

Evaluation of the
Summer 2016

Learn & Earn

Summer
Youth
Employment
Program

Prepared by

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University of Pittsburgh
SCHOOL OF EDUCATION

INTRODUCTION

This report provides an analysis of data from the 2016 Learn and Earn summer program. Data were collected by the research team at the University of Pittsburgh School of Education in partnership with Three Rivers Workforce Investment Board and with Learn & Earn providers and employers. Data analyzed in this report include youth applications, surveys from provider adults, surveys from employers that hosted the youth during the summer, and surveys from the youth that participated in the program.

In the document you will find six main sections reflecting the arc of time of Learn and Earn 2016. The information for each of the sections are across double-page spreads which we hope makes the information more accessible for readers. The first section starts with information about the application process, focusing on the demographics of youth in the program, the role of application centers, and Tier progression of youth who have returned to the program this year. Next, we review feedback from youth and adult respondents about their experiences with the work readiness training and what components of the training youth were able to recall at the end of the program. We also looked into youth placements at their worksites and whether or not there was a good “fit” between their job interests and actual placements. The following section describes program experiences of participants including program satisfaction and working relationships. Then we explored more about what youth learned during their time in the program and other outcomes including our model predicting affective commitment to their jobs. Here, we also include a section summarizing what our youth interns found in their youth participatory evaluation project. Finally, we finish the report with highlights and challenges reported by youth and adult respondents during their time in Learn and Earn 2016.

GLOSSARY

When we use the term “**Adult**” we are referring to two types of adults outlined below. We will refer to the specific type of adult when appropriate in text.

Providers: These are people who work for the Provider organizations that are in charge of hiring, training, and paying youth during Learn and Earn.

Employers/Supervisors: These are people who work at individual worksites (contracted by the Provider organization) and manage the youth day-to-day.

Tiers: When youth apply they are placed into one of three Tiers of the program, based on age and prior work experience. Tier 1 youth are placed into “entry-level jobs” whereas Tier 3 have more internship style placements.

Youth Participatory Evaluation (YPE): This is an approach that engages young people in evaluating programs designed to serve them.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

Findings	2
Methods	3
Application	4
Work Readiness Training	6
Placement	8
Youth Worksites	9
Program Experience	10
Youth Program Experiences	10
Adult Program Experiences	11
Youth Learning & Outcomes.	12
Highlights and Challenges	14
Youth	14
Adults.	15
Youth Participatory Evaluation	16

Findings

- Overall, youth and adult participants were satisfied with their experience in Learn and Earn this summer. These results were comparable to findings from last year.
- An online application was introduced this year. We found that youth benefited by using application support centers to help them complete their application.
- Both youth and adults indicated that they were more satisfied with the work readiness training hosted by providers this year than the common core curriculum used in 2015.
- Youth reported strong relationships with adults from their provider organization and worksites which contributed greatly to their overall satisfaction with the job and youth's affective commitment.
- A large portion of adults (42%) indicated that they believed the most important thing that happened to youth this summer was learning job skills including: learning new skills, project development, and having exciting experiences.



Methods

The University of Pittsburgh (Pitt) team and staff at Three River Workforce Investment Board (3RWIB) continued to collaborate and iterate on Learn and Earn evaluation activities for the 2016 evaluation. Prior to the start of the 2016 program, Pitt and 3RWIB met to discuss “lessons learned” from the previous year’s evaluation and the current needs of 3RWIB. Pitt then built upon last year’s evaluation by refining the primary research questions and updating surveys for youth participants, the providers, and the employers. All survey protocols were reviewed by 3RWIB for feedback and approval. Additionally, the Pitt team was involved in facilitating focus groups with providers at the end of the summer. The data sources used for this evaluation include application data, surveys from youth and adult participants, and focus group data.

Youth Surveys: To create this year’s youth surveys, Pitt drew from the 2015 survey in addition to literature on youth development and youth employment (including programs similar to Learn and Earn). For this evaluation, 13 of the youth measures remained the same as in 2015, allowing us to compare youth responses across the two years. In an effort to shorten surveys, we cut 8 measures (54 items) from the youth survey for the 2016 evaluation.

TABLE 1. YOUTH SURVEY COMPLETION ACROSS TWO YEARS

YOUTH SURVEY 2015			YOUTH SURVEY 2016		
Survey 1	Survey 2	Survey 3	Survey 1	Survey 2	Survey 3
End of June	Mid July	Early August	End of June	Mid July	Early August
64%	51%	73%	69%	67%	59%
n=1,172	n=928	n=1,268	n=1,205	n=1,176	n=1,017

We implemented three waves of youth surveys. Surveys were administered at a similar timeline to Learn and Earn 2015. Youth completed surveys either through an online link or a paper copy depending on the preference of their provider. For providers that preferred paper copies, 3RWIB and Pitt collected youth data from the assigned organizations (~1,700 surveys in total). Pitt research staff entered these data over a 1-month period (starting in August). We received a total of 3,468 surveys from youth participants and 605 youth completed all three surveys. After the data were collected and compiled, Pitt cleaned and prepared data for analysis.

Adult Surveys: The content of the provider and employer surveys (collectively referred to as adult surveys) largely remained the same from 2015 to 2016. Based on feedback from the previous year, we gave only one survey to adults (rather than two). Additionally, adults in 2016 only needed to report on five youth (instead of the 10 asked for in 2015) and we added a measure about stress in the workplace to the 2016 survey. We collected adult surveys online using Qualtrics survey software. Survey links were sent to employers via the provider organizations. Staff at 3RWIB conducted calls and sent emails to ensure the most surveys were collected from both groups. Adults (providers and employers) primarily completed the survey from the middle to end of August. Pitt cleaned and prepared adult survey data for use in this preliminary report.

TABLE 2. ADULT SURVEY COMPLETION ACROSS TWO YEARS

2015		2016
Survey 1	Survey 2	Survey 1
63%	73%	88%
n=69	n=93	n=132

Application



325 (15%) Declined Participation

- 148 No call, no show
- 64 Other job
- 56 Other commitments (e.g. summer school)
- 31 Reason unknown

47 (3%) Resigned 26 (1%) Terminated

- 17 No call, no show
- 10 Misconduct
- 9 Another job

The application data for the Learn and Earn summer program, shown at left, reflect both city and county applicants. The total number of youth who applied and were eligible to participate in the program was 2,147.

The average age of the applicants was 16.1 years old and the gender representation was 51% female and 49% male. The overall sample identified as 83% Black or African American, 6% White or Caucasian and 7% Multi-Racial. The majority of applicants (95%) are currently students with 93% indicating that they plan on attending college. 61% of youth indicated that they or their families receive food stamps. On average, household income for applicants for the past 12 months was \$15,530 and the average household size was 3.9 persons.

About 60% of applicants were city residents (n=1,311). Generally, the applicants from the city and county share similar demographics. Notably, there were slightly more males and more youth who identified as African American who applied through the county.

An online application was introduced this year, which allows for comparing applicants who completed their application online (completers) vs. those who started an application but did not complete it (partial completers). The groups exhibited several significant differences but most differences were small in size (for more info, see online supplement at tiny.cc/LEreport2016).

We also investigated the role of *application support centers* in helping youth complete their applications. For youth who began applications *without* visiting an application support center, a little over half (56%) completed their application.¹ For youth who did their applications at application support sites, 69% completed their application, a statistically significant difference of 13 percentage points.² This suggests that the assistance provided at application support sites led to significant increases in completed applications.

Table 3 presents demographic characteristics across the three tiers of the program. As expected, we see a significant difference between the ages of the youth placed in the various tiers and also the amount of youth enrolled in school. We also see significant differences between Tier and youth being Food Stamp recipients such that Tier 1 > Tier 2 > Tier 3.

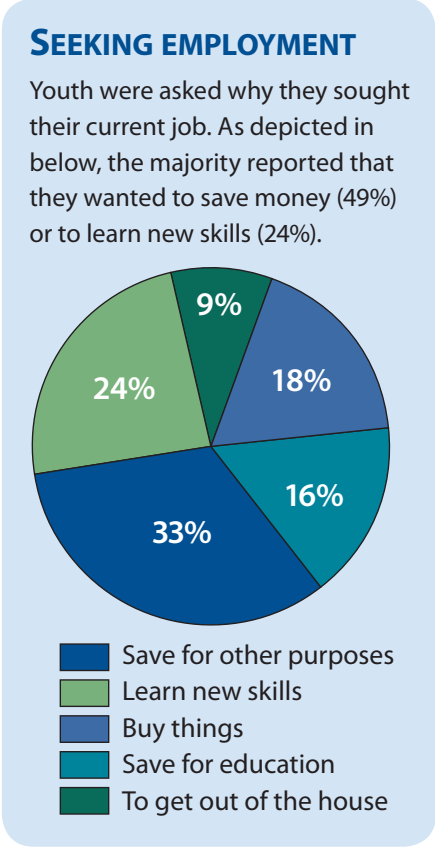
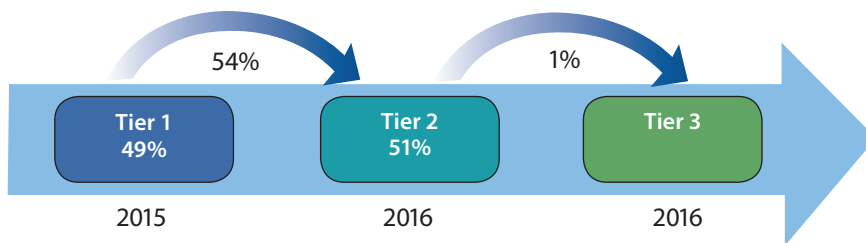


TABLE 3. YOUTH CHARACTERISTICS BY TIER

Applicants	Tier 1 (n=1,102)	Tier 2 (n=1,004)	Tier 3 (n=41)
Age			
Mean (years)	15.4	16.8	18.5
Gender			
Male	51%	50%	61%
Female	49%	50%	39%
Race			
Black or African American	83%	84%	77%
White or Caucasian	7%	6%	8%
Multiracial	7%	7%	13%
Other (including American Indian or Alaskan Native, Pacific Islander, or Asian)	4%	4%	3%
Student Status			
Currently a student	98%	93%	83%
Food Stamps			
Receive food stamps	65%	57%	39%
Household Income³			
Median	\$15,243.00	\$16,188.00	\$23,760.00

Roughly, 27% of youth indicated that they applied to Learn and Earn last year (n=574).⁴ Drawing from last year’s data we found that over half (54%) of youth who participated last year progressed from Tier 1 to Tier 2, and 7 youth moved from Tier 2 to 3 (See Figure 1). About 50% of the youth who participated in both years stayed in the same Tier.

FIGURE 1. TIER PROGRESSION OF YOUTH PARTICIPANTS



Finally, focus groups with providers added additional insights about this year’s application process. First, the overall consensus from providers was that people seemed generally satisfied with—or at least not opposed to—the move from paper to online (“This is the way the world is going”, “This gives youth an opportunity to try with support”). Second, youth and families needed considerable support to complete the online applications. For example, some providers printed out hard copies then scanned and uploaded them and some providers actually filled out applications with families. One area where there was considerable need for support was defining certain terms related to the application (e.g., SSN), related to the career tracks (e.g., definitions of industries), and also WIB related (e.g., provider vs. supervisor).

¹ This analysis used youths’ self-reports of whether they completed their application at an application support center.

² The results from a chi-square test of adjusted standardized residuals: $\chi^2= 58.122, p<.001, df=1$

³ Adjusted to reflect 12-month household income.

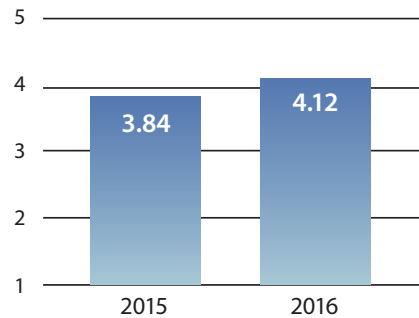
⁴ Using available data from 2015 we were able to identify 548 individuals.



Work Readiness Training

Youth participants in Tiers 1 and 2 engaged in up to 12 hours of work readiness training that was selected and led by their provider organization. In addition, 86% of employers indicated on surveys that they also provided orientations that included activities such as tours and site-specific training. We asked youth, at Wave 3, five questions about their satisfaction with the work readiness training on a 1-5 scale (Strongly disagree to Strongly agree).

FIGURE 2. WORK READINESS SATISFACTION (WAVE 3)

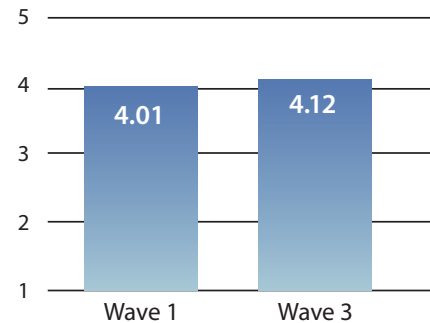


We found a significant increase in satisfaction ratings between Wave 1 and Wave 3, this may reflect the usefulness of the provider trainings this year as youth continued in the program.⁶ Last year, we found that there was significant decrease in work readiness satisfaction. Of the Work Readiness Competencies, 93% of youth reported learning about “Leadership and Responsibility”, 91% recalled learning about “Productivity”, Accountability and Teamwork”. The lowest endorsement rate was 81% so it seems that the youth recalled most of the components covered in their provider training.

Youth Training Satisfaction was highly correlated with supervisor support, provider support and agentic engagement in Wave 3.⁷ This suggests that support and training are closely related. This may be because youth associate positive experiences in the training to the staff supporting their learning.

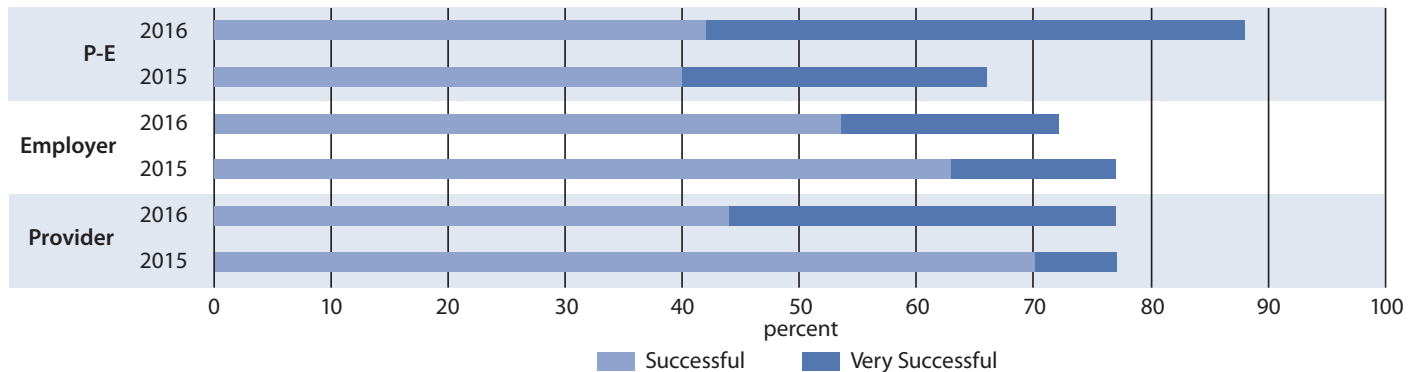
The average satisfaction with work readiness this year was 4.12, *which is considerably higher than last year’s rating of 3.84.*⁵ The most highly rated item was “I feel the career skills will help me in future jobs” for which 83% of youth respondents marked agree or strongly agree. Similarly, 82% of youth indicated they were “Overall” satisfied with the training and their job training being a “valuable experience.” These findings suggest that a large majority of youth were satisfied by the trainings that were hosted by their providers prior to starting their jobs.

FIGURE 3. DIFFERENCES IN WORK READINESS SATISFACTION ACROSS WAVES



We also asked adults to tell us how satisfied they were with the work readiness training this year. The majority of respondents across the three roles rated it as either Successful or Very Successful.

FIGURE 4. WORK READINESS SATISFACTION ENDORSEMENTS ACROSS TWO YEARS



As shown in the bar chart above, adults in 2016 tended to be more satisfied with the work readiness training than in 2015. Providers in particular, indicate almost 30% more satisfaction in 2016 vs 2015.

During the provider focus group debrief, providers shared the curriculum used for the trainings many of which their organizations have used before or small adaptation to existing curriculum (e.g., Philly Youth Network). Providers suggested increasing flexibility in training for future years; for example, offering ongoing trainings for youth so the learning could be connected to aspects of the program such as offering training in financial literacy after first paycheck, or updating resumes as youth go through the program. A positive side effect of such a plan would be that youth who start late content get the same training content as those who attend the beginning of the program.

⁵ Independent samples t-test: $t = -2.6, p = .009$, 2015 ($M = 3.8, SD = 0.76$), 2016 ($M = 4.12, SD = 0.74$).

⁶ Paired sample t-test: $t = -2.7, p = .006$, W1 ($M = 4.04, SD = .78$), W3 ($M = 4.12, SD = .74$).

⁷ Training satisfaction w3: Supervisor support w3 ($r = .63$), Provider support w3 ($r = .64$), AE w3 ($r = .55$).



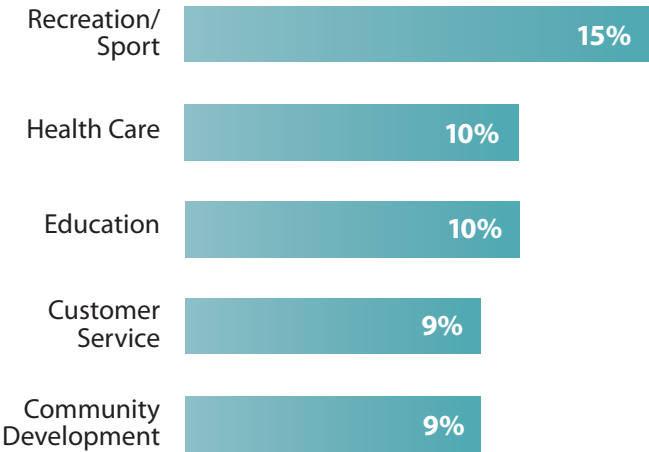
Placement

When youth applied to Learn and Earn they were asked what **type of work** they were interested in doing. Applicants were able to report three preferences and rank them in order of interest. Table 4 presents these applicant work preferences. The most popular type of work requested was Recreation/Sport (15%) followed by Health Care (10%) and Education (10%). These preferences are similar last year (Recreation/Sport 19%, Health Care 12%, and Education 8%). In order to ensure that youth select the type of work they are most interested in, providers in a focus group suggested providing youth with more explanation about each career track. For example, some youth might enjoy jobs that they have very little knowledge of. Or some youth may enjoy working in a certain type of job but did not know the correct label to select in the application.

TABLE 4. SUM OF ENDORSEMENTS FOR WORK PREFERENCE

Area of Interest	No. of Students	% of Applicants
Recreation/Sport	797	15%
Health Care	572	10%
Education	548	10%
Customer Service	505	9%
Community Development	507	9%
Human Services/Social Work	463	8%
Public Works	415	8%
Information Technology	380	7%
Finance/Law	337	6%
Labor & Trades	294	5%
Marketing	254	5%
Park Management	199	4%
Public Safety	160	3%
Insurance	29	1%

Top Five Areas of Interest Among Learn & Earn Applicants



We coded **match fit** between youth’s preferred and actual placements into three categories: strong, moderate, and weak.⁸ We found that 80% of youth were placed in internships that were moderately or strongly matched with one of their three preferences. This is a substantial increase from 2015 where only 47% of youth had a moderate to strong fit. In both years, it was difficult to accurately calculate fit; therefore, these findings should be treated with caution.⁹ In addition to career track placement, 1714 youth specified that they wanted to **work with a specific provider**. About half of these youth received their requested provider match.¹⁰

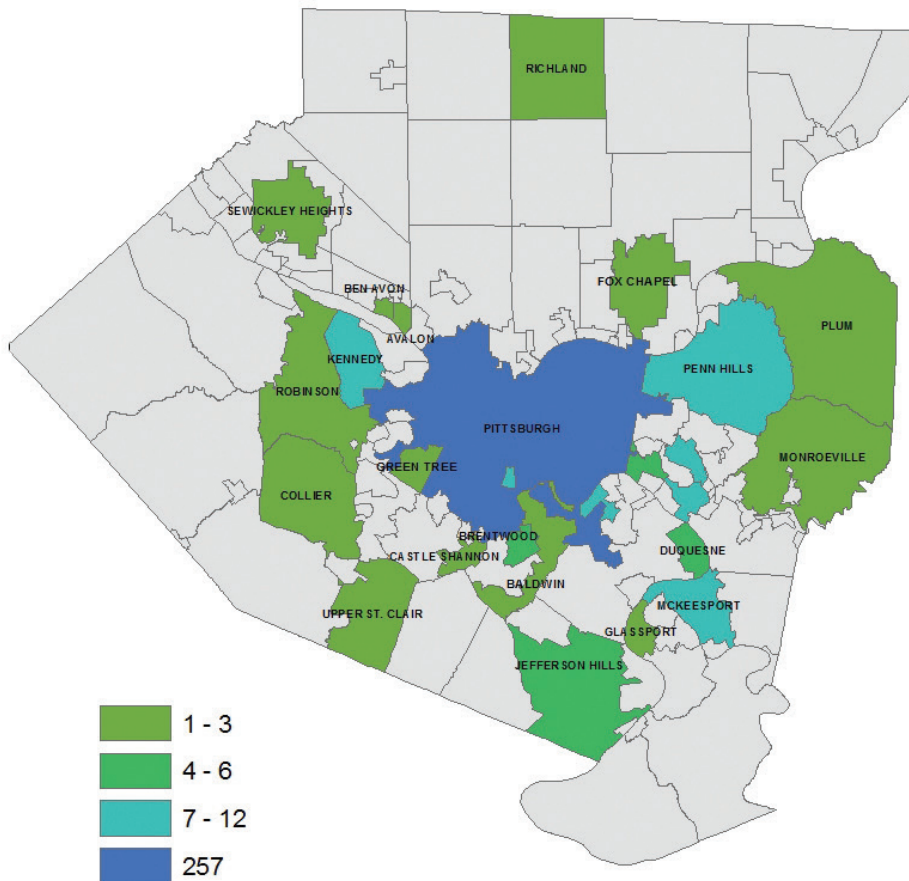
A focus group with providers provided additional information about the placement process. Many commented that the online matching system worked well this year. Providers also appreciated the flexibility to allow youth to swap worksites for a better fit. For example, if a youth lived closer to a particular worksite, providers communicated and were able to make this switch.

Youth Worksites

The following map shows the location of Learn and Earn worksite in municipalities in Allegheny County. The **most concentrated areas for worksites** were the Hill District (50 sites) followed by Spring Hill (34 sites) and Highland Park (31 sites), all in the city of Pittsburgh.

We asked youth if they experienced any **problems getting to work** due to factors at home by asking them about three items on a 4-point scale (NO!, no, yes, YES!). 5% of participants indicated that they had problems at home that prevented them from getting to work. Youth in this year's program reported significantly less trouble getting to work than youth from Learn and Earn 2015.¹¹

WORKSITES BY MUNICIPALITIES



⁸ Two independent coders calculated match fit based on information given by providers and youth descriptions of the worksite.

⁹ Accuracy was difficult due to variety of activities that youth did on the job. Also, many jobs included tasks that crossed many work sectors.

¹⁰ 844 (49%) of youth, excluding those that requested an "other" placement, were matched with the specific provider they requested.

¹¹ $t(2063) = 30.77, p < .001, 2015 (M=1.9, SD=.87), 2016 (M= 1.6, SD=.65)$

Program Experience

Program Satisfaction

We asked youth five questions at Wave 3 about their program satisfaction and 1,016 participants responded.¹² The average satisfaction value across all youth was 4.20 on a 5-point scale (Strongly disagree to Strongly agree), which is a considerable increase from 2015 (4.03).¹³ The majority of youth agreed or strongly agreed with each of the satisfaction statements (see figure below). The fifth item was the highest rated, with 86% of raters strongly agreeing or agreeing that they had an overall good experience. This represents a slight increase from last year at 83%.¹⁴ Additionally, clarity of supervisor's expectations seemed especially important for youth's satisfaction with the program. The greater understanding youth had of expectations, the higher their satisfaction.¹⁵

Overall, the great majority of participating adults also reported high satisfaction with Learn and Earn. At least 80% of employers and providers agreed or strongly agreed with statements about satisfaction with the program (see Figure 6).

FIGURE 5. YOUTH PROGRAM SATISFACTION

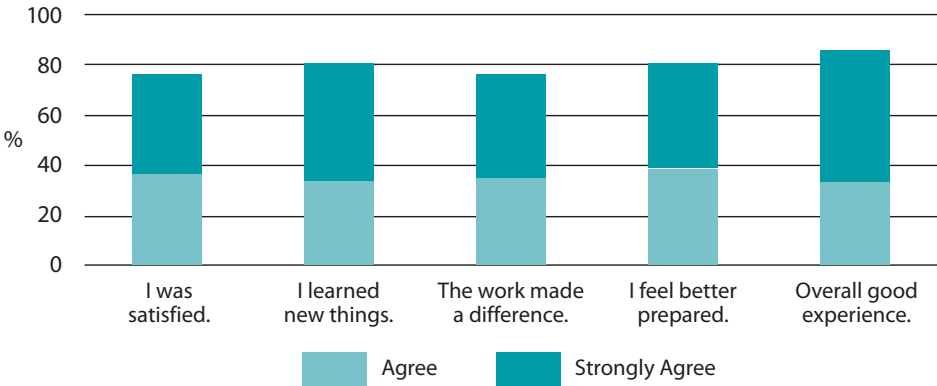


FIGURE 6. ADULT PROGRAM SATISFACTION

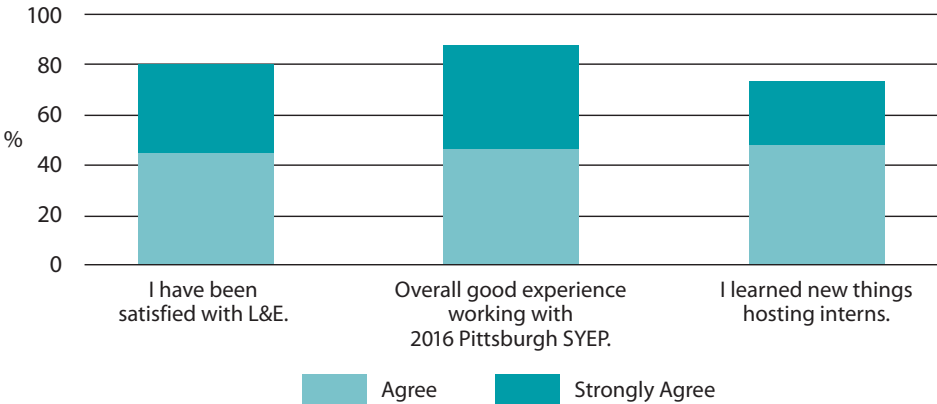
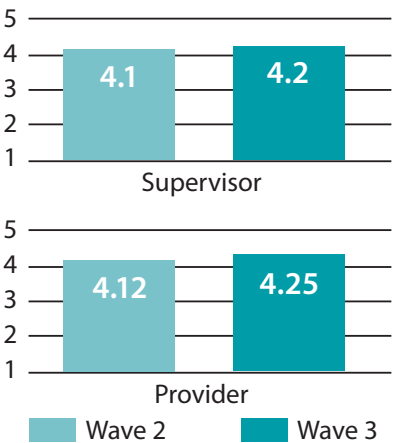


FIGURE 7. YOUTH REPORTED LEVEL OF SUPPORT RECEIVED



Youth Program Experiences

To assess the adult-youth relationships that are critical for program success, we asked youth in surveys about their *perceived support from adult leaders*: worksite supervisors and program providers. We used a modified version of a validated measure, the perceived supervisory support scale at Waves 2 and 3. For both worksite supervisors and provider adults, we found a significant increase in perceived supervisory support across time.¹⁶ We also found that females reported higher provider support at both Wave 2 and Wave 3.¹⁷ This finding might suggest that youth overall were able to build stronger relationships with adults as the program progressed, with girls indicating a stronger relationship. Overall, youth from 2016 reported slightly (yet significantly) stronger support from both providers and supervisors as compared to Learn and Earn 2015.¹⁸

We asked youth about their perception of *agentic engagement* using 5 items; which refers to youths' own role in their motivation and involvement in the workplace.¹⁹ On average, youth indicated that they "agree" that they were agenticly engaged in the workplace as evidenced by "expressing preferences and opinions", "asking questions to help them learn", and "letting their supervisor know what they want and need". We found significant differences by Tier such that youth in Tier 2 reported exhibiting more agency than those in Tier 1. We also found that females in the program reported higher levels of agentic engagement compared to males. Additionally, youth in 2016 reported significantly higher levels of agentic engagement than in 2015.

In addition to youth-adult relationships, **peer support** is another important component of the Learn and Earn experience.²⁰ At Wave 3, we asked youth participants about the level of peer support (3 items) and peer conflict (3 items) they experienced in their job placements. Items were on a 4-point scale such that higher scores represent more support or more conflict respectively (1=NO! 2=no, 3=yes, 4=YES!). Most youth reported that they received strong support and did not have much peer conflict. A total of 242 youth indicated that they experiences conflict with peers at work. Males in the program reported higher levels of peer conflict than females.

We asked youth about their experiences at work, specifically how **psychologically safe** they perceived that space to be using a 6-item scale. Our findings indicated that youth on average agree that they worked in a psychologically safe space, and females in the program on average indicated that they felt more psychologically safe than males.²¹

Adult Program Experiences

We asked adult participants in the program (Providers, Employers, and Provider-Employers) about their experiences during the program, and the majority indicated that each of the components of the programs were successful or very successful. These findings are within two percentage points of last year's results. We asked adults four questions about the stress that they might have experienced at their job during Learn and Earn this summer. Respondents indicated that their stress levels were manageable, with their responses to questions about stress they experience at work clustering around "Neither agree nor disagree".²² We asked this question to better understand the sustainability of Learn and Earn in organizations, specifically related to staff burnout. We found no evidence to suggest that Learn and Earn-related work adds to nor takes away stress from their work.

Providers and employers also reported on how easy it was for each to work with each other. No respondent marked that they strongly disagreed with any item. In both cases, the vast majority of respondents indicated agree or strongly agree for all items, demonstrating an overall agreement that communication between them was easy. To compare across the two groups we created a scale with the three items.²³ There were no significant differences in how providers or employers rated their experiences working together in Learn and Earn 2016. Compared to last year, our findings show a significant difference between how providers rated their partnership with employers, with a stronger rating between organizations this year.²⁴

FIGURE 9. ADULT EXPERIENCE DURING L&E 2016

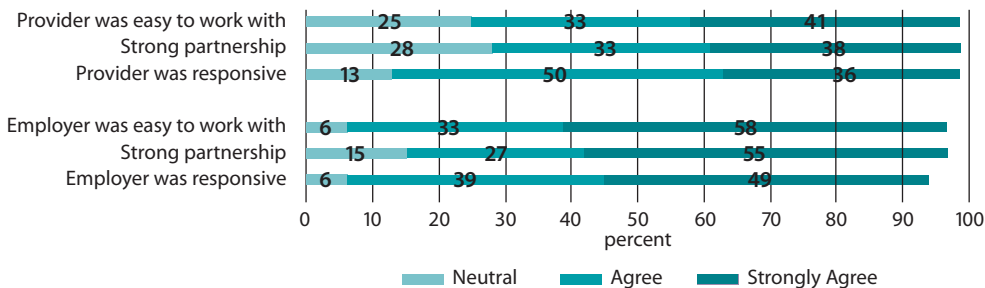
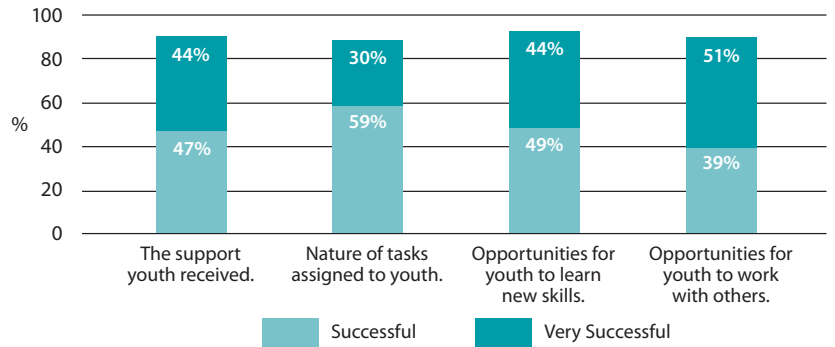


FIGURE 8. ADULT EXPERIENCES DURING L&E 2016



¹²This scale has high internal consistency ($\alpha = .90$)

¹³Independent samples t-test: $t(786) = -2.7, p = .007$

¹⁴Disagreement is less than 5% for every item. Program satisfaction did not differ by Tier, Gender, Race, or whether they received food stamps.

¹⁵Correlation between Program Satisfaction and Clarity of supervisor's expectations; $r = 0.42$

¹⁶Paired t-test: $t(674) = -4.5, p < .001$, mean 4.16 (w2) .03, and 4.3 (.03)

¹⁷W2: $t(1000) = 2.99, p = .003$, females ($M = 4.18, SD = .03$) males ($4.05, SD = .03$); W3: female ($M = 4.3, SD = .03$), males ($M = 4.2, SD = .03$); $t(897) = 2.23, p = .03$.

¹⁸Supervisor: $t(1915) = -12.12, p < .001$, Provider: $t(2000) = -4.3, p < .001$

¹⁹ $\alpha = .91$ (Reeve & Tsang, 2011); Average: ($M = 4.2, SD = .73$); $F(2) = 5.81, p = .003$, Tier 2 ($M = 4.2, SD = .71$) is significant different than Tier 1 ($4.08, SD = .73$); Females ($M = 4.24, SD = .13$), Males ($M = 4.1, SD = .03$); $t(1943) = -10.74, p < .001$

²⁰Support: ($M = 3.46$) Conflict: ($M = 2.36$); $t(921) = -4.3, p < .001$. men ($M = 2.54, SD = .06$) compared with women ($M = 2.19, SD = .06$).

²¹($M = 4.1, SD = .78$); Paired t-test: $t(1088) = 1.99, p = .05$. female ($M = 4.16, SD = .03$), males ($M = 4.06, SD = .04$)

²²($M = 3.06, SD = 1.1$)

²³For more information about the scale please see Appendix. ($\alpha = .95$)

²⁴2015 rating ($M = 3.89, SD = .56$) and 2016 rating ($M = 4.33, SD = .85$)



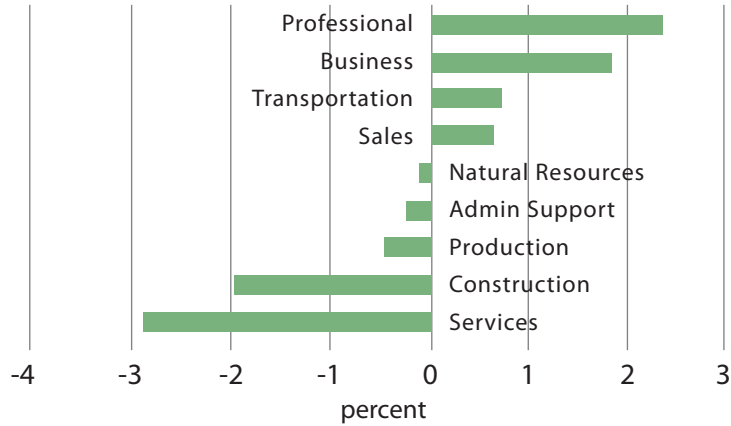
Youth Learning and Outcomes

One way to consider the successfulness of Learn & Earn is in terms of what youth seem to get from participating. In this section, we present evaluative findings about the learning outcomes related to preparing youth for future employment.

We asked youth how well they understood and met *workplace expectations* including being on time, dressing professionally, expected behavior, and completing work-related tasks. On average, youth reported that workplace expectations were very clear and they believed they met these expectations very well.²⁵ Adults rated youth on *workplace skills* including arriving to work on time, rarely missing a day of work, following directions, dressing appropriately, respectfulness, being a team player, taking initiative, and completing job tasks. On average, adults stated that youth were good at these workplace skills.²⁶

Youth beliefs that they were likely to have *success in their future careers* were significantly higher at the end of the Learn and Earn program than at the beginning. For example, at the end of the summer, youth stated they could find good, stable, and enjoyable work and that they will accomplish what they want to do with their lives. Youth that believed they would be successful in their future careers also reported greater school engagement.²⁷

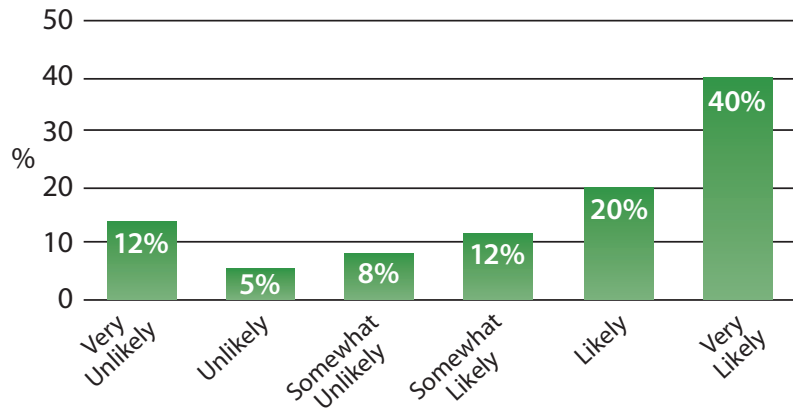
FIGURE 10. CHANGES IN CAREER ASPIRATIONS



Youth-identified career aspirations changed over the course of their participation in Learn & Earn.²⁸ Business (management, financial), professional careers, and service occupations were the top three categories endorsed by youth at both time points. However, at the end of the summer, *more* youth wanted a career in business, professional occupations, sales, and office jobs; *fewer* youth wanted service, construction, and production jobs. In Figure 10, positive numbers represent an increase in percent of endorsement from Wave 1 to 3 and negative numbers represent a decrease. Note that professional, business, and service had the highest total endorsements, potentially explaining magnitude of change.

Adults believe youth are better prepared to succeed, now and in the future, as a result of participating in Learn and Earn. Specifically, 86% of adults agreed or strongly agreed that interns are better prepared to succeed in their future careers and 81% agreed and strongly agreed that youth were better prepared to succeed at school.

FIGURE 11. LIKELINESS TO REHIRE



When adult providers and employers were asked about *likelihood of rehiring youth*, 60% responded that they were likely or very likely to do so.²⁹ When adults stated they were very unlikely to hire youth again, employers commented that youth “had a hard time adjusting,” “needed to be repeatedly told” what to do, and were “inconsistent in ... attendance and punctuality.” For youth that were very likely to be rehired, adults stated the individual they worked with was “a good worker and fast learner,” a “go-to...when I needed something done” and “offered many different solutions to overcome [problems].”

When an employee has high affective commitment, they have a sense of attachment to their job and are more likely to be satisfied in the workplace.³⁰ Affective job commitment is related to youth satisfaction but is slightly different and is a construct that has been studied in adult employment research. For youth in Learn & Earn, increased affective commitment means youth were committed to their worksites. High affective job commitment in Learn & Earn may connect to better employment attitudes and experiences beyond the summer program. On average, youth reported agreement with four questions about affective job commitment:³¹ I was very involved in my job this summer, I was very interested in my job this summer, I really care about my job this summer, I liked my job this summer.

To better understand the factors that might predict affective job commitment, we ran three multiple regression models (see Table 5). We started by looking at youth characteristics, then added working experiences, and finally included working relationships. Our results from the model tell us a story about some important pieces that contribute to increased levels of affective commitment. First, we found that when youth were satisfied with their job training this contributed significantly to their affective commitment. If youth reported there was a *psychologically safe* working environment, youth were more affectively committed. When youth perceived *support from their providers, supervisors and their peers*, they were predicted to have higher affective job commitment. Affective commitment was lower when youth experienced greater *boredom* on the job. These regression models indicate aspects of the Learn and Earn program that predict youth’s affective job commitment. These factors may be important to improve youth’s program experience in future years of the summer employment program.

TABLE 5. PREDICTING AFFECTIVE JOB COMMITMENT

	Relationship Model
Youth Characteristics	
Age	0.03
Gender	0.17
Receive Food Stamps	0
Home Problems	0.08
Working experience	
Tier	-0.11
Training Satisfaction W3	0.3
Boredom W2	-0.27
Psychological Safety W2	0.07
Working relationships	
Supervisor Support W3	0.11
Provider Support W3	0.12
Peer Support	0.15
Peer Conflict	-0.05

²⁵ Clarity of workplace expectations: M = 3.60 (SD = 0.62); Meeting workplace expectations: M = 3.65 (SD = 0.58)

²⁶ Adult rating of youth, M = 3.32, SD = 0.75

²⁷ W1 $\alpha = 0.92$; W3 $\alpha = 0.96$; Paired t-test significant difference: $t(685) 4.56, p < .001$; School engagement correlated with Work and Education scale at Wave 3 ($r = .58$)

²⁸ Chi 2 (64) = 843.4, $p < .001$

²⁹ Mean and standard deviation of likely to rehire youth: M = 4.39 (SD = 1.79)

³⁰ Meyer & Allen (2007)

³¹ Mean and standard deviation of affective job commitment: 4.23 (SD = 0.83).

Highlights & Challenges

Youth

In open-ended survey responses, youth shared what they believed was the most important thing they did and what was a challenge and how they overcame it during this year's Learn and Earn program.

Highlights Category	Amount	Description	Example
Exposure to new things	22%	Learning new skills, having exciting experiences, exploring new jobs and careers	"I was able to learn a lot of new things that I never knew how to do before starting the program."
Building social networks & skills	20%	Teamwork projects, networking with professionals	"I met new people that allowed me to have more opportunities."
Work related experiences	16%	Feeling accomplished from getting work done, gaining work experience, working hard, and receiving income.	"That I got to make my own money to buy my own things & get prepared for a real job."
Serving others	15%	Being able to help colleagues, serving the community through their projects, resolving problems.	"Just coming to work every day knowing that I'm making an impact on youth."
Skills for the future	10%	Learning life and job skills to learning how to be a leader and becoming more responsible.	"I learned some office skills that I can use later in life if I was to get an office job."
Personal growth	7%	Self-improvement in attitude, gaining fresh perspective, and having personal reflections as a result of an experience they had in the program.	"I learned how to use my creativity in different ways and gain more confidence."

Challenges Category	Amount	Description	Example
Social Skills	34%	Leadership skills, learning about new populations, dealing with social conflict, and social anxiety	"Answering phones/calling people was a challenge because I'm a shy person."
Work Skills	33%	Getting to work on time, adapting to working conditions, and meeting job requirements	"A challenge I encountered was lots of hard labor I had never done before, and getting very tired."
Self-Awareness	6%	Planning, multitasking, self-control and with maintaining a positive attitude.	"It was hard to balance work with everything else and sometimes I got tired."
Other	27%	Blank, "none", miscellaneous	"Honestly I didn't encounter any challenge(s) in this program."

Youth Strategies for Overcoming Challenges

The largest response rate, 27% of youth, reported using intrinsic skills to overcome challenges. Specifically, youth reported using skills such as problem solving, social skills, persistence and adopting a positive attitude. One youth reported, "I worked hard to change my attitude about the situation and I overcame it." Internal skills and strengths seemed to be a powerful force for these youth. Additionally, youth (16%) reported using support from extrinsic sources to overcome challenges. For example, youth reported fulfilling job responsibilities, engaging in self-care, and receiving adult support as tools for overcoming challenges.

Adults

Adults were asked to share what they believed was the most important thing that youth got from the Learn and Earn program and what were some challenges they experiences during their time in the program. The responses were coded and clustered into categories described in the table below.

Highlights Category	Amount	Description	Example
Job Skills	42%	Learning new skills, project development, having exciting experiences	"... this was their first job, so being able to learn workplace and essential soft skills are valuable tools for them to utilize in the future."
Social Growth	23%	Social skill development including communication, team-work, and overall maturation	"Our youth grew in areas such as social interaction and communication skills, meeting responsibilities and working together"
Contributing to Organization	20%	Youth in L&E contributed to workplace, identified areas for improvement	"We got to leverage our youth's great talent to develop some work that we needed and that he/she can use in his/her portfolio."
Job Exposure	8%	Introducing youth to new jobs and fields	"Youth got an opportunity to learn about various career opportunities that exist in the City."
Exposure to new populations	8%	Youth were able to work with new populations	"I was exposed to a brand new environment and was challenged to work with different kinds of people."
Personal growth	7%	Self-improvement in attitude, gaining fresh perspective, and having personal reflections as a result of an experience they had in the program.	"I learned how to use my creativity in different ways and gain more confidence."
Challenges Category	Amount	Description	Example
Program	24%	Leadership skills, learning about new populations, dealing with social conflict, and social anxiety	"Too much paperwork"
Participant	23%	Getting to work on time, adapting to working conditions, and meeting job requirements	"Laziness and students not wanting to work in an outdoor environment was the main problem this summer."
Pairing work with abilities	17%	Planning, multitasking, self-control and with maintaining a positive attitude.	"The biggest challenge [they] faced was creating meaningful projects for the students to complete."
Supporting youth development	13%	Youth's motivation to stay engaged and increasing youth confidence	"Trying to build self-esteem and a sense of responsibility."
External forces	8%	Unreliable transportation and bad weather conditions	"Youth was subject to the bus schedule, which was not always reliable, leading him to arrive 10-15 minutes late a few times per week."

Youth Participatory Evaluation

A new component of the summer 2016 evaluation was a Youth Participatory Evaluation (YPE). Two Learn and Earn participants (both Tier 3) joined our evaluation team for the six weeks of Learn & Earn plus an additional week after the program. To help facilitate this component of the evaluation, we also hired a recent college graduate with experience in youth development programming. The YPE team helped with the overall project—collecting surveys, entering data, etc.—but more importantly added a peer-to-peer interview component to this year’s evaluation. This project was the product of training and engagement with the broader L&E team focused on how to conduct a research project, including developing research questions, designing research protocols, and collecting, analyzing and presenting data.

The YPE team conducted one-on-one interviews with 22 youth and focus groups with 20 youth (4 groups of 5 youth each), with some youth participating in both focus groups and interviews. A majority of the interviewee youth (77%) was in Tier 3 and participated in interviews during their weekly professionalism training. The interviewee sample was balanced by gender (52% female) and older than the overall L&E sample—half the interviewees were 18 years old.

The YPE team developed and sought to address the following two evaluations questions:

Question 1: How did youths’ expectations compare to their actual job experiences?

Question 2: What makes a good supervisor?

To address these questions, focus group participants engage in 3 brainstorming activities and subsequent discussion around job experience, feelings at work (“Bored-Engaged-Overwhelmed”), and stress at work. In addition, one-on-one interviews with program youth focused on questions around what youth did on the job their perceptions of and interactions with supervisors.

How did youths’ expectations compare to their actual job experiences?

In reviewing the data, the YPE team found the following:

- 68% of interviewees enjoyed their jobs, 22% felt indifferent, and only one youth stated that he/she did not like their job.
- Youth who reported **doing a variety of tasks (versus a more limited set of tasks) also liked their job**. Across sites they describe varied tasks and the ways this helped them learn about different departments/areas /content in their worksites. As one youth reported, “...they have me doing a lot of stuff...I’ve just been working with people, just helping them...getting stud ready for board members...arranging stuff.”
- **When youth did not feel like their tasks were varied or interesting, this negatively affected their experience**. For example, one stated, “When she told me I would be filing, I was like, ‘Okay, cool.’ But then two weeks in I was still doing that same job so it was like, ‘Okay. It’s Learn and Earn, I would like to learn something else.”
- The majority of youth interviewed felt their **expectations were met or exceeded**. In particular, several youth were surprised by how much they learned. For example, one youth indicated, “Honestly, [my job] wasn’t like what I expected. Definitely better.”
- Of those for whom expectations were not met, it was typically task specific, for instance one youth said, “I expected to be doing a lot of computer work and banking...but that’s not what I am doing at all.”

Question 2: What makes a good supervisor?

Youth shared a variety of the positive qualities that make a good supervisor with the YPE team.

- **Regular supervisor-youth communication** generated a stronger working relationship, according to youth. Youth who indicated that they had daily interactions and/or regular or constant conversation provided concrete stories or examples of positive interactions with their supervisor. For example, *“I think she is pleasantly surprised at my artwork and stuff, cause I wasn’t expecting to have to show it and she wasn’t expecting to see it. So I think she sees a lot of talent in me.”*
- Youth positively viewed **daily interaction**. They spoke of interactions like friendly professional conversation, daily task giving, work-related conversation, and casual conversation. Youth noted that they generally like when supervisors provide direction and explain tasks but they also appreciated the reduction of this over time. For example, one noted, *“As I get the hang of it he comes down less and less.”*
- Initial employer-youth **relationship building** can build trust and a more productive climate down the road. For example, one youth noted, *“I’m able to come and ask her for help with anything.”*
- Youth viewed both **providing direction**, as well as **being available to help** as favorable characteristics, both for support and for clarity.
- On the flip side, some youths’ supervisors were too busy to interact with youth, and this was viewed unfavorably. One said, *“She seems like she cares, but I don’t really know because she’s always busy.”* Another said, *“I never met my supervisor. I don’t know who to report to.”*

YPE Youth Experience

During this process, the youth who led YPE not only learned about how to conduct research, but also reflected on their experience through bi-weekly written reflections, as well as ongoing feedback to their direct supervisor. Youth reflections at the start and conclusion of the program focused on what they hoped to get out of the summer experience and ultimately what they did take away and next steps, while reflections throughout focused on the content and application of what they were learning.

The YPE team came in with strong interest in **learning more about research** and engaging in data collection, as well as becoming **comfortable in a professional environment**. In addition, they indicated **financial independence** and **increased communication skills** were of importance to them.

While conducting research, the YPE team reflected on the importance of getting feedback to improve, the challenge of constraints around research (in particular time), and the differences between observation and interpretation. They also reflected on topics such as the value of interviewing, interview style, and challenges (and potential solutions) during interviews.

Reflections on their takeaways from the summer experience indicated that they **valued the opportunity to connect with other youth** and learn their perspective. They also felt that after their summer experience they **understand the purpose and value of research** and more intimately **appreciate challenges** of conducting interviews and synthesizing data.



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