Saving Summer Jobs: How Can Summer Youth Employment Programs Improve Youth Outcomes during COVID-19?

April 22, 2021 | 1:00 pm – 2:00 pm ET
Zoom Etiquette

- Please place Questions in the Q & A box.
- Comments can be placed in the chat box.
Quick Poll
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Preserving Summer Employment Opportunities for Inner-City Youth During the COVID-19 Pandemic

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Since 2015, we have been conducting a multi-year evaluation of the Summer Youth Employment Program in partnership with the City of Boston.

1. Compare experiences of youth in the treatment group relative to the control group to determine impact on criminal justice, academic, and economic outcomes.

2. Link self-reported survey data to administrative records to determine how behavioral changes during the summer lead to improvements in longer-term outcomes 1-2 years later.

3. Disaggregate impacts to learn if SYEP reduces inequality across SES, racial/ethnic groups.

**SHORT TERM (SUMMER):**
- Self-Reported Survey Data
- Social-Emotional Learning
- Community Engagement
- Academic Aspirations
- Job Readiness

**LONG-TERM (1-2 YEARS LATER):**
- Administrative Records
- Criminal Arraignments
- Academic Outcomes
- Employment and Wages
This evaluation has shown that summer jobs improve behavioral, academic, and employment outcomes, with greater impacts for black and brown youth.

Reduces crime by fostering community engagement and soft skills

- Improvements in soft skills linked to a **35% reduction in violent crime** and a **29% fall in property crime** for the treatment group during the 18 months after program end.

Raises academic achievement through aspirations and work habits

- Improvements in academic aspirations and work habits linked to a **4-percentage point increase in high school graduation rates** due to better attendance and grades.

Boosts employment through job readiness

- Improvements in job readiness skills linked to a **9-percentage point increase in employment and a 30 percent increase in wages** during the year following participation for opportunity youth of color ages 19-24 years.
Civilian Unemployment Rate, Seasonally Adjusted

- Total: 31.9%
- 16 to 19 years old: 14.7%
- All: 13.90%
- Black: 18.1%
- Hispanic: 16.3%
- White: 11.8%
- 6.0%

During summer 2020, Boston invested an additional $4.1 million to support four new tracks that allowed youth to safely engage in meaningful activities.

**Public Works Program:** To provide youth with at least one in-person option, Boston expanded its public works programs to employ youth in maintenance of parks and other outdoor recreational spaces under appropriate COVID-19 safety measures.

**Peer-to-Peer COVID-19 Campaign:** To educate youth about COVID-19 and safe practices, Boston engaged youth in developing a peer-to-peer marketing campaign to disseminate public health messages.

**Earn and Learn:** To ameliorate the learning loss from the school year, Boston negotiated agreements to enroll in college courses for credit and earn certifications such as Google’s IT Support Professional certificate.

**Virtual Internships:** To help support companies and community based organizations take their summer jobs online, Boston supported a new platform developed by Northeastern University to provide ready-made projects and a dashboard to engage youth under the guidance of a manager or mentor.
Both the Virtual Internship and Learn and Earn tracks provided similar, and in some ways superior, experiences compared to the traditional in-person jobs.

More than half of the survey respondents in the control group were unemployed.

Source: Author’s calculations using survey data collected from Youth Engagement and Employment summer jobs applicants.
Note: Difference relative to in-person group is statistically significant at the 1% level (***), 5% level (**), and 10% level (*).
City of Boston Internships

Social Work/Community Centers
Supporting younger students through digital lessons and instruction.
- 2 roles: Intern & supervisor from local community centre
- Supervisor-assisted zoom tutoring/activity sessions
- 3 focus areas

SME Businesses and Non-Profits
Supporting local businesses to analyse or improve current practices.
- 2 roles: Intern & supervisor from a local business
- Interns work on projects on various areas of the business
- 5 focus areas

Public Health Institutions
Analysing and supporting a local public health initiative.
- 2 roles: Intern & supervisor from a local organisation
- Interns work on projects on various areas of public health
- 4 focus areas

Internships Available
- Gen-Z Engagement Analysis: Evaluate your organisation's social media strategy for Gen-Z audience
- Technology Evaluation: Evaluate & conduct competitor analysis of a technology product
- Social Media Administrator: Plan & execute a social media plan for the summer with Gen-Z audience in mind
- Graphic Design Assistant: Evaluate and recommend tools to improve visual appeal of marketing materials
- Technology Quality Assurance: Test & report back on user experience of new technology product features
Youth in **virtual Internships** were as likely to develop strong work habits and soft skills as well as gaining a mentor compared to those with an in-person job.

Source: Author’s calculations using survey data collected from Youth Engagement and Employment summer jobs applicants. Note: Difference relative to in-person group is statistically significant at the 1 % level (***) , 5% level (**), and 10% level (*).

Roughly 80% rated their experience with the Practera virtual internship platform as very good or good.
Summer “Learn and Earn” Program Elements

- One-on-One Mentorship: Guidance on career goals, academic performance, and life challenges.
- Academic Support: Tutoring, mediation between professors and students, and reinforced class expectations.
- Social Engagement: Group check-ins and interactive, structured discussions on social justice topics.
- Weekly Life-Skills Webinars: Training in digital literacy, personal relationships, time management, and job-readiness skills.
- Distance Learning: Despite some challenges, increased digital literacy skills and provided time/schedule flexibility.

City of Boston Economic Development

Mayor's Office of Workforce Development
Youth in the **Learn and Earn track** were 10 percentage points more likely to report planning to enroll in a four year college compared to the control group.

**Summer College Course Outcomes**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Outcome</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Completed</td>
<td>88%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Passed</td>
<td>78%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Failed</td>
<td>10%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Withdrew</td>
<td>12%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Increased Self-efficacy to Attend College**

I knew it was going to be challenging because of all the things you need to know beforehand. But it showed me what I had to do.

**Confirmed/Contradicted Impressions about a Field**

I came out of this program, realizing that I don't want to do IT. But I still want to pursue something in tech.

**Raised Educational Aspirations**

It made me think what I wanted to do in college. I'm happy that I have three credits now and most people don't.

**Increased Self-Management Skills**

It helped me keep a schedule for myself and keep my life in balance.
Although most participants had a device, it was not always in good condition and some youth did not have access to hi-speed internet.

More than one in five youth in the Learn and Earn track reported that it was often or always challenging to find a quiet place to work.

Source: Author’s calculations using survey data collected from Youth Engagement and Employment summer jobs applicants. Note: Difference relative to in-person group is statistically significant at the 1% level (***), 5% level (**), and 10% level (*).
The pandemic has taken a tremendous toll on youth mental health with 22 percent reporting symptoms of depression during 2020 compared to 10 percent in 2019.

When do you think things will return to "normal" after the COVID-19 pandemic?

Source: Author’s calculations using survey data collected from Youth Engagement and Employment summer jobs applicants.
Note: Difference relative to in-person group is statistically significant at the 1 % level (***)}, 5% level (**), and 10% level (*).
The Boston SYEP kept youth engaged and continued to build skills similar to prior years but more intentional design could **improve performance and equity**.

**Recommendations**
- Increase engagement hours and feedback from supervisor for virtual internships
- Add an experiential component to build job readiness and teamwork for learn and earn track.
- Address mental health issues by developing a plan for youth engagement and re-entry this summer.
- Improve equity by using technology to increase access to jobs and prepare youth for the workplace of the future.
Thank You!

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Follow me on twitter:
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Rashad O. Cope
Director of the Department of Youth Engagement & Employment, City of Boston
Youth Participants

- Joseph Vann (SuccessLink Summer Jobs Participant)
- Nancy Nguyen (SuccessLink Summer Jobs Participant)
Webinar controls

- Windows
- macOS

Questions

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Upcoming Event

Supporting Students Learning Through COVID-19: A Conversation With Big Picture Learning

Monday, April 26, 2021
4:00 PM - 4:45 PM ET