



National Fund Principles: Collaborative and Partnership Achievements

*Fourth Annual National
Evaluation Report*

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Executive Summary

For this evaluation, National Fund investors requested that the National Evaluation Team examine the initiative's major hypothesis that the implementation of key principles leads to positive outcomes for low-income individuals and employers. The research questions for the analysis and report were:

- To what extent have the principles of the National Fund been implemented throughout the initiative's collaboratives and workforce partnerships?
- Is there a relationship between a site's fidelity to National Fund principles and outcomes?
- What lessons can be learned from sites that consist of high fidelity, high outcome collaboratives and high fidelity, high outcome partnerships?

For purposes of the analysis, the National Evaluation Team, in partnership with the investors and NFWS executive staff, developed specific criteria to capture NFWS principles and rated collaboratives and workforce partnerships. In the case of outcomes for individuals, the data source was quantitative data reported through December 2011 and drawn from the National Fund's web-based reporting system; virtually all other ratings data were based on qualitative information that came from interviews, site visits, written reports, and other documents from the partnerships and collaboratives.

Major Findings for Collaboratives

- The analysis of the data suggested that three-quarters of funding collaboratives had moderate to high conformity to NFWS principles. Collaboratives with the least conformity to NFWS principles were particularly weak in leadership; investment, support, and guidance of workforce partnerships; and sustainability.
- In terms of outcomes, 63 percent of collaboratives were rated as having moderate or better success in changing institutional and employer behavior, and 58 percent as having moderate or better success in making changes in public policy.

- There appeared to be fairly strong evidence of a relationship between conformance to NFWS principles and success in effecting system change.

Major Findings for Workforce Partnerships

- Most partnerships received a high to moderate fidelity rating on targeting low-skilled individuals, employer engagement, career advancement, and sustainability. Most of the highest fidelity workforce partnerships were in the healthcare sector, were formed prior to the National Fund, and were larger than average.
- There appeared to be a positive relationship between workforce partnership and collaborative fidelity. For example, 67 percent of partnerships that achieved a high fidelity score were associated with collaboratives that ranked in the top third in their conformance to the National Fund's vision and principles.
- There was a positive relationship between the fidelity of partnerships and their participant, employer, and system change outcomes, though there was little evidence of a systematic relationship between fidelity and participant outcomes alone.

Highly Effective Partnerships and Their Collaboratives

To throw light on these findings, the evaluation also examined sites consisting of highly effective collaboratives and highly effectively partnerships, to explore the factors that produced positive results and identify lessons that could be learned from these sites' experiences. Key findings included:

- Highly effective partnerships were older, more likely to be employer-initiated or led, and were larger than partnerships overall. They understood clearly the central role employers played in achieving their goals and usually had a core of employer "champions." Labor unions also were deeply engaged in a significant share of highly effective partnerships.
- Characteristics that distinguished highly effective partnerships' approach to career advancement included the establishment of long-term relationships with participants, the degree of screening and assessment provided to ensure that there was an appropriate fit between the candidate and the industry, the addressing of basic skills deficits, the extent to which partnerships mapped training pathways and supported long-term training, and extensive participant supports.

- For the highly effective partnerships, system change work was integral and essential to their overall strategies.
- Partnerships' strategies and successes in changing institutional practices tended to be narrowly focused on their own participants.
- The sustainability of the highly effective partnerships was based on factors including their usefulness and credibility with employers and funders; the range of strategies they had in place to sustain their efforts financially; and their ability to transform their strategies, and even organizational form, in response to shifts in the external environment and needs of their target populations.
- Highly effective collaboratives added real value to their partnerships, learned from them, and spread the lessons to other partnerships and intermediaries.

Conclusion and Implications

Viewing these analyses in the context of the other NFWS national evaluation reports from this and previous years, three findings stand out that would seem to hold important implications for the future work of the National Fund:

- 1) In places where the initiative was especially successful, the collaboratives emerged as effective regional intermediaries, essential to the formulation and implementation of the National Fund's vision. As such, a key task of the National Fund moving forward is to deepen and sharpen the support it provides to the growing network of regional workforce collaboratives its work has engendered.
- 2) Workforce partnerships that effectively adopted National Fund core principles (particularly a commitment to career advancement for low-income individuals and deep, ongoing employer engagement) were successful in crafting interventions that met the goals of both low-skill workers and employers. In some cases, however, there was a tension between focusing on the needs of workers with serious barriers to labor market success and employers' overall workforce needs. Drawing on these lessons, NFWS could play an even greater national role in disseminating and strengthening sector practice built on active employer engagement, including identifying approaches that tailor the implementation of National Fund principles to different industries and population groups.

3) Many of the National Fund's most significant and distinctive outcomes were in the area of system change. To date, however, only a relatively small share of collaboratives or partnerships has adopted or knows how to implement effective approaches to system change. In the future, then, it would be important for NFWS to support all collaboratives and partnerships in adopting system change strategies tailored to their capacities and context.

Introduction

For this evaluation, National Fund investors requested that the National Evaluation Team examine the initiative's major hypothesis that the implementation of key principles leads to positive outcomes for low-income individuals and employers. The research questions for the evaluation and report were:

- To what extent have the principles of the National Fund been implemented throughout the initiative's collaboratives and workforce partnerships?
- Is there a relationship between a site's fidelity to National Fund principles and outcomes?
- What lessons can be learned from sites that consist of high fidelity, high outcome collaboratives and high fidelity, high outcome partnerships?

To address the research questions, the National Evaluation Team worked with NFWS staff and the investors to codify NFWS principles into sets of criteria (described below) by which both the funding collaboratives' and workforce partnerships' fidelity and outcomes could be assessed and rated on a quantitative scale. The raw participant outcomes data from the 2011 reporting were also transformed into standardized, scaled data points for inclusion in the overall analysis.

The National Evaluation Team and NFWS site coaches and staff then independently rated each site on fidelity, employer outcomes, and system change outcomes, and reconciled differences. In general, raters knew the sites well, but there was predictable unevenness in knowledge and differences in judgment. The general trends are, therefore, more reliable than each individual rating and, overall, this analysis should be used in tandem with the broader quantitative and qualitative perspectives on the work of the National Fund provided in this and previous NFWS national evaluation reports.

The ratings and participant outcomes data points were used to develop bundled measures of relevant outcome sub-groups (e.g., employer, system change,

participant outcomes) as well as overall measures of fidelity and outcomes. Multiple analytic methods were employed to address the research questions of interest, including descriptive statistics to assess the degree of model adoption, exploratory simple correlational analyses and cross-tabulations to assess the directional nature and goodness-of-fit of the relationship between key variables of interest, and qualitative analysis to reflect on the implications of selected findings and identify key elements of highly effective sites. Where relevant, the robustness of selected data transformation and analytic methods were tested by applying selected procedural modifications and reviewing the findings.

Despite the quantitative appearance of the ratings, it is important to remember that the underlying data used in these analyses were qualitative with the exception of the participant outcomes data. The information used to inform the ratings included interviews with collaboratives and partnerships, site visits, reports from each collaborative's local evaluation team, reports provided to NFWS staff, and other materials supplied by the partnerships and collaboratives.

NFWS Principles and Outcomes

Funding Collaboratives

One of the National Fund's three principal goals was to:

Organize, support, and develop a national network of regional funding collaboratives dedicated to investing in workforce partnerships that effectively assist low-income individuals

obtain and advance in careers paying family-sustaining wages and benefits, while at the same time ensuring that employers have the high-quality human resources that will enable them to succeed in this dynamic and competitive economy.

By the end of 2011, the NFWS initiative had grown from six pilot collaboratives located mostly in the Northeast to 32 collaboratives across the nation. Of these, 21 had joined the National Fund on or before October 2008; four more were included between 2009 and 2011; and seven were recent additions, joining in 2011 as part of the federal Social Innovation Fund (SIF) project. The newest sites (the SIF sites and one in Newark) were excluded from the analysis.

The first six collaboratives were in many ways a federation of existing collaborations among philanthropic and public funders that were part of a growing national movement arguing that “dual customer,” industry-focused models of workforce development were most effective. Partly because of the confederate nature of the National Fund at its founding, the group of national investors initiating NFWS saw itself implementing a broad set of principles rather than a specific model. And, in practice, at least until 2010, the collaboratives displayed considerable diversity in composition and strategy. The hiring of an executive director that year began a process of clarifying and unifying the NFWS project, resulting in an articulation of principles for both the collaboratives and the partnerships that came closer to a model, though the expectation remained that regions would tailor their strategies to their circumstances.

Funding Collaborative Fidelity

Analysis

For this report, NFWS detailed even more explicitly the characteristics of a model collaborative in the areas of leadership, strategy, and planning; engagement of key

stakeholders; management; the targeting of low-income individuals; engagement and service to employers; investment in and support and guidance of workforce partnerships; capacity-building; system change; and sustainability. (See Exhibit I-1 below). NFWS staff and the evaluators then rated each collaborative on these characteristics, using a scale of 1 to 3, with 3 being the highest rating. Overall collaborative fidelity was calculated as an average of the underlying fidelity indicators.

Exhibit I-1: Indicators of a High Fidelity Collaborative

Criteria	Indicators of a High Fidelity Collaborative
Leadership, Strategy, and Planning	The collaborative has a clear vision, goals, and strategy that are consistent with the NFWS principles. The collaborative has used labor market information and other intelligence on the regional economy to shape and inform its strategy. It reviews its progress, utilizing data collected from its partnerships, planning grants, and evaluation, and revises its strategy as needed. The collaborative has a recognized leadership role and influence within the region.
Engagement of Key Stakeholders	The collaborative has the active participation of multiple funders; investors are engaged in developing strategy, making investment decisions, and overseeing implementation and progress. Other key regional stakeholders are included as appropriate to the collaborative’s strategy.
Management	The collaborative has an active chair and committee structure and strong staff, including a capable executive director who has a clear grasp of the NFWS principles and strategy. While the executive director may have a reporting relationship to the lead organization, there is a reporting relationship with the collaborative and clear recognition of its decision-making role. The lead organization values the collaborative’s work and provides substantial support. There are systems in place to support the collaborative’s fiscal and programmatic work.
Targets Low-Income Individuals	The collaborative has a clear focus on serving a low-income/low-skilled population and a well-articulated strategy. It provides guidance and oversight to its partnerships on serving this population, and its commitment to low-income, low-skilled workers and jobseekers shapes its capacity-building and system change strategies.
Focused on Engaging and Serving Employers	The collaborative understands the importance of employer leadership within its partnerships and has a clear commitment to ensuring that they engage and effectively serve employers. It weights employer engagement heavily in selecting partnerships and provides guidance to them on how to be successful in doing so.
Investment in, Support and Guidance of Workforce Partnerships	The collaborative selects and invests in partnerships based on a clear sense of its own goals and guided by labor market demand. It provides active guidance and oversight of its partnerships in the form of frequent interactions with grantees, evaluation, ongoing review of progress, capacity building, and incentives/disincentives for achieving key goals.
Capacity-Building Strategy	The collaborative has an active capacity-building strategy targeted to meet the specific needs of its grantees and has some direct influence on other workforce organizations in the region.
System Change Strategy	The collaborative has articulated and implemented a well-defined system change strategy aimed at public policy, institutional behavior, and/or employer practices. It seeks to influence other funding sources and/or workforce development practice within the region. The strategy aligns with NFWS principles.
Sustainability Strategy	The collaborative has worked together for at least three years and has a track record of raising funds to support its goals and activities. It may or may not plan to continue the collaborative over the long-run, but it is actively putting in place a sustainability strategy for its key activities and goals.

Findings

- The analysis of these data revealed that three-quarters of collaboratives had moderate to high overall conformity to the NFWS principles. In terms of their focus on the National Fund’s three principal targets (low-income individuals, employers, and system change), 22 collaboratives (92 percent) had moderate to high conformity on targeting low-income individuals, 20 (83 percent) on employer engagement, and 20 (83 percent) on system change.

Exhibit I-2: Collaborative Fidelity by Rating Criteria and Overall (n=24)

FIDELITY RATING	FIDELITY CRITERIA									
	Leadership	Stakeholders	Mgmt.	Low-income	Employers	WPs	Capacity	Systems	Sustain	Overall
3.00	42%	50%	42%	75%	46%	33%	33%	42%	46%	13%
2-2.99	42%	46%	46%	17%	38%	50%	50%	42%	25%	63%
<2.00	17%	4%	13%	8%	17%	17%	17%	17%	29%	25%

- Collaboratives’ fidelity ratings did not vary systematically by cohort (that is, the time at which they joined the National Fund family), although the ratings criteria included factors normally associated with maturity. This may be explained by several factors. Among the earliest cohorts, there was an implicit agreement to tolerate strategic diversity; over time, National Fund principles were more clearly defined. Some newer collaboratives were given longer lead times to coalesce before formally joining the National Fund, and during this period, NFWS provided guidance and support.
- The analyses did suggest that collaboratives with the least overall conformity to NFWS principles tended to be weakest in leadership; investment, support, and guidance of workforce partnerships; and sustainability.
 - The link between leadership and other elements of an effective collaborative is critical, as described in a companion piece to this report, *System Change Activities and Achievements*.
 - The absence of a sustainability strategy had a variety of origins. In some cases, it was simply a symptom of the youth of a collaborative, while in other sites there appeared to be real weakness in long-term viability.
 - Lack of clarity in the selection of partnerships and failure to guide them was a problem for many collaboratives that did not have a clearly defined theory of change and/or retained a traditional notion of the relationship between funder and grantee.

Funding Collaborative Outcomes

Analysis

The second question the analysis considered was the outcomes collaboratives achieved in the area of system change since this was a key expectation of the collaboratives. NFWS staff and evaluators rated collaboratives on a scale of 1 to 3 on their attainment of the National Fund’s three system change goals:

- success in effecting changes in institutional behavior in ways that support career advancement for low-income, low-skilled workers;
- success in effecting changes in public policy that support career advancement for low-income, low-skilled workers; and
- success in effecting changes in employer behavior that support career advancement for low-income, low-skilled workers.

The overall collaborative outcome was calculated as an average of the underlying outcome indicators.

Findings

- As Exhibit I-3 illustrates, 15 collaboratives (63 percent) were rated as having moderate or better success in changing institutional and employer behavior, and 14 (58 percent) as having moderate or better success in making changes in public policy.

Exhibit I-3: Collaborative Outcomes by Rating

Collaborative Outcomes by Rating				
Outcome	Rating			Collaboratives n=24
	3.00	2-2.99	<2.00	
Changes in Institutional Behavior	21%	42%	38%	24
Changes in Public Policy	42%	17%	42%	24
Changes in Employer Behavior	17%	46%	38%	24
OVERALL OUTCOMES	0%	54%	46%	24

- The larger share of collaboratives with high ratings in public policy reflected the fact that most took the lead in this system change area, while expecting their partnerships to lead in the areas of employer and institutional practices. However, as the data suggest, an equally large share of collaboratives did little or no public policy advocacy.

- As shown, none of the collaboratives achieved the highest *overall* outcome rating, reflecting the fact that none of the collaboratives achieved the highest score in all three system change outcome categories. However, seven collaboratives (29 percent) achieved a rating of 3 in two of three categories, which was reflected in overall outcome ratings above 2.5.

Collaborative Fidelity and Collaborative Outcomes

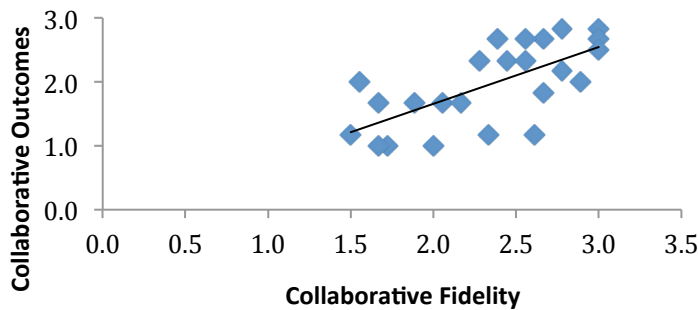
Analysis

The relationship between fidelity to NFWS principles and outcomes was a key research question, including the relationship between collaboratives' conformance to NFWS principles and their success in effecting system change.

Findings

- As the scatterplot in Exhibit I-4 demonstrates, there was fairly strong evidence of a positive relationship between collaborative fidelity and system change outcomes.

Exhibit I-4: Collaborative Fidelity by Collaborative Outcomes



- Among the collaboratives with the lowest overall outcomes rating, five (45 percent) received the lowest fidelity rating and none achieved the highest fidelity rating. Alternatively, among collaboratives with moderate or better outcomes ratings, only one (8 percent) had weak fidelity ratings and three (23 percent) had the highest fidelity ratings. (See Exhibit 1-5.) In this case, a positive relationship may partly reflect the fact that fidelity criteria included a strong focus on employers and system change.

Exhibit I-5: Relationship between Collaborative Fidelity and Outcomes (n=24)

Collaborative Outcome Score	Collaborative Fidelity Score		
	3.00	2-2.99	<2.00
3.00 (n=0)	0%	0%	0%
2-2.99 (n=13)	23%	69%	8%
<2.00 (n=11)	0%	55%	45%

Workforce Partnerships

A key expectation of the collaboratives was to fund sectoral workforce partnerships focused on assisting low-income individuals and employers. By 2011, there were 124 workforce partnerships at varying levels of maturity and experience. The age of the partnerships was fairly evenly divided between those formed prior to the launch of the National Fund (2006 or earlier), those formed in the earlier years of the initiative (2007 and 2009), and those formed in 2010 and later¹. Partnerships that were formed in 2006 or earlier provided services to nearly two-thirds of all participants, although they represented only 35 percent of all partnerships. The 10 largest partnerships served almost half of all participants. While the partnerships represented 10 major industries, most were in three sectors: healthcare (51 partnerships), construction (22 partnerships), and manufacturing (15 partnerships). Almost all partnerships (89 percent) offered a jobseeker program, and 58 percent of the partnerships offered incumbent programs.

Workforce Partnership Fidelity

The decision about which partnerships to fund and what constituted a partnership was made locally by the funding collaboratives and there was considerable variation across sites. From the beginning, however, four key characteristics of partnerships were articulated by the National Fund:

- *A focus on low-income individuals.* The targeting of low-income individuals was a foundational commitment of the initiative, although there were differences in how collaboratives and their partnerships understood and implemented this priority. Those with an economic development focus and a strong interest in responding to employers' broader workforce needs saw low-income populations as only one of their targets. On the other hand, collaboratives and partnerships

¹ Partnerships formed after 2010 were not included in the analytic sample since they did not report participant outcomes in the 2010 reporting period. The sample is similar to the overall population with respect to key participant and organizational characteristics, but includes a higher proportion of mature sites than the overall population of workforce partnerships due to the selection criterion.

particularly concerned with poverty often designed programs to serve those with the most serious barriers to labor market success.

- *Deep and sustained employer engagement.* A dual customer focus was also one of the pillars of the National Fund’s strategy, although the practice ranged from employer-formed and led partnerships to those with relatively shallow employer engagement. Beginning in 2010, the priority of this principle was underlined by NFWS leadership, and employer engagement was a key focus of the National Fund’s technical assistance.
- *A commitment to career advancement.* The commitment to career advancement complemented the focus on low-income individuals and, again, partnerships varied in their implementation of this principle. Some maintained long-term relationships with participants and worked closely with employers, colleges, and others to put in place strategies that supported skill development and career advancement over time. Other partnerships offered sector-specific, short-term training options assuming that the connection to employment demand would be sufficient for improving trainees’ opportunities.
- *A demonstrated capacity to sustain the partnership over time.* The National Fund’s vision included the development of fairly stable workforce development “intermediaries” that would gain the experience and credibility to work closely with employers and identify and address the workforce challenges of low-skilled populations.

Analysis

Exhibit I-6 below details the National Fund’s expectations of a high fidelity workforce partnership. These elements were used as the basis for the ratings process. To assess partnerships’ conformity to the four basic NFWS principles, the 80 partnerships with sufficient data on activities and results were rated on a 1 to 3 scale, with 3 being the highest rating. An overall partnership fidelity measure was calculated by averaging the underlying fidelity criteria scores.

Exhibit I-6: Indicators of a High Fidelity Workforce Partnership

Criteria	Indicators of a High Fidelity Workforce Partnership
Employer Leadership	Multiple employers/employer associations are actively engaged in the partnership on an ongoing basis; employers provide strategic leadership and concretely affect the design and implementation of the service on an ongoing basis. Employers may also participate in implementation of services, chair the partnership, recruit other employer partners, and/or contribute financially. Ideally, employers are convened on a regular basis to exchange information.
Targets Low-Skilled Individuals	The partnership has articulated a strong commitment to serve low-skill, low-income individuals, and most individuals served by the partnership are in that category. A significant focus of the work of the partnership may be on those with very serious barriers to employment.
Focuses on Career Advancement	The partnership has a clear commitment to support individuals' career advancement, not just their entry into the labor market. This includes implementation of more than one of the following strategies: provision of services to participants after placement into a job, development of career pathway programs, attempts to change employer practices to support career advancement for low-skill/low-income individuals, use of career coaches or navigators, provision of support services.
Sustainability	The partnership has had a demonstrated capacity to sustain itself and appears likely to be able to do so.

Findings

- The great majority of partnerships appeared to target low-income, low-skilled individuals (66 percent achieved the highest rating on this criterion, and another 26 percent received a moderate rating). (See Exhibit I-7.)
- Almost three-quarters of all partnerships received a high or moderate rating on both employer engagement and career advancement, and 67 percent achieved a moderate rating or better on sustainability.
- The fact that only 15 percent received the highest rating on overall fidelity reflected the fact that to achieve a 3, a partnership had to have a perfect score on all four of the sub-criteria.

Exhibit I-7: Workforce Partnerships by Selected Fidelity Criteria

Partnership Fidelity Criterion	Partnership Score		
	3.00	2-2.99	<2.00
Targeting Low-Income (n=80)	66%	26%	8%
Employer Engagement (n=80)	39%	34%	28%
Focus on Career Advancement (n=80)	31%	43%	26%
Sustainability (n=80)	29%	38%	34%
OVERALL FIDELITY (n=80)	15%	54%	31%

- Most of the highest fidelity workforce partnerships were in the healthcare sector. (See Exhibit I-8.) In addition, most were older partnerships, formed prior to the National Fund, and were larger, serving more participants than the average workforce partnership.

Exhibit I-8: Workforce Partnership Fidelity by Sector

Sector	Share of Highest Ranked Partnerships (n=12)	Share of Sample (n=80)
Healthcare	58%	41%
Biotechnology	8%	4%
Construction	17%	21%
Manufacturing	8%	11%
Energy	0%	5%

Collaborative and Workforce Partnership Fidelity

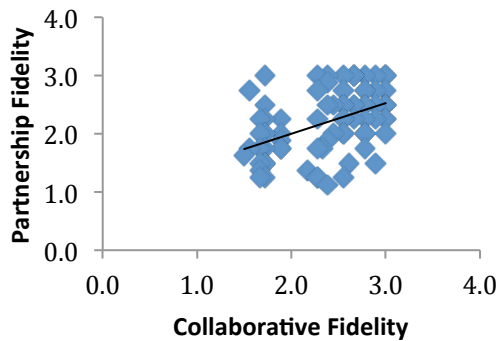
Analysis

Integral to the National Fund’s theory of change was the hypothesis that collaboratives sharing the NFWS vision would be likely to support and/or develop workforce partnerships with the characteristics that provide career advancement for low-skill, low-income individuals and meet the needs of employers.

Findings

- Overall, there was a positive relationship between collaborative and partnership fidelity, as shown by Exhibit I-9. The relationship cannot be characterized as a strong linear association due to the high dispersion of the data. Most high fidelity collaboratives funded moderate and even occasionally low fidelity partnerships and, at least in one case, two very high fidelity partnerships were associated with a relatively low fidelity collaborative.

Exhibit I-9: Collaborative Fidelity by Workforce Partnership Fidelity



- Despite the high level of dispersion, categorizing the data shows that the highest-scoring collaboratives tended to invest in moderate- to high-scoring partnerships. None of the lowest-scoring partnerships were associated with a high-scoring collaborative.

Exhibit I-10: Relationship between Collaborative Fidelity and Partnership Fidelity

Workforce Partnership Fidelity Score	Collaborative Fidelity Score		
	3.00	2-2.99	<2.00
3.00 (n=12)	25%	67%	8%
2-2.99 (n=43)	16%	63%	21%
<2.00 (n=25)	0%	44%	56%

- Similarly, dividing the collaboratives into terciles (in place of using the absolute score to categorize collaboratives) broadens the constraints on the upper bounds of the highest scoring collaboratives and allows collaboratives to be compared relative to one another, instead of comparing them to an ideal. This recognizes that high fidelity collaboratives are not only those that received the highest rating across all fidelity components, but also includes those whose ratings were in the highest third of collaboratives overall. Under this alternative categorization, 67 percent of workforce partnerships that achieved a high fidelity score were associated with collaboratives that ranked in the top third in their conformance to the National Fund’s principles. Conversely, only 8 percent of partnerships receiving the lowest fidelity score were associated with collaboratives ranking in the top third.

Exhibit I-11: Relationship between Collaborative Fidelity (by Tercile) and Partnership Fidelity

Workforce Partnership Fidelity Score	Collaborative Fidelity Tercile		
	Top Tercile	Middle Tercile	Bottom Tercile
3.00 (n=12)	67%	25%	8%
2-2.99 (n=43)	49%	30%	21%
<2.00 (n=25)	8%	36%	56%

Analysis

The National Fund’s expectations for the workforce partnerships reflected its goals for individuals, employers, and system change, while the design of the initiative and its data collection constraints set limits on the kinds of outcomes that could be expected and measured. Within those constraints, NFWS collected aggregate participant information from the partnerships to provide insight into the relationship between services and outcomes. The data collected from participants included information on demographics, services provided, and outcomes. Data collection quality across sites was uneven; information related to longer-term outcomes (such as retention information or improvements in wages and benefits after hire) was particularly difficult to obtain and inconsistent across sites.²

The outcomes data included in this analysis were a subset of all participant data collected. The objective was to reflect the NFWS emphasis on career advancement by selecting relevant variables where there were data across a sufficient number of sites to be meaningful. Jobseeker and incumbent worker outcomes were analyzed separately since the two programs are quite different and because some partnerships only provided one or the other kind of program.

The variables included for jobseekers were: occupational training participation, training completion, occupational training completion, certificates and/or degree receipt, job placement, wages at placement, full-time placements, placements with benefits, 12-month retention, and wages at 12-month retention. The variables for incumbent workers included in the analysis were: occupational training

² Longer-term outcome data were challenging to collect for multiple reasons. In incumbent programs, some engaged employers had concerns about privacy and/or time required for data collection, suggesting opportunities for targeted technical assistance to address these concerns. In the case of jobseeker programs, maintaining ongoing contact with participants post-completion is a common challenge in the field; programs may benefit from dissemination of best practices in data collection practices.

participation, training completion, occupational training completion, certificate and/or degree receipt, 12-month retention, and wages at 12-month retention.

These participant outcome variables were standardized and placed on a 1 to 3 scale to align with rated data. The resulting indicators were used to develop bundled measures of jobseeker training, placement, and retention, and incumbent training and retention, as well as an overall outcome measure for both jobseeker and incumbent worker programs.

To provide the system change outcomes data for this analysis, NFWS staff and evaluators rated sites, using a process similar to the fidelity ratings process. The system change ratings were informed by multiple data sources, including local evaluation assessments and deliverables, responses to NFWS national evaluation common questions on partnership activities and outcomes, the NFWS employer survey conducted in 2010-2011, and overall site visit observations and interviews. One employer-related goal and three system change outcomes were included in the analysis:

- success in helping employers meet their workforce goals;
- success in effecting change in employer practices that support career advancement for low-income, low-skilled workers;
- success in effecting change in institutional behavior in ways that support career advancement for low-income, low-skilled workers; and
- success in effecting change in public policy that supports career advancement for low-income, low-skilled workers.

The employer practices, institutional behavior, and public policy outcomes were averaged into a single system change measure. The bundled participant outcome measures (training, placement and retention/advancement) were used in combination with the employer goal outcome and bundled system change outcomes to generate a single measure of partnership overall outcomes.

Findings

- As Exhibit I-12 illustrates, moderate or better outcomes were achieved by partnerships on all the criteria except system change.

Exhibit I-12: Workforce Partnership Outcomes

Workforce Partnership Outcomes			
Outcome ³	Rating		
	3.00	2-2.99	<2.00
Jobseeker Program Outcomes (n=43)	5%	72%	23%
Incumbent Worker Program Outcomes (n=27)	26%	67%	7%
Employer Goals Outcomes (n= 80)	33%	39%	28%
System Change Outcomes (n=80)	10%	34%	56%

- Outcomes varied somewhat by industry. Looking at the three largest sectors’ jobseeker programs, construction partnerships appeared to slightly outperform those in other sectors when participant, employer, and system change outcomes all were taken into account. In incumbent worker programs, healthcare considerably outperformed the other sectors when all those measures were taken into account, but that was not true when participant outcomes alone were considered.

Workforce Partnership Fidelity and Outcomes

Analysis

The National Fund’s theory of change predicts a positive relationship between the fidelity of partnerships to NFWS principles and overall outcomes.

Findings

- As the scatterplots in Exhibits I-13 and I-14 demonstrate, there was strong evidence of a positive relationship, for both jobseeker and incumbent programs.⁴

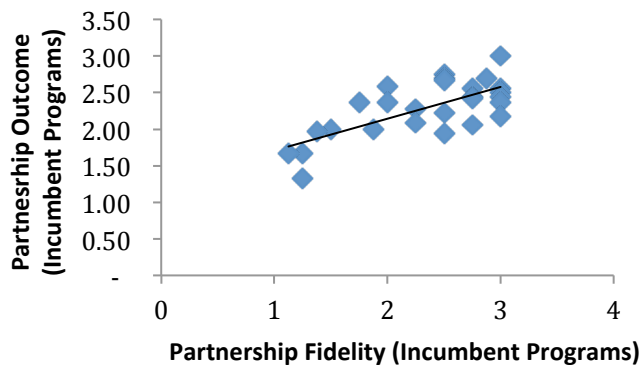
³ The inclusion of retention/advancement indicators yielded a significantly reduced sample (due to data availability). As such, the analyses described in this section were performed both with and without measures of retention/advancement. The resulting findings, presented in this and subsequent exhibits without measures of retention/advancement, were robust to the inclusion of retention/advancement indicators.

⁴ These findings were robust to several different data transformation processes (e.g., weighted/non-weighted variables; simple averaging/bundled averages).

Exhibit I-13: Workforce Partnership Fidelity by Outcomes, Jobseeker Programs only (n=43)



Exhibit I-14: Workforce Partnership Fidelity by Outcomes, Incumbent Programs only (n=27)



- Looking at the data by category yielded similar evidence. When the definition of high fidelity or high outcome is limited to partnerships that received a rating of 3 across all underlying components, no jobseeker partnership with the highest fidelity score received the lowest outcome score.⁵ (See Exhibits I-15 and I-16.)

Exhibit I-15: Relationship between Partnership Fidelity and Partnership Outcomes: Jobseeker Programs (n=43)

Workforce Partnership Fidelity Score	Workforce Partnership Overall Outcome Score		
	3.0	2-2.99	<2.0
3.0 (n=6)	0%	100%	0%
2.0-2.99 (n=19)	0%	74%	26%
<2.0 (n=18)	0%	6%	94%

⁵ Note also that no high fidelity partnership received the highest outcome score, reflecting in part the narrow definition of the high rating (limited only to the scores of 3 on all underlying components), and also the underlying dispersion of the data.

Exhibit I-16: Relationship between Partnership Fidelity and Partnership Outcomes: Incumbent Programs (n=27)

Workforce Partnership Fidelity Score	Workforce Partnership Overall Outcome Score		
	3.0	2.0-2.99	<2.0
3.0 (n=6)	17%	83%	0%
2-2.99 (n=14)	0%	93%	7%
<2.0 (n=7)	0%	43%	57%

- The relationship between overall fidelity and the bundled system change measure alone was similarly positive.
- Looking solely at participant outcomes, the story was more complex. The analyses did not yield evidence of a systematic relationship between fidelity and bundled participant outcomes for either jobseeker or incumbent worker programs.⁶

Conclusion

The broad findings of these analyses suggest that high fidelity partnerships are more likely to yield higher overall outcomes that include participant, employer, and system change and that high fidelity funding collaboratives are more likely to support high fidelity, high outcome partnerships than collaboratives with less adherence to NFWS core principles. Yet, the findings include some ambiguities, at least partly because of real limitations in the data. More importantly, these analyses do not illuminate the mechanisms through which positive results were produced or explain discrepancies and diversity in the findings. The closer look that follows of pairs of high fidelity collaboratives and high fidelity, high outcome sites is intended to illuminate some of these relationships.

⁶ The ambiguous results for participant outcomes alone may be related to the discrepancy between the proportion of high fidelity jobseeker-serving programs that provided sufficient participant data for inclusion (60 percent), compared to low fidelity programs (75 percent). Similarly, a lower proportion of high fidelity incumbent programs (67 percent) provided full participant data than low fidelity programs (100 percent).

Lessons from Highly Effective Partnerships and Their Collaboratives

Introduction

The third major research question for this analysis was what lessons can be learned from high fidelity, high outcome partnerships associated with high fidelity, high outcome collaboratives.⁷ Since limiting the analysis to only those partnerships and collaboratives that achieved perfect scores would have been too restrictive, partnerships in the top terciles of both outcomes and fidelity were paired with collaboratives in the top tercile. Seven partnerships operating three incumbent and five jobseeker programs fell into this category. (See Exhibit I-17.)⁸

Exhibit I-17: Highly Effective Sites

High Fidelity Collaborative	High Fidelity Workforce Partnership	Age	Sector	Number of Participants in the High Fidelity Programs	Number of Participants Served by the Partnership Overall	Number of Employers Served
	<i>Incumbent</i>					
Cincinnati Partners for a Competitive Workforce	Health Careers Collaborative (HCC)	Before 2006	Health	753	3,246	161
Milwaukee Area Workforce Funding Alliance	Wisconsin Regional Training Partnership – Construction (WRTP)	Before 2006	Construction	113	2,547	73
Baltimore Collaborative	Baltimore Alliance for Careers in Healthcare (BACH)	In or prior to 2006	Health	685	685	10

⁷ There were 80 partnerships within 24 collaboratives that received fidelity rankings. However, some partnerships had missing data in some of the key outcome measures and could not be included in the fidelity to outcomes analysis. In total, 56 workforce partnerships were part of the fidelity to outcomes analysis; these partnerships operated 43 jobseeker and 27 incumbent programs.

⁸ As discussed in the previous chapter, incumbent and jobseeker programs were assessed on slightly different participant outcome measures and, therefore, are considered separately.

High Fidelity Collaborative	High Fidelity Workforce Partnership	Age	Sector	Number of Participants in the High Fidelity Programs	Number of Participants Served by the Partnership Overall	Number of Employers Served
	<i>Non incumbent</i>					
Baltimore Collaborative	JumpStart	In or prior to 2006	Construction	344	344	107
Baltimore Collaborative	BioTechnical Institute of Maryland, Inc. (BTI)	In or prior to 2006	Biotech	224	224	35
SkillWorks, Boston	Healthcare Training Institute (HTI)	2008	Health	30	386	7
Milwaukee Area Workforce Funding Alliance	Wisconsin Regional Training Partnership – Construction (WRTP)	In or prior to 2006	Construction	2,434	2,547	73
SkillWorks, Boston	Hotel Training Center (HTC) ⁹	2008	Hospitality	127	256	20

Profile of Highly Effective Workforce Partnerships

The highly effective partnerships shared a set of characteristics that distinguished them from other partnerships:¹⁰

- *Highly effective partnerships were older than the average partnership.* Almost three-quarters (71 percent) were formed in or prior to 2006, compared to one-third of partnerships overall; and all were formed during or prior to 2008, compared to 50 percent of all partnerships. Highly effective partnerships were, therefore, more experienced than the rest. Unlike the average partnership, the most highly effective were formed during a period of labor and skills shortages. The deep connections to employers developed through the early years probably improved their ability to sustain their work and survive the economic downturn.

⁹ Cincinnati's HCC also operated a jobseeker program with high fidelity ratings, but there was insufficient data to include that program in the analysis. Boston's HTI and HTC also operated incumbent training programs with high fidelity ratings that received moderate outcomes for these programs.

¹⁰ There were a total of 17 partnerships that achieved high outcomes. These partnerships also generally received high fidelity ratings and shared many of the characteristics of the sites being profiled.

Exhibit I-18: Age of Highly Effective Partnerships Compared to All Partnerships

Year	Highly Effective Partnerships		All NFWS Partnerships	
	Number	%	Number	%
2006 or earlier	5	71%	43	35%
2008	2	29%	10	8%
2009	0	0%	26	21%
2010	0	0%	24	19%
2011	0	0%	12	5%

- *Highly effective partnerships were more likely to be employer-initiated and/or employer-led.*¹¹ All received the highest ranking on employer leadership. Deep employer engagement may, in fact, be key to the other differences between these partnerships and other sites.
- *Highly effective partnerships were more likely to be labor-management partnerships.*
 - Of the seven in this analysis, 29 percent were labor-management partnerships. Overall, of the 17 partnerships with the highest ratings, 35 percent were labor-management partnerships, compared to 14 percent of all NFWS partnerships.
 - Over-representation of partnerships with deep labor involvement may be explained by labor’s role in bringing employers to the table, facilitating outreach and the implementation of career advancement strategies, as well as the resources and stability labor can provide.
- *Highly effective programs were more likely to offer both incumbent and jobseeker programs.* Over half (57 percent) of the highly effective partnerships offered both an incumbent and a jobseeker program, compared to 38 percent of all partnerships. The strength of both employer and labor engagement in the highly effective partnerships may explain the focus on incumbent workers as well as the better-than-average outcomes.
- *Highly effective partnerships served more participants and employers than most.*
 - Three of the seven partnerships in our sample had over 500 participants and four had between 101 and 500 participants, compared to 14 percent and 29

¹¹ The HCC, BTI, and BACH were created by employers to address labor and skill shortages; WRT-Construction and the HTC grew from labor-management partnerships; and JumpStart and HTI were both launched with strong employer partners at their core.

percent, respectively, of all partnerships. (See Exhibit I-19.) Similarly, two of the seven highly effective partnerships served over 100 employers, compared to 6 percent of all partnerships.

Exhibit I-19: Size of Highly Effective Partnerships Compared to All NFWS Partnerships

Number of Participants	Highly Effective Partnerships (N = 8)		All NFWS Partnerships (N = 113)	
	Number	%	Number	%
1 - 25	0	0%	20	18%
26 - 50	0	0%	16	14%
51 - 100	0	0%	28	25%
101 - 500	4	57%	33	29%
More than 500	3	43%	16	14%

- The larger size of the highly effective partnerships may be a product of many of the other characteristics just discussed, such as age, employer, and labor engagement. The smallest of the highly effective partnerships may have been limited in scale because they offered direct training that constrained the number of enrollees per class cycle.
- *Highly effective partnerships were not much more likely to be in the healthcare sector than in other sectors.* Forty-three percent of the highly effective partnerships were in healthcare, compared to 41 percent of all partnerships. This finding is somewhat surprising given the preponderance of healthcare among NFWS partnerships overall and characteristics of the healthcare sector that make it more amenable than some to career advancement strategies.

Findings from Highly Effective Partnerships

Employer Engagement

Background

Although all the highly effective partnerships had active and sustained employer engagement, the roles they played varied. These included:

- *Employer-formed and employer-led partnerships.* Both Cincinnati’s Health Care Collaborative (HCC) and the Baltimore Alliance for Careers in Healthcare (BACH) were formed by employers and remained formally employer-led. Both were incumbent worker programs. In both, the partnership strove to represent a

substantial share of the regional industry; the partnership had formal structures for employer representation; employer partners were held to clear standards and required to have “skin in the game” (for example, by contributing to the cost of training or, in one case, agreeing to prepay participant tuition and provide clinical opportunities); and employers played a major role in participant selection, program design, and program support.

- *Employers as customer partners.* For the Boston Healthcare Training Institute (HTI), Baltimore’s JumpStart, and BioTechnical Institute (BTI), the strong emphasis was on the employer as a critical customer. Though employers were founding members of both BTI and JumpStart, and employers guided all three partnerships, they did not play the same kind of formal leadership role as in HCC and BACH, and the partnerships were not as fully “owned” by employers. Employer engagement in the case of these partnerships principally took the form of employers serving on an advisory board and playing an active role in participant selection, program design, and program support.
- *Labor-management partnerships.* The Boston Hotel Training Center (HTC) and Milwaukee’s WRTP-Construction partnership are examples of a third model. In these partnerships, employers and unions together led the partnership; unions played a critical role in bringing and keeping employers at the table and in working with them to define workforce needs and priorities; and employers’ contribution was sometimes formally negotiated, substantial, and long-term.

Findings

Despite the different forms employer engagement took across these partnerships, their shared characteristics were what set them apart. These included:

- *Highly effective partnerships understood clearly the central role employers played in achieving their goals.* Almost three-quarters of NFWS partnerships ranked moderate or better on employer engagement, but, in many cases, engagement took the form of relatively arms-length advisory groups. In contrast, the highly effective partnerships understood that to be successful in achieving the dual goals of meeting the needs of low-skilled workers *and* employers, the partnership had to become embedded in the industry.
- *Highly effective partnerships often had a core of employer “champions.”* Typically, intense industry engagement was limited to a relatively small number of industry partners who were champions for the effort and played a critical role in attracting and involving other employers. The goals and motivations of the champions were complex, often including civic as well as business concerns.

- *Labor unions were engaged in a significant share of the highly effective partnerships.* In many of the highly effective partnerships, labor’s role in bringing and keeping employers to the table was an essential component of the partnership’s strategy. Labor brought other benefits as well. (See sidebar on this page.)
- *The most highly effective partnerships benefited from being formed during a period of labor shortages, but developed strategies to retain employer engagement during the downturn.* Partnerships went to great lengths to identify ways in which they could be helpful to employers’ concerns even under recessionary conditions, such as reducing the costs associated with excessive turnover, a problem even when labor was plentiful.
- *Highly effective partnerships worked to address labor needs of employers beyond entry-level employment.* A focus on disadvantaged workers is not a natural fit for employers; partially as a result, many highly effective partnerships worked hard to develop strategies that would address other labor concerns of their employer partners. This broader view also supported the partnerships’ interest in developing career ladders.

**Labor Can Play a Valuable Role in Advancing Partnerships’ Goals:
Example from a Labor-Management Partnership**

Boston’s Hotel Training Center (HTC) is operated by a Taft Hartley labor-management training fund that is a partnership between UNITE HERE Local 26 and 22 unionized hotels that contribute to the fund. HTC has also raised resources from public and philanthropic sources to provide workforce services to jobseekers and employees at non-union facilities. The employer contribution to the training fund gives employers a stake and co-leadership role in its operation. The fund was created to reflect the common workforce goals and interests of employers and labor.

In general, labor-management partnerships, with their connections to union jobs offering higher entry-level wages, were one model for improving participants’ incomes. Graduates from HTC’s pre-employment training program start at positions paying at least \$15.23 an hour. Incumbent workers train for positions in culinary, food service, and guest service positions that pay from \$40,000 to \$70,000 annually.

In fact, labor representatives in HTC argued that negotiations over wages and benefits were critical to career advancement for its members. The learning gained from the joint operation of a labor-management training fund could influence labor contracts in other ways, including the resources available for training and compensation for skills gains.

Career Advancement

Background

One of the essential characteristics of all seven highly effective partnerships was their serious commitment to developing strategies to support the career advancement of low-skilled participants. Broadly, they employed two kinds of strategies depending on whether the target population was jobseekers or incumbent workers.

- *Job access with advancement opportunities.* In the case of jobseekers, the goal was to prepare participants for entry-level jobs, but where there was a genuine pathway to advancement. Where unions were involved, the entry-level job could be relatively high-wage and/or, as in the case of apprenticeships, provide workers on-the-job training. In each case, however, the partnership also had a strategy for moving participants from their first job into a better one. Exhibit I-20 on the next page details the range of strategies employed.
- *Skills-based career advancement.* For incumbent workers, the strategy of all partnerships was skill-based career advancement, often including basic skills improvement. Their strategies included mapping career pathways and career counseling or coaching.

The sector of a program, whether or not a union was involved, and the employer's role also had an influence on a partnership's strategy.¹²

Findings

Several key characteristics appeared to distinguish highly effective partnerships' approach to serving individuals from that of other partnerships:

- *Highly effective partnerships established long-term relationships with participants.* All seven partnerships described here had much longer-term relationships with their participants than the average. In incumbent worker programs, contact

¹² The construction programs targeted particularly disadvantaged jobseekers, such as those with criminal records; used a pre-apprenticeship approach to try to provide them access to higher-waged craft jobs; and tended to emphasize screening of participants both for entrance into the program and for placement. Healthcare partnerships focused on supporting workers' and jobseekers' access to specific skills training that would either provide entrance to the industry or job mobility. Unionized industries had vehicles for advancement not present in non-union industries. The greater interest of healthcare employers in addressing skill and labor shortages opened them to strategies such as supporting career coaches.

could be maintained through the employer. When unions were involved, they also played an important role in keeping individuals engaged, sometimes over several years. But even jobseeker programs developed effective approaches.

Exhibit I-20: Career Advancement Strategies

Partnership	Career Advancement Strategies
Baltimore Alliance for Careers in Healthcare (BACH)	Developed career maps and tools; made investments in long-term training; coaching paid for by employers for 100 percent of participants.
Baltimore JumpStart	Supported a path from pre-apprenticeship to apprenticeships, generally paid for by employers and provided by employer association and community college. Worked with trainees to get first job, then continued to work with them until they completed apprenticeship.
BioTechnical Institute of Maryland, Inc. (BTI)	Provided industry recognized certificate. Created agreements with community college and state university to provide Lab Associates graduates with 6 credits towards AAS degree and 4 credits to BS. Once employed, participants frequently received tuition reimbursement from employers to return to school.
Boston Hotel Training Center (HTC)	Sought to place jobseekers into unionized hotel jobs with high starting wages; also provided coaching to encourage additional education since some incumbent workers resisted advancement if it meant leaving the union or a preferred shift.
Boston Healthcare Training Institute (HTI)	Multiple options based on employer demand; each option prepared and supported individuals in getting a college degree as a means of career advancement. Participants received extensive career and academic coaching from employer or HTI.
Cincinnati Health Careers Collaborative (HCC)	Mapped a number of career pathways; offered career coaching paid for by the employers to all training participants. Made extensive investments in degree programs.
Milwaukee Area WRTP Construction (WRTP)	Supported a path from pre-apprenticeship to apprenticeship provided by building trade unions. Also provided training to increase skills of existing construction workforce to meet changing requirements within industry.

- *Highly effective partnerships used screening and assessment to ensure that there was an appropriate fit between the candidate and the industry. One tool was the careful and sophisticated use of screening and assessment to determine whether a candidate had the necessary commitment, appropriate background, ability to learn, and had acquired the skills the industry required. In some cases, employers participated in this process.*
- *Highly effective partnerships provided participants the information they needed to make good choices and, ultimately, manage their own careers. All seven partnerships emphasized academic and career counseling, and increasingly were employing career coaches or career navigators. This was particularly the case in*

the healthcare industry, but other industries also began to experiment with coaches to promote advancement and retention. One approach was to have a group of employers share a career navigator or retention specialist.

- *Highly effective partnerships addressed the basic skills deficits that often were the primary barrier to career advancement.* In order to qualify participants for entrance into targeted industries, partnerships created or partnered with “bridge” programs to improve participants’ English and math skills and help them learn the norms and expectations of the industry. In general, the highly effective partnerships used accelerated and contextualized approaches to reduce the time spent in remediation.
- *Highly effective partnerships provided participants access to ongoing occupational skills development.* Most NFWS partnerships provided participants some occupational skills development. What distinguished the highly effective partnerships was the extent to which they mapped training pathways and supported long-term training.
- *Highly effective partnerships provided participants with extensive supports.* Effective partnerships often partnered with other organizations to provide participants with childcare, transportation, and other supports. They also worked with participants to obtain drivers’ licenses, equipment, and other prerequisites for training and employment.

Putting it All Together: Baltimore's JumpStart Program

JumpStart's 87-hour pre-apprenticeship program prepares participants to be successful on a construction job site, and eventually to become an apprentice to a licensed carpenter, plumber, or electrician. Students attend class two nights a week for 13 weeks. They gain a better understanding of construction jobs, receive intense math instruction that will be needed on the job, and develop jobs skills. They also become CPR and OSHA certified in a 10-hour OSHA class and First Aid/CPR training. The curriculum is aligned with apprenticeship training. The classes also mirror the job environment with stipends and strict rules for attendance and punctuality. Participants who do not arrive in time for class or back from breaks do not receive the daily stipend. A participant is not allowed to continue the training if too many classes are missed. The completion rate for the training is approximately 80 percent.

Catholic Charities staff provide case management to participants and attend each class to help maintain contact and identify any support needs. Financial literacy training is provided. Also, the partnership assists participants who need help in securing a car or driver's license to facilitate access to job sites. The instructor provides additional academic support where needed.

After completing the class, participants are ranked to determine who is first referred to jobs. The rankings consider how well the participants did in the class, whether they have access to a car and a driver's license, and if they have begun the process of applying for apprenticeship training. The ranking system is continual, and rankings can change based on individual performance. For instance, if someone is not in contact with the program, his/her ranking may be lowered. Students are placed in construction jobs after graduation where they earn at least \$9.50 an hour and sometimes much more than that. The placement rate from the training averages around 70 percent.

JumpStart stays in touch with training graduates after completion of the pre-apprenticeship program and seeks to work with its training participants until they have completed an apprenticeship, which can take four to five years. Continuing contact occurs through phone calls and follow-up with hiring employers. The ranking system as well as access to information on jobs and services provides encouragement to graduates for staying in touch.

System Change

Background

The National Fund theory of change assumed workforce partnerships would actively engage employers and education and training providers to encourage practices and policies that support career advancement for low-income workers and jobseekers.

Findings

- *For the highly effective partnerships, system change work was integral and essential to their overall strategies.* In sharp contrast to partnerships that did not engage in system change activities, the most highly effective partnerships

viewed system change as a necessary and integral component of their work. Their strategies flowed from their deep commitment to career advancement and recognized that changing institutional and employer behavior could remove serious barriers to the achievement of that goal. (See box below.)

**Removing Barriers to Career Advancement:
Examples from the Cincinnati Health Careers Collaborative (HCC)**

HCC partners identified the following barriers to students enrolling in career pathways programs:

- low academic retention rates for low-skilled incumbent workers;
- need for training in soft skills and professional skills, college orientation, and introduction to math and science;
- inability to access clinical placements on a timely basis;
- no support for or early warning system in place for students at risk of dropping out;
- need for basic skills remediation; and
- inability to pay tuition upfront.

In response to these barriers, HCC implemented the following practices:

- *Pre-enrollment in remedial education:* Students who are assessed as needing remediation are first referred to an appropriate provider of basic skills. Employers have agreed to pay for this remedial education as well. HCC also has created pre-pathway “bridge” programs.
- *Cohort-based instruction:* Once enrolled in an HCC pathway program, all students, including those in entry-level certificate, advanced certificate, and associate degree programs, are placed in a cohort comprised of students pursuing the same award. Students in a cohort take all classes together through to the end of their program.
- *Learning communities:* In addition to their academic coursework, students are required to take courses called “Learning Community” that provide familiarity with healthcare working and postsecondary educational environments. These courses teach professional communication and writing, soft skills development, familiarization with healthcare careers, college orientation, and introduction to basic science concepts.
- *Upfront employer tuition assistance:* As a condition for participation in HCC, employers are required to provide upfront tuition assistance for students enrolled in a career pathways program. Prior to the formation of HCC, employers only provided this assistance on a reimbursement basis.
- *No waiting lists for clinical opportunities:* Students enrolled in an HCC pathways program that has clinical requirements are prioritized for clinical placements. The typical waiting time if students were not prioritized would be one to two semesters.

- *The highly effective partnerships were able to effect small changes in employer practices that opened opportunities for participants and, in some cases, for all low-skilled jobseekers and incumbent workers. In almost all cases, the changes even highly effective partnerships were able to effect were modest. For example, partnerships successfully convinced employers to prepay tuition for incumbent*

workers interested in obtaining additional skills training or persuaded employers to hire workers they had previously considered unqualified (such as those without a four-year degree or those with a criminal record). But, as these examples suggest, such changes could effectively open opportunities for many more low-skilled individuals.

- *Healthcare and unionized employers were more likely to make changes in human resource practices than other employers.* Employers were not equally receptive to change. Healthcare employers faced with labor and skill shortages and unionized employers under pressure from labor, for example, were more likely to implement broader-based and ongoing efforts to implement career advancement strategies.
- *Partnerships' strategies and successes in changing institutional practices tended to be narrowly focused on participants.* Changes partnerships were able to effect in the practices of institutions, particularly colleges, tended to be limited to their own participants. For example, a partnership might negotiate with a college to develop a class for participants that used a cohort-based approach, contextualized basic skills, and included counseling and support services. These innovations alone did not lead to changes in the college's normal way of doing business.

Sustainability

Background

Many NFWS partnerships were relatively short-term. In contrast, the most highly effective partnerships tended to be older and to have in place models that assumed considerable stability.

Findings

- *Highly effective partnerships' sustainability was a reflection of their usefulness and credibility.* Highly effective partnerships had demonstrated their usefulness to both their industry partners and their funders. In some cases (for example, the Cincinnati HCC), employers even conducted a formal return on investment evaluation.
- *Highly effective partnerships had a range of strategies in place to sustain their efforts financially, which changed over time in response to changing circumstances.* To support their efforts over multiple years, highly effective partnerships had to engage in a diverse set of fundraising strategies. Initial

funding was usually philanthropic and/or through employers. The credibility established using these monies then allowed sites to access public grants, both state and federal, and to attract additional funding from foundations and new employers. Employer investment took a variety of forms, including tuition reimbursement, support for career coaches and navigators, and monies for equipment. At least one of the highly effective partnerships provided fee-based workshops to industry professionals to support its work with lower-skilled individuals.

- *Highly effective partnerships worked to transfer costs to employers.* The ambition of many highly effective partnerships was to embed their strategies in the industries they were serving, including having employers increasingly own the work financially. For example, most of the training costs at HCC and BACH were paid for by employers; employers assumed most or all of the coaching costs. Similarly, the hospital employers active with HTI had created their own workforce development departments supporting training and coaching of entry-level hospital workers. Nonetheless, partnerships recognized that their focus on low-skilled workers made it likely that some outside support for the work would continue to be necessary.
- *Highly effective partnerships were entrepreneurial and nimble.* Highly effective partnerships were entrepreneurial and nimble overall, not just in their approach to fundraising. Their ability to transform their strategies, and even organizational form, in response to shifts in the external environment and needs of their target populations was another key to their survival.

Highly Effective Collaboratives and Partnerships

Background

The statistical analysis detailed in the first section of this report suggested that there is a positive, if weak, relationship between the fidelity of a collaborative and the effectiveness of its partnerships. The paired groups of highly effective collaboratives and highly effective partnerships provided insight into the ways in which the two kinds of intermediaries influenced each other.

Findings

- *High fidelity collaboratives supported moderately effective partnerships as well as lower fidelity collaboratives.* Reasons for this finding include:

- A significant number of high fidelity, high outcome partnerships predated their collaboratives. This is both true in the case of the effective partnerships associated with lower fidelity collaboratives and those associated with high fidelity ones.
- Some of the newer partnerships developed by high fidelity collaboratives were promising but had not matured sufficiently to achieve the highest rating.
- At least some of the high fidelity partnerships were deeply committed to the most disadvantaged workers and jobseekers, which could pull down their participant outcome ratings.
- *High fidelity collaboratives found, rather than formed, many of the highly effective partnerships; however, in contrast to low fidelity collaboratives, they added real value to those partnerships.*
 - Despite the fact that the high fidelity collaboratives did not form all the most effective partnerships, their association with those partnerships brought significant value and influenced the partnerships in ways consistent with the National Fund’s mission. The collaboratives:
 - supported new staffing and other infrastructure, strengthening the partnerships and allowing them to grow;
 - assisted their partnerships in accessing considerable new funding from federal, state, and philanthropic sources;
 - engaged in advocacy that led to policies supportive of the needs of the partnerships’ target populations and the creation of new funding streams; and
 - focused the partnerships more closely on career advancement.
 - Effective partnerships associated with low fidelity collaboratives did not reap these benefits and, in fact, appeared to be largely untouched by their association with those collaboratives.
- *High fidelity collaboratives learned from the highly effective partnerships and worked to replicate and diffuse their practices.*
 - In the relationships between highly effective collaboratives and partnerships, learning was a two-way street. The collaboratives clearly learned from the partnerships, many of them among the country’s leading workforce intermediaries, and consciously worked to develop new partnerships

- founded on those practices and/or to spread those practices to other intermediaries.
- The National Fund provided the collaboratives the opportunity to learn from effective partnerships outside their region.
 - *High fidelity collaboratives had clear expectations of their partnerships.*
 - The highly effective collaboratives shared the National Fund’s vision of an effective partnership and communicated this expectation in a variety of ways, including in their Requests for Proposals and conditions for re-funding, hands-on work to form new partnerships, and technical assistance to partnerships.
 - Less effective collaboratives generally failed to communicate clear expectations. This failure flowed from a combination of sources such as a more traditional approach to the relationship between funder and grantee and strategic confusion on the collaborative’s part.

Conclusion and Implications

Viewing these analyses in the context of the other NFWS national evaluation reports from this and previous years, three findings stand out that would seem to hold important implications for the future work of the National Fund.

These were:

- 1) In places where the initiative was especially successful, the collaboratives emerged as effective regional intermediaries, essential to the formulation and implementation of the National Fund’s vision. In many ways, the regional collaboratives were in fact the most unique innovation of the National Fund. Where they shared the NFWS theory of change (with its focus on employer leadership and career advancement for low-income workers) and had strongly committed stakeholders, the collaboratives proved themselves to be powerful vehicles for change.

One conclusion of this finding would seem to be that a key task of the National Fund moving forward is to deepen and sharpen the support it provides to the growing network of regional workforce collaboratives its work has engendered.

- 2) A second a parallel finding was that – as predicted in the NFWS theory of change – workforce partnerships that effectively adopted National Fund core principles (again, particularly a commitment to career advancement for low-income individuals and deep, ongoing employer engagement) were successful in crafting interventions that met the goals of both low-skill

workers and employers. In some cases, however, there was a tension between focusing on the needs of workers with serious barriers to labor market success and employers' overall workforce needs.

Drawing on the lessons from these experiences, NFWS could play an even greater national role in disseminating and strengthening sector practice built on active employer engagement. While retaining NFWS core principles and maintaining a focus on low-income individuals, this effort also could identify approaches that effectively tailor the implementation of National Fund principles to different industries and population groups.

- 3) Many of the National Fund's most significant and distinctive outcomes were in the area of system change. This was true at both the collaborative and partnership levels. Where collaboratives launched sophisticated system change strategies, their work in changing public policy and the practices of key institutions often had much broader impact than the work of the partnerships, but also supported the partnerships' work and made it visible. Similarly, a focus on employer and institutional system change is what distinguished extremely successful partnerships from ordinary training programs and allowed them to implement career advancement strategies and target employer goals.

To date, however, only a relatively small share of collaboratives or partnerships has adopted or knows how to implement effective approaches to system change. Moving forward, then, it would be important for NFWS to support all collaboratives and partnerships in adopting system change strategies tailored to their capacities and context. This includes improved approaches to setting goals, tracking outcomes, and measuring success.

Taken together, these conclusions suggest three key roles for NFWS:

- *Leadership development:* The initiative would benefit from a more formal and effective approach to leadership development at all levels, but with a particular focus on the collaboratives (both leadership development for the executive directors and for the collaboratives themselves). This would include identification of successful practices, the creation of leadership academies or something similar, and tailored technical assistance.
- *Knowledge transfer:* NFWS has an important role to play in collecting and analyzing lessons from the practice of the collaboratives and partnerships and in disseminating that knowledge to those participating in the initiative and more broadly nationally. Peer-to-peer learning is probably the most powerful vehicle for this kind of learning and might include greater emphasis on sector-focused communities of practice. Knowledge transfer might also include research and

education about how to better assess the accomplishments of workforce intermediaries.

- *Advocacy and resources:* Finally, the National Fund is uniquely positioned to provide national visibility to the work of the regional and local players, to work with others at the national level to embed these lessons in public policy, and to support the regions in accessing federal and national philanthropic resources.