IDEA, roughly 67% of participants from 2003 to 2011 were employed in a UI-covered job in Texas. In the last quarter of participation, that share rose to 75%. As illustrated in Figure 13, participants from 2003 to 2006 continued to exhibit strong employment levels (about 75%) at 16 quarters (four years) post-service and across all post-service quarters through March 2013, ranging from 70-80%. Employment for the 2007-2008 cohorts was slightly lower than other cohorts in all time periods. This may reflect the difficult times of the Great Recession; however, this group maintained lower employment rates even after the recession officially ended. The employment rate for the 2007 participants dropped sharply in the 20<sup>th</sup> quarter after services to about 52% (down from nearly 70% in the previous year). For these two cohorts (2007-2008), employment across all quarters in the post-service period was approximately 63%. It should be noted again that employment rates are based on those who had a job in a UI-covered position in Texas and that those who are employed outside of Texas are not included in this percentage. It is possible, especially as more time passes, that some participants are employed outside of Texas. However, the extent of this is unknown.

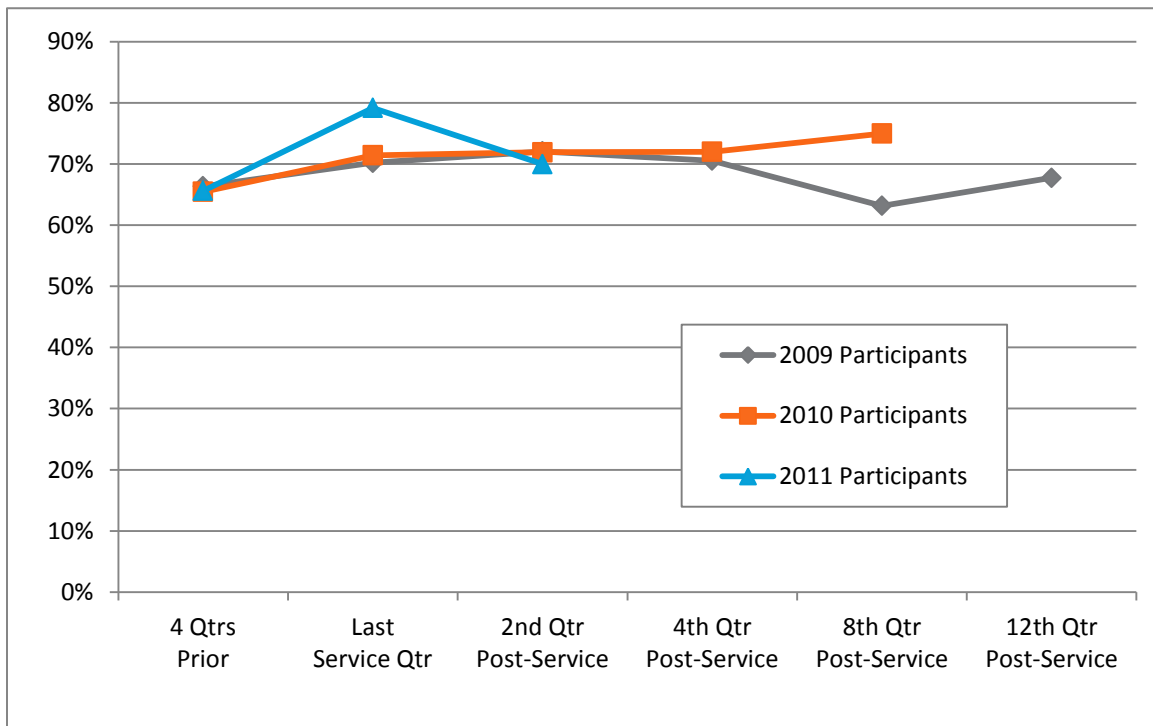
**Figure 13. Average Quarterly Employment<sup>a</sup> for Capital IDEA's 2003-2008 Participants**



<sup>a</sup> Participants were counted as employed if they were found in Texas UI wage records. Those who were not found may be unemployed, employed outside of Texas, or employed in Texas in a position that is not reported to TWC.

As shown in Figure 14, post-service employment for those Capital IDEA participants in the 2009-2011 cohorts averaged approximately 74%.

**Figure 14. Average Quarterly Employment for Capital IDEA's 2009-2011 Participants**



Earnings in the pre-service period averaged \$4,504 for employed participants. In all post-service quarters, Capital IDEA 2003-2011 participants earned an average of \$7,348, an increase of 63% over their pre-service earnings. The earnings trajectories of Capital IDEA's 2003-2008 participants are shown in Figure 15.

**Figure 15. Average Quarterly Earnings of Employed Capital IDEA 2003-2008 Participants**

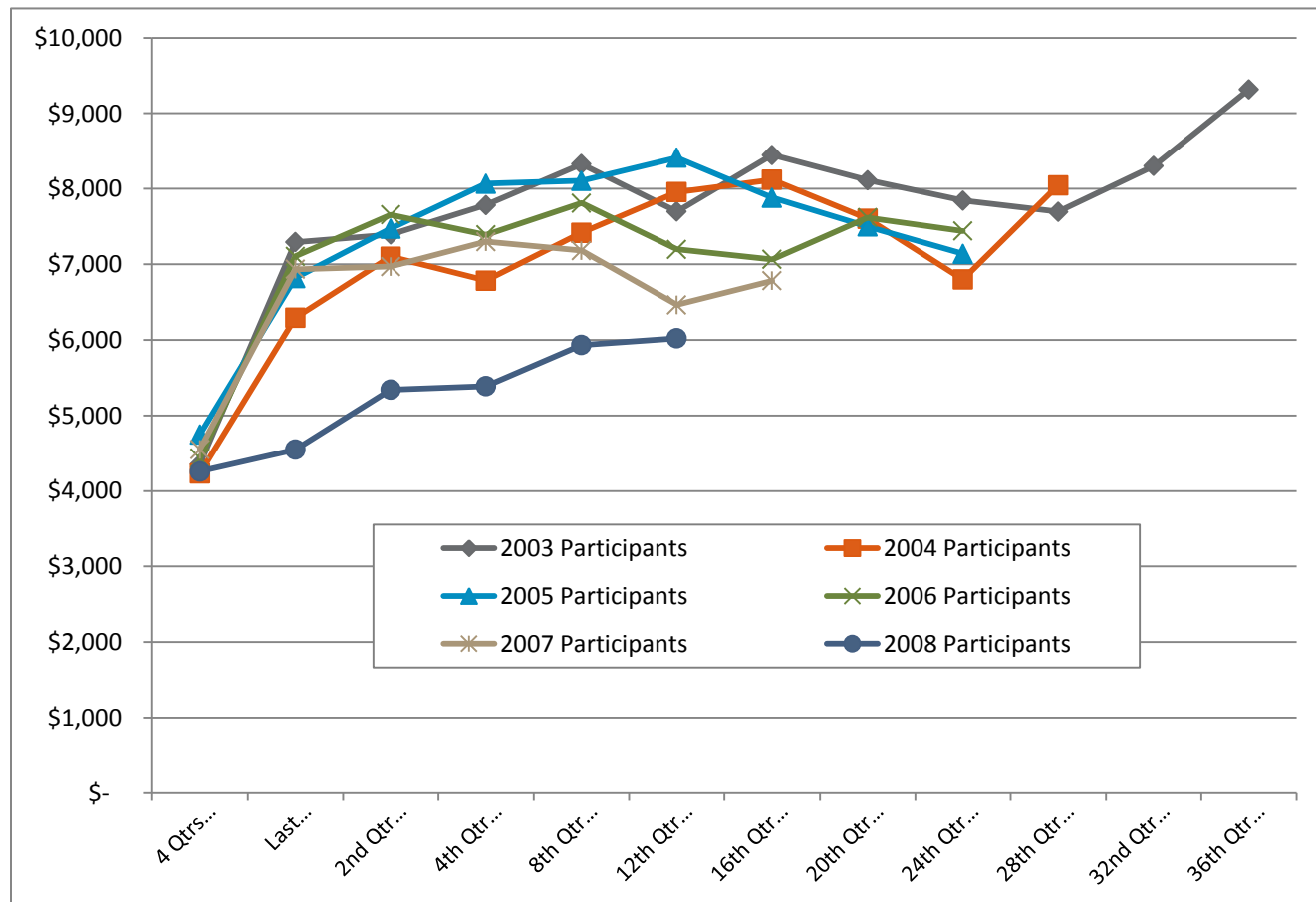
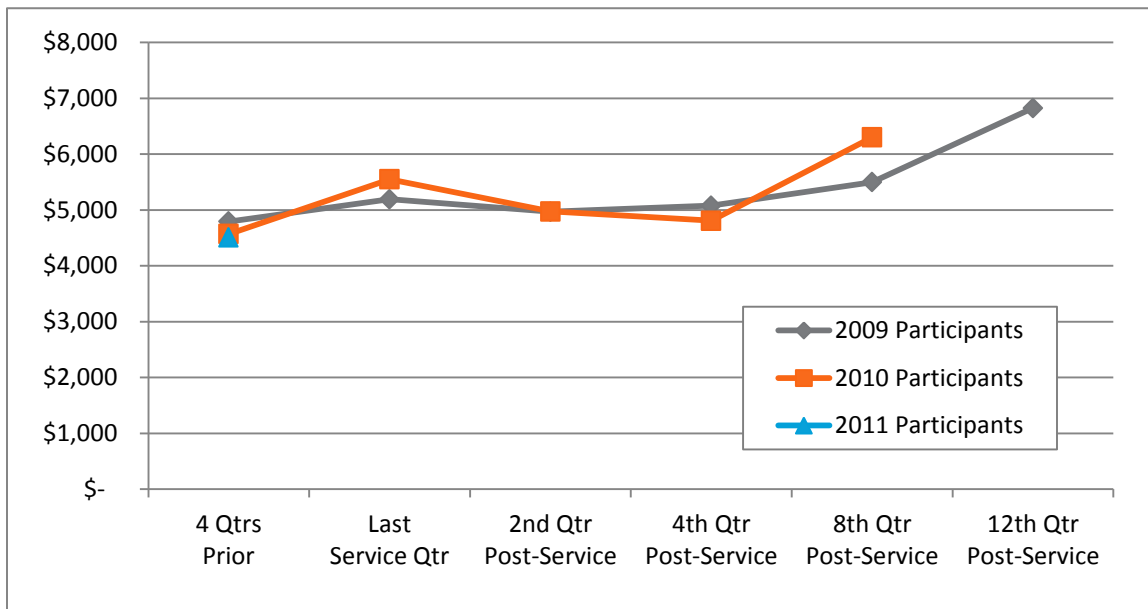


Figure 16 looks at the earnings trajectories of the more recent cohorts of Capital IDEA participants who began the program between 2009 and 2011.

**Figure 16. Average Quarterly Earnings for Employed Capital IDEA 2009-2011 Participants**



Approximately 61% of Capital IDEA participants met the monetary eligibility requirements for UI benefits in the four quarters prior to entry. Across all post-service quarters, that share rose to 69%. Almost 4% of all Capital IDEA 2003-2011 participants filed a claim for UI benefits in the pre-service period, while just 2.4% filed a claim in any post-service quarter.

## CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Travis County, Texas, invests local tax dollars in a continuum of services to improve opportunities for disadvantaged residents, including long-standing investments in workforce development services. Through contracts with a mix of workforce development providers and programs, the County funds opportunities that span from adult basic education to short-term job skills training, all the way up to longer-term occupational training for high-wage careers. Each provider has established at least one target population group for its services, with many using County funds to serve individuals facing considerable obstacles to employment such as homelessness or a criminal background.

The variety of services and target populations makes cross-provider comparisons inappropriate. The providers can be grouped, however, by service length—whether short- or long-term. Of the seven providers examined for this report, six offer relatively short-term services. Average quarterly employment for participants from all six programs increased in the post-service period. Participants from Ascend Center for Learning and Austin Area Urban League saw an approximate six percentage-point increase in average employment across all post-service quarters. Participants from American YouthWorks, Goodwill, Skillpoint Alliance, and the REM program saw an approximate twenty percentage-point increase in average employment over that same period.

The earnings outcomes associated with the increased employment are more varied. Employed participants from American YouthWorks and Goodwill earned approximately \$1,200 to \$1,400 more, on average, in the post-service period compared to their average pre-service earnings. Employed participants from Ascend Center for Learning, Austin Area Urban League, and Skillpoint Alliance earned approximately \$400 to \$500 more, on average, in the post-service period based on the same comparison. Employed participants in the REM program earned less, on average, in the post-service period than they had earned in the pre-service period.

Participants of Capital IDEA, the long-term training provider in the evaluation, show particularly strong earnings gains in the post-service period. Across all cohorts from 2003 through 2011, average quarterly earnings for those employed were up more than \$2,500 from

the average pre-service earnings, even though average quarterly employment only increased about 5% during this period. It is possible that more recent cohorts have a higher share of participants still in training, meaning that the individuals who did not complete the program may be driving the outcomes presented here. The results for recent cohorts may also reflect labor market softening during the time period examined. Future analysis based on additional quarters of post-service employment and earnings may shed light on these issues.

Participation in any skills building appears to have some association with increased employment stability, as evidenced by higher shares of participants in all of the programs meeting the monetary eligibility requirements for Unemployment Insurance benefits in the post-service period. Few participants from any program submitted a claim for UI benefits in the quarters examined.

While this report has focused on participant *outcomes*, the next report in the evaluation series will look at the *impact* of participation in some of the workforce development programs. That quasi-experimental analysis will compare the outcomes of participants to those of a matched comparison group, providing important context for understanding the benefits of participation in a Travis County-funded workforce development program.

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