



# An Introduction to the World of Work: A Study of the Implementation and Impacts of New York City's Summer Youth Employment Program

## SUMMARY

In 2014, the Chief Evaluation Office (CEO) partnered with the Employment and Training Administration and funded contractor MDRC to conduct An Introduction to the World of Work: A Study of the Implementation and Impacts of New York City's Summer Youth Employment Program. The study aims to examine both the implementation of New York City's Summer Youth Employment Program (SYEP) and its effects on participants' education, employment, and earnings outcomes. To examine program implementation, researchers conducted focus groups, fielded surveys, and held interviews with program administrators, employees, participants, and applicants. The impact evaluation used an experimental design based on SYEP's randomized lottery application system to analyze the program's effects on individuals who participated between 2006 and 2010.

Researchers compared earnings and employment data for participants and nonparticipants after one year, five years, and nine years. The last two analyses also compared participants' and nonparticipants' educational achievement.

SYEP is the nation's largest summer youth job program and has been in serving youth ages 14 to 24 since 1963. Each year between 2004 and 2015, New York City's SYEP placed between 25,000 and 50,000 youth in minimum-wage, entry-level summer jobs with New York City employers. SYEP also offers educational workshops in work readiness, financial literacy, career exploration, postsecondary education, and personal health.

This Department of Labor-funded study was a result of the annual process to determine the Department's research priorities for the upcoming year. It contributes to the labor evidence-base to inform [employment and training](#) programs and policies and addresses Departmental strategic goals and priorities.

## KEY TAKEAWAYS

- **SYEP's large scale resulted in wide variability in implementation across and within program sites.** The program is an enormous undertaking, and it can be challenging to provide every participant with a meaningful work experience. The types and quality of SYEP work experiences vary considerably, among the study interviewees even within the same job sector and industry.
- **The quality of educational workshops also varied based on the provider.** A number of participants described the workshops as not especially helpful or as repetitive of previous education. Participants reporting a positive workshop experience usually mentioned the work readiness and financial education workshops and considered these topics as helpful in their working lives" or similar.
- **SYEP had large positive impacts on young people's employment and earnings during the summer for which they applied, but it had little impact beyond that summer.** Young people who won places in the program through



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the lottery were 54 percentage points more likely to be employed and earned \$580 more (or three times that of the control group) during that summer, on average, than those who did not. By year five, participants and non-participants were employed at similar rates, earned similar amounts, and had completed similar educational milestones.

[SEE FULL STUDY](#)

**TIMEFRAME:** 2014-2017

**SUBMITTED BY:** MDRC

**DATE PREPARED:** January 2022

**PARTNER AGENCY:** Employment and Training Administration (ETA)

**SPONSOR:** Chief Evaluation Office

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