



MEMO

To: Workforce Development Providers

From: Participants in the Impact Fellowship Program

Date: 4/24/18

Subject: Memo to the Field on Workforce Development Programs

In partnership with JobsFirstNYC, Young Invincibles created our Impact Fellowship program to train young adults who are currently part of a workforce development program to lead projects that engage their peers and directly address policy issues in the workforce development field in New York City. One piece of the 12 week program was to have a candid discussion around best practices in programs, ways programs could be improved, and overall feedback around the programs they participated in. This discussion was put into this Memo to the Field to help inform young adult workforce programs.

I. Program Overview

The purpose of the Impact Fellowship was to give young adults the opportunity and tools to become experts and effective advocates on workforce development issues. Over a twelve-week period, six Impact Fellows participated in a variety of skills and strategy sessions to think through how they would advocate for increased access to quality job training, and how they could use communications and their own individual stories to amplify their policy priorities.

Impact Fellows participated in a variety of sectoral and generalist programs offered throughout New York City and were elected by their program providers to participate in the Impact Fellowship to reflect on their experiences, learn about the policies that impact workforce development, and learn how to advocate for issues that matter to them. Participants came from programs offered by United Activities United, Opportunities for a Better Tomorrow, Cypress Hills LDC, and Per Scholas.

The programs that the fellows participated in included:

Ladders for Leaders

Ladders for Leaders is a nationally recognized program that offers high school and college students the opportunity to participate in paid professional summer internships with leading corporations, non-profit organizations, and government agencies in New York City. The program is an initiative of the NYC Department of Youth and Community Development (DYCD) and supported by the NYC Center for Youth Employment and the Mayor's Fund to Advance New York City. Ladders for Leaders gives students a unique opportunity to explore their interests and discover new ones through:

- **Pre-employment Training:** Participants receive help with résumé and cover letter writing, and interviewing skills. They also learn essential workplace readiness skills and business etiquette.
- **Paid Summer Internships:** Paid internship opportunities are available in a variety of industries to accommodate student interests.

- Opportunity to join a growing alumni network: Ladders for Leaders has a broad network of alumni, post-internship opportunities, and networking events open only to past participants of the program.

YAIP-Young Adult Internship Program

YAIP provides placement into short-term internship opportunities for job-ready 16-24 year-old young adults who are not working and not in school. Funded through the Mayor's Center for Economic Opportunity (CEO), the program offers 14 weeks of paid orientation, training, and work, followed by nine months of follow-up services and assistance for placement in permanent jobs, training programs, and educational opportunities. YAIP programs are located in community-based organizations in all five boroughs of New York City, and offer a range of placements in many industries, including construction, hospitality, health care, and retail.

CHAMPION Network

The CHAMPION Network is a career opportunity for young adults between the ages of 17-24, out of work and school, who live in one of the five boroughs and who are able to commit to the program's requirements. Individuals complete a four-week core training in their choice of one of three areas: ServSafe® Food Handlers Certification, Microsoft Office, or Commercial Driver's License. The program also provides support on basic academic skills and provides access to a mentor. Young adults also have access to one of the following over the course of the year:

- Scholarship for advanced training at CUNY, approximate value \$3,000
- Paid internship, 150 hours/\$9/hr.
- Free High School Equivalency degree classes
- Direct job placement
- College counseling
- Help starting your own business

Participants have the opportunity to earn up to an \$150 incentive bonus for work and school supplies.

Per Scholas - IT Support

IT Support offers CompTIA A+, Security+, CCNA, and Coding and Network+ certifications, and equips individuals with the knowledge to fill a wide range of entry-level technology jobs as a support technician. The program runs for 15 weeks, Monday-Friday, from 9:00-4:00. Programs don't require any prior IT experience. The program is offered at no cost to the student. The program includes hands-on instruction that thoroughly covers core competencies in IT support, along with customer service training to support end users with technical help. Additionally, individuals receive professional coaching to prepare for their job search, interviews, and career advancement, and receive job placement assistance with access to an employer network of 200+ companies. Eighty percent of graduates land jobs.

II. Recommendations and Reflections

During the Impact Fellowship program, the fellows were asked to reflect on their programs and to address the following questions:

- What did you love about your program?
- What about your program could have been different?
- What would you like to see in future workforce development programs?

After this discussion, fellows had two weeks to try and connect with other program participants they knew and collect their feedback to be incorporated into this memo. Participants identified improvements to recruitment and eligibility, bringing new best practices to program execution, deepening provider support, and minimizing opportunity costs for participants as key themes.

Recruitment and Eligibility

The way a program recruits is critical not only to getting young adults to participate in the program, but also to making sure they know what program is offering.

- Programs need to make sure to recruit where the target population tends to be. For example, if a program is targeting 16-24 year olds, it should be posted in high schools and not middle schools. Recruitment could also focus on community centers or parks that young adults frequent.
- During the recruitment process, programs should share the intention behind different screening processes to show how the screening process supports the program's goal. For example, several program participants had to take personality tests, and it was not made clear to them how it related to the program they were going to participate in.
- In recruitment and outreach materials, programs should make sure the expectations are clear. It's important for participants to know what the expectations for any program are, including time commitment, attendance policies, and outcomes. Several of the participants cited that these were initially unclear at the start of the program.
- Programs should reconsider eligibility requirements that include not working while you are in the program. Many young adults are taking care of families or have other financial commitments, and find it difficult not to work for several weeks.

Program Execution

There are many different workforce development programs in New York City, each of which has its own set of program structures and activities. Some overall best practices that participants highlighted include openness on the part of program leaders to feedback, and giving participants some space to make mistakes. Participants appreciated when the instructors had industry experience, and when the programs provided a laid-back, friendly environment that encouraged participants to ask for assistance. While these recommendations are not inclusive of every program that exists, Impact Fellows recommended that:

- Programs should look at their curriculum and how it is executed by different instructors to make sure participants receive equally beneficial guidance that doesn't vary based on the instructor they're paired with.
- Programs should share information about their matching process with young adults, while gathering more information from the participants to create strong, mutually beneficial matches.
- For programs that are place-based and offer trainings, Impact Fellows felt it was particularly important to think through ways to increase access to the programs by reassessing geographic matching.
- Attendance policies are important, and participants felt that serious attendance policies, clearly conveyed to participants, were helpful in ensuring that young adults took the programs seriously.

Provider Support

While young adults are introduced to providers through specific programs, participants also look to the providers for additional supports, and have found the following helpful:

- Flexibility of program staff in scheduling follow up meetings or one-on-one's.
- Providing networking opportunities with adult professionals and other young adults.
- Continuous follow up on progress throughout the program, as well as after program completion.
- Finding the best way to communicate with participants by asking directly about their preferences.
- Giving general feedback, and providing one-on-one support when requested.
- Providing additional career coaching and technical instruction to continue to support post-secondary success.

Opportunity Cost

All of the Impact Fellows agreed that these programs were beneficial, give access to opportunities many wouldn't normally have, and in some cases were life changing. However, many participants flagged concerns about opportunity costs associated with participating in these programs, and stressed that workforce development programs should offer resources and incentives to make it possible for more young adults to participate. Participants specifically raised the following suggestions:

- Classes and training would be easier to attend if transportation were covered.
- Programs that provide Metro cards, food, or other incentives attract young adults and support consistent attendance.
- Some participants felt programs would be easier to participate in if they were offered in shorter time periods.