

Year Up

Intervention Brief | Postsecondary Career and Technical Education Topic Area

WHAT WORKS CLEARINGHOUSE™

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There is a growing divide between career opportunities for college graduates and those for young adults without postsecondary credentials. Young adults with no more than a high school credential earned 34 percent less than college graduates in 1980, 57 percent less in 1990, 71 percent less in 2000, and 78 percent less in 2015. Rising employer demand for skilled workers has driven efforts to better align occupational training programs to industry needs. *Year Up* is an occupational and technical education intervention that targets high school graduates to provide them with six months of training in the information technology and financial service sectors followed by a six-month internship and supports to ensure that participants have strong connections to employment.

This What Works Clearinghouse (WWC) report, part of the WWC’s Postsecondary Career and Technical Education topic area, explores the effects of *Year Up* on short- and medium-term earnings and employment and on industry-recognized credential completion. The WWC identified two studies of *Year Up*. Both meet WWC standards. The evidence presented in this report is from studies of the impact of *Year Up* on young adults ages 18 to 24 with a high school diploma or equivalent—including Black and Hispanic individuals—in urban areas around the country.

What Happens When Students Participate in *Year Up*?

The evidence indicates that implementing *Year Up*:

- is likely to increase short-term earnings
- may result in little to no change in short-term employment
- may result in little to no change in medium-term earnings
- may result in little to no change in industry-recognized credential, certificate, or license completion
- may result in little to no change in medium-term employment

Findings on *Year Up* from two studies that meet WWC standards are shown in Table 1. The table reports an effectiveness rating, the improvement index, and the number of studies and students that contributed to the findings. The improvement index is a measure of the intervention’s effect on an outcome. It can be interpreted as the expected change in percentile rank for an average comparison group student if that student had received the intervention.

Table 1. Summary of findings on *Year Up* from studies that meet WWC standards

Outcome domain	Effectiveness rating	Study findings	Evidence meeting WWC standards (version 4.0)	
		Improvement index (percentile points)	Number of studies	Number of students
Short-term earnings	Positive effects	+28	2	1,988
Short-term employment	No discernible effects	+7	1	143
Medium-term earnings	No discernible effects	+5	1	135
Industry-recognized credential, certificate, or license completion	No discernible effects	+2	1	143
Medium-term employment	No discernible effects	-1	1	143

Note: The improvement index can be interpreted as the expected change in percentile rank for an average comparison group student if that student had received the intervention. For example, an improvement index of +28 means that the expected percentile rank of the average comparison group student would increase by 28 points if the student received *Year Up*. The improvement index values are generated by averaging findings from the outcome analyses that meet WWC standards within each of the respective domains, as reported by Fein & Hamadyk (2018) and Roder & Elliott (2014). A positive improvement index does not necessarily mean the estimated effect is statistically significant. The short-term earnings outcomes reported in these studies include working in a job paying \$15/hour or more six months after program completion and average and annual earnings one year after program completion. Short-term employment outcomes reported in these studies include employed and average number of hours worked one year after program completion. Medium-term earnings outcomes reported in these studies include average annual earnings three years after program completion. Industry-recognized credential, certificate, or license completion outcomes reported in these studies includes earned a vocational certificate three years after program completion. Medium-term employment outcomes reported in these studies include employed and average number of hours worked three years after program completion. The effects of *Year Up* are not known for other outcomes within the Postsecondary Career and Technical Education topic area protocol, including credit accumulation, postsecondary degree attainment, technical skill proficiency, long-term employment, and long-term earnings.

BOX 1. HOW THE WWC REVIEWS AND DESCRIBES EVIDENCE

The WWC evaluates evidence based on the quality and results of reviewed studies. The criteria the WWC uses for evaluating evidence are defined in the [Procedures and Standards Handbooks](#) and the [Review Protocols](#). The studies summarized in this report were reviewed under WWC Standards (version 4.0) and the Postsecondary Career and Technical Education topic area protocol (version 4.0).

To determine the effectiveness rating, the WWC considers what methods each study used, the direction of the effects, and the number of studies that tested the intervention. The higher the effectiveness rating, the more certain the WWC is about the reported results and about what will happen if the same intervention is implemented again. The following key explains the relationship between effectiveness ratings and the statements used in this report:

Effectiveness rating	Rating interpretation	Description of the evidence
Positive (or negative) effects	The intervention is <i>likely</i> to change an outcome	Strong evidence of a positive (or negative) effect, with no overriding contrary evidence
Potentially positive (or negative) effects	The intervention <i>may</i> change an outcome	Evidence of a positive effect (or negative) with no overriding contrary evidence
No discernible effects	The intervention <i>may result in little to no change</i> in an outcome	No affirmative evidence of effects
Mixed effects	The intervention <i>has inconsistent effects</i> on an outcome	Evidence includes studies in at least two of these categories: studies with positive effects, studies with negative effects, or more studies with indeterminate effects than with positive or negative effects

How is *Year Up* Implemented?

The following section provides details of how the core *Year Up* program was implemented. This information can help educators identify the requirements for implementing *Year Up* and determine whether implementing this intervention would be feasible in their communities. *Year Up* has also implemented several variants on its core model, including a version co-located with local colleges and versions that are shorter in duration. Information on *Year Up* presented in this section comes from the studies that meet WWC standards (Fein & Hamadyk, 2018 and Roder & Elliott, 2014) and from correspondence with the developer.

- **Goal:** *Year Up* aims to close the opportunity divide by ensuring that young adults gain the skills, experiences, and support that will empower them to reach their potential through careers and higher education.
- **Target population:** *Year Up* is designed for low-income young adults ages 18 to 24 with a high school diploma or equivalent.
- **Method of delivery:** *Year Up* enrolls students in small learning communities of about 40 students. The program is structured around six months of full-time occupational and technical training followed by a six-month internship in the information technology or financial services sectors. The training is delivered face-to-face and involves work-based learning opportunities. For the internships, students are placed in entry-level positions at local employers in target occupational fields.

Comparison group: In the two studies that contribute to this intervention report, students in the comparison group did not have access to *Year Up*, but they could engage in other job training programs or postsecondary education opportunities. In one of the two studies (Roder & Elliott, 2014), members of the comparison group were able to reapply for the program 10 months after their initial application.

- **Frequency and duration of service:** During the six-month formal training phase, students attend full-time occupational and technical training for four and a half days a week. Students are then placed in six-month internships with local companies in their selected occupational fields. Throughout the program, Wednesday afternoons are dedicated to reflective sessions and workshops. Students also receive extensive supports, including advising, mentoring, instructional support, and financial assistance throughout. Post-program services support students with job search and placement for up to four months after program completion.
- **Intervention components:** The core *Year Up* model includes intake recruitment and assessment, a learning community, occupational and technical training, an internship, a stipend, and various other program and post-program supports. Refer to Table 2 for additional details.

Table 2. Components of *Year Up*

Key component	Description
Intake recruitment and assessment	The intake process involves an intensive, multi-stage assessment and screening, including a background and drug test, learning assessment, and one-on-one interviews.
Learning community	Students are grouped in learning communities of about 40 students that are facilitated by a designated staff member. Within each learning community, students engage in group activities and events designed to build trust and cohesion, active engagement in program activities, and collaboration.
Occupational and technical training	The formal training phase of the <i>Year Up</i> program involves six months of full-time occupational and technical training. The training focuses on: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • technical skills in specified occupational tracks (e.g., information technology, finance, quality assurance, project management, and customer service), • business communications (e.g., writing and public speaking), and • general skills related to functioning effectively in workplace environments (e.g., business etiquette and workplace relationship skills). The training classes are structured to meet the requirements of the program's college partners so that students can earn college credit for the completion of classes.
Internship	Students are placed in six-month internships with companies in the student's selected occupational field.
Workshops	Weekly workshops and reflective sessions offer students the opportunity to process and discuss their experiences as they progress through the program. Towards the end of the program, these activities emphasize career planning, resume development, and job search.
Instructional supports	Tutoring and other instructional assistance is provided to students who need additional academic help.
Advising	Students are assigned an advisor at the start of the program. The role of the advisor is to monitor the student's progress and support the student with any challenges or problems the student encounters. Advisors meet weekly with their students. Each advisor is assigned four to eight students.
Mentoring	Students are also paired with an external mentor from the local business community. The role of the mentor is to provide insights to the student's occupational field of interest, as well as to help students meet and network with relevant employers and working professionals.
Social services	Students have access to trained social workers and mental health professionals through <i>Year Up</i> 's Student Services staff. Service coordinators facilitate student access to other community-based providers for more specialized services, such as housing, childcare, legal advice, medical insurance and care, and help accessing public benefits.
Stipend	The training and services are provided at no cost to the students. <i>Year Up</i> provides all students with weekly stipends (around \$150 during the training and \$200 during the internship phase). The weekly stipend amount is contingent on compliance with and progress in the program.
Post-program supports	<i>Year Up</i> 's local teams assist graduates with job search and placement up to four months after program completion, including job fairs, one-on-one career guidance, and resume development. This support extends to one year after the program when <i>Year Up</i> reconnects with alumni to collect 12-month employment outcomes. Additionally, <i>Year Up</i> graduates have lifelong access to a national alumni association that provides free ongoing career, education, and family supports, as well as a talent placement firm, Year Up Professional Resources (YUPRO), a private beneficiary corporation dedicated exclusively to <i>Year Up</i> graduates.

What Does *Year Up* Cost?

This preliminary list of costs is not designed to be exhaustive; rather, it provides educators an overview of the major resources needed to implement *Year Up*. The program costs described in Table 3 are based on the information available as of 2014.

As reported in Fein & Hamadyk (2018), the average cost of *Year Up* was \$28,290 per student. Local *Year Up* staff accounted for 46 percent of the costs; student stipends

accounted for 23 percent; program, fundraising, and administrative costs accounted for 20 percent; and the national office cost accounted for 11 percent. The operating costs of *Year Up* are primarily financed by employer payments for interns (59 percent), foundation grants (22 percent), and charitable donations from private companies and individuals (17 percent). Public funds accounted for less than two percent of the operating costs.

Table 3. Cost ingredients for *Year Up*

Cost ingredients	Description	Source of funding
Personnel	<i>Year Up</i> instructors, advisors, social workers, and other support staff work with students throughout the program.	<i>Year Up</i>
Facilities	A national office in Boston provides operations and implementation support and facilitates sharing experiences and lessons learned across sites. Additionally, local <i>Year Up</i> offices are located in urban areas around the country.	<i>Year Up</i>

Key component	Description	Source of funding
Equipment and materials	All materials required for the training phase are provided by <i>Year Up</i> . Materials and equipment required for internship are provided by internship employers.	<i>Year Up</i> and internship employers
Direct assistance	Weekly stipends of around \$150 during the training and \$200 during the internship phase are provided to students.	<i>Year Up</i> and internship employers
Other	Local <i>Year Up</i> offices are responsible for fundraising to cover operating expenses, including staff salaries, rent, and other administrative costs.	<i>Year Up</i>

For More Information:

About *Year Up*

Roberto Zeledon
Chief Marketing Officer
Email: rzedon@yearup.org

Garrett Warfield
Chief Research Officer
Email: gwarfield@yearup.org

45 Milk St. 9th Floor, Boston, MA 02109
Web: <https://www.yearup.org/>. Phone: (855) 932-7871

About the cost of the intervention

Fein, D., & Hamadyk, J. (2018). *Bridging the opportunity divide for low-income youth: implementation and early impacts of the Year Up program*. (OPRE Report No. 2018-65). Office of Planning, Research, and Evaluation. Administration for Children and Families, U.S. Department of Health and Human Services.

https://www.acf.hhs.gov/sites/default/files/documents/opre/pace_8_year_up_narrative_6_1_18_508.pdf

In What Context Was *Year Up* Studied?

The following section provides information on the setting of the two studies of *Year Up* that meet WWC standards, and a description of the participants in the research.

This information can help educators understand the context in which the studies of *Year Up* were conducted, and determine whether the program might be suitable for their setting.

WHERE THE STUDY WAS CONDUCTED



2 studies, 2,002 students in 8 sites in Atlanta, Boston, Chicago, New York City, Providence, the San Francisco-San Jose Bay area, Seattle, and Washington, DC

Race



Ethnicity

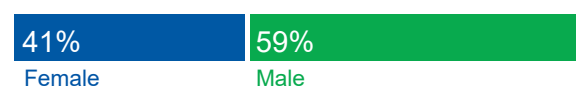


Districts:
Urban

Grades



Gender



LEARN MORE



Read more about *Year Up* and the studies that are summarized here in the [Intervention Report](#).