

Jobs for the Future, Inc. : Industry Partnerships



What is the community challenge?

Unemployment is a chronic problem in many regions of the country. Often in those same regions, employers across industries and sectors struggle to find and retain qualified individuals with the necessary skillsets to accomplish the work. This difference between what employers need and the skills that job seekers (i.e. the unemployed) have to offer is referred to as a “skills gap”. This gap can contribute to a sense of economic stagnation and lack of opportunity for potential employees and employers alike.

What is JFF/NFWS’s promising solution?

Since its establishment within Jobs for the Future, Inc. in 2007, the National Fund for Workforce Solutions (NFWS) has invested in Regional Funding Collaboratives which match NFWS funds with funds from other sources to support workforce partnerships among local industry, non-profits, and community colleges (i.e.

Industry Partnerships). These partnerships identify local skills gaps, usually within a specific industry, and design and administer training programs to help low-income workers obtain the skills needed to meet the demands of those industries.



What did the evaluation of Industry Partnerships find?

As a grantee of the Social Innovation Fund, JFF/NFWS contracted with an independent evaluator to conduct an evaluation of three Industry Partnerships in the Greater Cincinnati area. The study found that the programs had **statistically significant positive effects on general employment rates** for participants across all three partnerships, compared with unemployed non-participants seeking state employment

services. However, there were also differences among the partnerships:

- For participants in the Health Careers Collaborative of Greater Cincinnati, the program was **highly effective at improving employment in the healthcare sector, job retention, and earnings**;
- For participants in the Advanced Manufacturing Partnership, the program was **moderately effective at improving employment in the manufacturing sector, job retention, and earnings**, and
- For participants in the Construction Sector Partnership, the program showed **little to no effect on employment in the construction sector, job retention, and earnings**.

The differences in employment outcomes between the three partnerships may have several explanations, including a lower unemployment rate and a greater potential for career growth in the healthcare sector compared to the other two sectors.

To access the full evaluation report and learn more about CNCS, please visit nationalservice.gov/research.

Program At-a-Glance

Intervention: Industry Partnerships

Grantee: Jobs for the Future (JFF), Inc. /
National Fund for Workforce Solutions (NFWS)

Focus Area: Economic Opportunity

Focus Population: Disadvantaged workers and
job seekers

Communities Served: Nationwide (21 cities in
17 states)

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Evaluation design, timeline and study locations

The evaluation of JFF/NFWS's Industry Partnerships began in 2010 and finished reporting in 2014. JFF partnered with the State of Ohio to access employment data which made it possible to create a study sample using propensity score matching, a statistical matching technique between the group that goes through the program (i.e. treatment group) and one that does not (i.e. control group) to determine the effects of the program. In total the study looked at the impact of the program on over 2000 participants.



Evaluation At-a-Glance

Level of Evidence before Evaluation*: Moderate

Level of Evidence** after Evaluation: Moderate

Evaluation Designs: Outcomes Assessment Study; Impact Evaluation (Quasi-Experimental Design)

Study Population: Unemployed workers in job training programs in Ohio

Evaluator: IMPAQ International, LLC

* SIF-supported interventions undergo a level of evidence assessment at the point of program entry and are expected to advance that base of evidence through rigorous evaluation during the grant period.

**SIF and AmeriCorps currently use different definitions of levels of evidence.

How is JFF/NFWS using the evaluation findings to improve?

The impact evaluation has provided moderate evidence of the efficacy of JFF/NFWS's model and approach. This evaluation constitutes one part of a multi-faceted, multi-method evaluation; other components of this broader evaluation focus on measuring value to business, systems change, and enabling the JFF/NFWS to learn and improve their operations. JFF/NFWS and its Regional Funding Collaboratives will be examining these results as they undergo their annual assessment of progress against goals. JFF/NFWS is also pursuing learning goals to enable its network, as well as other workforce development practitioners, to learn about effective approaches and exemplary practices for closing needs gaps and improving employment.

The content of this brief was drawn from the full evaluation report submitted to CNCS by the grantee/subgrantee. The section of the brief that discusses evaluation use includes contribution of the grantee/subgrantee. All original content from the report is attributable to its authors.

The Social Innovation Fund (SIF), a program of the Corporation for National and Community Service (CNCS), combines public and private resources to grow the impact of innovative, community-based solutions that have compelling evidence of improving the lives of people in low-income communities throughout the United States. The SIF invests in three priority areas: economic opportunity, healthy futures, and youth development.