

**The Walmart Foundation's 2011 Investment
In Summer Youth Employment:
Encouraging Results and Lessons Learned**

ANALYTIC EVALUATION BRIEF

A Report for The Walmart Foundation

Prepared by the Center for Youth and Communities
Heller School for Social Policy and Management



November 8, 2011

OVERVIEW

In Spring 2011, the Walmart Foundation funded summer employment opportunities for youth in five cities – Chicago, Detroit, Los Angeles, New York, and Washington, DC. A team from the Center for Youth and Communities at Brandeis University’s Heller School visited all five sites, interviewing administrators, partners, and employers and observing program operations. The study addressed the following questions:

- Who did the summer programs serve?
- What outcomes did they achieve?
- What supports and opportunities did they provide?
- How much was invested?
- What factors influenced the results?

This report summarizes the study team’s analysis of its findings and observations and includes selected illustrative examples. Following the overview is a discussion of key themes and an outline of implications for the Walmart Foundation summer youth employment RFP for 2012.

The Walmart Foundation’s support yielded both encouraging results and lessons learned. A six million dollar investment created jobs for 3,759 vulnerable youth¹ in the five cities, reinforced existing partnerships that support summer youth employment, and enabled the sites to enhance their existing approaches to providing meaningful summer experiences for vulnerable youth. Despite last-minute funding (not just from the Walmart Foundation), all five 2011 summer employment programs held high expectations for youth, provided them with orientation and supervision, gave them meaningful work that expanded their horizons, delivered wages, and conveyed important skills. Cities marshaled existing partners, resources, and systems, applied lessons learned from experience, and used previously developed tools and materials. The youth whose positions were funded by the Foundation worked at a range of jobs with nonprofit organizations and public agencies, typically 25 or more hours per week for 6-7 weeks, usually earning slightly more than minimum wage. Depending upon city and program, youth were paid at different rates, some hourly and some by stipend, on different schedules, and through different vehicles (paychecks or debit cards).

Each city administered and implemented its summer program somewhat differently. Walmart Foundation initiatives were administered by the government agency that had historically overseen summer youth employment programs in New York City and Chicago, and by organizations separate from the city’s summer youth employment programs in Detroit, Washington, DC, and Los Angeles.

- The New York City Department of Youth and Community Development contracts with 68 providers that in turn oversee worksites for their large, citywide program. The Walmart Foundation-funded “slots” were spread throughout the city, directed toward providers that worked with especially vulnerable populations and that had extensive contacts with nonprofit and public worksites.
- The Chicago Department of Family and Support Services contracted with four experienced organizations (Phalanx Family Services, Chicago Urban League, SER – Central States, and Enlace Chicago), based in target neighborhoods, to implement One Summer Chicago.

¹ The five cities defined “vulnerable” somewhat differently, but generally targeted youth from very low-income, often violent neighborhoods. Special populations were also sometimes included, such as youth with disabilities or youth who were homeless, formerly incarcerated, or in foster care.

- City Connect-Detroit (CCD), a nonprofit, intermediary, partnership/resource brokering organization, oversaw the Grow Detroit's Young Talent Program.
- In Los Angeles, the Chamber of Commerce coordinated a coalition to provide summer youth employment opportunities. Members included the Mayor's office, the City of Los Angeles' Work Investment Board, the city's HIRE-LA's Youth Campaign, Los Angeles Community College, and Metro, as well as businesses and nonprofit organizations that had both experience with summer youth employment and access to young people.
- In Washington, DC, two different nonprofit organizations, Latin American Youth Center and Urban Alliance, operated summer programs.

Despite these structural differences, however, the Brandeis team saw many similarities in vision and mission, implementation, supports and opportunities provided, outcomes for youth, factors that supported success, and factors that inhibited success. The remainder of this section discusses these areas.

Vision and Mission

As has been the case historically, the goal of the five summer initiatives was to prepare vulnerable adolescents to be productive workers who can advance in the labor force through meaningful work along with orientation and supervision that provides both high expectations and high support. Interviewees from the five cities stressed that these are youth development programs, not an employment service.

Common Implementation Elements and Tasks

All sites included the following elements and tasks to at least some extent:

- Recruit/confirm partner organizations, which in turn recruit/confirm worksites
- Orient and develop worksites
- Develop tracking, payroll, and other systems
- Design evaluation plan
- Reach out to and recruit eligible youth²
- Conduct youth application/intake/screening/eligibility certification
- Match and assign youth to appropriate worksites
- Prepare and orient youth to be "work ready"
- Offer life skills workshops for youth
- Support youth and worksites throughout the program
- Offer post-program supports

Supports and Opportunities

Interviewees in all five cities described youth orientation as the key support making summer programs effective. Orientation goals are to help participants learn about the realities of work up front and be as well oriented as possible to the summer ahead – making expectations very clear, letting youth know that they will be held to these expectations (and the consequences of not meeting them), and ensuring that young people understand good work habits. Cities' coordinating agencies or contractors typically provided these general work-readiness orientations. Many employers also provided their own worksite-

² The programs in all five cities are valued not only by the young people they serve but also by their families, local agencies, schools, and other institutions, employers, funders, and community members. Interviewees talked about the program's popularity and visibility even in a context of budgetary constraints, fewer slots, and less advance notice. Outreach and recruitment is relatively straightforward since so many youth are aware of the program. Even many younger children know what the program is and look forward to applying when they are old enough.

specific orientations that reinforced what youth had heard in the general orientations and applied those concepts to the worksite. In some cities, youth signed “contracts” delineating what was expected from them and what they could expect from their employer.

The following orientation examples provide additional detail:

- City Connect Detroit (CCD) created participant manuals and other documents that explain program length, work and paycheck schedules, wages, time sheets, employer and program expectations, good work habits, appropriate dress, avoidance of workplace violence and sexual harassment, consequences of misbehavior, resources, and processes for getting questions answered and issues resolved. Worksites delivered the orientations using CCD’s content specifications, sometimes in partnership with CCD.
- During one New York City provider’s youth orientations, a key message is, “You are our ambassadors and the worksites are our partners. Please keep them happy for us. If you perform well this summer, other young people will have a chance like yours in the future.”
- Urban Alliance (Washington, DC) uses an interactive work-readiness skills training curriculum, much of which is based on youth and employer input. Interviewees said that by stressing to youth the importance of attendance and positive attitudes, many other aspects of a successful job experience fall into place.

Interviewees across cities further say that:

- Youth need to develop a self-image as a worker: “Work is an important part of my life.”
- We need to find creative and effective ways to explain to youth what this work experience can lead to.
- We need to encourage youth to take initiative, put in a strong effort, and consider how this experience can lead to future employment or education.

In addition to orientations, all five cities provided workshops (up front or spread throughout the program) that focused on some combination of:

- Job-hunting skills – e.g., resume development, job applications, cover letters, interviewing
- Financial literacy – e.g., visiting banks, opening accounts, savings, budgeting, building credit and assets
- Life skills – e.g., social, conflict resolution, leadership, healthy living, and basic computer skills
- Career and college exploration – e.g., exposure to jobs and careers, advancement to college, experiences on college campuses

These workshops were led by the cities’ oversight entities and/or contractors. Some were sophisticated, interactive, and hands-on, involved guest speakers, and used formal curricula; some were more informal.

At Urban Alliance (Washington, DC), youth work Monday through Thursday, and on Fridays, they participate in all-day workshops on various topics. Topics include: financial literacy, co-taught by local bank partners (UA encourages youth to put money into savings accounts and has a partnership with an organization that matches college savings); public speaking and PowerPoint; and healthy living, focusing on nutrition, healthy relationships, domestic abuse, grief counseling, and family planning. UA also connects youth with professionals – preferably from the communities the youth are from – to work on topics such as career exposure, informational interviews, and college essays.

In addition to orientation and learning opportunities, all five sites had systems in place for supporting youth in other ways. Quality assurance efforts (discussed later in this report) maximize quality experiences for youth. Also, case managers and other social workers (through the contractors/providers or public agencies) were available to help with complex problems and make needed referrals to services.

Outcomes³

In all cities, interviewees said that the key summer outcome is that youth participants worked productively and earned wages for several weeks while gaining some preparation for the “world of work.” Preliminary evaluation findings in New York City show that 77% of participants would not have a job without the summer employment program. Moreover, the vast majority of participants rated their experience as “excellent” or “good” and indicated that they benefited from the program. Participants said that the most important lessons they learned from their summer experience were getting along with supervisors and co-workers, job skills, and budgeting earnings.

Thank you for everything you have done to help us accomplish our goals in this program. I also want to thank you for your help and guidance to make me a better worker, student, person, and young man.

The wages help the youth and their households as well as stimulate the economy in their communities. Youth participants used their summer earnings for various purposes. For some, the money provided income for their families, and youth felt significant pride about this newfound “breadwinner” role. Some used the money towards college or other post-secondary training costs. In New York City, the most popular reported uses of earnings were for clothes, food, savings, and household expenses. Interviewees also believed that the summer experience starts many youth on the path to financial literacy.

This job kept me occupied and helped me stay out of trouble. On top of that it put money in my pocket. Thanks for caring.

Thank you so much for the chance to be in the work force. I love to have my own income and not have to ask my parents for money.

In the fall I will be attending community college. This job taught me a lot about having a full time job and helped me save money for books and other things for college. I am grateful that you gave me this opportunity.

For many participants, regardless of age, the summer job was their first job. They entered the programs often lacking basic work skills or a sense of what responsible employment is about.

We would like to thank you for giving us the opportunity not only to work and earn money, but also for teaching us the significance of the responsibility of having a job.

The summer program also offers a chance for an experience that enables them to learn what work is about, to prove themselves, to gain valuable employer references, and to have a work experience they

³ Interspersed throughout this section are quotes from youth participants in the 2011 Walmart Foundation summer youth employment program.

can include on a resume. Training, mentorship, getting a foot in the door, and extra supports create connections that these youth don't otherwise have.

Interviewees from the five cities frequently mentioned that they were especially proud of opportunities provided for young people who entered the program not believing that they could do anything. These disconnected youth needed mentors and caring adults to help them recognize what they have to offer and help them get back on track. By the end of summer many youth were excited about future possibilities and more interested in continuing their education. Interviewees in every city said that youth in such circumstances say, "You changed my life."

Not only have I been much more responsible, but now I have a lot more to show for myself. I've been meeting many new people, improving my sour attitude, and projecting my respect for others.

In order for inspiration to take place, there must be a mentor. Someone who can help us. Be there when others will not. [My mentor] is a proper role model and the person who singlehandedly changed my life direction.

Youth summer jobs programs are also important to employers – especially those in the government and nonprofit sectors. A lack of summer youth slots can reduce their capacity to deliver other important summer programs. For example, nonprofit summer camps are required to maintain a specific counselor to camper ratio but must keep costs per camper down. The availability of summer program youth as counselors makes camp experiences possible for larger numbers of children. Moreover, youth often prove to be positive role models for the campers. When the number of youth available as counselors is reduced, camps must reduce the number of young children who can attend.

Factors Promoting Success

All sites credited Walmart Foundation funding with enabling them to increase the number of summer job slots for vulnerable youth in 2011. Youth who would otherwise have been jobless were employed. To respond to last-minute funding, all sites depended upon existing networks of strong partners that have built positive relationships with youth and potential employers, local capacity and expertise, and systems that supported smooth program operations as well as blending disparate funding sources. All sites also noted the presence of widespread support for the program – as one interviewee put it, everyone was "rowing in the same direction" – and, importantly, high-profile support from city leaders. All sites stressed quality assurance, which included orientations, supervision, and monitoring for partners and worksites. Some were able to recruit vulnerable youth who were already connected to year-round programs. All benefited from in-kind contributions, such as public school classroom space.

Factors Inhibiting Success

Although proud of their 2011 accomplishments, interviewees cited two primary factors inhibiting a higher level of success for their programs:

- Insufficient funding to meet the need. All cities had many more eligible youth than their programs could employ (for example, the citywide New York City program received 131,000 youth applications in 2011 but were able to enroll only about 30,000). All operated with fewer staff than would be ideal.
- A lack of lead time for planning, design, and partnership development due to the lateness of funding from the Walmart Foundation and other sources. Many sites were still receiving notification of funding after program operation had begun. In particular, sites said that more lead time would have enabled them to: provide more of the supports that youth need to

reengage in school and avoid involvement in criminal activities; enhance their infrastructure and management information systems in innovative ways to improve program management and outcomes monitoring; focus more on special populations; and assure more consistency in quality, training tools, and outcomes measurement. Cities had to quickly provide “best possible” opportunities rather than take time to develop “special” opportunities.

In addition, sites wanted to develop new worksites and create improved “employer readiness” and youth employability tools. One site (LA) piloted a work readiness certification process for older youth. Its goal was to help youth move into unsubsidized private sector jobs. The business community helped the program develop core competencies that would demonstrate that a youth is ready to take on an entry-level job. To be certified, youth must demonstrate competence in job hunting and work maturity including accurately completing work applications, providing a resume, successfully handling a mock interview, and demonstrating basic math and customer service skills.

Finally, an ongoing challenge with most summer youth employment programs is the very limited funding for supportive services, bus passes, clothing, child care, and other supports that vulnerable youth may need to succeed.

Table 1 summarizes the number of youth served and program funding by city.

Table 1
Walmart Foundation 2011 Summer Youth Employment Program
Numbers Served and Program Funding⁴

TABLE 1 OMITTED FOR DISSEMINATION VERSION

KEY THEMES

This section addresses the following key themes emerging from the summer study:

- Although all sites found it challenging to be creative in using funds received relatively late in the spring, all were able to implement solid programs because of readiness: they had a vision and mission already developed and shared, and partnerships with individuals and organizations that bought into the vision and mission – a key element of readiness in all sites. With more lead time, the sites could have moved beyond the basics to innovation and creativity. Sites that are less “ready” in terms of history, experience, and resources than the five selected in 2011 will need even more lead time.

⁴ Figures in table based on sites’ reports to the Brandeis team.

- Every site stressed **quality assurance** to maximize experiences for youth as well as for providers and worksites.
- **Positive youth development principles** operated to at least some extent, and at least informally, in all sites. All programs had high expectations for youth, but also made systematic efforts to operate in asset-based, not deficit-based, ways, and to encourage connections with positive adults, safe places, healthy starts and healthy living, education leading to workforce success, and giving back to the community.
- Sites have developed **promising approaches to working with especially vulnerable youth**, such as youth in foster care, youth with disabilities, and youth who live in gang territory or are gang members.

Readiness and Partnerships

Organizational readiness proved crucial given the timing of summer 2011 funding and the need to rapidly implement programs. The five organizations had significant histories and expertise with summer youth employment programs. Because of the limited startup time, interviewees in the five cities repeatedly stressed how heavily they relied on numerous and strong existing partnerships and collaborations with experienced CBOs, government agencies, funders, and other organizations that work directly with young people, understood the summer youth employment initiatives' vision and goals, could attract young people who needed summer jobs and associated services, and had their own partnerships with veteran worksites that understood that their main role was to positively develop young people.

Quality assurance

All five cities provided some kind of orientation for providers/contractors as well as for worksites and supervisors as a crucial first step in assuring quality experiences for youth. Like the orientations for youth, these sessions addressed expectations, requirements, and paperwork, and stressed the “youth development” approach. As one interviewee put it, “We have to assure that partners understand our mission, goals, and expectations and are kept happy.” Cities worked to show appreciation for providers/contractors and worksites as well – for example, some acknowledge adult mentors (typically worksite supervisors) through appreciation events and thank-you cards.

Leaders in all five cities said that their central administrative agency and contracted agencies had staff who visited, monitored, and supported worksites, to assure that youth and employers were having positive experiences. Support systems and processes existed to address common issues that worksites and youth were likely to experience. Supports included those for youth in need of services during the summer – typically case manager interventions and referrals to services.

City Connect Detroit has staff who conduct agency and worksite visits to assure that things are going smoothly and to assist with problem solving as necessary. Their philosophy is to operate as consultants who work with employers to support quality and minimize problems, rather than as “monitors” who are primarily looking for problems.

Providers interviewed in New York City stressed that professional development, supervision, and support for staff help to ensure quality. They hire site monitors – typically young people who are in, or about to attend, college – who have been screened for maturity as well as skills. They often come from similar backgrounds as the youth participants and can serve as role models. Providers also emphasize

that communication lines must be kept open and try to get both youth and worksites to express clearly what they want and need from the providers and from the citywide program. The goal is that a worksite that cannot handle a problem will be open about it so that the problem can be addressed.

The New York City summer program has very high expectations for providers. The expectation that providers try to help youth deal with problems from within or outside of their own networks not only helps youth in the short term, but also connects them with resources that may help them even more over the long term. Providers in turn are very particular about worksites, looking for those that share the provider's passion for youth. Worksites know, too, that monitors from the city, the providers, or funding sources may drop in anytime, unannounced.

Interviewees across the cities noted that they want to improve the ways that they train worksites and supervisors in how to create learning environments and meaningful work experiences for youth. Not all worksite supervisors fully understand how to make work meaningful or how much youth can accomplish if held to high expectations.

Positive youth development principles

Among the organizations overseeing or contracting with the 2011 summer program, there was evidence that interviewees understood positive youth development (PYD) concepts, though they could not necessarily state them, and most of the concepts played out informally within their programs. The PYD principles are:

- Connections with positive adults
- Safe places
- Healthy starts and healthy living
- Education leading to workforce success
- Giving back to the community.

Most veteran worksites have grasped that the summer program is a youth development program, not an employment service, and understand that one of their primary roles is to instill good work habits among youth participants and benefit youth in other ways (i.e., mentoring, career exposure, encouraging youth to pursue further education, etc.). The goal is for youth to be seen – perhaps for the first time – as potential contributors who can solve, rather than be, the problem. Youth, in turn, may see themselves as solutions and role models for other kids. Summer program administrators stress these concepts for new worksites through employer and supervisor orientations.

In New York, PYD principles are incorporated though not necessarily spelled out. For example, worksites have been asked to identify caring adults to serve as supervisors and mentors; worksites are assessed for safety; worksite agreement forms include promises to nurture youth, and youth are required to follow worksite and program rules; one summer workshop focuses on health issues; and many worksites call upon youth to give back to their communities. Similarly, in Detroit, CCD staff said, “These principles have not been systematized as much as we’d like. However, most youth organizations are aware of them and we try to assure that contractors apply them.” Detroit’s initiative also encouraged youth participants to keep a journal. Each youth was given a blank journal– for each youth’s eyes only – in which s/he was encouraged to reflect on his/her summer experiences. All youth were also encouraged to develop portfolios. In Washington, DC, the Urban Alliance defines itself as a “youth development agency.” Staff at the Latin American Youth Center were also well versed in PYD principles.

Two examples from Los Angeles illustrate adherence to PYD principles:

- At the end of the summer, 320 youth participating in the Summer Night Lights program came together with LA Conservation Corps, trade schools, and other organizations for a Youth Squad Appreciation Day. Staff talk to youth about how they are leaders, encourage them to register to vote, try to show youth that they matter, and stress that adults are investing time and money in them. They are helped with job applications, resumes, interviewing, and scholarship applications and receive additional financial literacy information
- In Los Angeles, based upon a long-term partnership between Los Angeles Community College and Metro (the city public transportation system), 19 summer program participants worked in various Metro departments. To be able to put Metro experiences on their resumes will matter for the participants. Metro provides a positive work environment, exposes youth to multiple job opportunities, and provides information about “what is out there for them.” Metro’s goals for youth participants include education about Metro and its many job opportunities, providing positive and varied work experiences, and assisting youth to develop resumes and cover letters as well as work readiness skills. The summer program experiences may become a pathway to Metro’s regular internship program for college-age students.

Approaches to working with especially vulnerable youth

All of the sites made efforts to reach and serve young people who might be considered “most vulnerable.”

Within its lottery system, New York City treats youth with disabilities, youth aging out of foster care, homeless youth, and court-involved youth as a separate, high priority group so that they only “compete” against each other. For these groups, the city program looks for placements with one-to-one mentoring, more supervision and structure, and close connections to service agencies that can provide extra support.

New York City providers find that many youth in foster care face extraordinary challenges in commuting, day care, and housing. Providers must try to accommodate youth in terms of location, hours, and referral to resources. Some foster parents do not give youth in their care the money and clothes that should be provided based on the allowance received. In addition, many of these most vulnerable youth sabotage themselves. One young man, about to age out of foster care, was assigned to his first-choice placement but his attendance was sporadic and he was let go. When given a second chance, he worked at a different placement for one day, stopped attending, and did not communicate about it. When his case manager called him, he said, “I don’t have the right clothes.” After this issue was addressed, he again stopped going to work. This young man needs counseling, guidance, and further supports to become employable. More start-up and preparation time might help providers and worksites identify specific issues in which foster youth need help, and start them off well. Succeeding at employment is important for youth in foster care – they can move into supportive housing if they have a steady income and show maturity. The summer youth employment program can serve as one pathway to a new life if youth in foster care can take advantage of it.

Two examples, one from Chicago and one from Washington, DC, demonstrate approaches to working with vulnerable youth in the area of violence prevention.

With Walmart Foundation funds, Enlace Chicago, a community development agency, offered summer work

experiences to 43 “higher risk” youth. The program focuses on violence prevention as well as good work habits. Twelve nonprofit partner organizations provide the jobs.

“Jobs are the draw; they’re like a magnet. The kids want them. [The program] enables them to do good, constructive work and keeps them off the streets. It ‘buys kids’ time’ so that Enlace can learn their strengths, needs, and wants; can provide more personal, in-depth interventions; and can link them with other services and positive activities.”

Enlace used several strategies to maximize youth safety, especially with respect to traveling across opposing gangs’ turf: partner agencies selected local youth for the program; Enlace held orientations at several locations; and worksites were dispersed across the community. Based on their experience, Enlace staff also noted:

- The youth will rise to staff’s expectations if communication is handled well: “It’s not just about stating rules clearly; it’s about how they’re communicated and by whom. Youth listen to adults whom they respect.”
- Programs need to regularly analyze risks and consider contingency plans. For example, what happens if rival gangs show up at the same time?
- Program staff need to know turf boundaries and how different gangs operate; need to understand and “respect” gang cultures even if they don’t like them; and need to know gang colors so that youth and adults do not inadvertently wear the “wrong” colors in a turf area.
- Practitioners should get to know and should not “disrespect” gang leaders. There will be times when it’s important to get a “pass” for youth whose projects require them to operate on certain streets.
- It’s important to communicate regularly with police. They keep tabs on gang activity and can inform program staff about possible impacts on their activities.

In Washington, DC, the Latin American Youth Center (LAYC) engaged 40 youth (13 funded by Walmart Foundation funds) in the Promote the Peace Summer Program, which consisted of structured self-exploration, violence prevention, conflict resolution, and other learning activities preparing youth to serve as “Peace Promoters” in their communities, their relationships, and beyond. The program required young people to treat the experience as if it were a traditional job, with positive work behaviors such as good attendance and punctuality. LAYC reached out to recruit as many youth in high-risk situations as possible.

Youth participants were called “Peace Promoters” from the first day: the goal was to encourage them to see themselves in this role, if they didn’t already. The goals included helping the youth to understand the root causes of violence and conflict; develop peace-promoting skills such as active listening, empathy, nonviolent communication, and collaborative decision-making; develop leadership skills such as public speaking, media and computer literacy, goal setting, and group facilitation; and create a network of Peace Promoters and LAYC staff to support their ongoing peace promotion efforts. The six-week program included the following core elements:

- Help Increase the Peace, an experiential learning curriculum developed by the American Friends Service Committee, includes fun activities, serious reflection, and peer learning on themes such as communication, cooperation and trust, and anger, violence, and conflict resolution.
- The Phoenix Curriculum engages young people in contemplation and peer-driven discussions about violence, gang involvement, feelings, problem-solving, risk and protective factors, and other subjects.
- Changemakers combines interactive classroom learning with participation in activities such as an international youth summit, community outreach and canvassing, and youth performances. Themes include history, self and family, community, nation, and earth.
- Creative Expressions integrates youths’ personal experiences and summer learning into performances delivered to the community through music, theatre, dance/movement, and language/word.
- A four-day wilderness retreat includes activities to promote personal growth, critical thinking, interpersonal skills, health and nutrition, and artistic expression.
- Professional skill development aims to prepare youth to succeed in both work and higher education.
- Weekly experiential sessions encourage youth to take care of themselves through stress reduction activities such as meditation, yoga, and healthy eating.

THE WALMART FOUNDATION SUMMER YOUTH EMPLOYMENT RFP FOR 2012: IMPLICATIONS

Based on the study findings and observations as well as on the Center for Youth and Communities' experience with summer youth employment programs, we believe that the 2012 Walmart Foundation RFP for summer youth employment should stress combining work, learning, and supportive services. The short theme might be "employed, educated, and supported."

In particular, we believe that the RFP should seek specific information in the following areas:

- *Partnerships.* This was a key theme in the 2011 Walmart Foundation-funded programs, which could not have implemented even basic programs without existing strong partnerships in the brief time allowed between funding and program startup. For any program, even with more lead time, partnering with experienced programs can maximize resources, use providers' abilities and histories, utilize systems and processes already in place, and make incremental improvements that increase quality.
- *Support.* Vulnerable youth cannot succeed even in the most basic jobs programs without support, including comprehensive orientations, high-quality supervision, quality assurance, and coordinated case management. Opportunities for positive peer supports and interactions, mentoring/relationships with caring adults, and civic engagement (giving back to their community) are other important pieces to help youth gain all that they can from a relatively brief experience.
- *Employment and education.* The 2011 Walmart Foundation-funded programs provided many opportunities for youth to learn through working, and offered some "educational" experiences via workshops, structured reflection, and project-based learning at some worksites. However, education was not the most important aspect of most programs. Interviewees raised legitimate concerns about trying to do too much in a short period, and some thought that the workshops, even if well run, were not as effective as the work experience. However, with more lead time, grantees should be able to plan for more contextualized and project-based learning at worksites and more time for youth to reflect on what they are learning from their work experience, the skills they are developing, and how they can apply these experiences and skills to work and learning in the future. Project-based learning is ideal way to run a learning-rich summer program; however, it requires significant advance training for, and planning among, worksite supervisors. Succeeding in these areas will require more staff and worksite training and better systems integration, especially with year round programming (see next bullet). Interviewees also suggested that pursuing ideas such as academic credit for work experience and internships could enhance the "learning" aspect of summer jobs programs. It would be helpful to create handbooks with examples of how to make summer experiences more learning-rich.
- *Connections to year round programming and activities.* While all sites stressed the importance of and good outcomes from a positive summer work experience, they also noted the need to provide more, or connect better to, year-round programs – to look beyond summer and think systemically. Vulnerable youth could benefit from more than one summer of positive experiences. It's important to connect, leverage, and utilize resources that are already there to augment learning experiences for youth. Summer employment programs must be better connected to gang reduction, dropout prevention, and secondary and post-secondary education efforts, and taken to scale.

- *Vulnerable youth at different levels of employability.* Like the 2011 Walmart Foundation-funded programs, newly funded programs should include youth with greater levels of vulnerability, such as youth in foster care, youth with disabilities, formerly incarcerated youth, and youth who live in gang territory or are gang members.
- *Work readiness credentials.* While only one 2011 site developed a formal work readiness certification process, and it was focused on private sector employment, we believe (based on experience) that this is a promising area for grantees to work on. A number of interviewees commented on the need to provide youth constructive feedback on their work readiness levels and to assure employers that youth are ready to work.

In addition, proposed programs should pay explicit attention to positive youth development principles, and grantees should reflect the collaborative, communicative, strength-based approach demonstrated among the 2011 grantees.