



### What are the goals of the program?

Schools in high-poverty areas often lack sufficient resources and offer inadequate instruction; moreover, because of family, neighborhood, and peer environment factors, low-income children attending these schools have difficulty taking advantage of the educational opportunities that do exist. In Washington, DC, where the program is headquartered (and where the cost of living is high), 27 percent of children under age 18 live below the federal poverty level. In Baltimore, MD, the share of children in poverty is even higher, at 34 percent.

Urban Alliance (UA) supports at-risk youth in these communities through its High School Internship Program, which provides job skills training, mentoring, and work experience to high school seniors. The program serves youth before they become disconnected from school and work, with the goal of helping them successfully transition to higher education or employment after graduation.

### What was the purpose of evaluation?

Urban Institute began evaluating Urban Alliance's High School Internship Program in 2011 and finished reporting in 2017. The evaluation was designed to assess impacts on hard and soft skills comfort, college enrollment/persistence, employment rates, and earnings. Program applicants were randomly assigned to study conditions at baseline (2 treatment participants for every 1 control—1,062 youth total), and educational and employment outcomes were measured via youth surveys and National Student Clearinghouse data at one and two years after graduation.

### What did we learn from the evaluation?

As a subgrantee of the Social Innovation Fund's Venture Philanthropy Partners, Urban Alliance engaged an independent evaluator to evaluate their high school internship program. The impact study produced the following key findings:

- For the full sample, participation significantly **increased**:
  - **Comfort with applying for aid**—filling out the Free Application for Federal Student Aid and applying for other scholarships
  - **Soft skill development**—including professionalism, timeliness, etc.

#### Program At-a-Glance

CNCS Program: Social Innovation Fund

Intervention: Urban Alliance High School Internship Program

Subgrantee: Urban Alliance Foundation

Intermediary: Venture Philanthropy Partners

Focus Area: Youth Development

Focus Population: High school seniors

Communities Served: Washington, DC; Baltimore, MD

#### Evaluation At-a-Glance

Evaluation Designs: Randomized controlled trial (RCT) impact evaluation and process evaluation

Study Population: High school seniors

Independent Evaluator: Urban Institute

This Evaluation's Level of Evidence\*: Strong

\*SIF and AmeriCorps currently use different definitions of levels of evidence.

# Evaluation Report Brief

## Urban Alliance High School Internship Program



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- For the full sample, participation did not have any statistically significant impacts on taking the SAT, taking the ACT, the probability of graduating high school, the probability of applying to college, goal setting, time management, college attendance, college persistence, employment, wages, or savings.
- For males, participation significantly **increased the probability of:**
  - **Graduating high school**—by 4 percentage points for males offered the program ( $p < .10$ ).
  - **Attending college**—by 12 percentage points for males offered the program ( $p < .05$ ) and 23 percentage points for males who completed the program ( $p < .05$ ).
  - **Attending a four-year college**—by 10 percentage points for males offered the program ( $p < .05$ ) and 23 percentage points for males who completed the program ( $p < .10$ ).
  - **Attaining a two-year degree or being enrolled in their third year**—by 10 percentage points for males offered the program ( $p < .05$ ) and by 21 percentage points for males who completed the program ( $p < .10$ ).
- The effects of participation also seemed to vary based on the youth's GPA:
  - **Low GPA UA youth were more likely to persist in college**—the program increased the probability of attaining a 2-year degree or being enrolled in a third year by 8 percentage points for those offered the program ( $p < .10$ ) or by 39 percentage points for those participating ( $p < .05$ ).
  - **Middle GPA UA youth were more likely to attend a four-year college**—by 9 percentage points for those offered the program ( $p < .10$ ) and 18 percentage points for those completing it one year post-program ( $p < .10$ ).
  - **High GPA UA youth were more likely to attend a two-year college**—by 9 percentage points for those offered the program ( $p < .10$ ) and 18 percentage points for those completing it ( $p < .10$ ).



### How is Urban Alliance using the evaluation experience and findings to improve?

Evaluation results suggested that a sizeable share (31 percent) of treatment youth did not go to college and there were no significant program impacts on employment, wages, or savings overall for subgroups of participants. As such, the program will be considering providing additional supports to youth who are not going to college by facilitating job attainment and offering additional alumni services. Additionally, since the start of the evaluation, Urban Alliance has expanded their program services to two new locations (Northern Virginia and Chicago, IL); all four sites are included in an expanded evaluation of the program, funded by a grant from the US Department of Education's Investing in Innovation Fund that is currently underway.

The content of this brief was drawn from the full evaluation report submitted to CNCS by the grantee/subgrantee. The section of the brief that discusses evaluation use includes contribution of the grantee/subgrantee. All original content from the report is attributable to its authors.

To access the full evaluation report and learn more about CNCS, please visit [nationalservice.gov/research](http://nationalservice.gov/research).

The Social Innovation Fund (SIF), a program of the Corporation for National and Community Service (CNCS), combines public and private resources to grow the impact of innovative, community-based solutions that have compelling evidence of improving the lives of people in low-income communities throughout the United States. The SIF invests in three priority areas: economic opportunity, healthy futures, and youth development.