

# **INTEGRATING SERVICE INTO YOUTHBUILD AMERICORPS HSE AND DIPLOMA GRANTING PROGRAMS**

## **Final Report**

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**January 2019**

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## Executive Summary

In late 2016, YouthBuild USA and the Center for Youth and Communities at Brandeis University's Heller School for Social Policy and Management began a two and a half-year study of the differences in service experiences and impacts between YouthBuild's traditional high school equivalency (HSE)-focused programs and the growing number of YouthBuild programs offering a high school diploma either as the program's main secondary education credential or as an alternative to the GED or other high school equivalency credential. The study, designed to meet the evaluation requirements of YouthBuild's national direct AmeriCorps grant, grew out of an interest in understanding the different ways in which HSE and diploma-granting programs integrate service into the YouthBuild model. Specifically, YouthBuild USA was interested in knowing: Are the diploma-granting programs serving the same mix of members as more traditional, HSE-focused YouthBuild programs? How do the more structured charter and alternative school programs allocate time between education, service, and leadership development and/or balance time between classroom work and service? What kinds of AmeriCorps service experiences do the more "school-like" diploma-granting programs provide for their participants, and do those experiences differ substantially from those offered by the more traditional HSE-focused YouthBuild programs? Are members in these often longer-duration education programs more or less likely to complete their AmeriCorps service and earn their award as members in the short-term HSE programs? Finally, are there differences in outcomes, including educational attainment, job or postsecondary placement, AmeriCorps Education Award attainment, and attitudes towards civic engagement and the community, between the diploma-granting and non-diploma programs? How, in short, do the different educational models support YouthBuild's career and educational goals and its mission of helping young people become civically engaged leaders in their communities?

This study was designed to address these questions through a comparative assessment of the service experiences and participant outcomes of AmeriCorps members among three groups of YouthBuild AmeriCorps programs: HSE-focused YouthBuild programs, those providing a high school diploma, and those providing a combination of diploma and HSE credentials. The study collected data at several levels. First, the study collected detailed program description data through a survey of a representative sample of 40 YouthBuild AmeriCorps programs (approximately half of the programs receiving AmeriCorps grants). That data sets the context for the study, providing basic descriptive data on the three groups of programs and how their services are organized. Second, from among those programs, a sample of 20 sites was selected for participant-level analysis through the administration of surveys to their AmeriCorps participants as they completed their time in YouthBuild and analysis of YouthBuild DYB (Data YouthBuild) reporting system data. The surveys, which used a retrospective pre/post design, included questions on participants' service experiences as well as items assessing attitudes related to education, college and career knowledge, civic engagement, and community leadership before joining YouthBuild and at program exit. The YouthBuild reporting system data included information on participant characteristics, service activities, and program outcomes. The combined survey and reporting system data were used in the analysis of participant-level service experiences and outcomes among the HSE, diploma-granting, and combined HSE/Diploma programs. Finally, in order to gain a more in-depth understanding of program structures and participant experiences, the study conducted hour-long telephone interviews with leadership and staff at ten of the programs in the study and site visits, including participant interviews, at two participating YouthBuild AmeriCorps programs.

Based on the program and participant surveys, reporting system data, and interviews with YouthBuild AmeriCorps program staff and participants, three major findings stand out:

First, the program survey data show YouthBuild AmeriCorps programs represent a diverse array of programs in terms of organizational context, how education programs are organized and structured, the range of service experiences, and who the programs serve. All three maintain the core elements of the YouthBuild model placing substantial emphasis on service, integrating service throughout the program experience, and providing service experiences that participants find engaging and enriching. All three emphasize the core YouthBuild values of building strong relationships and promoting youth development, service and leadership. However, while there are common characteristics based in the core elements of the YouthBuild program model, there are also substantial differences among the three major program types in terms of structure, program size and duration, and populations served that may ultimately be related to differences in program experience and outcomes.

Second, while the data indicate that all three program models produced a positive service experience and positive outcomes for YouthBuild AmeriCorps participants, there were consistent, statistically significant differences among the three major program types. In terms of the service experience, while the Diploma-only programs provided more service hours and participants in all three program types reported positive service experiences, the Combined HSE/Diploma programs tended to show better results on the measure of service quality and impact. Similarly, while all three program types showed positive outcomes on multiple measures, the DYB and survey data show that participants in the Combined HSE/Diploma programs, and to a slightly lesser degree, the Diploma-only programs consistently showed stronger results for most educational and civic outcomes than the HSE-only programs, and the differences between the program types were statistically significant. While the actual differences in outcomes are not large, the consistent pattern of differences suggests that there is a real difference in the program experience.

Finally, while the survey data highlight the program differences, the telephone interviews and site visits suggest that some core elements and lessons are common across program types. One important observation from the field is that, in many cases, it is the secondary service experience – volunteering at community events, food pantries, clothing drives, and the like, that provide the most memorable service experiences for AmeriCorps participants. Two key messages emerged from the discussions. The first was the importance of integrating service fully into the overall program experience; the second was the importance of face-to-face service experiences as having the greatest impact on participants, whether in the course of the primary service activities (meeting the residents of the buildings being rehabbed) or the secondary service projects that take place on a regular basis.

# Chapter I

## Introduction

### Background

YouthBuild USA is a national youth leadership development program aimed at developing education, occupational, and civic leadership skills through service in low income communities. The goal of the program is to help low income youth, aged 16-24, attain a high school diploma or high school equivalency (HSE) credential and occupational skills and experience while developing leadership skills and deepening their commitment to service and engagement in their community. The mission of the organization is to “unleash the intelligence and positive energy of low-income youth to rebuild their communities and their lives.”<sup>1</sup> Over 260 YouthBuild programs operate nationally.

As one of the largest national direct grantees in the country, YouthBuild has been an AmeriCorps grantee since the AmeriCorps program formed in 1994. As of 2016, 79 YouthBuild programs serving over 3,000 young people per year, received AmeriCorps grants through YouthBuild’s National Direct AmeriCorps program.

YouthBuild participants earn AmeriCorps education awards through the service activities associated with their education and training. YouthBuild USA’s primary service activity is the construction of low-income housing. Traditionally, AmeriCorps members learn construction skills through building and rehabilitating affordable housing in low income communities. Construction training is designed to provide YouthBuild participants with hands-on experience while engaging them in the process of contributing to their communities. More recently, YouthBuild has expanded its service streams to include health care, computer technology, and environmental services. As with the construction program, each of these service streams is designed to provide participants with a mix of occupational training and hands-on service to the community.

One of the major changes in the YouthBuild AmeriCorps model over the past decade has been the growth in the number of YouthBuild AmeriCorps programs that grant high school diplomas. While the traditional YouthBuild model emphasized “a GED and a job,” a growing number of YouthBuild AmeriCorps programs now offer a diploma either as the program’s main secondary education credential or as an optional alternative to the GED or other HSE credentials. According to the YouthBuild website at the time this study began, more than 50 YouthBuild programs nationally offered a high school diploma, though recent data suggest that the figure may be higher. Among the sites in the recently completed US Department of Labor (DOL) random assignment evaluation of YouthBuild, 40% offered some type of high school diploma, either exclusively or as an alternative to the GED program.<sup>2</sup> Among

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<sup>1</sup> See the YouthBuild USA mission statement at their website: <http://www.youthbuild.org>.

<sup>2</sup> The data on the prevalence of diploma programs is from the implementation report for the DOL study: Andrew Wiegand *et al* (2015). *Adapting to Local Context: Findings from the YouthBuild Evaluation Implementation Study*. New York: MDRC. Available at: [https://www.mdrc.org/sites/default/files/Adapting\\_to\\_Local\\_Context.pdf](https://www.mdrc.org/sites/default/files/Adapting_to_Local_Context.pdf). See also the final impact report for the study: Cynthia Miller *et al* (2018). *Laying a Foundation: Four-Year Results from the*

the 2016 YouthBuild AmeriCorps programs, according to data from the YouthBuild reporting system (DYB), 44 of the 81 sites offered a high school diploma as one of their educational options.

As the random assignment study's implementation report makes clear, the diploma-granting YouthBuild programs take many forms. In many cases, a relatively small number of students in a program pursue a high school diploma, with educational services provided through partnerships with other educational programs and/or through independent study or computer-based learning models. In a growing number of cases, however, YouthBuild programs have established full-fledged charter and alternative school programs serving most, if not all, of their participants. Those programs often differ significantly from the traditional GED programs, with a school-like, structured curriculum and organized classes in English, math, history, science, and social studies. Many involve project-based learning, and most reflect the YouthBuild principles of small classes and individualized learning and support. Diploma-granting programs are often longer in duration, with participants taking up to two years to acquire the needed class credits or complete a competency-based curriculum. Programs range in size from relatively small, stand-alone YouthBuild programs to some of the largest YouthBuild programs in the country.

As the diploma-granting programs become more common among the YouthBuild AmeriCorps sites, they raise the question of how AmeriCorps service is being integrated into an increasingly education-focused YouthBuild model. Are the diploma-granting programs serving the same mix of members as more traditional, HSE-focused YouthBuild programs, in terms of entry reading and math levels, age, and prior experience, including court involvement, homelessness, or parenting? How do the more structured charter and alternative school programs allocate time between education, service, and leadership development and/or balance time between classroom work and service? What kinds of service experiences do the more "school-like" diploma-granting programs provide for their participants, and do those experiences differ substantially from those offered by the more traditional HSE-focused YouthBuild programs who may have more flexible classroom structures? Are members in these often longer-duration education programs more or less likely to complete their AmeriCorps service and earn their award as members in the short-term HSE programs? Finally, are there differences in outcomes, including educational attainment, job or postsecondary placement, and attitudes towards civic engagement and the community, between the various forms of diploma and non-diploma programs? In sum, YouthBuild USA is interested in understanding how the different educational models support YouthBuild's career and educational goals and its mission of helping young people become civically engaged leaders in their communities.

### **Research Questions**

This study is designed to address these questions by examining the differences in program structures, service experiences, and program and outcomes among three groups of YouthBuild AmeriCorps programs: those providing an HSE-focused educational program; those providing a high school diploma program; and those providing some combination of HSE and diploma educational options. Three questions guide the study:

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National YouthBuild Evaluation. New York: MDRC. Available at: <https://www.mdrc.org/publication/laying-foundation>.

1. How are AmeriCorps service experiences similar and/or different among the three types of YouthBuild AmeriCorps programs? What kinds of service activities take place within each type of program and how are those experiences organized and structured? Are there differences in terms of the intensity of service (duration and total hours), the degree of hands-on service provided, and/or in the extent of direct engagement with community members and local partner organizations? Is there a difference in program culture towards service, in terms of the emphasis on service in the overall program design?
2. Among the three program types, based on the telephone interviews and site visits, are there major differences in the ways in which service is integrated into the overall program? Are there unique benefits or challenges to integrating AmeriCorps service into each of the different settings? Are there differences in program culture and staff attitudes towards service that impact the service experience? What “promising practices” lessons have the various programs learned about how best to integrate service into their programs and curriculum?
3. Are there significant differences in outcomes among the three types of YouthBuild AmeriCorps programs in terms of core program measures (program completion, credential attainment, education award attainment, employment and/or postsecondary placement) and in terms of personal and civic development (e.g., educational aspirations, sense of educational competence, leadership, civic engagement and commitment to future service)? Is there a relationship between key program elements (most notably structure and type of service) and member outcomes?

**Study Design and Data Sources**

To address these questions, Brandeis University’s Center for Youth and Communities, working with YouthBuild USA, conducted an implementation and outcome study of the differences between diploma and non-diploma granting YouthBuild AmeriCorps programs. The study drew on program and reporting system data to select a representative sample of approximately 40 YouthBuild AmeriCorps programs for an initial survey on program structure and organization. A subset of 20 sites, including both HSE and diploma-granting programs were then selected for more intensive study, including participant surveys, analysis of YouthBuild reporting system data, and telephone interviews and site visits in selected sites. Overall, the study included reporting system data on 950 YouthBuild AmeriCorps participants and survey data on 582 YouthBuild AmeriCorps members

<b>Overview of Study Sites and Data Sources</b>	
<b>Study Sites</b>	<b>Data Sources</b>
Phase 1: Representative Sample -- 40 YouthBuild AmeriCorps Sites	Program-level survey data on program structures and operations.
Phase 2: Intensive Study Sites – 20 Sites (selected from 40 sites in Phase 1)	YouthBuild Participant Reporting System (DYB) and participant survey data to assess participant-level experiences and outcomes.
Phase 3: Interviews/Site Visit Sites – 10 sites (selected from 20 in Phase 2)	Telephone interviews with staff at 10 sites, site visits to 2 sites for additional interviews and participant focus groups.

from the sample sites. Each element is described in more detail below.<sup>3</sup>

**Initial Site Selection and Program Survey.** The site selection process was designed to provide a representative mix of both HSE and diploma-granting programs for the study. To accomplish that, the evaluation used YouthBuild AmeriCorps reporting data to conduct a stratified random sampling process to select a group of 40 sites for the study. The sampling process took into account the type of credential offered by the program (HSE or diploma), the experience level of the YouthBuild program (newer/less experienced and older/more experienced programs), and the program size (larger and smaller programs, based on the number of AmeriCorps slots).<sup>4</sup> The initial sampling pool included 73 AmeriCorps programs: 40 programs were selected for the study, including 20 from the HSE-only group and 20 from the diploma granting group.<sup>5</sup>

Once selected, study sites were invited to participate in a series of webinar presentations orienting them to the study and the data collection process. The program survey was then distributed to the 40 study sites in early April 2017 with multiple follow-ups through the end of May 2017. As noted above, the program survey was designed to gather detailed program information on the study sites including credential offered; how education, training and service activities were organized; who provided educational services; and the kinds of primary and secondary service activities taking place through the program. Ultimately 38 of the 40 programs in the sample completed the survey. The results are discussed in Chapter II of this report and a copy of the survey is included in the Appendix.

**Site Selection and Data Collection at Intensive Study Sites.** After the initial program surveys were completed, the results were used to guide selection of 20 sites from the 38 program survey responders for more intensive study. A variety of program characteristics were reviewed, including program type (HSE, Diploma, Combined HSE/Diploma), program size (above/below 20 AmeriCorps members), organizational context (standalone/part of a larger organization); program schedule (alternating days, weeks, etc.); program duration (below/above 9 months), etc. Ultimately, it was decided to use program size (above/below 20 members) as an initial screen in order to ensure that there were sufficient AmeriCorps members in the study sites to provide an adequate analysis sample. The result was the identification of 22 programs that met the size criteria, 20 of which were included in the final intensive study sample.<sup>6</sup> Despite the use of size as the primary selection criteria, the resulting sample included programs that reflected the mix of characteristics found in the larger 38-site sample. Table I-1 provides a summary of the program characteristics for both the larger and smaller sample groups.

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<sup>3</sup> The study was reviewed and approved by the Brandeis University Institutional Review Board (IRB) on June 29, 2017 (Protocol #17128). The retrospective pre/post survey design is discussed in more detail later in this section.

<sup>4</sup> For sampling purposes, “HSE” programs included those offering only an HSE credential; “diploma” programs included any program that offered a diploma option, including those that offered both diploma and HSE credentials.

<sup>5</sup> Six YouthBuild programs were dropped from the overall sampling pool for a variety of reasons, including a history of data collection issues and/or concerns about continued participation in the AmeriCorps program.

<sup>6</sup> Two of the 22 potential study sites, Shreveport YouthBuild and YouthBuild McLean County, were eliminated from the sample because of issues with the timing of their AmeriCorps enrollment.

**Table I-1: Site Characteristics – Program Survey Sites (38) and Intensive Sample Sites (22)**

Characteristic	Program Survey Sites		Intensive Study Sites	
	N	Percent	N	Percent
<b>All Sites</b>	<b>38</b>		<b>20</b>	
<b>Program Type (Credential Provided)</b>				
HSE	17	45%	8	40%
Diploma	10	26%	6	30%
Both	11	29%	6	30%
<b>Program Sites (Reported AmeriCorps Members)</b>				
Fewer than 20 members	16	42%	0	0%
20 or more members	22	58%	20	100%
<b>Organization Context</b>				
Part of larger organization	25	66%	13	65%
Standalone YouthBuild program	13	34%	7	35%
<b>Program Structure/Schedule (for Education &amp; Training)</b>				
Same or alternating days	18	47%	9	45%
Alternating weeks	15	40%	7	35%
Other (alternating months, semesters, etc.)	5	13%	3	15%
<b>Required Minimum Reading/Math Levels for Entry</b>				
No required minimums	23	61%	10	50%
Required minimum for at least 1 program	15	40%	10	50%
<b>Program Duration (HSE programs)</b>				
Below average duration (< 7 months)	11	44%	4	31%
Average duration or more (7 mos. or more)	14	56%	9	69%
<b>Program Duration (Diploma programs)</b>				
Below average duration (< 9 months)	9	45%	6	46%
Average duration or more (9 mos. or more)	11	55%	7	54%
<b>Numbers of AmeriCorps Enrollees</b>				
HSE Sites	17	367	9	234
Diploma Sites	10	370	6	305
Sites offering both credentials	11	237	6	252
Total	38	974	20	791

Source: Based on responses to the study's program survey, N=38.

The intensive study sites included a wide array of YouthBuild AmeriCorps programs, including a mix of HSE-only, Diploma-only, and combined HSE/Diploma programs, urban and rural sites, as well as older and newer, larger and smaller programs. The largest intensive study site was the Guadalupe Alternative Program (GAP) in St. Paul, MN, which projected more than 100 AmeriCorps members per year. The smallest were YouthBuild of Jefferson and Marion Counties (Illinois), Pathways YouthBuild (Virginia), and SER YouthBuild Construction Institute (Michigan), each of which projected 20 AmeriCorps members for the year. Table I-2 shows the selected intensive study sites and the projected number of participants per site (based on the program survey data).

Once the intensive study sites were selected, participant data collection began. As noted above, there were two major sources of participant data for the study: data from the YouthBuild DYB reporting system and a post-program survey administered to YouthBuild participants as they left the program. The DYB data included information on participant characteristics (age, gender, race, homeless and offender status at entry, baseline reading and math scores, etc.), enrollment information (when enrolled, time in program, completion status), service data (hours of service and primary service field) and program outcomes (credential earned, placement in jobs or postsecondary education, hours and types of service and whether an AmeriCorps education award was received).

Initially, the DYB data was used to identify YouthBuild participants for inclusion in the survey process. The initial survey sample was defined as all enrollees in the study sites who had enrolled after August 1, 2016 and were still active in the program in June 2017 when the survey process began. Later, enrollees who joined YouthBuild between July and October, 2017 were added to the study to increase the total survey pool. Altogether, 1064 participants were identified as enrollees in the study sites during the data collection period. Ultimately, 950 of those participants enrolled as AmeriCorps members and formed the basis for this report's analyses of YouthBuild participant characteristics, service activities, and program outcomes.

Once the YouthBuild enrollees were identified, participant surveys were distributed to the study sites with instructions to administer the surveys to participants as they completed or exited the YouthBuild program. Programs were provided with lists of participants who were included in the survey sample and with pre-addressed, postage-paid envelopes so the surveys could be returned directly to Brandeis by program participants to protect the confidentiality of their responses. The surveys also included each participant's YouthBuild ID so the survey data could later be linked to the DYB reporting system data (for example, to incorporate participant characteristics into the survey analysis) without violating confidentiality. An online version of the survey was also made available, though most participants used the paper version.

**Table I-2: Intensive Study Sites**

<b>Program Name</b>	<b>City</b>	<b>State</b>	<b>Projected AmeriCorps Enrollees (2016-2017)*</b>
1. Capital City YouthBuild	Hartford	CT	21
2. Crispus Attucks YouthBuild	York	PA	80
3. CTI YouthBuild of Greater Lowell	Lowell	MA	26
4. D.R.E.A.M.S Youthbuild and Young Adult Training Program	Brooklyn	NY	31
5. Guadalupe Alternative Programs - St. Paul	St. Paul	MN	110
6. Los Angeles Conservation Corps	Los Angeles	CA	13
7. Mile High Youth Corps YouthBuild	Denver	CO	22
8. Pathways YouthBuild	Petersburg	VA	20
9. Portland YouthBuilders	Portland	OR	75
10. PPEP YouthBuild	Tucson/San Luis	AZ	81
11. Project YES YouthBuild	Philadelphia	PA	33
12. ReSOURCE YouthBuild	Burlington	VT	30
13. SER YouthBuild Construction Institute	Detroit	MI	20
14. South Los Angeles YouthBuild	Los Angeles	CA	50
15. Youth Action YouthBuild	New York	NY	38
16. YouthBuild Dayton CountyCorp	Dayton	OH	32
17. YouthBuild Louisville	Louisville	KY	23
18. YouthBuild New Bedford	New Bedford	MA	32
19. YouthBuild of Jefferson and Marion Counties	Mount Vernon	IL	20
20. YouthBuild Schenectady @ SEAT	Schenectady	NY	34
Total Reported Participants			791

\* Projected AmeriCorps enrollees numbers are based on estimates of new enrollees reported by the sites in the program survey and formed the basis for site selection. Actual enrollments during the study period differed depending, in part, on the timing of the enrollment process.

The surveys were designed using a “retrospective pre/post” format. In part this reflected the practical decision that collection of separate baseline and post-program surveys was not feasible given the timing and resources available for the study.<sup>7</sup> At the same time, there is a strong case to be made for the use of a retrospective pre/post design. The retrospective pre/post design asks respondents to respond to items twice – first, based on their attitudes at the time of program enrollment and a second time, based on attitudes “now,” at the time of survey administration. While this makes for a longer survey (since every question is asked twice), the retrospective pre/post design has been found to be effective in addressing the problem of “response shift bias” in which participants’ understanding of the question (and potentially their responses) changes as they gain new insights into themselves and/or the topic being addressed.<sup>8</sup> In this case, it was anticipated that YouthBuild AmeriCorps participants’ understanding of some of the questions about their attitudes towards civic engagement, leadership, or their educational options might change as a result of program participation. By using a retrospective pre/post design, the surveys enable participants to assess their attitudes “then” and “now” using a single frame of reference.

The surveys used in the study were based on surveys used in a prior (2013-2016) study of YouthBuild AmeriCorps programs and included attitudinal scales aimed at addressing educational aspirations and attitudes towards learning, college and career awareness and readiness, civic engagement, leadership, civic skills, and interest in future service. The surveys also collected information on members’ service experience, including the mix of service activities, the quality of their service activities, program support, and the impact of their service on their attitudes and beliefs. A copy of the survey is included in the Appendix.

The participant survey process began in June 2017 and continued through September 2018 with regular reminders and updates to the sites over the course of the data collection period. In some cases, surveys arrived after participants had left the program (one site had its graduation the week before the surveys arrived), limiting the overall response rate. However, in general, sites were responsive and able to administer the surveys to a high percentage of their participants. Overall, 637 of the 1064 enrollees in

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<sup>7</sup> Because of the time needed to conduct the program survey and select sites, participant data collection did not begin until late in the 2016-2017 program cycle. If a traditional pre/post design had been used, baseline surveys could not have been collected until Fall 2017 and many new enrollees at that point would not have completed their YouthBuild programs until after the end of data collection for the study in Fall 2018. Using a post-program survey allowed the study to focus on 2016-17 enrollees and follow them for up to two years after entry into the program. Also, prior studies indicate that collecting pre/post data can be challenging at YouthBuild programs, resulting in relatively low response rates (below 50%) for matched pre- and post-program surveys. The use of a single, post-program survey was expected to produce a higher response rate.

<sup>8</sup> For early statements on the challenge of changing perspectives (“response-shift bias”) and the use of a retrospective pre/post survey design, see G.S. Howard, R.R. Schmeck and J.H. Bray, “Internal Invalidity in Studies Employing Self-Report Instruments: A Suggested Remedy,” *Journal of Educational Measurement*, Vol. 16, No. 2 (Summer, 1979), pp. 129-135; and G.S. Howard, “Response-shift bias: A problem in evaluating interventions with pre/post self-reports,” *Evaluation Review*, 4 (1980), pp. 93-106. For a more recent discussion, see D. Moore and C. A. Tananis, “Measuring Change in a Short-Term Educational Program Using a Retrospective Pretest Design,” *American Journal of Evaluation*, Vol. 30 No. 2 (June 2009), pp. 189-202. It is important to recognize that the retrospective pre/post reflects the participants’ self-assessment of change rather than an objective, outside measurement. Traditional pre/post surveys also reflect participants’ subjective self-assessment, though at two different points in time. Neither provides a perfect measure.

the sample returned a survey, a response rate of 60%. When non-AmeriCorps members were dropped from the enrollment and survey samples the final figures were 950 AmeriCorps enrollees, of whom 582 provided surveys, a response rate of 61%. Table 3 provides a summary of the response rates by site.<sup>9</sup>

**Interviews and Site Visits.** Finally, in order to gain a more thorough understanding of the AmeriCorps experience among the different types of programs (HSE-only, Diploma-only, and Combined HSE/Diploma), the evaluation team conducted hour-long telephone interviews with staff at ten of the intensive study sites and one- to two-day site visits, including focus group interviews with participants, at two of the sites. The telephone interviews and site visits were designed to learn more about how the different types of YouthBuild programs organized their educational and service activities and to gain staff and participant perspectives on the quality of the service experience, what aspects of service most influenced participant attitudes, the challenges programs experienced, and the lessons they had learned.

**A Note on Weighting Adjustments for Demographic Differences.** As Table I-3 indicates, there are substantial differences in program size and response rates among the programs in the study sample, with programs ranging from 4 enrollees to over 180 in the DYB data system and from 1 to 99 in the survey responses. In order to balance the program differences so that one or two programs do not inordinately influence the analysis results, the decision was made to weight both the DYB and the survey data so that each program is represented equally in the sample. While this approach has its own drawbacks (smaller programs have a larger influence in the analysis than might be warranted), it helps to ensure that no one program overly influences the analysis as a whole.

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<sup>9</sup> Note that two sites, Resource YouthBuild and SER YouthBuild Construction Institute, were unable to return any surveys. Because they were part of the intensive study sample, data from both sites is included in the analysis of DYB reporting system data, but the sites are not included in the survey analysis.

**Table I-3: Survey Returns by Site**

	AmeriCorps Members (DYB Data)	Percent of AmeriCorps Members	Completed Surveys	Percent of Completed Surveys	Response Rate
Capital City YouthBuild	31	3.3%	15	2.6%	48.4%
Crispus Attucks YouthBuild	100	10.5%	97	16.7%	97.0%
CTI YouthBuild of Greater Lowell	41	4.3%	31	5.3%	75.6%
D.R.E.A.M.S Youthbuild and Young Adult Training Program	36	3.8%	36	6.2%	100.0%
Guadalupe Alternative Programs - St. Paul	184	19.4%	99	17.0%	53.8%
Los Angeles Conservation Corps	15	1.6%	15	2.6%	100.0%
Mile High Youth Corps YouthBuild	28	2.9%	17	2.9%	60.7%
Pathways YouthBuild	4	0.4%	1	0.2%	25.0%
Portland YouthBuilders	113	11.9%	71	12.2%	62.8%
PPEP YouthBuild	47	4.9%	18	3.1%	38.3%
Project YES YouthBuild	30	3.2%	28	4.8%	93.3%
ReSOURCE YouthBuild	21	2.2%	0	0.0%	0.0%
SER YouthBuild Construction Institute	61	6.4%	0	0.0%	0.0%
South Los Angeles YouthBuild	34	3.6%	7	1.2%	20.6%
Youth Action YouthBuild	37	3.9%	37	6.4%	100.0%
YouthBuild Dayton CountyCorp	32	3.4%	19	3.3%	59.4%
YouthBuild Louisville	33	3.5%	27	4.6%	81.8%
YouthBuild New Bedford	41	4.3%	16	2.7%	39.0%
YouthBuild of Jefferson and Marion Counties	28	2.9%	27	4.6%	96.4%
YouthBuild Schenectady @ SEAT	34	3.6%	21	3.6%	61.8%
<b>Total</b>	<b>950</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>582</b>	<b>100.0%</b>	<b>61.3%</b>

As Table I-4 shows, there were also several significant, though not large, differences in baseline characteristics between the sample of survey responders and the overall population of AmeriCorps enrollees. Responders were more likely to have a diploma or HSE credential at entry, less likely to be currently or recently homeless or an ex-offender, more likely to read above the 8<sup>th</sup> grade level, and to be slightly younger than the average AmeriCorps member at the participating sites. As is discussed later (Chapter II), there were also significant differences in baseline characteristics among participants in the three program types examined in the study (HSE, Diploma, and Combined HSE/Diploma). In both cases, to address these differences, the analyses of service experience and outcomes include a number of demographic characteristics as control variables, including credential at entry, gender, race, housing and offender status at entry, entry reading level, and age.

**Table I-4: Characteristics of Survey Responders and Non-Responders**

		Non-Responders		Survey Responders		Total	
		N	Pct	N	Pct	N	Pct
Has Credential at Entry**	None	354	96.2%	534	91.8%	888	93.5%
	Diploma/HSE	14	3.8%	48	8.2%	62	6.5%
Gender	Male	221	60.4%	360	61.9%	581	61.3%
	Female	145	39.6%	222	38.1%	367	38.7%
Race/Ethnicity	White	64	17.4%	94	16.2%	158	16.6%
	Asian	81	22.0%	96	16.5%	177	18.6%
	Black	110	29.9%	210	36.1%	320	33.7%
	Hispanic	103	28.0%	174	29.9%	277	29.2%
	Other	10	2.7%	8	1.4%	18	1.9%
Parent or Guardian	Neither	313	85.1%	481	82.6%	794	83.6%
	Parent or Primary Caregiver	55	14.9%	101	17.4%	156	16.4%
Housing Status***	Neither	299	86.2%	540	94.4%	839	91.3%
	Current/Recent Homeless	48	13.8%	32	5.6%	80	8.7%
Offender Status***	None	277	77.6%	488	87.3%	765	83.5%
	Adult/Youth Offender	80	22.4%	71	12.7%	151	16.5%
Math Below 8th/ 8th and Above	Below 8th Grade	209	79.2%	364	75.8%	573	77.0%
	8th Grade and Above	55	20.8%	116	24.2%	171	23.0%
Reading Below 8th/ 8th and Above**	Below 8th Grade	241	69.1%	342	59.1%	583	62.8%
	8th Grade and Above	108	30.9%	237	40.9%	345	37.2%
Economically Disadvantaged	Non-Disadvantaged	13	3.5%	89	15.3%	102	10.7%
	Disadvantaged	355	96.5%	493	84.7%	848	89.3%
English Language Learner	Non-ELL	247	67.1%	421	72.3%	668	70.3%
	English Language Learner	121	32.9%	161	27.7%	282	29.7%
Age**	Average Age	368	19.8	582	19.33	950	19.51

Source: DYB Reporting Data, N=950 and YouthBuild participant survey (N=582). Unweighted. Asterisks indicates statistically significant differences: \* p≤.05, \*\*p≤ .01 \*\*\*p≤.001.

## **Key Findings**

The balance of this report reviews the DYB, survey, and interview data in detail. Chapter II summarizes the program descriptive data from the survey of 40 YouthBuild AmeriCorps programs. Chapter III provides information on the AmeriCorps service experience – who participates, what kinds of services they participated in, the quality of those service experiences, and the differences among the three program types (HSE-only, diploma-only, and combined HSE/Diploma). Chapter IV examines the relative outcomes for participants involved in the three program types. Chapter V examines the cross-cutting lessons on effective practices and challenges based on YouthBuild AmeriCorps staff and participant interviews and focus groups. Chapter VI summarizes the conclusions of the study and presents considerations for the future.

Overall, several major findings stand out:

First, the program survey data show YouthBuild AmeriCorps programs represent a diverse array of programs in terms of organizational context, how education programs are organized and structured, the range of service experiences, and who the programs serve. All three maintain the core elements of the YouthBuild model placing substantial emphasis on service, integrating service throughout the program experience, and providing service experiences that participants find engaging and enriching. All three emphasize the core YouthBuild values of building strong relationships and promoting youth development, service and leadership. However, there are also substantial differences among the three program types in terms of structure, program size and duration, and populations served that may ultimately be related to differences in program experience and outcomes.

Second, while the data indicate that all three program types produced a positive service experience and positive outcomes for AmeriCorps participants, there were consistent, statistically significant differences among the three program types. In terms of the service experience, while the Diploma-only programs provided more service hours and participants in all three program types reported positive service experiences, the Combined HSE/Diploma programs tended to show better results on the measure of service quality and impact. Similarly, while all three program types showed positive outcomes, the DYB and survey data show that participants in the Combined HSE/Diploma programs, and to a slightly lesser degree, the Diploma-only programs consistently showed stronger results for most educational and civic outcomes than the HSE-only programs, and the differences between the program types were statistically significant. While the differences are not large, the consistent pattern of differences suggests that there is a real difference in the program experience.

Finally, while the survey data highlight the program differences, the telephone interviews and site visits suggest that some core elements and lessons are common across program types. One important observation from the field is that, in many cases, it is the secondary service experience – volunteering at community events, food pantries, clothing drives, and the like – that provide the most memorable service experiences for AmeriCorps participants. Two key messages emerged from the discussions. The first was the importance of integrating service fully into the overall program experience; the second was the importance of face-to-face service experiences as having the greatest impact on participants, whether in the course of the primary service activities (e.g., meeting the residents of the buildings being rehabbed) or the secondary service projects that take place on a regular basis.

Specific findings from the study include the following:

- Based on the program survey data from the sample of 38 YouthBuild AmeriCorps sites, the YouthBuild programs reflect a remarkable diversity in their organizational settings, the ways they structure their educational programs, the types of occupational training and service they provide, and the mix of leadership, life skills, and postsecondary preparation services offered. Ultimately, all three program types offered a mix of educational and occupational training, combined with service, leadership, life skills development, and postsecondary preparation, and on many measures there were few consistent differences among the program types in how those services were organized and delivered.

At the same time, there were some important distinctions among the three program types that are the focus of the study. HSE-only programs were generally smaller; based in larger nonprofit organizations; shorter in duration with fewer hours of education and service; and more focused on construction-based training and service than the Diploma-only and Combined HSE/Diploma programs. Diploma-only programs tended to be larger; based in a variety of institution types; including schools; be longer in duration with a greater number of hours of instruction and service; and have a somewhat greater focus on postsecondary preparation. The Combined HSE/Diploma programs, not surprisingly, had elements of both the HSE and diploma world. More than the other types, they were based in standalone YouthBuild sites, and fell in the middle in terms of size and duration and hours, but provided a somewhat broader array of service and supports than the other two program types. While it is difficult to draw a simple line from these characteristics to differences in service experiences and outcomes, it is likely that the differences in program structure and operations did have some impact on the nature of the experience across the three types of programs.

- As much as the study sites varied by size, organization, and programming, there were also substantial variations in the characteristics of program participants among the three groups of programs, based on the data from the 20 intensive study sites. Overall, the programs in the sample reflected YouthBuild's focus on serving low-income, out-of-school youth: over 90% of participants entered without a high school credential and 89% qualified as economically disadvantaged. Roughly 83% of YouthBuild AmeriCorps members in the sample were young people of color; 16% were parents; and a similar percentage were recently or currently homeless at entry. Nearly 80% entered YouthBuild scoring below 8th grade on their math assessments (63% scored below 8th grade in reading), and 30% qualified as English Language Learners.

Within that context, however, there were significant differences between participants in the three program types on a number of measures, in most cases with the Diploma-only programs standing out as different from both the HSE-only and the Combined HSE/Diploma sites:

- Participants in Diploma-only programs were older on average than enrollees in HSE or Combined HSE/Diploma programs and more likely to enter YouthBuild without a high school credential. They were also more likely to be female and Asian (largely through

the influence of one program serving large numbers of Southeast Asian participants), and less likely to be Black or Hispanic.

- Diploma-only participants were also less likely to be homeless or an ex-offender: HSE programs had the highest percentage of homeless participants and Combined HSE/Diploma programs had a substantially higher percentage of youth who were ex-offenders at entry.
- Diploma-only programs accepted a substantially higher percentage of participants with entry-level reading and math scores that were below the 8th grade level, but they were also substantially more likely to include students who were not classified as economically disadvantaged.
- Finally, Diploma students were substantially more likely to include English Language Learners, again largely through the influence of one of the larger programs in the sample.

The one measure in which programs showed no significant difference was the proportion of participants who were parents at entry, with all three programs showing 15%-17% of their participants as parents or guardians at program entry.

While many of these differences are statistically significant, they need to be interpreted with caution as they may reflect the influence of the individual programs in a particular category (such as the large number of Southeast Asian participants served in the GAP program) rather than a characteristic of the program type as a whole. At the same time, the differences in characteristics like gender, entry level math and reading scores, and support for homeless or ex-offenders may result in real differences in the nature of the program experience among the different types of programs. In order to minimize the influence of these population differences and keep the focus of the analysis on the programmatic differences among the three program types, we control for a number of demographic characteristics in the analyses of service experiences and program outcomes.

- The DYB data and participant surveys collected for the study show that while all three program types provide a positive, high quality service experience, there are significant differences among the three program types in the nature and extent of service and in the service experience itself. While the Diploma-only programs provided the most hours of service among the different program types, participants in the Combined HSE/Diploma programs generally reported higher quality, more engaging service experiences than either of the other two program types. These results may reflect the strengths of the specific programs in the sample (a caution that will be repeated throughout the report), but taken together they suggest that the more comprehensive Combined HSE/Diploma programs may be able to deliver a stronger, more comprehensive service experience than the HSE or Diploma-only programs.
- As was the case for the service experience data from the survey, the DYB and survey data on participant outcomes points to two broad conclusions. First, all three program types are generally producing positive outcomes. On most of the attitudinal measures there were significant pre/post gains for all three program types, suggesting that all three are carrying out

YouthBuild's broad goals of education, civic engagement, and leadership development. However, there are also consistent differences across the programs, and in most cases, the Diploma-only and the Combined HSE/Diploma programs produced results that were significantly stronger than those for the HSE-only programs. In terms of YouthBuild's core program outcomes, HSE-only participants had higher program completion and job placement rates than the Diploma-only and Combined HSE/Diploma programs, but participants in the Diploma-only programs were significantly more likely to earn their credential and their AmeriCorps education award and to enroll in postsecondary education. On the other hand, on most of the measures of educational goals, civic and educational attitudes, and workplace-related skills, participants in the Diploma-only and the Combined HSE/GED programs were significantly more likely to show gains than participants in HSE-only programs. As noted earlier, while statistically significant (i.e., unlikely to have occurred by chance), the differences between programs are not generally large. But, they do tend to suggest that the Combined HSE/Diploma programs and the Diploma-only programs generally produced better outcomes in both educational terms and in terms of civic and educational attitudes than the HSE-only programs in the study.

- While the survey and DYB reporting data highlight the differences in service experiences and outcomes among the different program types, the observations made by YouthBuild staff and participants in open-ended responses to the program surveys and through the telephone interviews and site visit discussions emphasize the features of effective service experiences that run across program types. Overall, those observations suggested that there were more similarities than differences in the service experience among the HSE-only, Diploma-only, and Combined HSE/diploma programs. Staff and participants describe a wide range of practices that they identify as effective in enhancing members' service experiences and outcomes, including: explicitly integrating service with other program components; attending to organizational/staff issues; instilling a program-wide culture of service; and supporting and motivating youth to create a commitment to service and yield better outcomes – all elements that could be, and are, implemented regardless of program type. Finally, across the discussions ran the theme that interaction with beneficiaries is often at the heart of effective service experiences, and that programs need to make an effort, regardless of setting, to create those face-to-face experiences for their participants.

In the end, the findings suggest that there may be some real differences among program types, and the advantage, though often small, lies with the Diploma-only and the Combined HSE/Diploma programs. At this point, there is no simple explanation for the difference. While Diploma-only programs are substantially longer in duration and provide more service hours, when those variables are included in the analysis, they show only a minor influence on the results. At the same time, the interviews with the program sites suggest that all three types of programs are committed to the basic YouthBuild model and work to ensure that the connections are made between education, training, service and leadership.

One possible explanation for the differences in outcomes comes down to a question of organizational capacity. While all three program types share a commitment to the YouthBuild model and goals, the larger Diploma-only and Combined HSE/Diploma programs may have a greater capacity to carry that commitment into daily operation. As larger programs, both the Diploma and Combined HSE/Diploma programs may have more staff capacity, better management, and/or access to more stable funding

(through local education funds), or a combination of all three. That organizational capacity, in turn, may support a more consistent delivery of programs and services, both within and across program years. Whatever the explanation, as noted throughout, all three program models are generating broadly positive results on a wide variety of outcomes.

## Chapter II

### Program Survey Findings

In the first step of the data collection process for this evaluation, the Brandeis University research team conducted a survey of a representative sample of YouthBuild AmeriCorps programs (approximately half of the programs receiving AmeriCorps grants); 38 of the 40 programs surveyed responded with detailed information on their program structure and operation.<sup>10</sup> The sample included programs offering only a high school equivalency credential (HSE-only), only a high school diploma (Diploma-only) or a combination of HSE and diploma options (Combined HSE/Diploma). The survey gathered program structure and organization data, asking about such characteristics as type of organizational setting; size; and how programs organize and carry out educational, occupational training, service, and leadership development activities. In addition, the survey included open-ended questions that sought respondents' reflections on offering education, service, and training (to be discussed in Chapter V).

The survey data highlights the diversity of settings and approaches used by YouthBuild AmeriCorps programs, including those in this study. While the central observation is that YouthBuild AmeriCorps programs vary widely in their setting, their size, and how they organize and carry out their education, occupational training, and leadership programming, there are some important differences in structure and organization among the three major program types in the study. Both the diversity of YouthBuild AmeriCorps programs generally, and the differences among the three program types help to set the context for the study's focus on differences in the service experience and outcomes among the three program types while also providing a broader picture of how YouthBuild's AmeriCorps programs organize their services.

#### **Organizational Context for YouthBuild AmeriCorps Programs**

YouthBuild AmeriCorps programs in the sample were based in a variety of organizational settings, including a mix of standalone and school-based programs and programs integrated into larger nonprofit social service agencies (Table II-1):

- One-third (34%) of programs were standalone programs – i.e., independent nonprofit organizations.
- 19 programs (50%), were part of some other type of nonprofit agency – human services/social services programs (24%), CAP agencies (13%), government agencies (7.9%), or conservation corps programs (5.3%).
- Six of the 38 (16%) were part of charter or alternative schools.

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<sup>10</sup> As described in Chapter 1, the evaluation team used program and reporting system data to select a representative sample of approximately half of the 73 YouthBuild AmeriCorps programs. The sampling process took into account the type of credential offered by the program, the program's experience level, and program size.

**Table II-1: Organization and Enrollment of YouthBuild Programs in Sample**

<i>Organization Type</i>	Program Characteristics				
	N of Sites	Percent of All Sites	Non-YouthBuild Youth (Mean)	YouthBuild Members (Mean)	YouthBuild AmeriCorps Members (Mean)
Charter school/Part of charter school	2	5.3%	36	95.0	55.5
Alternative school/Part of alternative school	4	10.5%	31.25	48.8	44.8
Part of a Conservation Corps program	2	5.3%	110	14.0	17.5
Part of a CAP agency	5	13.2%	38.5	10.2	15.8
Part of a government agency	3	7.9%	29	32.7	13.7
Part of another type of human services/social services program - please explain:	9	23.7%	23.5	21.3	21.3
A separate, standalone YouthBuild program	13	34.2%	212.8	28.8	25.9
All Sites	38	100.0%	97.1	29.7	25.6

Source: YouthBuild Program Survey, N=38.

The typical program was relatively small:

- Among those that were part of a larger agency (i.e., all but the standalone YouthBuild programs), the average number of youth served per year outside of the YouthBuild program was just under 37 participants. The largest organization in that group reported 220 non-YouthBuild participants. Two of the standalone YouthBuild programs also reported running programs for non-YouthBuild members, including a 2200-student summer program. When those are added into the mix, the average number of non-YouthBuild participants served across all sites was about 97 per organization.
- The average number of YouthBuild participants per site, however, was generally much smaller. The average across all 38 sites was 30 members; the median was 24.5.
- The number of YouthBuild AmeriCorps participants was also relatively small: an average of 26 per site, with a median of 21.5. (Note: while all AmeriCorps members in the study were also YouthBuild members, not all participants in YouthBuild are enrolled as AmeriCorps members. Hence, the smaller number of YouthBuild AmeriCorps members.)

There is considerable variation in program size among types of organizations in the sample:

- The charter schools and alternative schools in the sample were relatively large. Charter schools had an average of 95 YouthBuild participants and 56 YouthBuild AmeriCorps members; the alternative schools averaged 49 YouthBuild members and 45 YouthBuild AmeriCorps participants.
- Those that were part of another nonprofit were generally smaller: Conservation Corps and CAP agencies averaged 16 and 18 YouthBuild AmeriCorps members respectively, and programs

located in larger human service agencies (one of the most common settings) averaged 21 YouthBuild members and 21 AmeriCorps participants per program.

- Standalone YouthBuild programs fell in-between, averaging 29 YouthBuild members and 26 YouthBuild AmeriCorps participants (medians were 28 and 21 respectively).

While the overall organizational context highlights the variety of organizations hosting YouthBuild AmeriCorps programs, the major focus of this study is the difference between programs based on the types of educational programs they offer. As Table II-2 shows, just under half (17 or 45%) of the 38 YouthBuild programs in the program sample operated HSE-only programs; 10 programs (26%) were Diploma-only; and 11 (29%) were Combined HSE/Diploma programs.

**Table II-2: YouthBuild Education Programs by Organization Type**

<i>Organization Type</i>	<b>HSE-Only</b>		<b>Diploma-Only</b>		<b>Combined HSE/Diploma</b>		<b>Total</b>	
	<b>N</b>	<b>Percent</b>	<b>N</b>	<b>Percent</b>	<b>N</b>	<b>Percent</b>	<b>N</b>	<b>Percent</b>
Charter school/Part of charter school	0	0.0%	1	10.0%	1	9.1%	2	5.3%
Alternative school/Part of alternative school	2	11.8%	2	20.0%	0	0.0%	4	10.5%
Part of a Conservation Corps program	0	0.0%	2	20.0%	0	0.0%	2	5.3%
Part of a CAP agency	4	23.5%	0	0.0%	1	9.1%	5	13.2%
Part of a government agency	2	11.8%	0	0.0%	1	9.1%	3	7.9%
Part of another type of human services/social services program - please explain:	6	35.3%	3	30.0%	0	0.0%	9	23.7%
A separate, standalone YouthBuild program	3	17.6%	2	20.0%	8	72.7%	13	34.2%
All Sites	17	100.0%	10	100.0%	11	100.0%	38	100.0%
Average Number of YouthBuild Members	17	22.9	10	40.3	11	30.5	38	29.7
Average Number of YouthBuild AmeriCorps Members	17	21.6	10	37.0	11	21.5	38	25.6

Source: YouthBuild Program Survey, N=38.

While all three types of education programs appear among the different organization types, there are some differences worth noting:

- The HSE-only programs are largely located within other, larger nonprofit organizations: 35% are based in a human service agency, and 71% are based within the broader group of government and nonprofit organizations (CAP agencies, Conservation Corps, etc.). Conversely, the HSE-only programs are the most common program type among the nonprofit organizations: 12 of the 19 nonprofit organizations (63%) offer an HSE credential only.
- Interestingly, the Diploma-only programs are spread across a variety of organizations, with only three of the 10 Diploma-only programs in charter or alternative Schools; the other 7 are located in human service agencies, Conservation Corps, and standalone YouthBuild programs.

- The Combined HSE/Diploma programs, on the other hand, are largely concentrated among the standalone YouthBuild programs, with 73% (8 of 11) of the Combined HSE/Diploma programs based in those independent nonprofit organizations. The other three are spread among a charter school, CAP agency, and government agency.

Despite the variety of organizational settings (or in some cases, because of it), there are some clear differences in terms of the numbers of participants that each type of program tends to serve.

- The Diploma-only programs are the largest in the sample, averaging 40 YouthBuild participants and 37 YouthBuild AmeriCorps members. This likely reflects the fact that at least one of the larger charter schools falls into this group.
- The Combined HSE/Diploma sites fall in the middle, with an average of 30 YouthBuild participants, but only 22 YouthBuild AmeriCorps members.
- The HSE-only programs are the smallest, averaging 23 YouthBuild participants and 22 YouthBuild AmeriCorps members.<sup>11</sup>

### **Structure and Organization of Educational Programming**

While there were some distinctions in the organizational structure of YouthBuild AmeriCorps programs, there were no consistent differences in how the three program types organized the delivery of educational services. As Table II-3 shows, the large majority of programs (87%) used one of three ways of alternating the delivery of education and training services: within the day (half day academic, half day occupational), on alternating days, and on alternating weeks.

- Most (82%) of the HSE programs organized academic education and occupational training to take place on alternate days (41%) or alternate weeks (41%).
- Most (60%) high school diploma programs had academic and occupational training/service take place on alternate weeks, though a substantial minority (30%) alternated within the same day.
- Combined HSE/Diploma programs used all three models: 36% alternated classes within the day, 27% on alternating days, and 18% on alternating weeks.

**Annual Program Cycles.** The programs in the sample also varied widely in how they organized their time across the year (by semesters, trimesters, etc.), with differences by program type. There is no clear “standard” model, except to note that nearly half of the programs across all three major program types (HSE-only, Diploma-only, and Combined HSE/Diploma) counted themselves in the “other” category in describing their yearly program cycle. Overall, 56% of HSE programs, 40% of diploma-granting programs, and 40% of the Combined HSE/Diploma programs indicated that the timing of their programs does not fit any of the outlined options (i.e., they are “other”). Their open-ended responses indicate that they worked on quarters, open-entry, rotating 7-8-month cycles, etc. The other options, including two semesters per year (with and without a summer program), and three trimesters (with or without summer program) were relatively evenly distributed across the different types of programs.

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<sup>11</sup> The smaller size of the HSE-only programs may involve some possible trade-offs, which will become evident as we examine program outcomes in later chapters. Their small size allows for the strong staff/participant relationships that are at the heart of the YouthBuild program. However, the smaller programs may have more limited access to resources and be more vulnerable to year-by-year variations in funding, making it harder to achieve the same level of performance as larger, better-funded programs.

**Table II-3: Organization/Scheduling of Educational Programming**

Academic Education and Occupational Training on:	HSE-Only		Diploma-Only		Combined HSE/Diploma		Total	
	N	Percent	N	Percent	N	Percent	N	Percent
Same Day	1	5.9%	3	30.0%	4	36.4%	8	21.1%
Alternating Days	7	41.2%	0	0.0%	3	27.3%	10	26.3%
Alternating Weeks	7	41.2%	6	60.0%	2	18.2%	15	39.5%
Other alternating periods (month, trimester, semester, etc.)	1	5.9%	1	10.0%	1	9.1%	3	7.9%
Other	1	5.9%	0	0.0%	1	9.1%	2	5.3%
<b>Total</b>	<b>17</b>	<b>100.0%</b>	<b>10</b>	<b>100.0%</b>	<b>11</b>	<b>100.0%</b>	<b>38</b>	<b>100.0%</b>
Two Semesters, Plus Summer Program	2	12.5%	1	10.0%	2	20.0%	5	13.9%
Two Semesters, no Summer Program	2	12.5%	1	10.0%	3	30.0%	6	16.7%
Three Trimesters, plus Summer Program	2	12.5%	3	30.0%	1	10.0%	6	16.7%
Three Trimesters, no Summer program	1	6.3%	1	10.0%	0	0.0%	2	5.6%
Other	9	56.3%	4	40.0%	4	40.0%	17	47.2%
<b>Total</b>	<b>16</b>	<b>100.0%</b>	<b>10</b>	<b>100.0%</b>	<b>10</b>	<b>100.0%</b>	<b>36</b>	<b>100.0%</b>

Source: YouthBuild Program Survey, N=38.

**Educational Staffing.** There were also relatively few differences in how the three program types staffed their educational programs. Overall, slightly more than half of the programs in the sample used YouthBuild staff as teachers; another 31% used outside instructors, generally from community colleges or the local school district. A relatively small number (16%) drew on other sources, including online teaching programs.

As Table II-4 shows, there were some variations among the different types of educational programs, through no clear pattern of difference. (In this table and several that follow, the data for the Combined HSE/Diploma programs are broken out to show any differences between the delivery of HSE vs. diploma services in those programs.)

- In 71% of the 17 HSE-only programs, YouthBuild staff provide HSE instruction; in 35%, outside teachers do so (some programs use both types, so the percentages add up to more than 100%).
- In 55% of the ten diploma-only programs, YouthBuild staff provide instruction; in the remaining 45%, outside teachers or a combination of YouthBuild staff and outside teachers provide instruction.
- Among the HSE programs within Combined HSE/Diploma programs, YouthBuild staff provide 55% of the HSE instruction, with a mix of teachers from another organization or under individual contracts providing the balance. Among the diploma programs in Combined HSE/Diploma sites, 64% of the teaching is done by YouthBuild staff and 36% by outside teachers.

**Table II-4: Staffing by Program Type**

Educational Staffing	HSE-Only		Diploma-Only		Combined HSE		Combined Diploma	
	N	Percent	N	Percent	N	Percent	N	Percent
YouthBuild Staff	12	70.6%	6	54.5%	6	54.5%	7	63.6%
Teachers from Outside YouthBuild (another organization or individual contracts)	6	35.3%	3	27.3%	6	54.5%	3	27.3%
Other (online, etc.)	2	11.8%	2	18.2%	4	36.4%	1	9.1%
<b>Total</b>	<b>17</b>		<b>11</b>		<b>11</b>		<b>11</b>	

Source: YouthBuild Program Survey, N=38.

**Instruction.** Across all three program types, the majority of instruction took place in a classroom setting and computer-aided instruction was used less than half the time (Table II-5). But the data suggests some important differences among the different types of programs.

- Within HSE-only programs and HSE within Combined HSE/Diploma programs, a substantially higher percentage of instruction took place in a classroom setting: 88% of the HSE-only programs and 82% of the HSE programs in a Combined HSE/Diploma setting report that 76% or more of instruction was classroom based. Among diploma programs (both Diploma-only and diploma in a Combined HSE/Diploma setting), only 50% report that the bulk of instruction takes place in the classroom. The survey did not ask for more detail at this point, but it seems likely that the “out of class” instruction may be taking place at the worksite or through project-based learning in a community setting.<sup>12</sup>
- On the other hand, the HSE-only and Diploma-only sites appear substantially less likely to use computer-aided instruction than either the HSE or diploma programs in the Combined HSE/Diploma sites. Among the HSE programs in the Combined HSE/Diploma sites, 36% report that more than half of their instruction is computer-based vs. 6% in the HSE-only sites and 30% in the Diploma-only sites. Among diploma programs in the Combined HSE/Diploma sites, 64% report that more than half of their instruction is computer-based, a far higher percentage than any of the other programs. In this instance, the use of computer-aided instruction may also be part of the explanation for the lower reported levels of classroom instruction in those settings.

Class size is small across the sites, with an average of 11 per class for HSE instruction and 12 per class for diploma instruction (Table II-5). Among the three educational program types, the Diploma-only programs tend to have the largest classes (18 students), possibly reflecting the larger overall programs. The HSE-only and Combined HSE/Diploma programs show somewhat smaller class sizes, ranging from an average class size of 7 (diploma programs in the Combined HSE/Diploma sites) to 13 (HSE-only).

<sup>12</sup> In the YouthBuild Charter School network programs, for example, community-based projects represent an important element in every semester’s instruction.

**Table II-5: Instruction by Program Type**

	HSE-Only		Diploma-Only		Combined HSE		Combined Diploma	
	N	Percent	N	Percent	N	Percent	N	Percent
<b>Computer Aided Instruction</b>								
0%-25%	9	52.9%	4	40.0%	3	27.3%	1	9.1%
26%-50%	7	41.2%	3	30.0%	4	36.4%	3	27.3%
51%-75%	1	5.9%	2	20.0%	4	36.4%	1	9.1%
76%-100%	0	0.0%	1	10.0%	0	0.0%	6	54.5%
Total	17	100.0%	10	100.0%	11	100.0%	11	100.0%
<b>Instruction in Classroom Setting</b>								
0%-25%	0	0.0%	0	0.0%	0	0.0%	1	9.1%
26%-50%	2	11.8%	3	30.0%	1	9.1%	1	9.1%
51%-75%	0	0.0%	2	20.0%	1	9.1%	3	27.3%
76%-100%	15	88.2%	5	50.0%	9	81.8%	6	54.5%
Total	17	100.0%	10	100.0%	11	100.0%	11	100.0%
Average Class Size	17	12.9	10	18.1	10	8.3	11	7
Median Class Size	17	10	10	17	10	8	11	5

Source: YouthBuild Program Survey, N=38.

It is important to recognize that some of these figures represent averages across multiple programs, and given the variation among sites, the averages might mask important exceptions to the rule. As one example, within the Combined HSE/Diploma sites, 45% teach their HSE and diploma students together; 36% teach the two groups separately; and 18% teach them sometimes separately, sometimes together. In that regard, splitting the data out separately for the two tracks in those sites obscures the fact that in some sites, the program experience for the two tracks is basically identical.

**Enrollment Requirements and Duration.** YouthBuild programs also differed in the degree to which they had required minimum reading/math levels at admission (Table II-6):

- 90% of the 10 Diploma-only programs had no minimum reading and math levels for admission; only 1 of the programs set a minimum for entry.<sup>13</sup>
- 82% of the HSE programs in Combined HSE/Diploma sites had no required minimum; 64% of the diploma programs at those sites had no minimum requirement.
- 41% of the 17 HSE-only programs had no minimum; the remainder required a minimum level.

In those cases where a minimum was required, the average required reading and math levels for all three types of programs generally ranged from 5<sup>th</sup>- 7<sup>th</sup> grade for the HSE programs, and as low as 2<sup>nd</sup> grade in the diploma-based programs.

Given the differences in entry requirements, it is not surprising to see a substantial variation in the average hours of classroom time among the three program types or in the average time to completion

<sup>13</sup> While most of the diploma programs did not set a minimum reading and math level, some did screen potential students in terms of course credits and the likelihood of completing required credits in a reasonable time. Several of the sites interviewed for the study reported that when diploma applicants had too many credits to make up, they would refer them to the HSE program (in-house or externally) as a more realistic alternative.

(duration) for the different types of programs. In terms of hours of classroom/educational instruction, HSE-only programs report an average of 59 hours per month of instruction (about 3 hours per day, 5 days a week); both the HSE and diploma programs in the Combined HSE/Diploma sites report similar numbers. Diploma-only programs report a substantially higher figure, averaging a reported 75 hours per month (a little less than 4 hours per day).

The average time to earn a credential also varies between programs. On average, YouthBuild members who earn their HSE in an HSE-only program do so in about 8 months; the HSE programs in Combined HSE/Diploma settings report a slightly shorter duration/time to completion (7 months) for their participants. The diploma-based programs tend to take longer: YouthBuild AmeriCorps members in Diploma-only programs took an average of 11 months to earn their credential; diploma students in the Combined HSE/Diploma programs averaged 8 months. In all cases, however, there were substantial variations, since most of the programs were in some degree individualized and self-paced. The HSE programs and the diploma programs in Combined HSE/Diploma settings reported a minimum time to completion of 3 months and a maximum of 14 months; the Diploma-only programs were generally longer, with an average minimum time to completion of 6 months and a maximum of 17.

**Table II-6: Enrollment Requirements and Duration by Program Type**

	HSE-Only		Diploma-Only		Combined HSE		Combined Diploma	
	N	Percent	N	Percent	N	Percent	N	Percent
<b><i>Required Reading/Math Levels</i></b>								
No Minimum	7	41.2%	9	90.0%	9	81.8%	7	63.6%
Required Minimum	10	58.8%	1	10.0%	2	18.2%	4	36.4%
Average required reading level	6.7		2		6		2.25	
Average required math level	5.59		2		5.5		7.25	
<b><i>Hours of Classroom Instruction (Average)</i></b>								
	16	59.4	10	75.2	10	51.2	11	55.3
<b><i>Reported Duration (Months)</i></b>								
Maximum	16	14	10	17.3	9	13.4	10	12.5
Minimum	16	3.1	10	5.6	9	3.44	10	3
Average	16	7.9	10	10.7	9	7	10	8.4

Source: YouthBuild Program Survey, N=38.

### **Primary Service/Occupational Training**

At the core of the YouthBuild model is the combination of education with occupational training and service. All YouthBuild AmeriCorps programs offer a primary service/occupational track in which students learn occupational skills while providing service to the community (most programs also provide opportunities for secondary service, discussed below). Accepted primary service tracks include construction, health care, conservation/recycling, and digital divide/tech.

Table II-7 shows the distribution of primary service tracks among the three major educational program types. Given its role at the heart of the YouthBuild model, it is not surprising that construction was the

most common service track: all of the programs in the sample offer construction as a primary occupational training/service track. The other tracks were significantly less common: nine programs (24%) offered a health care track; five (13%) offered a digital divide/tech track; and two (5%) offered a recycling/conservation service track. Six programs (16%) reported offering other primary service/occupational tracks, including customer service, introduction to renewables, agriculture training, first aid/CPR training, and digital media training.

There were some differences among the three program types. The Combined HSE/Diploma programs were most likely to offer non-construction primary service options; the HSE-only programs were least likely to include service other than construction.

Reported instructional time and service hours within each of the primary service tracks also varied widely, with the Diploma-only programs generally reporting the highest average hours of instruction, and the HSE-only programs the least. It is important to treat these estimates with caution: in some cases they represent reports from a single program; in others, they likely represent rough estimates by program staff. However, they do suggest that the Diploma-only programs, which tend to be longer, also may tend to provide more instruction and primary service time.

**Table II-7: Primary Service/Occupational Training Tracks by Program Type**

<i>Service Track</i>	<b>HSE-Only</b>		<b>Diploma-Only</b>		<b>Combined HSE/Diploma</b>		<b>Total</b>	
	<b>N</b>	<b>Percent</b>	<b>N</b>	<b>Percent</b>	<b>N</b>	<b>Percent</b>	<b>N</b>	<b>Percent</b>
Construction	17	100.0%	10	100.0%	11	100.0%	38	100.0%
Health Care	1	5.9%	2	20.0%	6	54.5%	9	23.7%
Digital Divide	1	5.9%	1	10.0%	3	27.3%	5	13.2%
Conservation/Recycling	1	5.9%	0	0.0%	1	9.1%	2	5.3%
Other	3	17.6%	2	20.0%	1	9.1%	6	15.8%

  

<i>Average Hours Instruction/Service</i>								
Construction	17	236	10	445	11	330	38	323
Health Care	1	155	2	550	5	294	8	341
Digital Divide	1	200	1	450	3	243	5	276
Conservation/Recycling				250	1	20	1	20
Other	2	43	2	250	1	40	5	125

Source: YouthBuild Program Survey, N=38.

**Secondary/community service activities.** YouthBuild AmeriCorps programs also coordinate secondary service activities (sometimes, but not necessarily, associated with the primary service track) to allow members to earn more service hours and to accomplish other goals, such as team building and enhancing members' commitment to service. Survey respondents reported a number of secondary service activities in which their members participate, with similar proportions among the three major program types. Following are the most commonly reported activities, with a breakdown for the three types (Table II-8):

- All 38 programs organized park clean-ups and/or help with community gardens.
- 84% of programs engaged in food/nutrition-related service activities (82% of HSE-only programs, 90% of Diploma-only, and 82% of Combined HSE/Diploma programs).
- 68% provided planning and support for neighborhood/community events such as fairs, festivals, and children’s activities.
- 37% engaged in health/wellness service activities.
- 26% provided some type of educational service activities.

Roughly 40% of programs reported “other” activities: the most common were construction-related projects, including assisting Habitat for Humanity and building garden boxes and wheelchair ramps.

**Table II-8: Secondary Service Activities by Program Type**

<i>Secondary Service Activities</i>	HSE-Only		Diploma-Only		Combined HSE/Diploma		Total	
	N	Percent	N	Percent	N	Percent	N	Percent
Park clean-up or help with community gardens	17	100.0%	10	100.0%	11	100.0%	38	100.0%
Planning/support for community fairs, festivals, children’s activities, or other events	12	70.6%	5	50.0%	9	81.8%	26	68.4%
Food/nutrition	14	82.4%	9	90.0%	9	81.8%	32	84.2%
Health/wellness	5	29.4%	4	40.0%	5	45.5%	14	36.8%
Education	6	35.3%	1	10.0%	3	27.3%	10	26.3%
Other	8	47.1%	3	30.0%	4	36.4%	15	39.5%
<b><i>Frequency of Secondary Service</i></b>								
At least once per week	5	29.4%	1	10.0%	4	36.4%	10	26.3%
At least once per month	11	64.7%	9	90.0%	4	36.4%	25	65.8%
At least once per quarter or trimester	0	0.0%	0	0.0%	4	36.4%	2	5.3%
Only a couple of times per year (less than once per quarter/trimester)	1	5.9%	0	0.0%	4	36.4%	1	2.6%
Total	17	100.0%	10	100.0%	4	36.4%	38	100.0%
Secondary Service Hours/Month (Average)	15	9.2	9	13.4	11	10.0	35	10.5

Source: YouthBuild Program Survey, N=38.

Virtually all programs reported that YouthBuild AmeriCorps members engaged in secondary service activities at least once per month and averaged a little over 10 hours a month of secondary service. While the Diploma-only programs averaged a slightly higher number of hours than the other two program types, the differences were not substantial.

**Leadership training and activities.** Leadership development is another important component of YouthBuild AmeriCorps programs. Respondents reported a number of leadership development activities. Following are the most commonly reported activities, with a breakdown for the three program types (Table II-9):

- 87% reported youth participation in a Youth Policy Committee or similar activities.
- 76% had youth in leadership roles in program implementation.
- 74% placed an explicit emphasis on members being positive role models.
- 63% offered peer mentoring/advising opportunities.
- 58% helped members create individual leadership development plans.

While the proportions reporting each type of leadership activity were similar across program types for most items, the Combined HSE/Diploma programs were more likely to report several of the activities than the other two program models, notably youth leadership roles in program implementation (91% vs. 77% and 60% for HSE-only and Diploma-only, respectively); peer mentoring/advising (82% vs. 53% and 60% for HSE-only and Diploma-only); and individual leadership development plans (73% vs. 53% and 50% for HSE-only and Diploma-only).

**Table II-9: Leadership Training Activities by Program Type**

	HSE-Only		Diploma-Only		Combined HSE/Diploma		Total	
	N	Percent	N	Percent	N	Percent	N	Percent
Youth participation in policy committee or similar opportunities	15	88.2%	9	90.0%	9	81.8%	33	86.8%
Youth leadership roles in program implementation	13	76.5%	6	60.0%	10	90.9%	29	76.3%
Explicit emphasis on being a positive role model	11	64.7%	8	80.0%	9	81.8%	28	73.7%
Peer mentoring/advising opportunities	9	52.9%	6	60.0%	9	81.8%	24	63.2%
Individual leadership development plans	9	52.9%	5	50.0%	8	72.7%	22	57.9%
Curricular concentration on and evaluation of leadership competencies	5	29.4%	3	30.0%	4	36.4%	12	31.6%
Other	2	11.8%	2	20.0%	0	0.0%	4	10.5%

Source: YouthBuild Program Survey, N=38.

**Life skills training and activities.** Still another component of YouthBuild AmeriCorps programs is helping members to develop and enhance their life skills. Respondents reported a number of life skills training activities, again with similar proportions of the three credential-related program types reporting similar types of activities (Table II-10). Following are the most commonly reported activities, with a breakdown for the three program types:

- All programs provided career planning and preparation activities.

- 97% provided financial literacy training.
- 92% provided conflict management training.
- 90% provided problem-solving training.
- 79% provided public speaking training.
- 76% provided time management training.

As noted above, there were few differences among the three major program types.

**Table II-10: Life Skills Training/Activities by Program Type**

	HSE-Only		Diploma-Only		Combined HSE/Diploma		Total	
	N	Percent	N	Percent	N	Percent	N	Percent
Career planning and preparation activities	17	100.0%	10	100.0%	11	100.0%	38	100.0%
Financial literacy	16	94.1%	10	100.0%	11	100.0%	37	97.4%
Conflict management	16	94.1%	9	90.0%	10	90.9%	35	92.1%
Problem solving	15	88.2%	8	80.0%	11	100.0%	34	89.5%
Public speaking	14	82.4%	8	80.0%	8	72.7%	30	78.9%
Time management	13	76.5%	6	60.0%	10	90.9%	29	76.3%
Other	1	5.9%	1	10.0%	3	27.3%	5	13.2%

Source: YouthBuild Program Survey, N=38.

**Postsecondary education preparation and support.** Finally, an increasing number of YouthBuild AmeriCorps programs provide postsecondary education preparation and support. Again, survey respondents reported a number of postsecondary preparation and support activities, with similar proportions of the three credential-related program types reporting similar types of activities (Table II-11). Following are the most commonly reported activities:

- 97% offered college visits and tours.
- 97% assisted members with admission and financial aid applications.
- 84% assisted members with study skills.
- 66% assisted members with note-taking skills.
- 63% offered placement test preparation.
- 61% provided college prep advising by staff.
- 58% helped members with analytical writing skills.
- 53% provided postsecondary education prep courses.

**Table II-11: Postsecondary Preparation Activities by Program Type**

	HSE-Only		Diploma-Only		Combined HSE/Diploma		Total	
	N	Percent	N	Percent	N	Percent	N	Percent
College visits or tours	17	100.0%	9	90.0%	11	100.0%	37	97.4%
Assistance with admission and financial aid applications	16	94.1%	10	100.0%	11	100.0%	37	97.4%
Study skills	15	88.2%	7	70.0%	10	90.9%	32	84.2%
Note-taking	11	64.7%	6	60.0%	8	72.7%	25	65.8%
Placement test prep	13	76.5%	2	20.0%	9	81.8%	24	63.2%
Advising by PSE staff	8	47.1%	8	80.0%	7	63.6%	23	60.5%
Analytical writing	9	52.9%	6	60.0%	7	63.6%	22	57.9%
PSE prep courses	7	41.2%	7	70.0%	6	54.5%	20	52.6%
After school tutoring	8	47.1%	5	50.0%	6	54.5%	19	50.0%
Bridge Program (to support transition to postsecondary)	9	52.9%	5	50.0%	4	36.4%	18	47.4%
Dual enrollment	7	41.2%	4	40.0%	5	45.5%	16	42.1%
Other	0	0.0%	1	10.0%	1	9.1%	2	5.3%

Source: YouthBuild Program Survey, N=38.

A few differences can be seen in the proportions of the three program types offering these services:

- HSE-only and Combined HSE/Diploma programs were substantially more likely than Diploma-only programs to provide placement test preparation (82% for Combined, 77% for HSE vs. 20% for Diploma-only programs).
- Diploma-only programs were substantially more likely to provide advising by PSE staff than either Combined or HSE-only programs (80% vs. 64% for Combined and 47% for HSE-only programs).
- Diploma-only programs were also substantially more like to provide PSE preparation courses as part of their curriculum than either HSE or Combined HSE/Diploma programs (70% vs. 55% for Combined and 41% for HSE-only programs).

**Leadership, Life Skills and PSE Instructional Hours.** Lastly, as Table II-12 shows, there were also few differences among the three program types in the average hours devoted to leadership, life skills, and postsecondary preparation instruction and activities. Compared to time spent for academic education and occupational training, programs provided relatively few hours to work in these three areas. That said, these activities clearly were a consistent element in the program design across all of the YouthBuild programs and an essential aspect of the YouthBuild AmeriCorps program design.

**Table II-12: Average Hours for Leadership, Life Skills and PSE Activities, by Program Type**

	HSE-Only		Diploma-Only		Combined HSE/Diploma		Total	
	N	Average	N	Average	N	Average	N	Average
In-Class Hours-Average	12	16.25	10	13.45	11	10.36	33	13.44
Outside Class Hours - Average	15	10.67	10	10.9	11	4.91	36	8.97

Source: YouthBuild Program Survey, N=38.

### Summary

In examining the data across the sample of 38 YouthBuild AmeriCorps sites in the program survey, two broad conclusions stand out. First, the YouthBuild programs reveal a remarkable diversity in their organizational settings, the ways they structure their educational programs, the types of occupational training and service they provide, and the mix of leadership, life skills, and postsecondary preparation services offered. The diversity is remarkable in both the breadth of services offered by what are generally small programs with limited staff and resources and in the multiplicity of ways in which these programs put the core elements of the YouthBuild model into operation.

At the same time, there are some, though only a few, consistent differences among the three major program types that need to be kept in mind as this study examines differences in service experiences and program outcomes. Some of the differences include:

- YouthBuild’s HSE-only programs tended to be smaller and most commonly located within a larger nonprofit organization, while the Combined HSE/Diploma programs tended to be somewhat larger in terms of enrollments and most likely to be based in a separate, standalone YouthBuild program. Diploma-only programs tended to be the largest in terms of average YouthBuild and AmeriCorps enrollments and were based in the broadest range of organizational settings, including charter schools, nonprofits, and standalone programs.<sup>14</sup>
- All three program types relied heavily on internal YouthBuild staff for academic instruction, with HSE-only programs most likely to use internal staff for teaching. Instruction in all three program types was heavily classroom based, with less than half of the sites taking place through computer-aided instruction. Within that context, however, diploma programs were substantially more likely to move instruction outside of the classroom (possibly through community-based, project-based learning); diploma programs within the Combined HSE/Diploma sites were also substantially more likely to use computer-aided instruction than the other sites in the study.
- The Diploma-only programs stood out in terms of average class size, entry requirements, and average time to completion, with generally larger classes (18 students on average compared to 13 for the HSE-only programs and 7-8 in the Combined HSE/Diploma sites), low or no entry math and reading requirements, and a relatively long duration, with an average of 11 months compared to 7-8 for the other types of programs.
- All of the programs in the sample included construction as a primary service track, with substantially fewer programs offering health care, digital, or conservation/recycling options.

<sup>14</sup> On the other hand, there were few clear differences in the ways in which sites organized their educational services, with all three program types reporting a mix of weekly schedules (alternating days, weeks, etc.) and annual program cycles (semesters, trimesters, open-enrollment sessions, etc.). The variety of approaches suggests that each program, regardless of “type,” has looked for what best fits its local circumstances and population.

The Combined HSE/Diploma sites were substantially more likely to offer multiple primary service tracks than the HSE or Diploma-only programs. Diploma-only programs, on the other hand, reported substantially more hours of training/service in construction (and the other types of service as well) than the other types of programs.

- While there were few major differences among programs in the types of secondary service provided, Diploma-only programs again tended to report greater numbers of hours.
- There were also few consistent differences in the extent of leadership, life skills, and PSE preparation activities among programs, though there were scattered variations. However, Combined HSE/Diploma programs provided a somewhat broader range of leadership development activities; Diploma-only programs were somewhat more likely to provide a range of PSE advising and support.

Taken together, the data point to a broad array of programs with relatively subtle distinctions: HSE-only programs were generally small, shorter, more focused on construction-based training and service; Diploma-only programs tended to be larger, longer, and perhaps more PSE-focused; Combined HSE/Diploma programs, not surprisingly, had elements of both the HSE and diploma world, standing in the middle in terms of size, but providing a somewhat broader array of service and supports than the other two program types. While it is difficult to draw a line from these characteristics to differences in service experiences and outcomes, differences in program structure and operations may have some impact on the nature of the experience across the three types of programs.

#### **Program Characteristics of Intensive Study Sites**

As the preceding data shows, the 38 YouthBuild AmeriCorps programs in the initial program survey vary substantially in terms of size, organization, and structure, as well as education, training, and service experiences. The 20 sites selected for the intensive study sample reflect that diversity. As in the larger sample, the sites in the study sample vary widely in size from fewer than 20 participants to over 100. They also vary in organizational structure (standalone program vs. part of a larger organization), in the ways in which they organize their education, training and service activities (daily, weekly, etc.), in their entry requirements, and in the duration of the program (Table II-13).

However, there are some important differences among the three program types that are the focus of the study. As in the larger sample, Diploma-only programs in the study sample, for example, tend to be larger and longer in duration than both the HSE-only and Combined/HSE programs. The enrollment data from the DYB reporting system show a similar pattern – an average of 64 enrollees in the Diploma-only programs in the study sample vs. 44 in the Combined HSE/Diploma programs and 39 in the HSE-only programs. The Diploma-only programs also report a longer average duration – just under 12 months compared to an average of 8 months for the HSE-only programs and 8-10 months for the Combined HSE/Diploma programs. Diploma-only programs were also less likely than either HSE-only or Combined HSE/Diploma programs to report a minimum reading or math requirement for entry. As noted below, one result is that the average entry level reading and math scores for Diploma-only participants were significantly lower than those in the other two types of programs. Finally, while the Diploma-only programs were larger, the Combined HSE/Diploma programs were much more likely to operate as standalone programs; the HSE and Diploma-only programs tended to be part of larger organizations.

**Table II-13: Program Characteristics by Site, Intensive Study Sites**

	Projected N of YouthBuild AmeriCorps Slots	Actual N YB AmeriCorps Enrollees in Sample	Stand-alone Program (S) or Part of Larger Org. (L)*	Alternating Days (D), Weeks (W) or Other (O)	Required Minimum Reading/Math	HSE Program Duration (Months)	Diploma Program Duration (Months)
<b>HSE-Only</b>							
CTI YouthBuild of Greater Lowell	26	41	L	W	N	6.0	
D.R.E.A.M.S Youthbuild and Young Adult Training Program	31	36	L	W	Y	7.0	
Project YES YouthBuild	33	30	L	D	Y	15.0	
SER YouthBuild Construction Institute	20	61	L	D	N	6.5	
Youth Action YouthBuild	38	37	L	W	Y	7.0	
YouthBuild New Bedford	32	41	L	W	N	10.0	
YouthBuild of Jefferson and Marion Counties	20	28	L	D	Y	5.0	
YouthBuild Schenectady @ SEAT	34	34	L	D	Y	9.0	
<i>Average HSE-only</i>	<i>29.3</i>	<i>38.5</i>				<i>8.2</i>	
<b>Diploma-Only</b>							
Crispus Attucks YouthBuild	80	100	L	W	N		9.0
Guadalupe Alternative Programs - St. Paul	110	184	L	D	Y		12.0
LA Conservation Corps	13	15	L	O	N		12.0
Mile High Youth Corps YouthBuild	22	27	L	D	N		18.0
ReSOURCE YouthBuild	30	21	L	W	N		12.0
South Los Angeles YouthBuild	50	34	L	D	N		8.0
<i>Average Diploma-Only</i>	<i>50.8</i>	<i>63.5</i>					<i>11.8</i>
<b>Combined HSE/Diploma</b>							
Capital City YouthBuild	21	31	S	W	Y	6.0	6.0
Pathways YouthBuild	20	4	S	O	N		10.0
Portland YouthBuilders	75	113	S	O	Y	7.0	7.0
PPEP YouthBuild AmeriCorps	81	47	S	O	Y	7.0	8.0
YouthBuild Dayton CountyCorp	32	33	S	D	N	9.0	15.0
YouthBuild Louisville	23	33	S	D	Y	7.0	5.0
<i>Average Combined HSE/Diploma</i>	<i>42.0</i>	<i>43.5</i>				<i>7.2</i>	<i>8.5</i>
All Sites	791	950				7.8	10.2

\* Includes programs that were part of a charter or alternative school.

While it is not immediately clear how these differences impact the nature and quality of the service experience among the three program types, it is important to recognize that these differences exist and represent part of the context for the study. As we examine the data on the service experience and outcomes from the three types of programs, it will be helpful to keep those characteristics in mind.

### **YouthBuild AmeriCorps Participants in Intensive Study Sites**

As much as the study sites varied in their size, organization and programming, there were also substantial variations in the characteristics of program participants among the three program types. In most cases, the Diploma-only programs stood out as different from both the HSE-only and the Combined HSE/Diploma sites.

Overall, the programs reflected YouthBuild's focus on serving low-income, out-of-school youth: over 90% of participants entered without a high school credential and 89% qualified as economically disadvantaged. Roughly 83% of YouthBuild AmeriCorps members were young people of color; 16% were parents and a similar percentage were recently or currently homeless at entry. Nearly 80% entered YouthBuild scoring below 8<sup>th</sup> grade on their math assessments (63% scored below 8<sup>th</sup> grade in reading), and 30% qualified as English Language Learners (Table II-14).

Within that context, as Table II-14 shows, there were significant differences between participants in the three program types on a number of measures:

- YouthBuild AmeriCorps participants in Diploma-only programs were likely to be older than enrollees in HSE or Combined HSE/Diploma programs and more likely to enter YouthBuild without some form of high school credential.
- Diploma-only participants were more likely to be female (45.4%) than participants in the other program types (HSE-32%, Combined-37%).
- Diploma-only programs had a much higher proportion of Asian participants (42%), while HSE and Combined HSE/Diploma programs tended to serve higher percentages of Black and Hispanic students.
- Diploma-only participants were less likely to be currently or recently homeless or ex-offender than the other types of programs: HSE-only programs had the highest percentage of homeless participants (12%) and Combined HSE/Diploma programs had a substantially higher percentage of youth who were ex-offenders at entry (29%).
- Diploma-only programs accepted a substantially higher percentage of participants with entry-level reading and math scores that were below the 8<sup>th</sup> grade level: 91% of Diploma-only participants scored below 8<sup>th</sup> grade in Math compared to 65% in HSE-only programs and 81% in Combined HSE/Diploma; 78% scored below 8<sup>th</sup> grade in reading compared to 52% and 54% in the HSE-only and Combined HSE/Diploma programs.
- On the other hand, Diploma-only programs were substantially more likely to include students who were not officially economically disadvantaged – nearly 20% of diploma students fell into that category compared to 3% among HSE students and 6% in the Combined HSE/Diploma programs.

- Finally, Diploma-only students were substantially more likely to include English Language Learners, with 58% of diploma participants falling into that category. In large part, that figure reflects the inclusion of the GAP program in St. Paul, MN, one of the larger diploma programs in the sample whose participants are primarily from the Southeast Asian refugee community.

The one measure in which programs showed no significant difference was the proportion of participants who were parents at entry, with all three programs showing 15%-17% of their participants as parents or guardians at program entry.

While many of these differences are statistically significant (i.e., not likely to have occurred purely by chance), they need to be interpreted with some caution. In a number of cases, they likely reflect some of the characteristics of the individual programs in a particular category, rather than a characteristic of the program type as a whole. As noted above, for example, the GAP program is relatively large and services a high percentage of Southeast Asian participants. The high percentage of Asian and English Language Learners served by diploma programs likely reflects the inclusion of GAP in that category. At the same time, the differences in characteristics like gender, entry level math and reading scores, and support for homeless or ex-offenders may reflect real differences in the nature of the program experience among the different types of programs. In order to minimize the influence of these population differences and keep the focus of the analysis on the programmatic differences among the three program types, we control for a number of demographic characteristics in the analyses of service experiences and program outcomes.

**Table II-14: Participant Characteristics by Program Type**

		Program type							
		HSE Only		Diploma Only		Combined HSE/Diploma		Total	
		N	Percent	N	Percent	N	Percent	N	Percent
Has Credential at Entry***	None	286	92.9%	369	96.9%	233	89.3%	888	93.5%
	Diploma/HSE	22	7.1%	12	3.1%	28	10.7%	62	6.5%
Gender***	Male	208	67.8%	208	54.6%	165	63.5%	581	61.3%
	Female	99	32.2%	173	45.4%	95	36.5%	367	38.7%
Race/Ethnicity***	White	61	19.8%	30	7.9%	67	25.7%	158	16.6%
	Asian	11	3.6%	161	42.3%	5	1.9%	177	18.6%
	Black	160	51.9%	72	18.9%	88	33.7%	320	33.7%
	Hispanic	73	23.7%	113	29.7%	91	34.9%	277	29.2%
	Other	3	1.0%	5	1.3%	10	3.8%	18	1.9%
Parent or Guardian	Neither	255	82.8%	316	82.9%	223	85.4%	794	83.6%
	Parent or Primary Caregiver	53	17.2%	65	17.1%	38	14.6%	156	16.4%
Housing Status**	Neither	249	88.0%	357	94.9%	233	89.6%	839	91.3%
	Current/Recent Homeless	34	12.0%	19	5.1%	27	10.4%	80	8.7%
Offender Status***	None	223	80.5%	356	94.2%	186	71.3%	765	83.5%
	Adult/Youth Offender	54	19.5%	22	5.8%	75	28.7%	151	16.5%
Math Level at Entry***	Below 8th Grade	194	64.7%	170	91.4%	209	81.0%	573	77.0%
	8th Grade and Above	106	35.3%	16	8.6%	49	19.0%	171	23.0%
Reading Level at Entry***	Below 8th Grade	158	52.3%	287	78.0%	138	53.5%	583	62.8%
	8th Grade and Above	144	47.7%	81	22.0%	120	46.5%	345	37.2%
Economically Disadvantaged***	Non-Disadvantaged	10	3.2%	76	19.9%	16	6.1%	102	10.7%
	Disadvantaged	298	96.8%	305	80.1%	245	93.9%	848	89.3%
English Language Learner***	Non-ELL	295	95.8%	162	42.5%	211	80.8%	668	70.3%
	ELL	13	4.2%	219	57.5%	50	19.2%	282	29.7%
Age**	Average Age	308	19.41	381	19.78	261	19.25	950	19.51

Source: DYB reporting data for AmeriCorps participants in study sites (unweighted), N=950. Asterisks (\*) indicates statistical significance: \* $p \leq .05$ , \*\* $p \leq .01$ , \*\*\* $p \leq .001$ .

## **Chapter III**

### **Differences in the Service Experience among Program Types**

One of the key questions for the study is whether there are substantial differences in the nature and quality of the service experience among the three types of YouthBuild AmeriCorps programs. What kinds of service activities take place within each type of program? Are there differences in the intensity of service (duration and total hours), the degree of hands-on service provided, and/or the extent of direct engagement with community members and local partner organizations? Do the programs differ in the degree of staff support they provide YouthBuild AmeriCorps members in their education and training activities? And are there differences in what YouthBuild AmeriCorps participants perceive as the benefits of their service experience and the degree to which they were able to see themselves growing and contributing through their service experience?

The DYB data and participants surveys collected for the study suggest that while all three program types provide a positive, high quality service experience, there are some significant differences among the three program types in the nature and extent of service and in the service experience itself. While the Diploma-only programs tended to provide the most hours of service among the three program types, participants in the Combined HSE/Diploma programs generally reported higher quality, more engaging service experiences than either of the other two program types. Though the results may reflect the strengths of the specific programs in the sample (a caution that will be repeated throughout the report), they suggest that the more comprehensive Combined HSE/Diploma programs may be able to deliver a somewhat stronger service experience than the HSE or Diploma-only programs.<sup>15</sup>

#### **Types of Service Experiences**

One of the more challenging elements of the service experience to track and assess is the type of service experienced by AmeriCorps members. While most programs focused on a primary service – construction in most cases, health care, digital technology, recycling and conservation in others – participants frequently engage in multiple forms of service, and most YouthBuild AmeriCorps programs include a substantial amount of secondary service as part of their program model. That mix of service experiences often makes it difficult to establish an accurate record of participants' service experience.<sup>16</sup>

The DYB data provides a rough indication of the differences in service types among the three program types. Table III-1 shows the primary service reported for AmeriCorps participants in the intensive study sites. Based on that data, the HSE-only programs were significantly more focused on construction service than the other program types, though construction was by far the most common form of service in all three types of programs. The Diploma-only and Combined HSE/Diploma programs reported a more diverse mix of service experience among their participants, with at least a modest percentage

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<sup>15</sup> Unless otherwise indicated, all analyses in this and following chapters are based on DYB and survey data that is weighted so that all sites in the sample are equally represented. All analyses also include controls for participant characteristics at baseline, including: credential at entry, gender, race (Asian, Black/Hispanic), housing status, offender status, entry reading level, economically disadvantaged, and age at entry.

<sup>16</sup> The DYB reporting system, for example, now generally only lists the primary service. Previous versions of the reporting system reported service in more detail, including multiple types of service activities.

reporting involvement in healthcare and digital service than in the HSE-only sites. This parallels the program level data in Chapter II, in which Diploma-only and Combined HSE/Diploma programs were more likely to report providing non-construction service opportunities.

**Table III-1: Primary Service Activities by Program Type, DYB Data**

Service Types	Program Type***							
	HSE Only		Diploma Only		Combined HSE/Diploma		Total	
	N	Percent	N	Percent	N	Percent	N	Percent
Construction	353	92.9%	235	82.7%	227	79.1%	815	85.7%
Healthcare	2	0.5%	30	10.6%	36	12.5%	68	7.2%
Digital	1	0.3%	18	6.3%	24	8.4%	43	4.5%
Community, Other	24	6.3%	1	0.4%	0	0.0%	25	2.6%
Total	380	100.0%	284	100.0%	287	100.0%	951	100.0%

Source: DYB reporting data for AmeriCorps participants in study sites (weighted), N=950. Asterisks (\*) indicates statistical significance between program types: \* $p \leq .05$ , \*\* $p \leq .01$ , \*\*\* $p \leq .001$ .

The participant survey data presents a somewhat different picture. The surveys asked AmeriCorps participants to report the proportion of time they spent in each of the different types of service, with responses including: “Did not do this type of service,” “Less than half of my service time,” “About half of my service time,” “More than half of my service time,” and “All of my service time.” Table III-2 shows the percentage of respondents who reported spending either “More than half” or “All” of their service time in each type of service. (It must be noted that a number of survey respondents reported more than a full-time equivalent of service.) These responses indicate a more even distribution of service experiences among the three types of programs. The survey data still shows a significant difference among the three program types in the percentage of participants reporting construction as the main service experience, but in contrast to the DYB data, participants in the Diploma-only and Combined HSE/Diploma programs were more likely to report spending most or all of their time on construction. At the same time, the levels of involvement in Healthcare, Digital, and Recycling were much more evenly distributed among program types. Combined HSE/Diploma participants were significantly less likely to report “Other” service activities, though the differences are not large.

The simplest conclusion may be that construction continues to be the predominant service experience among YouthBuild’s AmeriCorps members, but that a substantial proportion of members across all three program types have opportunities to experience other types of service as well. This is consistent with the telephone interviews and site visits conducted as part of the study. A key finding from those interviews and visits was that all programs placed a high degree of emphasis on engaging YouthBuild AmeriCorps participants in service, through both primary service and regularly organized secondary service activities. It seems likely that the mix of data available on the types of service reflects that mix of on-the-ground experiences where participants across the board often have an opportunity to engage in multiple kinds of service activities during their time in YouthBuild, though many of those experiences are in fact secondary service.

**Table III-2: Primary Service Activity by Program Type, Participant Survey Data**

Please indicate how much of your service time you spent doing each type of service (Percent “More than half” or “All”)	Program Type							
	HSE Only		Diploma Only		Combined HSE/Diploma		Total	
	N	Percent	N	Percent	N	Percent	N	Percent
Construction***	201	49.3%	146	61.0%	180	67.8%	527	58.8%
Healthcare	188	16.5%	137	24.8%	176	19.3%	501	19.8%
Digital	193	16.6%	145	20.0%	176	21.0%	514	19.1%
Recycle/Conservation	190	24.2%	132	24.2%	175	23.4%	497	23.9%
Community, Other*	198	30.8%	145	31.0%	174	22.4%	517	28.0%

Source: Participant surveys in study sites (weighted), N=582. Percentages are unadjusted percentages. Significant differences for individual items assess using LOGIT controlling for baseline participant characteristics. Asterisks (\*) indicates statistical significance between program types: \*p<.05, \*\*p<.01, \*\*\*p<.001.

### Service Hours

The differences among programs in the hours of service performed are more distinct, with participants in Diploma-Only programs providing significantly more hours of service than participants in either the Combined HSE/Diploma or the HSE-only programs (Table III-3). Among all enrollees (including those still active in the YouthBuild program), participants in Diploma-only programs averaged more than 25% more hours of service than participants in the Combined HSE/Diploma programs (474 hours vs. 375) and roughly 40% more hours than participants in HSE-only programs (474 vs. 336). Among program completers – those that had successfully exited their YouthBuild programs – the differences are comparable: Diploma-only participants performed more than 30% more hours than participants in the Combined HSE/Diploma programs (568 vs. 430) and nearly 50% more hours than those in the HSE-only programs (568 vs. 383).

**Table III-3: Service Hours by Type of Program**

	Program Type							
	HSE Only		Diploma Only		Combined HSE/Diploma		Total	
	N	Average Hours	N	Average Hours	N	Average Hours	N	Average Hours
All YB AmeriCorps Enrollees***	307	336.12	151	<b>473.72</b>	199	375.09	657	394.98
Program Completers***	212	382.95	106	<b>567.640</b>	137	429.91	455	460.167

Source: DYB reporting data for AmeriCorps participants in study sites (weighted). Averages are estimated means based on GLM Univariate analysis controlling for participant characteristics at baseline. Asterisks (\*) indicates statistical significance between program types: \*p<.05, \*\*p<.01, \*\*\*p<.001. **Bold italics** indicate that program type is significantly different from at least one other program type at p<.05.

This difference likely reflects the longer duration of the Diploma-only programs in the sample. As noted earlier, the duration of the average Diploma-only program in the sample was nearly 12 months, compared to 8 months for the average HSE-only and Combined HSE/Diploma programs. On average,

participants in Diploma-only programs also spent significantly more days enrolled in YouthBuild than participants in either HSE-only or Combined HSE/Diploma programs (362 days vs. 325 days in HSE-only programs and 275 in Combined HSE/Diploma programs). Given the longer duration of the programs and the longer time in YouthBuild, it is also not surprising that participants in Diploma-only programs were also more likely to enroll in AmeriCorps more than once. Roughly 11% of Diploma-only participants enrolled in AmeriCorps for a second year, compared to 5% of HSE-only participants and 2.4% of those in Combined HSE/Diploma programs.<sup>17</sup>

### **Service Experiences**

While the Diploma-only programs provided more hours of service, the Combined HSE/Diploma programs appeared to provide a significantly more engaging service experience, based on the participant survey data. At the end of their program experience, participant survey respondents were asked how frequently they experienced a number of key elements associated with a high-quality service experience. As Table III-4 shows, on a number of these items, participants in Combined HSE/Diploma programs were significantly more likely to report that these experiences took place “Very Often” or “Always.”

Overall, there were statistically significant differences among the three program types on four of the six survey items: serving with other AmeriCorps members at the same location; serving in the community where you live; serving people who come from different backgrounds than you; and getting involved in planning the service. There was no overall difference among the three program types in the proportion of participants who reported direct contact with service beneficiaries or working as part of a team. On most of the items, even when there was not a significant difference overall among the three program types, the Combined HSE/Diploma programs showed significantly stronger results than at least one of the other program categories (generally the HSE-only programs).

- Combined HSE/Diploma participants were significantly more likely to report serving with other AmeriCorps members at the same location (74% vs. 51% and 50% for Diploma and HSE programs respectively).
- Combined HSE/Diploma programs were significantly more likely than Diploma-only programs to report serving in direct contact with service beneficiaries (65% vs. 49% and 54% for Diploma and HSE programs respectively). (Note that the overall difference among all three program types was not significant).
- Combined HSE/Diploma participants were significantly more likely than participants in HSE-only programs to serve in the community where they lived (60% vs. 49%) and significantly more likely than HSE-only participants to report serving people who come from different backgrounds than themselves (73% vs. 56%).
- Interestingly, participants in Combined HSE/Diploma programs were significantly less likely than participants in Diploma-only programs to report being involved in planning their service activities (40% vs. 51%).

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<sup>17</sup> Figures are based on data from the DYB reporting system.

**Table III-4: Characteristics of Service Experiences by Type of Program**

<i>How often do you do each of the following in the time you spent in AmeriCorps? (Percent “Very Often” or “Always”)</i>	Program Type							
	HSE Only		Diploma Only		Combined HSE/Diploma		Total	
	N	Percent	N	Percent	N	Percent	N	Percent
Serve with other AmeriCorps members at the same location***	203	49.9%	146	50.6%	182	<b>74.0%</b>	532	58.3%
Serve in direct contact with people who benefit from your service	196	53.5%	140	49.0%	182	<b>65.3%</b>	518	56.5%
Serve in the community where you live*	199	49.2%	141	55.4%	182	<b>60.3%</b>	522	54.8%
Get involved in planning your service*	194	45.9%	141	50.8%	183	<b>39.8%</b>	517	45.1%
Serve people who come from different backgrounds than you**	199	55.6%	144	58.4%	182	<b>72.6%</b>	524	62.3%
Work as part of a team	195	77.4%	141	82.7%	181	84.0%	518	81.1%
Service Experience Scale Score***	169	3.577	87	3.679	150	<b>3.947</b>	406	3.734

Source: Participant surveys in study sites (weighted), N=582. Percentages are unadjusted percentages. Significant differences for individual items assess using LOGIT controlling for baseline participant characteristics. Service scale assessed using GLM Univariate analysis controlling for baseline characteristics. Asterisks (\*) indicates statistical significance between program types: \* $p \leq .05$ , \*\* $p \leq .01$ , \*\*\* $p \leq .001$ . **Bold italics** indicate that program type is significantly different from at least one other program type at  $p \leq .05$ .

When the responses to the question in Table III-4 are combined into a single overall scale (running from 1 to 5), the Combined HSE/Diploma program results are, again, significantly higher than those for both the HSE and Diploma-only programs.

It is important to recognize that, while statistically significant, the differences among the three program types on a number of items are not large. But they do suggest that, on these measures, the Combined HSE/Diploma programs may be providing key elements of high quality service experiences more regularly than the other two program models.

### **Training and Support**

While there are differences on measures associated with the quality of the service experience provided by the three different program types, the opposite is true for participant ratings of the quality of training and support provided by YouthBuild program staff. At Table III-5 shows, on all of the items, the large majority of survey respondents rated their YouthBuild experience highly: over 88% of program participants rated the teaching and support, education and career advising, and personal support from counselors as “Good” or “Excellent.” Similarly, 86% or more of participants rated the support from other YouthBuild staff and training and support from worksite supervisors highly. Over 90% indicated that they had “Good” or “Excellent” opportunities to learn and practice leadership.

On most of these items, the results were comparable across the three program models – only one item, personal support from counselors, showed a significant difference among the three programs, with the

Combined HSE/Diploma programs showing a significantly higher rating than the HSE-only programs. While the differences among the three programs as a whole were not significant, Combined HSE/Diploma programs were rated significantly higher than HSE-only programs on the rating of training and support for worksite supervisors. When all of the items were combined into a single scale (from 1 through 4), these differences added up to an average rating that was significantly higher for the Combined HSE/Diploma programs than either of the other two program types. In sum, while the ratings of staff support were consistently high across all three programs, the Combined HSE/Diploma programs tended to be rated higher than the other two program models.

**Table III-5: Quality of Training and Staff Support by Program Type**

<i>How would you rate the quality of your experience and the support you received in your YouthBuild program? (Percent “Good” or “Excellent”)</i>	Program Type							
	HSE Only		Diploma Only		Both HSE/Diploma		Total	
	N	Percent	N	Percent	N	Percent	N	Percent
Teaching and support in the educational program	145	91.5%	208	88.8%	181	84.7%	534	88.1%
Education and career advising	143	88.2%	195	88.6%	183	90.3%	521	89.1%
Personal support from counselors*	148	85.2%	205	88.8%	182	<b>92.7%</b>	535	89.2%
Support from other YouthBuild staff	142	83.2%	195	87.6%	183	86.4%	520	86.0%
Training and support from worksite supervisors	142	86.9%	207	86.5%	182	<b>90.5%</b>	531	88.0%
Opportunities to learn and practice leadership	141	90.6%	196	93.4%	182	91.8%	519	92.1%
Support Scale***	173	3.328	87	3.195	150	<b>3.537</b>	410	3.353

*Source: Participant surveys in study sites (weighted), N=582. Percentages are unadjusted percentages. Significant differences for individual items assess using LOGIT controlling for baseline participant characteristics. Service scale assessed using GLM Univariate analysis controlling for baseline characteristics. Asterisks (\*) indicates statistical significance between program types: \* $p \leq .05$ , \*\* $p \leq .01$ , \*\*\* $p \leq .001$ . **Bold italics** indicate that program type is significantly different from at least one other program type at  $p \leq .05$ .*

### Impact of the Service Experience

The participant responses to questions about the impact or benefits of their service experience showed a similar pattern. Participants were asked to agree or disagree with a series of statements about the impact of their service experience. As with the questions about YouthBuild training and support, a high percentage of AmeriCorps survey respondents across all three programs responded positively. As Table III-6 shows, over 85% of participants “Agreed” or “Strongly Agreed” on each of the thirteen items in this set of questions:

**Table III-6: Impact of the Service Experience**

Thinking about your YouthBuild experience, how strongly do you agree or disagree with each of the following statements? (Percent "Agree" or "Strongly Agree")	Program Type							
	HSE Only		Diploma Only		Both HSE/Diploma		Total	
	N	Pct	N	Pct	N	Pct	N	Pct
I made a contribution to the community	148	86.5%	197	80.6%	184	88.5%	531	85.0%
I was exposed to new ideas and ways of seeing the world	143	90.0%	196	87.0%	184	93.8%	524	90.3%
I re-examined my beliefs and attitudes about myself	141	88.7%	199	84.6%	182	91.5%	523	88.1%
I changed some of my beliefs and attitudes	140	86.3%	194	83.5%	184	87.9%	520	85.8%
I felt like part of a community*	144	89.8%	199	<b>81.3%</b>	183	<b>90.8%</b>	525	86.9%
I learned more about the 'real' world	139	90.5%	194	83.2%	184	87.6%	518	86.7%
I made a difference in the life of at least one person*	141	90.3%	197	80.8%	184	<b>92.9%</b>	523	87.6%
I did things I never thought I could do	140	89.2%	196	81.8%	183	<b>92.5%</b>	520	87.6%
I had a chance to take on a leadership role***	143	86.5%	201	79.8%	185	<b>93.2%</b>	529	86.3%
I now make healthier decisions than I did before YB	141	87.3%	193	85.9%	184	90.9%	518	88.1%
My training helped me learn the skills I need to get a job in that field***	141	96.1%	206	<b>82.9%</b> <sup>†</sup>	184	<b>91.8%</b>	532	89.5%
I learned something that will help me succeed in postsecondary education or training	141	93.0%	195	86.1%	184	90.9%	520	89.7%
I learned something that will help me succeed in my career	141	94.6%	197	89.5%	184	92.7%	522	92.0%
Service Impact Scale***	166	3.294	87	3.318	150	<b>3.606</b>	403	3.406

Source: Participant surveys in study sites (weighted), N=582. Percentages are unadjusted percentages. Significant differences for individual items assess using LOGIT controlling for baseline participant characteristics. Service scale assessed using GLM Univariate analysis controlling for baseline characteristics. Asterisks (\*) indicates statistical significance between program types: \*p≤.05, \*\*p≤.01, \*\*\*p≤.001. **Bold italics** indicate that program type is significantly different from at least one other program type at p≤ .05.

<sup>†</sup>Despite lower raw percentages, adjusted data shows Diploma sites more likely to agree/strongly agree compared to HSE-only sites.

- More than 85% of respondents agreed that, as a result of their service experience, they had made a contribution to the community; felt like part of a community; and made a difference in the life of at least one person.
- A similar percentage (86-90%) agreed that they were exposed to new ideas, re-examined and changed some of their beliefs and attitudes; learned more about the “real” world; and did things that they never thought they could do.

- 86% agreed that they had a chance to take on a leadership role; 88% reported they now made healthier decisions than before joining YouthBuild, and 90-92% reported gaining new skills and knowledge that would help them in their career and postsecondary education and training.

Only a few of the items (those with asterisks) showed significant differences overall among the three program types. However, on a number of those items, participants in the Combined HSE/Diploma programs were significantly more likely to agree or strongly agree than those from HSE-only or Diploma-only programs: Combined HSE/Diploma participants were significantly more likely to report feeling like part of a community, that they made a difference in the life of at least one person, and that they did things they thought they were never be able to do. They were also significantly more likely to agree that their training helped them learn skills needed to get a job. As with both of the prior sets of questions, when the items are combined into a single scale, the average responses from the Combined HSE/Diploma programs were significantly higher than those of either of the other two program models.

Again, it is important to recognize that these differences, while statistically significant, are taking place within a generally strong set of positive responses. On each of the items in this group, 80% or more of the participants responded positively from each of the three program groups. In that regard, the conclusion from these analyses is not that any program type does poorly, but rather that among a relatively strong group of responses, the Combined HSE/Diploma programs appear to consistently provide a somewhat stronger, more effective service experience than the other two programs. As Chapter IV discusses, the strength of the Combined HSE/Diploma service experience is further reflected in a number of service-related program outcomes.

## Chapter IV

### Participant Outcomes

The analysis from the preceding chapter shows that while all three types of YouthBuild AmeriCorps programs provide a strong, positive service experience, the Combined HSE/Diploma programs consistently score higher on measures of the quality of the service experience. Though Diploma-only programs generally provide more service hours than the other program types, the Combined HSE/Diploma programs tend to provide more direct engagement of service participants with service beneficiaries and a stronger sense of connection to the community.

The question remains whether those differences in the service experience translate into differences in program outcomes. Are there significant differences in outcomes among the three types of YouthBuild AmeriCorps programs in terms of core program measures, including program completion, credential attainment, AmeriCorps Education Award attainment, employment and/or postsecondary placement? Are there differences in measures of personal and civic development (e.g., educational aspirations, sense of educational competence, leadership, civic engagement, civic and workplace skills, and commitment to future service)? To what extent can we link differences in the service experience and variations in program outcomes?

The DYB reporting system and survey data examined in this chapter suggest that there are significant differences for a number of outcomes among the three types of YouthBuild AmeriCorps programs. In terms of YouthBuild's core program outcomes, HSE-only participants had higher program completion and job placement rates than the Diploma-only and Combined HSE/Diploma programs, but participants in the Diploma-only programs were significantly more likely to earn their credential and their AmeriCorps Education Award and to enroll in postsecondary education. On the other hand, on most measures of educational goals, civic and educational attitudes, and workplace-related skills, participants in the Diploma-only and the Combined HSE/GED programs were more likely to show gains than participants in the HSE-only programs. As noted earlier, while statistically significant (i.e., unlikely to have occurred by chance), the differences among programs are not generally large. But, they do suggest that the Combined HSE/Diploma programs and the Diploma-only programs generally produce better outcomes in education and civic and educational attitudes than the HSE-only programs in the study.

#### Program Outcomes

Not surprisingly, there are significant differences in the core YouthBuild AmeriCorps program outcomes among the three program types, reflecting, in part, the different focus and emphases of the different types of programs. Table IV-1 presents the results for the three program types for five key outcomes: YouthBuild program completion, attainment of a secondary credential (HSE or Diploma), placement in employment or postsecondary education, and completion of at least one AmeriCorps education award.<sup>18</sup> As the table shows, there are statistically significant differences between the programs on all

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<sup>18</sup> The analysis of program completion is based on those AmeriCorps participants who were reported as completing YouthBuild successfully or who dropped out or were terminated for disciplinary reasons. Active participants and those who left for reasons out of their control (illness, family moves, etc.) were excluded. Analysis of credential earned includes program completers who entered YouthBuild without a credential. Analysis of placements and education award includes all program completers.

five outcome measures. HSE-only programs showed the strongest program completion results, with an 89.5% completion rate, compared to 84% for Diploma-only programs and 80% for the Combined HSE/Diploma programs. HSE-only programs also showed the strongest results in terms of placement in employment, with an 81% placement rate compared to 72.5% for the Combined HSE/Diploma programs and 60% for the Diploma-only programs. In this instance, both the HSE-only and Combined HSE/Diploma programs showed significantly stronger results than the Diploma-only programs.

**Table IV-1: Program Outcomes by Program Type**

Program Outcome	Program Type							
	HSE Only		Diploma Only		Combined HSE/Diploma		Total	
	N	Percent	N	Percent	N	Percent	N	Percent
Program Completion**	304	<b>89.5%</b>	241	84.2%	265	80.4%	810	84.9%
Earned Diploma/GED***	245	56.3%	179	<b>82.1%</b>	182	69.2%	606	67.8%
Placed in Job***	271	81.2%	203	<b>60.1%</b>	213	73.2%	687	72.5%
PSE Placement***	272	11.4%	203	<b>19.7%</b>	213	8.0%	688	12.8%
Earned Ed Award***	272	57.4%	203	<b>73.4%</b>	213	50.2%	688	59.9%

Source: DYB reporting data for AmeriCorps participants in study sites (weighted), N=950. Percentages are unadjusted percentages. Significant differences for individual items assess using LOGIT controlling for baseline participant characteristics. Asterisks (\*) indicates statistical significance between program types: \* $p \leq .05$ , \*\* $p \leq .01$ , \*\*\* $p \leq .001$ . **Bold italics** indicate that program type is significantly different from at least one other program type at  $p \leq .05$ . Analysis of program completion excludes active participants and “other exits” who left the program for reasons beyond their control (moving, illness, etc.). Analysis of credential earned includes program completers who entered YouthBuild without a credential. Analysis of placements and education award includes all program completers.

On the other hand, Diploma-only programs showed significantly stronger results on the other three program measures. Diploma-only participants were significantly more likely to complete a secondary credential than those in either of the other two programs (82% vs. 68% Combined HSE/Diploma and 56% HSE-only). In this case, the HSE-only results were significantly lower than those of either of the other two program types. Diploma-only programs were also significantly more successful in enrolling graduates in postsecondary education, and Diploma-only program completers were significantly more likely to earn an AmeriCorps Education Award than those in either of the other two types of programs. As noted in Chapters II and III, Diploma-only programs provided a significantly longer program experience than the other two program types, and their participants tended to perform significantly more hours of service. That said, when variables for hours of service or days enrolled in YouthBuild are entered into the analyses, they show only a minor influence on the results. It seems more likely that the Diploma-only programs include a stronger orientation to educational outcomes and may place more emphasis on the AmeriCorps Education Award as part of an overall focus on postsecondary education.

### **Educational Attitudes and Goals**

While the Diploma-only programs showed the strongest results on several of the YouthBuild education-related program outcomes, there were fewer differences among the program types on measures of educational goals and attitudes. When there were significant differences, the Diploma-only and Combined HSE/Diploma programs tended to show the stronger results.

Table IV-2 shows one analysis of changes in educational goals among the different groups of program participants. In this instance, participants were asked to indicate the importance of achieving several key education and career goals before joining YouthBuild and “now” (i.e., at program exit). Goals included completing a GED or diploma, going on to trade or technical school, and enrolling in 2- or 4-year college or graduate school. The table shows the percentage of participants who rated each goal as “Very Important” (a 3 or 4 on a 4-point scale). On almost every measure, participants in all three program types showed positive, significant gains in how much importance they placed on each educational goal: that is, significantly more participants rated each goal as “very important” at the end of their time in YouthBuild than before they joined the program. The two exceptions were in the Diploma-only programs, whose participants were most likely to indicate a high importance of attending 4-year college and graduate school at baseline and consequently showed little change on those measures from pre to post. While this analysis helps to show the overall changes in attitudes among YouthBuild participants, it does not allow for the analysis of differences between program types or control for the demographic characteristics of participants in the different programs.

**Table IV-2: Educational Goals by Program Type, Pre/Post Change**

*How important is each of the following goals for you?  
(Percent "Very Important" – 3 or 4 on 4 point scale)*

	<b>N</b>	<b>Baseline</b>	<b>Post</b>	<b>Difference</b>
<b>Completing your GED or high school diploma?</b>				
HSE-only	197	72.1%	90.9%	18.8%
Diploma-only	143	80.4%	89.5%	9.1%
Combined HSE/Diploma	180	75.0%	88.9%	13.9%
Total	520	75.6%	90.0%	14.4%
<b>Getting a job as soon as possible?</b>				
HSE-only	201	71.1%	89.6%	18.5%
Diploma-only	142	81.0%	92.3%	11.3%
Combined HSE/Diploma	185	78.9%	94.6%	15.7%
Total	528	76.7%	91.9%	15.2%
<b>Getting training or an apprenticeship that would help you earn a living over the long term?</b>				
HSE-only	196	64.3%	82.7%	18.4%
Diploma-only	141	64.5%	88.7%	24.2%
Combined HSE/Diploma	184	68.5%	91.8%	23.3%
Total	520	65.8%	87.7%	21.9%
<b>Going to a trade or technical school?</b>				
HSE-only	196	48.5%	63.8%	15.3%
Diploma-only	141	55.3%	72.3%	17.0%
Combined HSE/Diploma	181	54.1%	76.2%	22.1%
Total	517	52.2%	70.6%	18.4%
<b>Going to a two-year college?</b>				
HSE-only	192	52.1%	74.0%	21.9%
Diploma-only	141	67.4%	78.0%	10.6%
Combined HSE/Diploma	184	55.4%	77.2%	21.8%
Total	516	57.4%	76.4%	19.0%
<b>Going to a four-year college?</b>				
HSE-only	198	47.0%	67.7%	20.7%
Diploma-only <sup>†</sup>	143	55.9%	62.9%	7.0%
Combined HSE/Diploma	184	51.1%	72.8%	21.7%
Total	523	50.9%	68.3%	17.4%
<b>Going to graduate school (master's degree, Ph.D., medical or law degree)?</b>				
HSE-only	196	45.9%	59.7%	13.8%
Diploma-only <sup>†</sup>	137	60.6%	63.5%	2.9%
Combined HSE/Diploma	182	47.8%	70.9%	23.1%
Total	516	50.6%	64.7%	14.1%

Source: Participant surveys in study sites (weighted), N=582. Percentages are unadjusted for baseline characteristics. Percentages indicate the percentage of participants reporting that each education goal is "Very Important" (a 3 or 4 on a 4-point scale) at baseline and post-program and the pre/post difference. All of the pre/post differences were statistically significant except those marked with a cross (†). Significance was assessed using the Chi Square McNemar analysis, which does not include controls for demographic characteristics.

Table IV-3 looks at the data from a slightly different perspective, examining the percentage of participants who showed an increase in the reported importance of each education goal from pre to post, again broken down among the three program types. In this case, the analysis includes the various adjustments for participant characteristics and allows a comparison among the three program types. The data in the table show that there were statistically significant differences between the three program types on only two of the seven education goals: going to a technical or trade school and going to a two-year college. On both of those measures, participants in the Combined HSE/Diploma programs were more likely to show a gain in interest in those educational outcomes than either of the other program types; on both measures the difference between the Combined HSE/Diploma programs and the HSE-only programs was statistically significant.

**Table IV-3: Educational Goals by Program Type, Percent Reporting Increase in Importance of Goals**

<i>How important is each of the following goals for you? (Percent that increased from Pre- to Post)</i>	Program Type							
	HSE Only		Diploma Only		Combined HSE/ Diploma		Total	
	N	Percent w/Gain	N	Percent w/Gain	N	Percent w/Gain	N	Percent w/Gain
Completing your GED or high school diploma?	197	33.5%	143	23.1%	180	26.1%	520	28.1%
Getting a job as soon as possible?	200	39.5%	142	29.6%	185	28.1%	527	32.8%
Getting training or an apprenticeship that would help you earn a living over the long term?	196	38.3%	142	35.9%	185	37.3%	523	37.3%
Going to a trade or technical school?***	196	38.8%	141	41.1%	181	<b>56.4%</b>	518	45.6%
Going to a two-year college?***	192	41.7%	141	34.8%	184	<b>53.8%</b>	517	44.1%
Going to a four-year college?	198	40.4%	142	31.0%	184	38.0%	524	37.0%
Going to graduate school (master's degree, Ph.D., medical or law degree)?	196	33.7%	138	26.8%	183	37.7%	517	33.3%

*Source: Participant surveys in study sites (weighted), N=582. Percentages are unadjusted and show percentages of participants reporting an increase in importance of the education/career goals from pre- to post. Significance assessed using LOGIT controlling for baseline participant characteristics. Asterisks (\*) indicates statistical significance between program types: \*p≤.05, \*\*p≤.01, \*\*\*p≤.001. **Bold italics** indicate that program type is significantly different from others at p≤.05.*

Table IV-4 shows the analysis of several other education-related attitudinal measures. The Educational Competence scale assesses participants' sense of educational self-efficacy, or the sense that they can influence or control their own educational success; the second group of scales assess the degree to which participants have gained an understanding of what they need to do to get into and succeed in postsecondary education, vocational training, and a job. The boxes on the next page list the items included in each scale.

<b>Educational Competence Scale</b>	<b>College/Career Knowledge Scale</b>
<p><i>For each of the following statements, please indicate how strongly you agree or disagree:</i></p> <p>It is very important to me to do the best that I can as a student</p> <p>If I decide to get good grades, I can do it</p> <p>I try hard in my classes</p> <p>When studying, I keep working even if the material is difficult</p> <p>If I need help in class, I ask for it</p> <p>If I want to learn something well, I can</p> <p>I will use what I learn in school after I graduate</p> <p><i>Cronbach's alpha pre = .943, post = .925</i></p>	<p><i>How much you feel you know about each of the following:</i></p> <p><i>College</i></p> <p>Why I should get training or education beyond HS or a GED</p> <p>What I need to do to get into college</p> <p>How to pay for college</p> <p>What going to college might be like</p> <p>The attitudes and skills I need in order to succeed in college</p> <p><i>Career</i></p> <p>What I need to do to get into a vocational training/certificate program</p> <p>How to pay for a vocational training/certificate program</p> <p>The attitudes and skills I need to be successful in a vocational training/certificate program</p> <p>Careers or jobs I might be interested in</p> <p>How to apply for a job</p> <p>The attitudes and skills I need to be successful in a job</p> <p><i>Cronbach's alpha pre = .941, post = .939 (All items), Pre=.900, post=.884 (College items) Pre=.895, post=.910 (Career items)</i></p>

The table provides several pieces of information for each of the scales. The numbers on the right show the pre- and post-program scale scores (the average of the responses to the items in the scale) and the pre/post difference for each of the three program types and the sample as a whole. On the left, the plus signs indicate whether the pre/post difference for the group as a whole is statistically significant, and the asterisks (\*) indicate whether there are statistically significant differences in the result between the three groups.

**Table IV-4: Educational Attitudes/College and Career Knowledge by Program Type**

<b>Outcome</b>	<b>Program Type</b>	<b>Pre</b>	<b>Post</b>	<b>Difference</b>
Educational Competence**	HSE Only	3.076	3.410	0.334
	Diploma Only	2.837	3.365	0.528
	Combined HSE/Diploma	3.146	3.724	0.578
	Total	3.020	3.500	0.480
College/Career Knowledge++***	HSE Only	2.898	3.293	0.395
	Diploma Only	2.517	3.128	0.611
	Combined HSE/Diploma	2.752	3.575	0.823
	Total	2.722	3.332	0.610
College Knowledge Subscale++***	HSE Only	2.915	3.315	0.400
	Diploma Only	2.615	3.182	0.567
	Combined HSE/Diploma	2.807	3.549	0.742
	Total	2.779	3.349	0.570
Career Knowledge Subscale++***	HSE Only	2.872	3.238	0.366
	Diploma Only	2.375	3.004	0.629
	Combined HSE/Diploma	2.709	3.605	0.896
	Total	2.652	3.282	0.630

*Source: Participant surveys in study sites (weighted), N=582. Pre/post differences assessed using GLM Repeated Measures analysis controlling for baseline characteristics. Plus sign (+) indicates positive, statistically significant pre/post gain for the population as a whole: +p≤.05, ++p≤.01, +++p≤.001. Asterisks (\*) indicates statistically significant difference between program types: \*p≤.05, \*\*p≤.01, \*\*\*p≤.001.*

As the table shows, there were substantial differences in the results among the three program types. For the measure of educational competence, while the scale scores went up from pre- to post for all the groups, the gains were not large enough for the sample as a whole to be statistically significant. However, there were statistically significant differences in the results among the three program types, with both the Diploma-only and Combined HSE/Diploma programs showing substantially larger gains than the HSE-only programs.<sup>19</sup>

For the college and career-related scales, the pre/post gain for the sample as a whole was statistically significant and there also were significant differences in the results among the three program types. The College/Career scale includes all 11 of the scale items; the College and the Career subscales each include a subset of the items. In this case, all three versions of the scale show significant gains and significant difference among the groups, and in all three scales, the Combined HSE/Diploma and the Diploma-only participants show substantially greater gains than HSE-only participants.

Taken together, the data on the various education-related outcomes suggest that, not surprisingly, the Diploma-only and Combined HSE/Diploma programs were substantially more education-focused than the HSE-only programs and in a number of instances produced more positive results. Participants in the Diploma-only programs were significantly more likely to gain their secondary credential while in YouthBuild, to complete their AmeriCorps education award, and to enroll in postsecondary education. While there were fewer differences in the measures of gains in educational goals and attitudes, when there were differences, participants in the Diploma-only and the Combined HSE/Diploma programs generally showed larger gains than those in the HSE-only programs.

### **Civic Attitudes**

Another key goal of the study was to examine differences in impacts on civic attitudes among the three programs. Are there differences among the three in terms of service-related civic outcomes? Does the greater emphasis on academic achievement in Diploma-only programs translate into less emphasis on service and civic engagement? Or conversely, does the longer program cycle in the Diploma-only programs result in longer-term service that translates to increased civic engagement?

The participant survey data suggests that the Combined HSE/Diploma and the Diploma-only programs tend to produce greater gains on measures of civic attitudes and leadership than the HSE-only programs. Table IV-5 presents the results for two measures of civic attitudes: a civic engagement scale, which assesses the degree to which AmeriCorps participants feel connected to the community and capable and committed to making a difference; and a leadership scale, in which participants self-assess their leadership skills. The specific items for each scale are listed in the boxes on the following page.

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<sup>19</sup> Note that this particular analysis method does not test the significance of the gains within the subgroups or whether the gains of each group are larger than another. As a result, all we can say is that the results among the three program types are significantly different from one another.

<b>Community Engagement Scale</b>	<b>Leadership Scale</b>
<i>Please indicate how strongly you agree or disagree:</i>	<i>Please indicate how strongly you agree or disagree:</i>
I feel very connected to my community	I am good at working on a team
I often talk with people I know about how larger political and social issues affect my neighborhood	When working on a team, I am willing to be a leader
I know what steps I can take to solve problems in my community	People in my life rely on me
It is important to me that my community sees me doing good work	If I need help, I know people I can go to
Helping my community is important to me	I am comfortable speaking in front of a large group
I try to help other people in my neighborhood	I respect people's ideas that are different from mine
I believe I can make a difference in my community	I am a self-confident person
I think it is important to volunteer in my community	I can motivate people to work together
It is important to vote	I have a positive future ahead of me
	In my community, there is an adult who believes I will be a success
	<i>Cronbach's alpha pre = .932, post = .922</i>
<i>Cronbach's alpha pre = .945, post = .933</i>	

As Table IV-5 shows, while there were pre/post gains for both scales for the participants as a whole, those average gains were not large enough to be statistically significant. At the same time, both scales showed statistically significant differences among the three program types. In both cases, the Combined HSE/Diploma programs showed the greatest gains, and both the Combined HSE/Diploma and Diploma-only programs showed substantially greater average gains than the HSE-only programs.

**Table IV-5: Civic Attitudes by Program Type**

<b>Outcome</b>	<b>Program Type</b>	<b>Pre</b>	<b>Post</b>	<b>Difference</b>
Community Engagement Scale**	HSE Only	2.550	3.007	0.457
	Diploma Only	2.190	2.822	0.632
	Combined HSE/Diploma	2.565	3.386	0.821
	Total	2.435	3.072	0.637
Leadership Scale***	HSE Only	2.949	3.299	0.350
	Diploma Only	2.625	3.170	0.545
	Combined HSE/Diploma	2.886	3.617	0.731
	Total	2.820	3.362	0.542

*Source: Participant surveys in study sites (weighted), N=582. Pre/post differences assessed using GLM Repeated Measures analysis controlling for baseline characteristics. Plus sign (+) indicates positive, statistically significant pre/post gain for the population as a whole: +p≤.05, ++p≤.01, +++p≤.001. Asterisks (\*) indicates statistically significant difference between program types: \*p≤.05, \*\*p≤.01, \*\*\*p≤.001.*

Two additional civic measures show a similar pattern of differences among the three program types. Both measures asked questions aimed at directly assessing interest in community engagement (volunteer service) and leadership activity. The first was, “How important is it for you to be involved in volunteer activities/community service to help your community?” The second defined leadership as “taking positive steps to make things go right for yourself, your family, your program, and your community” (a definition adapted from YouthBuild materials) and asked, “During the past 6 months, how often did you act as a leader in those ways?” Table IV-6 presents the percentages of participants who responded that volunteering/community service was “Moderately” or “Very” important at pre- and

post-program, and the percentage who indicated that they acted as leaders “Sometimes” or “Often” at the two points in time.

**Table IV-6: Volunteering and Leadership by Program Type**

<i>How important is it to you to be involved in volunteer activities/community service? (Percent “Moderately/Very Important”)*</i>	<b>N</b>	<b>Baseline</b>	<b>Post</b>	<b>Difference</b>	<b>Percent Showing Pre/Post Gain</b>
HSE-Only	198	37.4%	74.2%	36.8%	51.3%
Diploma-Only	137	43.1%	75.2%	32.1%	<b>54.1%</b>
Combined HSE/Diploma	182	44.0%	86.8%	42.8%	57.7%
Total	517	41.2%	78.9%	37.7%	54.3%
<b>In the past 6 months, how often did you act as a leader? (Percent Sometimes/Often)***</b>					
	<b>N</b>	<b>Baseline</b>	<b>Post</b>	<b>Difference</b>	
HSE-Only	199	60.8%	80.4%	19.6%	35.4%
Diploma-Only	135	53.3%	82.2%	28.9%	<b>43.3%</b>
Combined HSE/Diploma	183	42.6%	90.2%	47.6%	<b>63.4%</b>
Total	517	52.4%	84.3%	31.9%	47.4%

Source: Participant surveys in study sites (weighted), N=582. Percentages are unadjusted for baseline characteristics. All of the pre/post differences were statistically significant. Significance assessed using the Chi Square McNemar analysis, which does not include controls for demographic characteristics. Significant differences between programs assessed using LOGIT controlling for baseline characteristics. Asterisks (\*) indicates statistically significant difference between program types: \* $p \leq .05$ , \*\* $p \leq .01$ , \*\*\* $p \leq .001$ . **Bold italics** indicate that program type is significantly different from at least one other program type at  $p \leq .05$ .

On both questions, the pre/post gains were statistically significant for the participants as a whole and for those in each of the three program types: for the volunteering question, the percentage of participants reporting that volunteering/community service was “Moderately” or “Very” important increased significantly from pre- to post; for the leadership question, the percentage of participants reporting that they had acted as a leader “Sometimes” or “Often” also increased significantly from pre- to post. It is important to note that these results are based on changes in the raw, weighted percentages, without any adjustments for baseline demographic characteristics. However, they indicate that there were positive, significant gains across the different programs.

The column to the far right of Table IV-6 shows the percentage of participants in each program time that showed a gain. A LOGIT analysis of those differences, which controls for baseline demographic characteristics, found significant differences in the proportion of participants with gains among the three programs. For the volunteering question, the Diploma-only programs showed gains that were significantly greater than those for HSE-only programs (though not reflected in the raw percentages in the table); for the leadership question, both the Combined HSE/Diploma and Diploma-only programs showed significantly greater gains than HSE-only programs. On this question, the gains for the Combined HSE/Diploma programs were also greater than those for Diploma-only programs as well.

As with the findings on the education-related outcomes and attitudes, the data on civic and leadership measures suggests that, while all three program types are producing positive results, the Combined HSE/Diploma and Diploma-only programs are providing significantly stronger results than the HSE-only programs.

### Civic and Workplace-Related Skills

Finally, the participant surveys included a set of questions addressing “21<sup>st</sup> Century” civic and workplace skills: solving problems, finding information, working with others, managing time, and communicating at work and in the community. Participants were asked to rate their skills (“How well can you do each of the following”) before they joined YouthBuild and “now,” with ratings ranging from “Not at All” to “Very Well.” Table IV-7 shows the pre/post results for the sample as a whole. There were substantial gains for each item in the percentage of participants reporting that they could do each task “pretty well” or “very well,” and all of those gains were statistically significant, using an analysis that does not adjust for baseline characteristics. However, the overall scale score also shows statistically significant gains in an analysis that does take baseline characteristics into account.

**Table IV-7: Civic/Workplace Skills, All Participants**

<i>How well can you do the following?</i>	Percent “Pretty Well” or “Very Well”			
	N	Pre	Post	Difference
Solve unexpected problems	485	31.8%	93.4%	61.6%
Find and use the resources that I need to complete a project or task	484	36.4%	93.2%	56.8%
Listen and respond to other people's suggestions or concerns	483	50.7%	94.6%	43.9%
Resolve conflicts between people	482	37.3%	90.7%	53.4%
Find the right person or organization to talk with to address an issue in my community	484	32.9%	86.6%	53.7%
Negotiate, compromise, and get along with co-workers and supervisors	483	45.8%	93.2%	47.4%
Manage my time when I am under pressure	485	29.9%	90.1%	60.2%
Deal with uncomfortable or difficult working conditions	485	33.2%	92.4%	59.2%
Talk to someone I don't know about something I think is important	477	30.2%	88.5%	58.3%
Make a presentation	478	31.4%	85.6%	54.2%
Write a letter or email to someone I don't know	484	27.7%	76.9%	49.2%
Work with neighbors to make a difference in my community	483	23.2%	82.0%	58.8%
Skills Scale (average of responses on all items)***		2.193	3.374	1.181

*Source: Participant surveys in study sites (weighted), N=582. Percentages are unadjusted and show percentages of participants responding “Pretty Well” or “Very Well” at pre- and post-program. All of the pre/post differences were statistically significant based on a Chi Square McNemar analysis, which does not include controls for demographic characteristics. Work-Related Skills scale score was assessed using GLM Repeated Measures analysis controlling for baseline characteristics. The overall pre/post gain for the scale score was significant at  $p \leq .001$ .*

Table IV-8 shows the data for the same items broken out by program type. As with the participant group as a whole, the basic pre/post analysis found positive statistically significant gains for participants in all three programs. However, the analysis also found significant differences among the three program types on all but one of the measures (ability to write a letter to a stranger). On all of the items where there was an overall difference between the three programs, either the Combined HSE/Diploma programs or the Diploma-only programs (in some cases both) had significantly greater gains than the HSE-only programs. On 8 of the 11 items with significant differences, the Combined HSE/Diploma programs showed the greatest gains; the Diploma-only programs had the largest gains on the other three items. The summary Skills Scale also showed a significant difference between the three programs, with both the Combined HSE/Diploma and Diploma-only programs showing higher scale scores than the HSE-only programs.

### **Summary of Participant Outcomes**

One of the core questions for this study is whether there are significant differences in outcomes among the three types of YouthBuild AmeriCorps programs under consideration (HSE-only, Diploma-only, and Combined HSE/Diploma). Is one or another of the program types consistently more effective in meeting YouthBuild AmeriCorps' goals, and/or does each model have its own strengths and/or challenges?

The DYB and participant survey data reviewed in this chapter show consistent differences among the three program models across a wide array of outcomes. In most of those cases, the Combined HSE/Diploma programs, and to a slightly lesser degree Diploma-only programs, show the strongest results. On most of the measures, the HSE-only programs, while providing positive results, show significantly smaller gains than the other two types of programs.

- In terms of the core YouthBuild program outcomes, HSE-only participants were significantly more likely to complete their YouthBuild program and to be placed in employment; however, Diploma-only participants were significantly more likely to leave YouthBuild with a secondary credential, to enroll in postsecondary education and training, and to successfully earn an AmeriCorps education award. On these measures, the Combined HSE/Diploma programs produced mixed results relative to the other two types of programs: their program completion, postsecondary enrollment, and education award attainment rates were the lowest of the three program types; however, they were in the middle of the three in terms of completion of a secondary credential and job placement. In that regard, the results for the Combined HSE/Diploma programs appeared to reflect their mixed structure, showing a moderate level of success on both education and career outcomes, but not as strong as either their HSE or Diploma-only counterparts.

**Table IV-8: Civic/Workplace Skills by Program Type**

<i>How well can you do the following? (Percent “Pretty Well” or “Very Well”).</i>	HSE Only				Diploma Only				Combined HSE/Diploma			
	N	Pre Pct.	Post Pct.	Difference	N	Pre Pct.	Post Pct.	Difference	N	Pre Pct.	Post Pct.	Difference
Solve unexpected problems*	179	38.5%	93.3%	54.8%	131	30.5%	93.1%	62.6%	175	25.7%	93.7%	<b>68.0%</b>
Find and use the resources that I need to complete a project or task**	180	40.6%	93.3%	52.7%	130	39.2%	93.8%	54.6%	173	29.5%	93.6%	<b>64.1%</b>
Listen and respond to other people's suggestions or concerns**	179	52.0%	93.9%	41.9%	131	45.0%	91.6%	<b>46.6%</b>	175	53.1%	97.1%	<b>44.0%</b>
Resolve conflicts between people***	179	46.9%	89.4%	42.5%	129	32.6%	87.6%	<b>55.0%</b>	174	31.6%	93.7%	<b>62.1%</b>
Find the right person or organization to talk with to address an issue in my community*	181	28.2%	78.5%	50.3%	130	32.3%	90.0%	<b>57.7%</b>	173	38.2%	92.5%	54.3%
Negotiate, compromise, and get along with co-workers and supervisors***	179	45.3%	93.9%	48.6%	131	32.8%	92.4%	<b>59.6%</b>	175	56.0%	92.6%	36.6%
Manage my time when I am under pressure***	180	38.3%	92.2%	53.9%	130	32.3%	82.3%	50.0%	175	19.4%	94.3%	<b>74.9%</b>
Deal with uncomfortable or difficult working conditions***	180	39.4%	91.7%	52.3%	130	32.3%	90.8%	58.5%	174	27.6%	94.3%	<b>66.7%</b>
Talk to someone I don't know about something I think is important**	180	32.8%	85.0%	52.2%	128	33.6%	88.3%	54.7%	169	24.9%	92.3%	<b>67.4%</b>
Make a presentation***	178	35.4%	82.0%	46.6%	130	35.4%	88.5%	53.1%	171	24.6%	87.1%	<b>62.5%</b>
Write a letter or email to someone I don't know	180	27.8%	83.3%	55.5%	129	34.9%	84.5%	49.6%	174	22.4%	64.9%	42.5%
Work with neighbors to make a difference in my community***	180	28.3%	77.8%	49.5%	130	22.3%	78.5%	56.2%	170	18.2%	89.4%	<b>71.2%</b>
Work-Related Skills Scale***	158	2.367	3.325	0.958	84	2.120	3.386	1.266	154	2.091	3.411	1.320

Source: Participant surveys in study sites (weighted), N=582. Percentages are unadjusted and show percentages of participants responding “Pretty Well” or “Very Well”. Significance for individual items assessed using LOGIT controlling for baseline participant characteristics. Asterisks (\*) indicates statistical significance between program types: \*p≤.05, \*\*p≤.01, \*\*\*p≤.001. **Bold italics** indicate that program type is significantly different from others at p≤ .05. Scale score was assessed using GLM Repeated measures, controlling for baseline characteristics.

- There were fewer differences on the measures of educational goals and attitudes, but where there were significant differences, the Diploma-only and Combined HSE/Diploma programs tended to show stronger results. Participants in all three types of programs reported an increased interest in achieving a variety of educational goals, including completing their high school credential, getting a job, and going on to further training or two- and four-year colleges. Only two of those measures showed significant differences between the program types, with Combined HSE/Diploma participants showing greater gains in interest in postsecondary training and enrollment in a two-year college. On the other hand, there were significant differences between program types on the scale score measures of Educational Competence and College and Career knowledge, in each case with the Combined HSE/Diploma and the Diploma-only programs scoring substantially higher than the HSE-only programs.
- There were also significant differences among the programs in the measures of civic attitudes. On the measure of community engagement, while the pre/post change was not statistically significant, there was a significant difference between the programs, with the Combined HSE/Diploma and Diploma-only programs showing greater gains than the HSE-only programs. The same pattern was found for the questions related to leadership-related attitudes and skills: there was no significant pre/post gain for participants as a whole, but there were significant differences between the three program types, with the Combined HSE/Diploma and Diploma-only programs showing the larger gains. On questions asking about the importance of volunteering and leadership experience, there were significant pre/post gains for the participant group as a whole and significant differences among the three program types. For the volunteering question, the Diploma-only participants were the most likely to show gains, while the largest gains on the leadership question were among Combined HSE/Diploma participants.
- Finally, on questions about 21<sup>st</sup> Century civic and workplace-related skills, gains were again evident across all three program types, but with significantly greater gains for the Combined HSE/Diploma and Diploma-only programs on all but one of the measures.

Looking across the mix of outcomes assessed in this chapter, several broad conclusions seem clear. First, all three program types are generally producing positive outcomes. On most of the attitudinal measures there were significant pre/post gains for all three program types, suggesting that all three are carrying out YouthBuild's broad goals of education, civic, and leadership development. At the same time, there are consistent differences across the programs, and in most cases, the Diploma-only and the Combined HSE/Diploma programs produced results that were significantly stronger than those for the HSE-only programs. As discussed further in the concluding chapter, while there are some clear structural differences between the three program types, there is no simple explanation (for example, in terms of program duration or service hours) for the difference in results. Rather, it seems likely that the differences reflect a combination of time, program capacity, and program culture. That said, the overall conclusion is that the Combined HSE/Diploma and Diploma-only programs appear to be providing a more effective program experience, even after taking into account differences in the populations that they serve.

## **Chapter V**

### **Voices from the Field:**

### **Perspectives on the YouthBuild AmeriCorps Service Experience**

While the survey and other data highlight program differences, the telephone interviews and site visits conducted for the study suggest that many core elements and lessons are common across program types and can be (and are) implemented regardless of setting. This chapter reviews the qualitative data about the YouthBuild AmeriCorps service experience obtained from three sources: the open-ended questions on the program survey, telephone interviews with staff from ten YouthBuild AmeriCorps programs in the intensive study sample, and site visits to two of those programs to talk further with staff and to gain the perspectives of program participants.<sup>20</sup> Both the survey questions and the interviews ask respondents about the nature and quality of the service experiences: how to balance and integrate service with a program’s educational and training components, what kinds of challenges programs faced in creating effective service experiences, and what aspects of service had the greatest impacts on program participants. In each case, the emphasis was on identifying best practices and exploring lessons learned.

Overall, the responses to the survey, interviews, and site visits suggested more similarities than differences in the service experience among the HSE-only, Diploma-only, and Combined HSE/diploma programs. They described a wide range of practices that programs identified as effective in enhancing members’ service experiences and outcomes, as well as a number of challenges they faced in implementing their service programs. All of these took place in different programs across the three program types. Respondents also discussed their sense of what members’ service experiences meant to the members. Two major themes flowed through the discussions. The first was the importance of integrating service fully in the overall program experience (along with strategies for accomplishing that); the second was the importance of face-to-face service experiences as having the greatest impact on program participants. The following sections present the responses from practitioners and young people on effective program strategies, challenges, and how service is made meaningful, with supporting quotations from the surveys, telephone interviews, and site visits.

#### **Perspectives from the Program Surveys**

The initial program surveys (discussed in Chapter II) included open-ended survey questions that asked respondents about four aspects of offering education, service, and training in their YouthBuild AmeriCorps programs. The items asked respondents to briefly describe how their academic education and service components were integrated; what challenges they faced in balancing education with occupational training and service; what strategies they used to create a culture of service; and what experiences most contributed to creating a commitment to service among their participants.

Table V-1 presents the questions and summarizes the responses from the 38 program surveys that were completed and provides a preview of the themes and responses that run through the rest of the chapter.

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<sup>20</sup> The quantitative data from the program survey is presented in Chapter II.

**Table V-1: Responses to Open-ended Questions from the YouthBuild AmeriCorps Program Description Survey**

Question	Responses (number of programs)
To what degree and how are your program’s academic/ education and service components integrated or connected?	All 38 described key strategies to explicitly link education with primary and secondary service as well as leadership/life skills development: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Applying classroom instruction to all service activities and to researching/planning secondary service (n = 30)</li> <li>• Centering lessons on service projects (n = 15)</li> <li>• Applying leadership/life skills training to service experiences (n = 5)</li> <li>• Staff strategies, such as regular team meetings (n = 4)</li> <li>• Requiring projects that link research and service. (n = 4)</li> </ul>
What are your program’s biggest challenges in balancing educational with service activities, occupational training, leadership activities, and life skills training?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Scheduling/logistics (n = 10)</li> <li>• Attendance (n = 8)</li> <li>• Achieving balance while also trying to meet individual students’ needs and build on their strengths (n = 7)</li> <li>• Time constraints (n = 7)</li> <li>• Other challenges (n = 6)</li> </ul>
What key strategies does your program use to create a culture of service?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Emphasizing service early and often (n = 15)</li> <li>• Encouraging/motivating students to commit to service (n = 11)</li> <li>• Promoting student buy-in and ownership of service (n = 9)</li> <li>• Building service into program operations (n = 8)</li> <li>• Understanding why we do service (n = 6)</li> </ul>
Which experiences do you think contribute most to creating a commitment to service among AmeriCorps participants?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Being supported in doing, and motivated to do, service (n = 16)</li> <li>• Broadly recognizing one’s impact (n = 14)</li> <li>• Seeing one’s impact directly (n = 12)</li> <li>• Participating in service with staff and other adults (n = 6)</li> </ul>

Source: YouthBuild Program Survey, N=38.

### Common Themes across Program Types

In addition to the surveys, as described in Chapter I, Brandeis staff conducted telephone interviews with staff at 10 of the 20 sites in the intensive study sample, with interviews lasting 60-90 minutes. Staff then conducted site visits to two of the programs – a Combined HSE/Diploma site and an HSE-only program – to talk further with staff and to interview program participants to gain their perspective. In both the interviews and site visits, the researchers asked about integrating service with education and training, challenges, and factors influencing a commitment to service and a culture of service. They also explored members’ community interactions through service; how programs prepared participants for and reflected on service experiences; youth involvement in planning and implementing service projects; and programs’ messages about education, work, and service. Additional questions concerned lessons about which practices, structures, and/or types of services were most closely related to positive member outcomes and a culture of service, and how the interviewees would advise a new YouthBuild AmeriCorps program about creating an effective service experience. Finally, the site visits enabled the research team to explore these issues more deeply and from more perspectives (the youth themselves, occupational training instructors, and others). In the analysis that follows, the responses from the interviews and focus groups are combined with responses to the open-ended questions on the program survey.

One theme that emerged from the interviews, surveys, and site visits was that there were more similarities than differences in practices across the three program types. Representatives from all three types of programs identified very similar effective service-related practices, challenges, and service impacts on members. The responses suggested that effective practices, which closely mirrored those of the YouthBuild approach generally, influenced the quality of the service experience and member outcomes more than which credential a site offered. The challenges and member reactions to service were also similar to those the research team has observed or heard about in its previous work with YouthBuild sites. .

The similarities in experiences were highlighted in the Combined HSE/Diploma programs. Most of those programs reported similar service experiences for diploma and HSE students: diploma/HSE students were in the same academic classes *and* mixed together in career pathways and secondary services in order to ensure similar service experiences, more opportunities for teamwork with a greater variety of people, successful program-wide secondary service experiences (since more students would know each other), and smoother transitions for students who might want to switch to the other credential. Similarly, none of the practices identified in the interviews as effective were associated more with one type of program than another. Instead, more often than not, as the discussions below illustrate, staff at multiple programs emphasized similar themes. While some programs may have had greater or lesser capacity to implement the effective practices identified here, the practices themselves were largely independent of program type and could be readily recommended across all types of YouthBuild programs.

The rest of this chapter focuses on the effective service-related practices, challenges, and impacts of service on members, as identified by the sites.

### **Effective Service-Related Practices**

This section discusses the practices most frequently identified as effective in the surveys, interviews, and site visits: explicitly integrating service throughout the program; building practices that reinforce service; instilling a program-wide culture of service; and supporting and motivating youth to create a commitment to service and yield better outcomes.

**Integrating Service Throughout the Program.** A consistent theme from the interviews and surveys was the importance of integrating service across YouthBuild program components to reinforce the importance of service and to provide multiple opportunities to make connections. Strategies included applying classroom instruction to service activities and to researching/planning secondary service; centering lessons on service projects; and applying leadership/life skills training to service experiences. One staff person noted, *“The impact of linking courses and service is often transformative: participants connect their intellect with the world outside the school.”* Another said, *“Putting classroom math to practical use in construction helps members really understand what they’re learning.”* While some representatives thought they could do a better job of integrating service with other program components, respondents consistently mentioned integration as an effective practice and a goal that they saw as important. Strategies reported in the surveys and interviews included the following:

- *Our math teacher goes to the job site; our construction instructor teaches math in the classroom.*

- *We have students prepare/present service proposals to reinforce writing, public speaking, and advocacy.*
- *English classes require written reflections on service.*
- *We link secondary service with primary service and lessons whenever we can.*
- *We have students provide services that help them hone academic skills – such as helping young children with reading or mentoring younger youth in community programs.*
- *During a garden project, our science teacher taught about photosynthesis, the water cycle, the role of bees in pollination, and the cell wall of plants.*
- *Students explored South American geography when they participated in a project benefiting a South American immigrant family.*
- *Civil rights lessons coincide with MLK Day of Service.*
- *For the hunger campaign, they learned how hunger affects the body and researched local hunger problems.*
- *After learning about the Little Free Library movement and its benefits, a math class used math skills to design and build these libraries.*
- *Young people researched community and social problems in class, selected activities to address them, and use math and writing to plan activities and chart successes.*
- *In our work with a food pantry, some clients appeared rude, but through developing life skills, our members can handle these situations. In construction, we divided into small crews, giving more youth leadership experience as they oversee their crew.*
- *We always try to dig deeper – like looking at our neighborhood’s history as well as policies that are associated with community problems or solutions.*
- *We look for teachable moments in service. Sometimes students will ask why service beneficiaries seem so angry. This gives us a chance to talk about mental health issues and empathy.*

**Building Practices that Reinforce Service.** Respondents also pointed to the importance of creating practices that enhance service experiences and/or reinforce a culture of service. Examples included:

- Making service an explicit part of daily, weekly, and monthly schedules and activities – requiring service and talking about service.
  - *We continually recognize service - we have a symbol, call-back, and even a hand gesture – and its meaningfulness.*
  - *Never underestimate recognition. People want to know their work matters. A ‘thank you’ is even more motivating than an incentive.*
- Requiring projects that link research and service.
  - *Students complete a capstone research/service project that encompasses all aspects of YouthBuild.*
- Quick response to community requests for help.
  - *When a community partner needs volunteers on short notice, we encourage individual members to help, or take everyone to work on the project together.*
- Having staff participate in service to reinforce it as an important aspect of the culture.

- Ensuring that staff attitudes and beliefs align with YouthBuild’s philosophy.
  - *Being qualified to teach or be a counselor isn’t enough. You have to buy into our service culture and into holding our young people accountable, while approaching them based on their strengths. This job isn’t for everyone. But if you have the right team, you’ll have the right outcomes.*
  - *If your staff doesn’t buy into YouthBuild from the very beginning, the youth will pick up on it.*
  - *You need staff who want to learn and are willing to keep learning. This helps them help the youth, but it also helps the youth to take steps toward becoming lifelong learners.*
  - *We have ongoing training for the entire staff.*
  - *As an organization you have to keep learning from experience and be continually evolving.*
  - *The staff makes our members feel cared about and supported, which makes all the difference.*
- Ensuring that the staff act as a team. With a team, young people are more likely to find the adult with whom they connect the best, and staff members know they have backup when their approach to a young person isn’t working.
  - *It takes a lot of time to ensure that staff are aligned. No shortcuts – this just takes time.*
  - *Avoid silos at all costs.*
- Maintaining a small staff-student ratio – *“Students need so much support.”*
- Using team meetings and other ways to unite different parts of the team and keep lines of communication open.
  - *The same team runs academic and service components.*
  - *Weekly staff meetings help staff link curricular objectives with their responsibilities. It is not unusual to have a counselor integrate fractions into a life skills discussion.*
  - *If students are working on fractions in class, we integrate fractions-related ‘words of the day’ into morning meeting and do demonstrations– usually a fun team project.*
  - *We meet weekly without the students to do a deeper dive into what’s going on and to manage and solve problems.*
  - *It’s important to be able to work in each other’s place.*
  - *Strong and transparent case management is effective. Everyone, including the student, knows everything about the plan, so the entire program supports the student in the same goals.*
  - *We work together to meet students’ basic needs. They can’t learn in class if they’re homeless or hungry.*
  - *You need a partner that provides the ‘wraparound’ services the youth – and often their families – need.*

**Instilling a Program-wide Culture of Service.** Programs reported on the importance of incorporating practices aimed at setting clear expectations for, doing, reflecting on, and celebrating service **early and often** – from recruitment to Mental Toughness and throughout the program.

- *We stress service during recruitment and candidate interviews. During Mental Toughness we discuss and do service. If this is not done right in the beginning you will not get buy-in, and the "culture" of service will not be deemed important.*
- *Mental Toughness sets the stage of a culture of service. Morning meetings and close outs along with staff consistency in language maintain it.*
- *We connect youth to the state and national movement. We recite the AmeriCorps pledge each morning and at community events.*
- *We lead sessions on power and privilege, civic reflection, and "what is service." Members take leadership roles in school-wide service projects.*

**Supporting and Motivating Members.** A focus on support and motivation also was identified as critical to creating a commitment to service and yielding other positive outcomes. Key aspects were program-wide affirmation practices (for which YouthBuild is known); helping members to change thought patterns; providing incentives for service; making service easy, meaningful, and fun; promoting buy-in and ownership; and helping members to recognize their impact.

Overall, programs reported the following steps, which are often cited as core elements of effective service-learning, as critical to service-related motivation and support:

- Framing, even "selling," the experience: Why are we doing this? What social problems does it address? How does it help our community?
- Helping members prepare, through discussion and research: What impact will it/ does it have on the individuals who benefit and on the community as a whole? On us?
- Helping them persevere, through debriefing, acknowledging efforts, and celebrating: How are things going (good and bad)? What have we accomplished?
- Helping them to reflect: What have we learned from this experience?

Program-wide *affirmation*, staff members noted, enhances members' personal development, strengthens their ability to work as a team, and builds them up so they can see themselves helping their community. Many YouthBuild members have had little affirmation in their lives before YouthBuild, and as one respondent said, "*It's amazing what a difference it makes.*" A number of programs find that morning or other meetings are ideal for structured, fun, and effective affirmation activities. Staff members' use of a strengths-based approach reinforces these efforts (as one interviewee said, "*We don't ask 'what's wrong with you?' That's what these kids have heard all their lives*"). Teamwork is another key to affirmation as youth learn to trust and be trusted and to feel "*we're all in this together.*" Finally, several programs mentioned that the "once in YouthBuild, always in YouthBuild" philosophy matters a lot to students.

Part of the practice of *motivating* YouthBuild AmeriCorps members is understanding that, given their backgrounds, many need to make changes in their thought patterns and expectations:

- *Educating youth about the right to serve and their ability to change lives.*
- *It's important to help students understand why you give of yourself and how it impacts others. This idea is new to many participants.*
- *Letting every student know that they are needed and wanted in their community and that there are opportunities for them to impact their community.*

- *Having our Mayor look them in the eye on their first day and tell them she needs their help.*
- *Even if students have negative thoughts about an experience, we as a staff help them see what they can learn and gain by engaging in their community and helping meet present needs.*
- *An important message is 'you CAN take on issues that you see.'*
- *It's all about mindset. My program changes the way I view the world.*
- *When I heard we were going to meditate in a park, I said, "we're gonna listen to birds?" But I liked being outside and quiet. And it helped me see why improving parks is such a good thing for our neighborhood.*

Several programs reported that incentives for service are motivating for many participants:

- *Members set annual service completion goals. When they reach the goal, they earn their "prom," a Service Ball held in the spring.*
- *Using social media to highlight projects; giving bonuses and high fives for going above and beyond.*
- *Tracking - monthly updates of service hours, quarterly assessment of which 'phase' they're in – helps keeps members on course. As they do everything they're supposed to do, they move to the next phase, which is very rewarding. With each phase comes more freedom and independence.*
- *We've made a direct connection between service and the stipend, which has been a good incentive.*
- *At first incentives helped get me to do service. Now I do it whether I get credit or not, and I feel rewarded for everything I do.*

Staff also said that they promote student buy-in and ownership, which they consider critical, by involving youth in selecting, planning, and leading secondary service and program activities. Some programs list "service" under "leadership development" on their websites and in program materials. One program had posters on the walls with questions designed to stimulate discussion about service, such as "How might we make vacant or blighted properties useful and desirable?" and "How might we improve neighborhood safety?"

- *We get them to take ownership of their learning and achievements and involve them in decisions that affect them and the program.*
- *The Policy Committee meets weekly with peers and the program director to discuss events, service projects, and youth-led endeavors.*
- *Youth participate in staff leadership meetings, public hearings, hiring interviews, and youth feedback platforms.*
- *Encouraging members to consider which secondary service opportunities **they** think will benefit **their** community leads to buy in.*
- *A critical factor in the service experience is connecting the service to the members' interests.*
- *We joined a service coalition that enables more students to connect to a broader service community.*
- *You have to find and speak to their individual motivation to get the "service light" to go on.*
- *We ask youth for feedback – pros, cons, and suggestions – about service experiences.*
- *We take cues from students as well as lead them.*

Staff and students both pointed out that making service easy, meaningful, and fun motivates and supports members and encourages youth to sign on. Offering as many service opportunities as possible

maximizes good matches and helps to ensure that the projects are varied and interesting. Ensuring that these opportunities are meaningful – members should be able to understand their impact – makes them more appealing. Staff and student observations include:

- *Providing service opportunities that youth can relate to makes it easier for them to engage.*
- *Have information about community needs available.*
- *The shared language provided by AmeriCorps is very valuable. Continually referring to the Segal Award and PSE helps to show we value students' service and career goals.*
- *Secondary service allows members to work in a variety of settings, which they enjoy.*
- *We schedule projects where staff, mentors, and volunteers work alongside our youth. Students like having adults around: they provide support and role models.*
- *Doing service as a team reinforces it and makes it fun, which is important.*
- *We cultivate a lot of partners so we can offer a lot of different service opportunities. We look for partners who can teach our members something and be good role models for them.*
- *A big lesson is to avoid random activities just to help the students gain service hours. Service has to have a purpose, and students need to understand the purpose.*

Finally, helping youth recognize their impact motivates and supports them, and helps them to commit to service. Seeing the broader impact provides youth with perspective on giving back to their communities. Seeing **direct** impact, however, is often key to “feeling” the impact. This is why so many staff and youth say that secondary service, in which youth are more likely to interact with service beneficiaries, is the most meaningful to them. Such personal interaction is not easy to arrange in primary service tracks. For example, in construction projects, members often don't get to meet the new owners; if they are working on housing for homeless people, there are confidentiality issues. That said, many programs reported finding ways to make service more immediate and meaningful to participants:

- *Staff reinforce how the AmeriCorps Pledge relates to making the community better, and how student efforts help this cause.*
- *We have alumni come back and talk to students about service.*
- *We work on getting them to embrace what it means to be part of the big picture to better our community.*
- *Those who travel to D.C. understand the larger network and national activities such as MLK Day.*
- *Discussing AmeriCorps Service history and its influence on self-confidence, self-worth, and youth leadership, and the fulfillment of making a difference in their communities.*
- *You have to provide education about the service site and the importance of the service.*
- *We talk about how construction-related secondary service helps us fulfill our commitment to affordable housing.*
- *In the Customer Service track, we talk about indirect impacts and apply customer service to secondary service projects, like saying “thank you” to families who come to the food distribution or serving hot drinks.*
- *There's a big difference between just cleaning off a lot and seeing vegetables grow as a result of planting, watering, and nurturing garden beds. They are so proud to take vegetables home and share the process it took to get the results.*
- *When we complete a house with Habitat, there is a ceremony recognizing our youth and giving keys to the new homeowners. What makes this even more emotional is that our youth know and have worked with the new owners, who must take part in the work to receive the home.*

- *When they see themselves making a difference in someone's life, they commit to service.*
- *In healthcare, it's hands-on interaction with patients and families and appreciation from hospital staff. In construction, it's hearing from grateful people who live in houses built by previous YouthBuild cohorts and hearing how having a place to live alleviated their hardships.*
- *If we fix a mobile home in a park where some of students live and they see how big a difference it makes in the lives of the often elderly/disabled people who live there, it is really powerful.*
- *We've worked hard in health and wellness to emphasize service impact and meaning – we're limited in interacting with patients and families due to privacy concerns.*
- *Any organization we provide service for has to agree to have their staff talk to students about their jobs and organizational mission and activities.*

Taken together, the comments, strategies and observations from staff and participants highlight the importance of integrating service across the program experience – making sure that it is reinforced in multiple ways on a daily basis from the beginning of the program through to graduation. While different program types offer different opportunities to accomplish this, the goal of integrating service is relevant and do-able across all program types.

### **Challenges**

Program staff reported several challenges to their ability to integrate and balance education, service, and other activities. These include scheduling conflicts; attendance; achieving balance while meeting members where they are; and time constraints.

**Scheduling.** Practitioners noted that when scheduling conflicts arise, plans that were intended to keep activities balanced go amiss. Such conflicts can arise from community partners' or outside educational providers' inflexible schedules, requirements related to the primary service track, trying to meet student needs, or trying to fit all the required activities into the time available.

- *Having to reschedule activities while maximizing opportunities, as when valuable one-time service projects land on academic days.*
- *Being less flexible in nonacademic components due to our education provider's rigid schedule.*
- *Getting healthcare students through the two-step TB Test and accessing immunization records before they start primary service.*

**Attendance.** Attendance issues were regularly reported as a challenge: low attendance negatively affects a program's ability to integrate and balance activities.<sup>21</sup>

- *Getting students to come every day and to see the importance of taking advantage of all activities available is a constant challenge.*
- *Lack of consistency in attendance causes us to have to change plans on the fly.*

**Meeting Members Where They Are.** Meeting members where they are is part of the YouthBuild philosophy. However, it can be difficult as students are at different places in their educational and

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<sup>21</sup> Some programs reported that going to a model of rotating primary service/training and academics every other day helped them increase attendance as well as balance the different program components.

personal development, while facing their own personal needs and obligations. Finding ways to meet those individual needs with limited time and resources is an ongoing challenge.

- *Finding the right balance for each student is challenging, especially in such a short program.*
- *Keeping a predictable schedule, while offering a lot of options to meet each student's needs, is challenging.*
- *Some students need more or less time than others to embrace a stage of change and transformational development. This can adversely affect group dynamics.*
- *Many students need to work – jobs can pull them from program offerings.*
- *We had one youth who had trouble academically due to learning disabilities, but he totally grasped the idea of service, so we started with that. Eventually he did better with academics as long as he had support.*
- *We have many more young people with disabilities than we used to. We could use some special education expertise to help us help them.*

**Time.** Time constraints affect staff's ability to plan and students' ability to obtain their credential and required service hours in multiple ways:

- *We have no time for integration and planning. We have only a 2-week turnaround between cycles.*
- *We plan to move from a 6-month to a 9-month core program to have time for all components.*
- *Many students need more time than we can offer to recover credits and earn their diploma.*
- *We offer extra time and opportunities after they complete the program for them to complete their service hours.*

**Other challenges.** Some programs noted the difficulty of integrating different parts of the program. As one example, some respondents reported that having outside instructors for the education program was a challenge, that it was difficult to bring the staff together. Others similarly noted that having teachers and other staff under the same organizational umbrella promotes teamwork and sharing of the YouthBuild culture, especially with respect to service. However, many programs with outside instructors reported no challenges. In most cases, they had been working with the same instructors over time. They communicated frequently, the instructors seemed to be part of the team, and they and the instructors had worked hard “to get on the same page” about service and other aspects of YouthBuild culture.

Rural sites face distinctive challenges in terms of service experiences. Transportation challenges in particular affect all program components, including service. One program addressed this in part by offering “independent” service opportunities and providing shuttle transportation to different sites. However, since so many programs highlight the benefits of working with other members (e.g., teamwork, camaraderie, and reflection), the lack of group service experiences may affect service-related outcomes.

### What the Service Experiences Meant to Members

During the telephone interviews and site visits, staff and youth reflected on youth service experiences with substantial enthusiasm and commonly reported the following reactions to service experiences (see the quotations in the box for example):

- Both staff and youth put feelings of pride and accomplishment at or near the top of their lists of the meaning of service experiences. Many of the youth were not accustomed to such feelings.
- An important benefit of service – both primary and secondary – was learning new skills.
- Many young people had received – or were still receiving – community supports similar to those they were helping to provide through their service. Service helped them feel that they were giving back.
- Service helped youth to have more empathy for others.
- Youth experienced improvements in self-confidence and attitude from meeting new people, being exposed to new settings and places, and learning about community resources that could help them, their families, or the people they were helping through service.
- Service experiences helped youth expand their horizons and see their future differently.
- Service projects helped youth understand teamwork. Working as a team on service projects helped them to get to know, trust, and understand their fellow YouthBuild AmeriCorps members and to feel a part of something bigger than themselves. A staff member said, *“The more they experience being interdependent on a team, the more they realize how important they are to the collective whole.”*
- Service – especially, but not only, secondary service – was fun and meaningful.

### Youth Voices

*“Before YouthBuild, the only community service I knew about was ordered by a judge. This is SO different. Nothing compares to seeing how what YOU do helps your community.”*

*“My service is important to me because I’m leaving something behind that will be here after I’m gone.”*

*“I’ll always be able to bring my kids here and say, ‘I built this.’”*

*“I’ve learned that people with needs are three-dimensional. Homeless people have names, histories, and stories – they are not defined only by their homelessness.”*

*“I learned to be less selfish. I’m not the only one going through things. I need to be more giving, more open. You can be the one that makes a difference.”*

*“What’s the best thing about YouthBuild and service? It changed my entire life.”*

*“We were all individuals, but that experience made us a group.”*

*We were all damaged, but now we’re together and we can encourage each other.”*

## **Summary**

Overall, the responses to the survey, interviews, and site visits suggested more similarities than differences in the service experience among the three program types. They also describe a wide range of practices that programs identify as effective in enhancing members' service experiences and outcomes; a number of challenges they face; and a sense of what members' service experiences mean to the members. Practices identified as effective in the surveys, interviews, and site visits included consistently integrating service with other program components; building staff and organizational practices that support service; instilling a program-wide culture of service; and supporting and motivating youth to create a commitment to service. Running through all of the interviews was the importance of face-to-face service experiences as a powerful and highly impactful aspect of the service experience. Whether through primary or secondary service, that face-to-face interaction with the beneficiaries of service creates a lasting commitment to service in the community.

## Chapter VI

### Conclusions and Reflections

This study of YouthBuild’s AmeriCorps programs was designed to examine whether there are significant differences in the service experience and program outcomes for AmeriCorps members between YouthBuild’s traditional high school equivalency (HSE)-focused programs and the growing number of YouthBuild programs offering a high school diploma either as the program’s main secondary education credential or as an alternative to the GED or other high school equivalency credentials. The goal of the study was to better understand the different ways in which HSE and diploma-granting programs integrate service into YouthBuild by examining the differences among three program types: those offering an HSE; those offering a high school diploma; and those providing some combination of HSE and diploma options. Key questions for the study included: Are the diploma-granting programs serving the same mix of members as more traditional, HSE-focused YouthBuild programs? How do the more structured charter and alternative school programs allocate time between education, service, and leadership development and/or balance time between classroom work and service? What kinds of AmeriCorps service experiences do diploma-granting programs provide for their participants, and do those experiences differ substantially from those offered by the more traditional HSE-focused YouthBuild programs? Are members in the often longer-duration diploma-based education programs more or less likely to complete their AmeriCorps service and earn their award as members in the short-term HSE programs? Finally, are there differences in outcomes, including educational attainment, job or postsecondary placement, and attitudes towards civic engagement and the community, between the diploma-granting and non-diploma programs?

#### Key Findings

Several major conclusions emerge from the analysis of the DYB data, participant surveys, and interviews with YouthBuild staff members and participants in the study. As outlined in the opening chapter, they include the following:

First, the program survey data show YouthBuild AmeriCorps programs represent a diverse array of programs in terms of organizational context, how education programs are organized and structured, the range of service experiences, and who the programs serve. All three maintain the core elements of the YouthBuild model placing substantial emphasis on service, integrating service throughout the program experience, and providing service experiences that participants find engaging and enriching. All three emphasize the core YouthBuild values of building strong relationships and promoting youth development, service and leadership. However, there are also substantial differences among the three program types in terms of structure, program size and duration, and populations served that may ultimately be related to differences in program experience and outcomes.

Second, while the data indicate that all three program types produced a positive service experience and positive outcomes for AmeriCorps participants, there were consistent, statistically significant differences among the three program types. In terms of the service experience, while the Diploma-only programs provided more service hours and participants in all three programs reported positive service experiences, the Combined HSE/Diploma programs tended to show better results on the measure of service quality and impact. Similarly, while all three program types showed positive outcomes, the DYB

and survey data show that participants in the Combined HSE/Diploma programs, and to a slightly lesser degree, the Diploma-only programs consistently showed stronger results for most educational and civic outcomes than the HSE-only programs, and the differences between the program types were statistically significant. While the differences are not large, the consistent pattern of differences suggests that there is a real difference in the program experience.

Finally, while the survey data highlight the program differences, the telephone interviews and site visits suggest that some core elements and lessons are common across program types. One important observation from the field is that, in many cases, it is the secondary service experience – volunteering at community events, food pantries, clothing drives, and the like – that provide the most memorable service experiences for AmeriCorps participants. Two key messages emerged from the discussions. The first was the importance of integrating service fully into the overall program experience; the second was the importance of face-to-face service experiences as having the greatest impact on participants, whether in the course of the primary service activities (e.g., meeting the residents of the buildings being rehabbed) or the secondary service projects that take place on a regular basis.

Specific findings from the study include the following:

- Based on the program survey data from the sample of 38 YouthBuild AmeriCorps sites, the YouthBuild programs reflect a remarkable diversity in their organizational settings, the ways they structure their educational programs, the types of occupational training and service they provide, and the mix of leadership, life skills, and postsecondary preparation services offered. Ultimately, all three program types offered a mix of educational and occupational training, combined with service, leadership, life skills development, and postsecondary preparation, and on many measures there were few consistent differences among the program types in how those services were organized and delivered.

At the same time, there were some important distinctions among the three program types that are the focus of the study. HSE-only programs were generally smaller; based in larger nonprofit organizations; shorter in duration with fewer hours of education and service; and more focused on construction-based training and service than the Diploma-only and Combined HSE/Diploma programs. Diploma-only programs tended to be larger; based in a variety of institution-types, including schools; be longer in duration with a greater number of hours of instruction and service; and have a somewhat greater focus on postsecondary preparation. The Combined HSE/Diploma programs, not surprisingly, had elements of both the HSE and diploma world. More than the other types, they were based in standalone YouthBuild sites, and fell in the middle in terms of size and duration and hours, but provided a somewhat broader array of service and supports than the other two program types. While it is difficult to draw a simple line from these characteristics to differences in service experiences and outcomes, it is likely that the differences in program structure and operations did have some impact on the nature of the experience across the three types of programs.

- As much as the study sites varied by size, organization, and programming, there were also substantial variations in the characteristics of program participants among the three groups of programs, based on the data from the 20 intensive study sites. Overall, the programs in the

sample reflected YouthBuild's focus on serving low-income, out-of-school youth: over 90% of participants entered without a high school credential and 89% qualified as economically disadvantaged. Roughly 83% of YouthBuild AmeriCorps members in the sample were young people of color; 16% were parents and a similar percentage were recently or currently homeless at entry. Nearly 80% entered YouthBuild scoring below 8th grade on their math assessments (63% scored below 8th grade in reading), and 30% qualified as English Language Learners.

Within that context, however, there were significant differences between participants in the three program types on a number of measures, in most cases with the Diploma-only programs standing out as different from both the HSE-only and the Combined HSE/Diploma sites:

- Participants in Diploma-only programs were older on average than enrollees in HSE or Combined HSE/Diploma programs and more likely to enter YouthBuild without a high school credential. They were also more likely to be female and Asian (largely through the influence of one program serving large numbers of Southeast Asian participants), and less likely to be Black or Hispanic.
- Diploma-only participants were also less likely to be homeless or an ex-offender: HSE programs had the highest percentage of homeless participants and Combined HSE/Diploma programs had a substantially higher percentage of youth who were ex-offenders at entry.
- Diploma-only programs accepted a substantially higher percentage of participants with entry-level reading and math scores that were below the 8th grade level, but they were also substantially more likely to include students who were not classified as economically disadvantaged.
- Finally, Diploma students were substantially more likely to include English Language Learners, again largely through the influence of one of the larger programs in the sample.

The one measure in which programs showed no significant difference was the proportion of participants who were parents at entry, with all three programs showing 15%-17% of their participants as parents or guardians at program entry.

While many of these differences are statistically significant, they need to be interpreted with caution as they may reflect the influence of the individual programs in a particular category (such as the large number of Southeast Asian participants served in the GAP program) rather than a characteristic of the program type as a whole. At the same time, the differences in characteristics like gender, entry level math and reading scores, and support for homeless or ex-offenders may result in real differences in the nature of the program experience among the different types of programs. In order to minimize the influence of these population differences and keep the focus of the analysis on the programmatic differences among the three program types, we control for a number of demographic characteristics in the analyses of service experiences and program outcomes.

- The DYB data and participant surveys collected for the study show that while all three program types provide a positive, high quality service experience, there are significant differences among the three program types in the nature and extent of service and in the service experience itself. While the Diploma-only programs provided the most hours of service among the different program types, participants in the Combined HSE/Diploma programs generally reported higher quality, more engaging service experiences than either of the other two program types. These results may reflect the strengths of the specific programs in the sample (a caution that will be repeated throughout the report), but taken together they suggest that the more comprehensive Combined HSE/Diploma programs may be able to deliver a stronger, more comprehensive service experience than the HSE or Diploma-only programs.
- As was the case for the service experience data from the survey, the DYB and survey data on participant outcomes points to two broad conclusions. First, all three program types are generally producing positive outcomes. On most of the attitudinal measures there were significant pre/post gains for all three program types, suggesting that all three are carrying out YouthBuild’s broad goals of education, civic engagement, and leadership development. However, there are also consistent differences across the programs, and in most cases, the Diploma-only and Combined HSE/Diploma programs produced results that were significantly stronger than those for the HSE-only programs. In terms of YouthBuild’s core program outcomes, HSE-only participants had higher program completion and job placement rates than the Diploma-only and Combined HSE/Diploma programs, but participants in the Diploma-only programs were significantly more likely to earn their credential and their AmeriCorps education award and to enroll in postsecondary education. On the other hand, on most of the measures of educational goals, civic and educational attitudes, and workplace-related skills, participants in the Diploma-only and the Combined HSE/GED programs were significantly more likely to show gains than participants in HSE-only programs. As noted earlier, while statistically significant (i.e., unlikely to have occurred by chance), the differences between programs are not generally large. But, they do tend to suggest that the Combined HSE/Diploma programs and the Diploma-only programs generally produced better outcomes in both educational terms and in terms of civic and educational attitudes than the HSE-only programs in the study.
- While the survey and DYB reporting data highlight the differences in service experiences and outcomes among the different program types, the observations made by YouthBuild staff and participants in open-ended responses to the program surveys and through the telephone interviews and site visit discussions emphasize the features of effective service experiences that run across program types. Overall, those observations suggested that there were more similarities than differences in the service experience among the HSE-only, Diploma-only, and Combined HSE/diploma programs. Staff and participants describe a wide range of practices that they identify as effective in enhancing members’ service experiences and outcomes, including: explicitly integrating service with other program components; attending to organizational/staff issues; instilling a program-wide culture of service; and supporting and motivating youth to create a commitment to service and yield better outcomes – all elements that could be, and are, implemented regardless of program type. Finally, across the discussions ran the theme that interaction with beneficiaries is often at the heart of effective service experiences, and that

programs need to make an effort, regardless of setting, to create those face-to-face experiences for their participants.

In the end, the findings suggest that there may be some real differences among program types, and the advantage, though often small, lies with the Diploma-only and the Combined HSE/Diploma programs. At this point, there is no simple explanation for the difference. While Diploma-only programs are substantially longer in duration and provide more service hours, when those variables are included in the analysis, they show only a minor influence on the results. At the same time, the interviews with the program sites suggest that all three types of programs are committed to the basic YouthBuild model and work to ensure that the connections are made between education, training, service, and leadership.

One possible explanation for the differences in outcomes comes down to a question of organizational capacity. While all three program types share a commitment to the YouthBuild model and goals, the larger Diploma-only and Combined HSE/Diploma programs may have a somewhat greater capacity to carry that commitment into daily operation. As somewhat larger programs, both the Diploma and Combined HSE/Diploma programs may have more staff capacity, better management, and/or access to more stable funding (through local education funds), or a combination of all three. That organizational capacity, in turn, may support a somewhat more consistent delivery of programs and services, both within and across program years. Whatever the explanation, as noted throughout, all three program models are generating broadly positive results on a wide variety of outcomes. But there are differences and they suggest that the Diploma and Combined HSE/Diploma programs are delivering a somewhat stronger service experience and better program outcomes for AmeriCorps participants.

### **Considerations for the Future**

The findings from the study have implications for YouthBuild to consider as it continues to support and strengthen its programs:

1. One of the origins of this study was a concern that the more “school-like” diploma-based YouthBuild AmeriCorps programs might not emphasize building an ethic of service and civic engagement among participants as strongly as the more traditional HSE-focused YouthBuild AmeriCorps programs. The study results suggest that, in fact, the Diploma-only and Combined HSE/Diploma programs have been as or more successful than the HSE-only programs in that area and in carrying out YouthBuild’s mission of youth leadership development. In that context, YouthBuild can safely continue its emphasis on the development of a diploma-granting capacity without concern that it is compromising a core mission.
2. The study also suggests that the quality of the service experience is vital to positive outcomes, regardless of the program type. (This echoes a finding from the recent study of YouthBuild’s construction and non-construction programs.) Thus, YouthBuild USA may want to further emphasize the importance of building context and opportunities for face-to-face contact with community members and beneficiaries into both primary and secondary services. This may mean providing more examples of how to integrate community context into the service activities and/or how to build a service-learning/civic engagement element into academic programs. Finally, it also suggests that the importance of continuing to emphasize regular secondary service experiences, already a part of many programs, as one of the elements of a quality YouthBuild experience.

3. Given the differences in experiences and outcomes between the Diploma and Combined HSE/Diploma programs and the HSE-only programs, YouthBuild may want to further examine both the education and the service programming at the HSE-only sites. As noted in the report, while program completion and job placement rates for the HSE-only sites were high, HSE attainment rates were relatively low. A key question for YouthBuild is how to strengthen the HSE programs' educational components without eliminating the option of a shorter route to a high school credential that is needed by many students. Similarly, the results suggest that YouthBuild USA look at how to increase the capacity of the HSE programs to deliver a strong, consistent set of service experiences.
4. Finally, the relative success of the Combined HSE/Diploma programs suggests that there is some value in providing a well-integrated, but distinct, set of education options as part of the YouthBuild program. As highlighted in the interviews with several of the Combined HSE/Diploma programs, the presence of both the HSE and diploma options allowed the programs greater flexibility in placing members where they were most likely to achieve success while building the educational capacity of the program as a whole. While these programs are likely more difficult to design and manage, their relatively stronger results suggests that an investment in program capacity can pay dividends for YouthBuild AmeriCorps members.

## Appendix

## Program Survey

### AmeriCorps Evaluation – Impact of Diploma Granting Programs

As part of a study of the differences in impacts of diploma granting and non-diploma granting YouthBuild AmeriCorps programs, Brandeis University and YouthBuild USA are surveying both kinds of programs . Each YouthBuild AmeriCorps program should complete one survey. The staff member(s) most familiar with YouthBuild and AmeriCorps should complete this survey.

Unless otherwise specified, questions about students refer to your YouthBuild AmeriCorps members and questions about enrollment refer to the 2016-2017 AmeriCorps grant year (i.e., the cohort enrolled between 8/15/16 and 8/14/17).

We want to assure you that, even though we ask for your name, your survey will be confidential. Only the Brandeis University researchers will see your completed survey. No one at YouthBuild USA will see your individual responses.

Since no two YouthBuild programs are alike, we've included several places where you can clarify or comment on your responses about your program. Our goal with this survey is to get as accurate and complete an understanding of your program as possible.

### Identifying Information

The following information is what we have on file.

If the field is blank or in error, please provide the information:

- Program name \_\_\_\_\_
- Location city: \_\_\_\_\_
- Location State: \_\_\_\_\_
- Name of the primary person completing the survey:  
\_\_\_\_\_
- Title: \_\_\_\_\_
- How long have you been with the organization?: (# of years, entered as a whole number)  
\_\_\_\_\_
- Email: \_\_\_\_\_
- Phone number: \_\_\_\_\_

Please select the **best** description of your YouthBuild program:

- Charter school/Part of charter school
- Alternative school/Part of alternative school
- Part of a Conservation Corps program
- Part of a CAP agency
- Part of a government agency
- Part of another type of human services/social services program - please explain:  
\_\_\_\_\_
- A separate, standalone YouthBuild program

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If you need more space to clarify your overall YouthBuild program structure, please do so here:

\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

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Please fill in the numbers in the following table:

\_\_\_\_\_ Total number of young people enrolled (through age 26) in the larger organization or program this current year, if applicable (If your program is a standalone program, please write "0")

\_\_\_\_\_ Number of **YouthBuild** participants enrolled for the 2016-2017 AmeriCorps grant year (i.e., the cohort enrolled between 8/15/16 and 8/14/17)

\_\_\_\_\_ Number of **AmeriCorps** participants enrolled for the 2016-2017 AmeriCorps grant year (i.e., the cohort enrolled between 8/15/16 and 8/14/17)

Comments/clarifications about your enrollment numbers:

\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

How does your program organize its academic education and occupational training schedule? Please check the answer that applies to the majority of your YouthBuild AmeriCorps members (you can clarify below if needed):

- Academic education and occupational training take place during the same day
- Academic education and occupational training take place on alternating days
- Academic education and occupational training take place on alternating weeks
- Academic education and occupational training take place on different alternating periods (month, trimester, semester, etc.) – please explain:

\_\_\_\_\_

- Other – please explain: \_\_\_\_\_

How is your overall program organized annually?

- Two semesters during the academic year, plus a summer program
- Two semesters during the academic year, without a summer program
- Three trimesters during the academic year, plus a summer program
- Three trimesters during the academic year, without a summer program
- Other – please explain: \_\_\_\_\_

To help us understand your schedule, please complete the following charts for a typical 2-week period. If your schedule is about the same from one week to the next, please leave the second chart blank and check "Generally the same as Week 1". Types of activities might include academic and occupational training (construction, healthcare, technology/ recycling), leadership development, secondary/ community service, postsecondary preparation, and career supports.

Week 1:

	Monday	Tues	Wed	Thurs	Friday	Sat	Sun
Morning Activities							
Afternoon Activities							
Other Activities							

Is week 2 generally the same as week 1?

- Yes
- No

Week 2: (leave blank if "yes" above)

	Monday	Tues	Wed	Thurs	Friday	Sat	Sun
Morning Activities							
Afternoon Activities							
Other Activities							

If you need to clarify information about your schedule, please do so here:

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**Educational Program**

Does your 2016-2017 YouthBuild educational program offer YouthBuild AmeriCorps members the opportunity to earn a high school equivalency credential, a high school diploma, or both?

- High School Equivalency credential (GED, HiSet, TASC, etc.)
- High School Diploma
- Both High School Equivalency and High School Diploma

**High School Equivalency (HSE) Program**

How many of your 2016-2017 YouthBuild AmeriCorps participants are enrolled in the high school equivalency (HSE) program?

Number: \_\_\_\_\_

Which HSE credential does your program offer? Check all that apply.

- GED
- HiSET
- TASC
- Other – please describe: \_\_\_\_\_

Who provides your program’s HSE instruction? Please check all that apply.

- YouthBuild staff
- Parent organization staff
- Teachers from outside YouthBuild (from another organization or under individual contracts)

You checked that staff from more than one organization provides your program's HSE instruction. Approximately what percentage of instruction is provided by each?

% of HSE instruction provided by YouthBuild staff : \_\_\_\_\_

% of HSE instruction by provided by YouthBuild parent organization staff: : \_\_\_\_\_

% of HSE instruction provided by other staff: : \_\_\_\_\_

Total : \_\_\_\_\_

If outside staff provide HSE instruction, what type of organizations are they affiliated with? (please select all that apply)

Community college

Public school district

Workforce Investment Board (WIB)

Adult education program

Other, please explain: \_\_\_\_\_

Comments/ clarifications about your HSE instruction:

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How many academic instructors (Full Time Equivalents) teach in your HSE program and how many assist them?

# of Academic Instructors: \_\_\_\_\_

# of other staff assisting the academic instructors (Full Time Equivalents):

\_\_\_\_\_

How much of your HSE instruction is computer-aided?

0% to 25%

26% to 50%

51% to 75%

76% or more

How much of your HSE instruction takes place in a classroom setting?

- 0% to 25%
- 26% to 50%
- 51% to 75%
- 76% or more

On average, how many students (YouthBuild AmeriCorps members and others) are in an HSE class?

- # of students \_\_\_\_\_

Do you have a minimum required reading/math grade levels for entry into the HSE program?

- Yes we have required minimum reading/math grade levels for entry.
- No, we do not have a minimum requirement for reading or math.

What are the required minimum reading/math grade levels?

- Required grade level in reading: \_\_\_\_\_
- Required grade level in math: \_\_\_\_\_

On average, how many hours of classroom/educational instruction do HSE-seeking YouthBuild AmeriCorps members receive in a typical month?

- Hours: \_\_\_\_\_

For those earning a HSE during the program or within one month of completion, how many months does it take to earn their HSE? Please fill in your best estimates of the maximum, minimum, and average amount of time it takes a YouthBuild AmeriCorps member to earn an HSE credential in your program:

- Maximum amount of time to earn HSE credential (in months): \_\_\_\_\_
- Minimum amount of time to earn HSE credential (in months): \_\_\_\_\_
- Average amount of time to earn HSE credential (in months): \_\_\_\_\_

Comments/clarifications about your HSE program:

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**High School Diploma Program**

How many of your 2016-2017 YouthBuild AmeriCorps participants are enrolled in the high school diploma program?

Number: \_\_\_\_\_

Through what mechanism do your YouthBuild AmeriCorps participants earn a diploma?

Traditional public high school or partnership with public high school

- Charter school
- District-affiliated alternative school
- Independent school
- Other – please explain: \_\_\_\_\_

Who provides the educational component for the diploma program? Please check all that apply.

- YouthBuild staff
- Parent organization staff
- Teachers from outside YouthBuild/ Parent organization
- Other – please explain: \_\_\_\_\_

You checked that both YouthBuild/parent organization staff and others provide your program's diploma instruction. Please estimate the approximate percentage of effort in diploma instruction (sum must = 100).

% of diploma instruction provided by YouthBuild staff : \_\_\_\_\_  
% of diploma instruction provided by YouthBuild parent organization staff: : \_\_\_\_\_  
% of diploma instruction provided by other staff: : \_\_\_\_\_  
Total : \_\_\_\_\_

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If outside partners provide instruction, what type of organization are they affiliated with?

- Community college
- Public school district
- Other, please explain: \_\_\_\_\_

Comments/ clarifications about your diploma instruction:

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How much of your diploma instruction takes place in a classroom setting?

- 0% to 25%
- 26% to 50%
- 51% to 75%
- 76% or more

How much of your diploma instruction is computer-aided?

- 0% to 25%
- 26% to 50%
- 51% to 75%
- 76% or more

On average, how many diploma-seeking students (YouthBuild AmeriCorps members and others) are in a class?

- # of students \_\_\_\_\_

Do you have minimum required reading/math grade levels for entry into the diploma program?

- Yes, we have required minimum reading/math grade levels for entry
- No, we do not have a minimum requirement for reading or math.

What are the required minimum reading/math grade levels?

- Required grade level in reading: \_\_\_\_\_
- Required grade level in math: \_\_\_\_\_

On average, how many hours of classroom/educational instruction do diploma-seeking YouthBuild AmeriCorps members receive in a typical month?

Hours: \_\_\_\_\_

For those earning a diploma during the program or within one month of completion, how many months does it take to earn a diploma? Please fill in your best estimates of the maximum, minimum, and average amount of time it takes a YouthBuild AmeriCorps member to earn a diploma in your program:

Maximum amount of time to earn diploma (in months):

\_\_\_\_\_

Minimum amount of time to earn diploma (in months):

\_\_\_\_\_

Average amount of time to earn diploma (in months):

\_\_\_\_\_

Comments/clarifications about your diploma program:

\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

### Both HSE and Diploma Programs

If you offer **both** HSEs and diplomas to YouthBuild AmeriCorps members, are those seeking an HSE and those seeking a diploma taught separately or together?

Separately

Together

Sometimes separately, sometimes together

Comments/clarifications on your HSE and diploma programs overall:

\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

**Service and Occupational Training Activities**

Please fill in the chart below to explain your program’s career pathways (primary service tracks/occupational training areas) for YouthBuild AmeriCorps participants.

	Describe training/service track briefly (e.g., “CNA prep, training, and clinical experience” for health care track)	Average # of hours in track for completion (estimate)	Type of certificate(s) awarded:	Not applicable/ Nor offered
	Training/ Service Track	Hours:	Certificates:	NA/Not offered
Construction				<input type="radio"/>
Health Care				<input type="radio"/>
Conservation/ Recycling				<input type="radio"/>
Digital Divide/ technology				<input type="radio"/>
Other (Describe)				<input type="radio"/>

How many hours of primary service track/occupational training do YouthBuild AmeriCorps members participate in per month? Please fill in your best estimates of the maximum, minimum, and average number of hours per participant:

Maximum number of hours of primary service track/occupational training per month: (in hours)

\_\_\_\_\_

Minimum number of hours of primary service track/occupational training per month: (in hours)

\_\_\_\_\_

Average number of hours of primary service track/occupational training per month: (in hours)

\_\_\_\_\_

What secondary/community service activities do YouthBuild AmeriCorps members participate in? Check all that apply

Park clean-ups or help with community gardens

Planning/support for neighborhood/ community fairs, festivals, children's activities, or other events

Food/nutrition (soup kitchen, food bank, meals on wheels/ distribution, etc.)

Health/wellness (nursing home or hospital volunteering, etc.)

Education (homework help, reading programs, etc.)

Other – please describe: \_\_\_\_\_

Other – please describe: \_\_\_\_\_

Other – please describe: \_\_\_\_\_

In general, how often do YouthBuild AmeriCorps members participate in secondary/community service activities organized through the program?

At least once per week

At least once per month

At least once per quarter or trimester

Only a couple of times per year (less than once per quarter/trimester)

How many hours of secondary/community service activities do members participate in per month? Please fill in your best estimates of the maximum, minimum, and average number of hours per participant:

Maximum number of hours of secondary service activities per month: (in hours)

\_\_\_\_\_

Minimum number of hours of secondary service activities per month: (in hours)

\_\_\_\_\_

Average number of hours of secondary service activities per month: (in hours)

\_\_\_\_\_

Comments/clarifications about your program's occupational training and service activities:

\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

### **Other Kinds of Training and Activities**

This section focuses on training and activities that don't fit in other educational or career/service categories.

#### ***Leadership Training and Activities***

What kinds of leadership development training and activities does your program offer? Please check all that apply.

Youth participation in policy committee or similar opportunities

Youth leadership roles in program implementation

Curricular concentration on and evaluation of leadership competencies

Explicit emphasis on being a positive role model

Peer mentoring/advising opportunities

Individual leadership development plans

Other – please describe: \_\_\_\_\_

**Life Skills Training and Activities**

What kinds of life skills training and activities does your program offer? Please check all that apply:

- Career planning and preparation activities (e.g., matching strengths/interests with potential careers, preparing resumes, developing portfolios)
- Financial literacy
- Time management
- Problem solving
- Conflict management
- Public Speaking
- Other – please describe: \_\_\_\_\_

**Postsecondary Education Activities**

What kinds of postsecondary education preparation and support activities does your program offer? Please check all that apply.

- Bridge Program (to support transition to postsecondary)
- Dual Enrollment
- College Visits or Tours
- PSE Preparation Courses
- Advising by PSE staff
- After School Tutoring
- Placement test prep
- Assistance with admission and financial aid applications
- Study skills
- Analytical writing
- Note-taking
- Other – please describe: \_\_\_\_\_

How many hours of these leadership, life skills, and PSE training and activities do YouthBuild AmeriCorps members participate in per month? Please fill in your best estimates of the maximum, minimum, and average number of hours per participant focused on these issues, both in regular academic classes and outside of, regular academic classes:

	Hours of leadership, life skills, and PSE training and activities:	Hours of leadership, life skills, and PSE training and activities:
	In regular academic classes	Outside of regular academic classes
Maximum number of hours per month: (in hours)		
Minimum number of hours per month: (in hours)		
Average number of hours per month: (in hours)		

Comments/clarifications about your leadership, life skills, and PSE training and activities:

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**Reflections on Offering Education, Service, and Training**

Finally, we'd like to know your thoughts on the following open-ended questions.

To what degree and how are your program's academic/education and service components integrated or connected? Please give an example or two.

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What are your program’s biggest challenges in balancing educational with service activities, occupational training, leadership activities, and life skills training?

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What key strategies does your program use to create a “culture” of service?

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Which experiences do you think contribute most to creating a commitment to service among AmeriCorps participants?

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Congratulations! You have finished the survey. Please click "Submit" below to record your responses.

Thank you!

# YouthBuild Member Survey



As part of a study of the YouthBuild AmeriCorps program, Brandeis University and YouthBuild USA are surveying YouthBuild AmeriCorps participants to learn more about your education goals, your involvement in the community, and your experiences in the program. The survey asks how far you hope to go with your education, how you think about yourself as a student, your attitudes towards community involvement, and skills that you have learned through YouthBuild. The survey also asks about the kinds of service you were engaged in through your YouthBuild program. YouthBuild will use the information from the survey as part of its effort to improve the effectiveness of its AmeriCorps programs for its members. Please complete the survey as honestly and completely as you can so we have the best possible information to work with.

We promise that all of your survey responses will be kept strictly confidential and only used for the purposes of this study. Please note:

- The survey is **anonymous**. The survey does include your YouthBuild ID number, which will let us link your survey information to other YouthBuild program data (such as your age or gender) without including your name. Before you complete the survey, we will instruct you (below) to remove this cover page, so your name is not connected to the survey data.
- The survey is also **confidential**: the only people who will see your actual survey responses are the researchers at Brandeis University. When you complete your survey, you will seal it in an envelope that will be mailed directly to Brandeis University. We will keep all information collected as part of this study private and secure. No one at your local YouthBuild program or at YouthBuild USA will see your answers.
- Participation in this study is **voluntary**. If you do not want to complete the survey, or if there are questions you do not want to answer, you do not have to. **But we strongly encourage you to participate.** Your answers will make a difference! The study will provide valuable information for YouthBuild and help YouthBuild better serve young people like you in the future. We hope you will agree to be in the study.

If you agree to participate in the study, please complete the survey. **Tear off this cover page (so your name is not on the survey) and seal the completed survey in the postage-paid envelope that has been provided.** Return the survey to your YouthBuild staff person. He or she will mail the survey back to Brandeis.

If you do not agree to participate in the study, you can simply return a blank survey. Please tear off the cover page (so your name is not on the survey) and seal the blank survey in the postage-paid envelope that has been provided. Return the survey to your YouthBuild staff person. He or she will mail the survey back to Brandeis. If you prefer, you can simply place the blank survey in your recycling bin or return it to your YouthBuild staff person.

If you have any questions about the study, please contact us by email at [Youthbuildstudy@brandeis.edu](mailto:Youthbuildstudy@brandeis.edu) or call us at Brandeis University, toll-free at (800) 343-4705 extension 63813.

THANK YOU! We hope you will help us with this important study.

An online version of this survey is available at: <http://cyc.brandeis.edu/YBAmeriCorps.html>. Be sure to have your YouthBuild ID number (on the next page of this survey) to include in the online survey.

**PLEASE BE SURE TO REMOVE THIS COVER PAGE BEFORE YOU RETURN YOUR SURVEY**

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**Place Name**  
**Label here**

*If you have questions about your rights as a research subject please contact the Brandeis Institutional Review Board at [irb@brandeis.edu](mailto:irb@brandeis.edu) or 781-736-8133.*

**THIS PAGE IS INTENTIONALLY BLANK**

Thank you for taking the time to complete this survey!  
Please answer each question as honestly and completely as you can.

**ID LABEL PLACED HERE**

**I. Before Joining YouthBuild**

**Instructions:**  
For each question, make a solid mark that fills the oval completely.  
Like this: ● Not like this: ✓ ✗ /

First, we want to learn about some of your goals, community connections, and leadership experiences **before** you joined YouthBuild.

**Your goals**

1. **Think back to just before you joined YouthBuild.** How important were each of the following goals for you **at that time**? Please mark one response for each goal that indicates how important that goal was for you **before you joined YouthBuild**.

<i>How important was each of the following goals for you <b>before you joined the YouthBuild program</b>?</i>	<b>Not Important at All (1)</b>	<b>(2)</b>	<b>(3)</b>	<b>Very Important (4)</b>
a. Completing your GED or high school diploma.	①	②	③	④
b. Getting a job as soon as possible.	①	②	③	④
c. Getting training or an apprenticeship in construction or another trade that would help you earn a living over the long term.	①	②	③	④
d. Going to a trade or technical school.	①	②	③	④
e. Going to a two-year college.	①	②	③	④
f. Going to a four-year college.	①	②	③	④
g. Going to graduate school (master's degree, Ph.D., medical or law degree, etc.)	①	②	③	④

2. **Before you joined YouthBuild**, how did you think about yourself as a student? Please mark how strongly you would have agreed or disagreed with each of the following statements, **just before you joined YouthBuild**.

	<b>Strongly Disagree (1)</b>	<b>(2)</b>	<b>(3)</b>	<b>Strongly Agree (4)</b>
It was very important to me to do the best I could as a student.	①	②	③	④
If I decided to get good grades, I could do it.	①	②	③	④
I tried hard in my classes.	①	②	③	④
When studying, I kept working even if the material was difficult.	①	②	③	④
If I needed help in class, I asked for it.	①	②	③	④
If I wanted to learn something well, I could.	①	②	③	④
I expected to use what I learned in school after I graduated.	①	②	③	④



3. How much did you know about each of the following, **just before you joined YouthBuild?**

	Nothing at All	Very Little	Some	A Lot
Why I should get training or education beyond high school or a GED	①	②	③	④
What I needed to do to get into college	①	②	③	④
How to pay for college	①	②	③	④
What going to college might be like	①	②	③	④
The attitudes and skills I needed in order to succeed in college	①	②	③	④
What I needed to do to get into a vocational training/certificate program	①	②	③	④
How to pay for a vocational training/certificate program	①	②	③	④
The attitudes and skills I needed to be successful in a vocational training/certificate program	①	②	③	④
Careers or jobs I might be interested in	①	②	③	④
How to apply for a job	①	②	③	④
The attitudes and skills I needed to be successful in a job	①	②	③	④

**You and your community**

4. How true were each of the following statements about your connections to your community **just before you joined YouthBuild?**

	Not True at All (1)	(2)	(3)	Very True (4)
I felt very connected to my community.	①	②	③	④
I often talked with people I knew about how larger political and social issues affected my neighborhood.	①	②	③	④
I knew what steps I could take to solve problems in my community.	①	②	③	④
It was important to me that my community saw me doing good work.	①	②	③	④
Helping my community was important to me.	①	②	③	④
I tried to help other people in my neighborhood.	①	②	③	④
I believed I could make a difference in my community.	①	②	③	④
I thought it was important to vote.	①	②	③	④



**Leadership**

5. For each of the following statements, please mark how true each statement was for you **before you joined YouthBuild**.

	Not True at All (1)	(2)	(3)	Very True (4)
I was good at working on a team.	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)
When working on a team, I was willing to be a leader.	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)
People in my life relied on me.	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)
If I needed help, I knew people I could go to.	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)
I was comfortable speaking in front of a large group.	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)
I respected people's ideas that were different from mine.	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)
I was self-confident.	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)
I could motivate people to work together.	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)
I believed I had a positive future ahead of me.	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)
I knew an adult in my community who believed I would be a success.	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)

6. **Before you joined YouthBuild**, how important was it to you to be involved in volunteer activities/community service to help your community?

- It was not important at all
- It was only a little important
- It was moderately important
- It was very important

7. YouthBuild defines good leadership as taking positive steps to make things go right for yourself, your family, your program, and your community. **During the 6 months before you joined YouthBuild**, how often did you act as a leader in those ways?

- Never
- Rarely
- Sometimes
- Often



## II. About You Today

Now, we want to learn about some of your goals, community connections, and leadership experiences **today**.

### Your education and career goals

8. **Think about your education and career goals today.** How important are each of the following goals for you **now**? Please mark one response for each goal that indicates how important that goal is for you **today**.

<i>How important is each of the following goals for you today?</i>	Not Important at All (1)	(2)	(3)	Very Important (4)
a. Completing your GED or high school diploma.	①	②	③	④
b. Getting a job as soon as possible.	①	②	③	④
c. Getting training or an apprenticeship in construction or another trade that would help you earn a living over the long term.	①	②	③	④
d. Going to a trade or technical school.	①	②	③	④
e. Going to a two-year college.	①	②	③	④
f. Going to a four-year college.	①	②	③	④
g. Going to graduate school (master's degree, Ph.D., medical or law degree, etc.)	①	②	③	④

9. How do you think about yourself as a student **today**? Please indicate how strongly you agree or disagree with each of the following statements.

	Strongly Disagree (1)	(2)	(3)	Strongly Agree (4)
It is very important to me to do the best I can as a student.	①	②	③	④
If I decide to get good grades, I can do it.	①	②	③	④
I try hard in my classes.	①	②	③	④
When studying, I keep working even if the material is difficult.	①	②	③	④
If I need help in class, I ask for it.	①	②	③	④
If I want to learn something well, I can.	①	②	③	④
I expect to use what I learn in school after I graduate.	①	②	③	④



10. Please indicate how much you know **today** about each of the following.

	Nothing at All	Very Little	Some	A Lot
Why I should get training or education beyond high school or a GED	①	②	③	④
What I need to do to get into college	①	②	③	④
How to pay for college	①	②	③	④
What going to college might be like	①	②	③	④
The attitudes and skills I need in order to succeed in college	①	②	③	④
What I need to do to get into a vocational training/certificate program	①	②	③	④
How to pay for a vocational training/certificate program	①	②	③	④
The attitudes and skills I need to be successful in a vocational training/certificate program	①	②	③	④
Careers or jobs I might be interested in	①	②	③	④
How to apply for a job	①	②	③	④
The attitudes and skills I need to be successful in a job	①	②	③	④

### You and your community

11. How true are each of the following statements about your connections to the community **today**?

	Not True at All (1)	(2)	(3)	Very True (4)
I feel very connected to my community.	①	②	③	④
I often talk with people I know about how larger political and social issues affect my neighborhood.	①	②	③	④
I know what steps I can take to solve problems in my community.	①	②	③	④
It is important to me that my community sees me doing good work.	①	②	③	④
Helping my community is important to me.	①	②	③	④
I try to help other people in my neighborhood.	①	②	③	④
I believe I can make a difference in my community.	①	②	③	④
I think it is important to vote.	①	②	③	④



**Leadership**

12. For each of the following statements, please mark how true each statement is for you **today**.

	Not True at All (1)	(2)	(3)	Very True (4)
I am good at working on a team.	①	②	③	④
When working on a team, I am willing to be a leader.	①	②	③	④
People in my life rely on me.	①	②	③	④
If I need help, I know people I can go to.	①	②	③	④
I am comfortable speaking in front of a large group.	①	②	③	④
I respect people's ideas that are different from mine.	①	②	③	④
I am self-confident.	①	②	③	④
I can motivate people to work together.	①	②	③	④
I have a positive future ahead of me.	①	②	③	④
I know an adult in my community who believes I will be a success.	①	②	③	④

13. How important is it to you to be involved in volunteer activities/community service to help your community?

- It is not important at all
- It is only a little important
- It is moderately important
- It is very important

14. YouthBuild defines good leadership as taking positive steps to make things go right for yourself, your family, your program, and your community. During the past 6 months, how often did you **act** as a leader in those ways?

- Never
- Rarely
- Sometimes
- Often



## Skills

15. We would also like to know more **about the skills you learned during YouthBuild**. Please tell us how well you could do each of the following tasks **before you joined YouthBuild** and how well you can do them **now**.

For example, the sample question below asks how well you could plan your travel to get to school or work on time. To answer, **first fill in a circle on the left side of the page** to tell us how well you could plan your travel **before you joined YouthBuild**. Then, **fill in a circle on the right side of the page** to tell us how well you can plan your travel **now**. In the sample question, we filled in the circle indicating that you could plan your travel so you got to work on time “a little” before joining YouthBuild, and can plan it “very well” now.

Before You Joined YouthBuild				How well could you do each of the following?	Now			
Not at All	A Little	Pretty Well	Very Well		Not at All	A Little	Pretty Well	Very Well
①	●	③	④	a. Plan my travel so I get to school or work on time. (sample question)	①	②	③	●
①	②	③	④	b. Solve unexpected problems.	①	②	③	④
①	②	③	④	c. Find and use the resources that I need to complete a project or a task.	①	②	③	④
①	②	③	④	d. Listen and respond to other people’s suggestions or concerns.	①	②	③	④
①	②	③	④	e. Resolve conflicts between people.	①	②	③	④
①	②	③	④	f. Find the right person or organization to talk with to address an issue in my community.	①	②	③	④
①	②	③	④	g. Negotiate, compromise, and get along with co-workers and supervisors.	①	②	③	④
①	②	③	④	h. Manage my time when I am under pressure.	①	②	③	④
①	②	③	④	i. Deal with uncomfortable or difficult working conditions.	①	②	③	④
①	②	③	④	j. Talk to someone I don’t know about something I think is important.	①	②	③	④
①	②	③	④	k. Make a presentation.	①	②	③	④
①	②	③	④	l. Write a letter or email to someone I don’t know.	①	②	③	④
①	②	③	④	m. Work with neighbors to make a difference in my community.	①	②	③	④



## Program Experience

16. What types of service activities did you perform as part of your YouthBuild AmeriCorps program? Please indicate about how much of your service time you spent doing each type of service listed below. **Please choose one answer for each type of service.**

Type of Service	Did not do this type of service	Less than half of my service time	About half of my service time	More than half of my service time	All of my service time
Construction	①	②	③	④	⑤
Health Care	①	②	③	④	⑤
IT/Digital Divide/ Computer	①	②	③	④	⑤
Recycling/Conservation	①	②	③	④	⑤
Other Service (for example, special service days, Saturday projects, etc.)	①	②	③	④	⑤

17. During your time in YouthBuild AmeriCorps, how often did you do each of the following:

	Never	Not Very Often	Sometimes	Very Often	Always
Serve with other AmeriCorps members at the same location.	①	②	③	④	⑤
Serve in direct contact with people who benefit from your service.	①	②	③	④	⑤
Serve in the community where you live.	①	②	③	④	⑤
Get involved in planning your service.	①	②	③	④	⑤
Serve people who come from different backgrounds than you.	①	②	③	④	⑤
Work as part of a team.	①	②	③	④	⑤

18. Please rate each of the following elements of your YouthBuild experience from **Poor** to **Excellent**, based on your experience in the program.

	Poor	Fair	Good	Excellent
Teaching and support in the educational program (GED or diploma)	①	②	③	④
Education and career advising from counselors, teachers, and other YouthBuild staff	①	②	③	④
Personal support from counselors, teachers, and other YouthBuild staff	①	②	③	④
Support from other YouthBuild participants	①	②	③	④
Training and support from the worksite supervisors/vocational instructors	①	②	③	④
Opportunities to learn and practice leadership	①	②	③	④



19. Thinking about your YouthBuild AmeriCorps experience, mark how strongly you agree or disagree with each of the following statements:

	Strongly Disagree (1)	(2)	(3)	Strongly Agree (4)
I made a contribution to the community.	①	②	③	④
I was exposed to new ideas and ways of seeing the world.	①	②	③	④
I re-examined my beliefs and attitudes about myself.	①	②	③	④
I changed some of my beliefs and attitudes.	①	②	③	④
I felt like part of a community.	①	②	③	④
I learned more about the “real” world.	①	②	③	④
I made a difference in the life of at least one person.	①	②	③	④
I did things I never thought I could do.	①	②	③	④
I had a chance to take on a leadership role (for example, on a team, a project, on an advisory or policy council).	①	②	③	④
I now make healthier decisions than I did before YouthBuild.	①	②	③	④
My training (for example in construction or health care) helped me learn the skills I need to get a job in that field.	①	②	③	④
I learned something that will help me succeed in postsecondary education or training.	①	②	③	④
I learned something that will help me succeed in my career.	①	②	③	④

**Thank you for completing the survey!**

**Please check that you tore off the cover sheet with your name on it.**

**Then, please seal your completed survey in the envelope and return it to your YouthBuild/AmeriCorps staff person.**

