

Bridging the Opportunity Gap Initiative



“The best part about [the Bridging the Opportunity Gap program] was the opportunity to have this young man at our sanctuary for two years in that time he acquired basic skills for the workplace-communication, punctuality, wearing appropriate clothing for the activity and general social skill. He grew into a productive young man!

The opportunity to help a youth who may not have been able to be successful in a non-subsidized setting.”

—EMPLOYER COMMENTS FROM A
COMMONWEALTH CORPORATION SURVEY

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“ He comes from a rough background, and started with really bad attendance but when he returned for the second time he improved greatly and is one of the top workers and has secured an internship”

— EMPLOYERS OBSERVATION ABOUT YOUTH WORKER

BOG Overview

The Bridging the Opportunity Gap (BOG) initiative provides funding for workforce development training and education programming that supports the success of youth committed to the Department of Youth Services (DYS). The BOG initiative has two funding components – a BOG Summer Program, which operated from July – September 2014, and a BOG Year-Round program that operated from October 2014 – June 2015. The BOG Initiative (summer and year-round) offers five different program options including:

- **Option 1:** Work-based learning (career readiness and subsidized employment)
- **Option 2:** Vocational training (career readiness and training in a vocational skill or trade at a vocational school or other training venue)
- **Option 3:** HiSET and Tutoring Services at DYS District Offices
- **Option 4:** Arts and Cultural Activities
- **Option 5:** Mentoring Programs

The BOG Initiative is based on a positive youth development model that is asset-based, culturally responsive, and delivered by personnel with experience in operating youth programs. Programming is interactive and engaging to youth, and is delivered in a way that addresses a variety of learning styles. BOG grantee organizations include (but are not limited to) human service organizations, community- and faith-based organizations, workforce investment boards, career centers, and vocational technical high schools across the state.

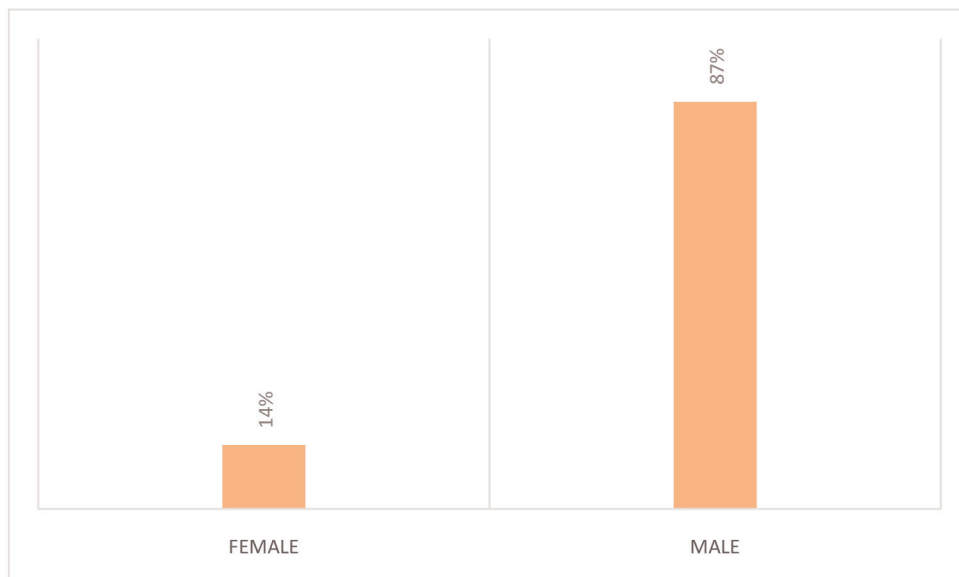
KEY ACCOMPLISHMENTS FOR THIS YEAR INCLUDE:

- The launch of a new database that allows us to capture how often youth participate in BOG programs over time and the types of services youth receive. All grantees were trained in the use of the database in November of 2014.
- The launch of a revised BOG Empower Your Future Curriculum that is aligned with the career readiness requirements. All grantees were trained in the curriculum in October of 2014.
- Four new partnerships were established throughout the state to offer new and innovative programming to youth. One partner's program took place at a regional technical high school where youth were trained in 7 modules related to the automotive industry, including, mechanical, detailing, electrical and welding instruction. The training led to one youth receiving a subsidized internship with a local automotive shop.
- A statewide BOG technical assistance conference that brought all BOG partners together to be trained in culturally responsive practice and how to best support adjudicated youth in seeking employment and education. In addition, this conference incorporated youth voice by demonstrating what youth are gaining through BOG programs. Youth provided an opening performance and served as facilitators to discuss how BOG programs aid youth in achieving their goals.

**In FY 2015,
107 youth
participated in
BOG summer
programming and
268 in year-round
programming.**

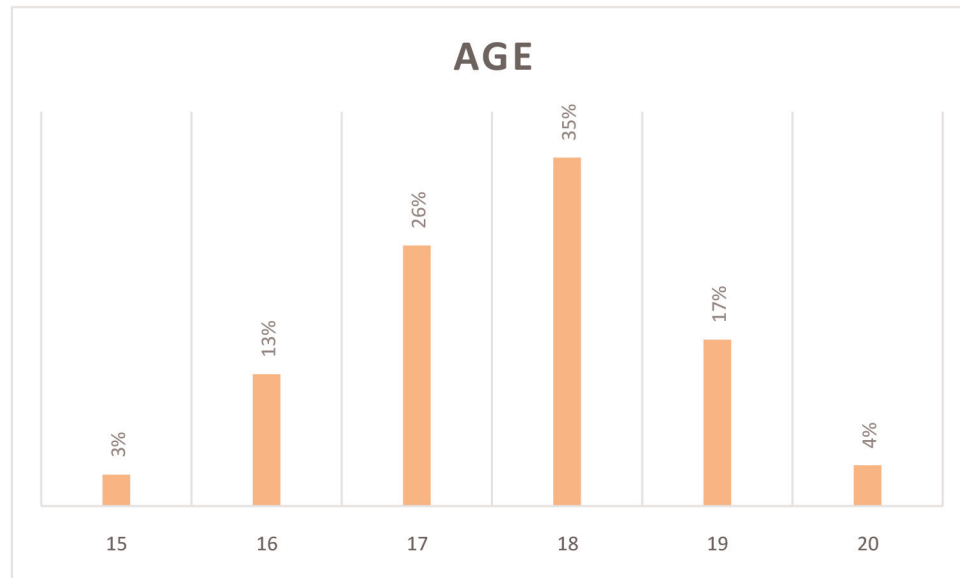
Participation & Demographics

In FY 2015, 107 youth participated in BOG summer programming and 268 in year-round programming. Of the 107 youth that participated in summer programming, 63 youth continued to participate in year-round programming. Below are the demographics of youth participants served throughout FY 2015:

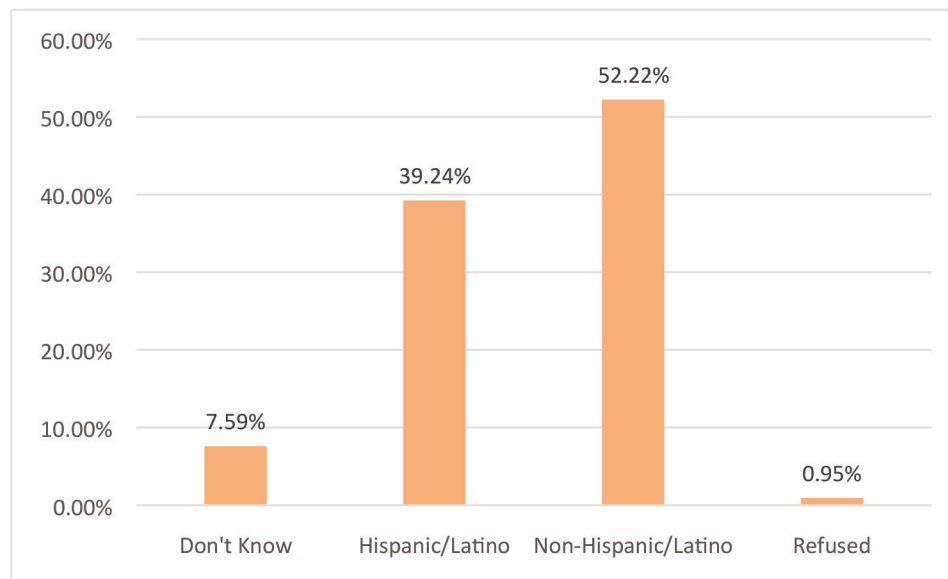


Graph 1.0:
Gender of Summer
and Year-Round BOG
Participants, FY 2015.

Graph 1.1:
Age of Summer and
Year-Round BOG
Participants, FY 2015.



Graph 1.2:
Ethnicity of Summer
and Year-Round BOG
Participants, FY 2015.



Enrollments

During summer and year-round programs youth may be served by more than one grantee. Youth are given separate enrollments for each grantee by whom they are served by. As a result youth sometimes have multiple enrollments during a funding cycle. Consequently, total enrollments for the summer and year-round programming are greater than the number of participants (107 summer and 268 year-round). For summer FY 2015 there were 112 total enrollments, and for year-round FY 2015 there were 290 enrollments. A breakdown of enrollments by program option, for summer and year-round programming, is below:

| BOG Year-Round FY 2015 | | |
|------------------------|-------------------|------------|
| BOG PROGRAM OPTION | YOUTH ENROLLMENTS | PERCENTAGE |
| Arts and Cultural | 63 | 22% |
| HiSET | 33 | 11% |
| Vocational | 47 | 16% |
| Work-Based Learning | 147 | 51% |
| Grand Total | 290 | 100% |

Table 1.0:
Enrollments FY
2015 Year Round

| BOG Summer FY 2015 | | |
|---------------------|-------------------|------------|
| BOG PROGRAM OPTION | YOUTH ENROLLMENTS | PERCENTAGE |
| Arts and Cultural | 33 | 29% |
| HiSET | 11 | 10% |
| Vocational | 17 | 15% |
| Work-Based Learning | 51 | 46% |
| Grand Total | 112 | 100% |

Table 1.1:
Enrollments, FY
2015 Summer



“ I think it is very helpful and useful as a resource and also the way to go when trying to build experience to find a permanent job placement”

– YOUTH COMMENTS FROM A COMMONWEALTH CORPORATION SURVEY

SUMMER FY 2015

GOAL REQUIREMENTS

In total 107 youth participated in BOG summer programming. Youth enrolled in BOG programs work on goal requirements for each program type as outlined in the BOG RFP. For example, most program options require a 2 hour orientation in which youth must participate in orientation training that reviews program expectations and workplace documentation. Other goal requirements vary based on program option. Some examples include career readiness training, subsidized employment, vocational training, certification training, and arts and cultural activities. Table 2.0 provides a description of BOG summer program goal requirements by program option.

Table 2.0:
Program Goal
Requirements, FY
2015 Summer

| Program Option | FY 2015 Summer Goal Requirements |
|---------------------------------------|---|
| Option 1: BOG Work-based Learning | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Completion of Youth Resume • Completion of 8 hours career readiness and youth development sessions • Completion of 90 hours of subsidized employment per youth |
| Option 2: BOG Vocational Training | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Completion of 2 hours orientation career readiness training per youth • Completion of Youth Resume • Completion of 8 hours career readiness and youth development sessions • Completion of 90 hours of exploratory training in one or more vocational trades |
| Option 3: HiSET and Tutoring Services | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Completion of 40 hours of classroom instruction • Attainment of a High School equivalency credential such as GED or HiSET |
| Option 4: Arts and Culture Activities | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Completion of 2 hours of program orientation per youth • Completion of 8 hours youth development sessions • Completion of 90 hours of project-based exposure to arts and culture |

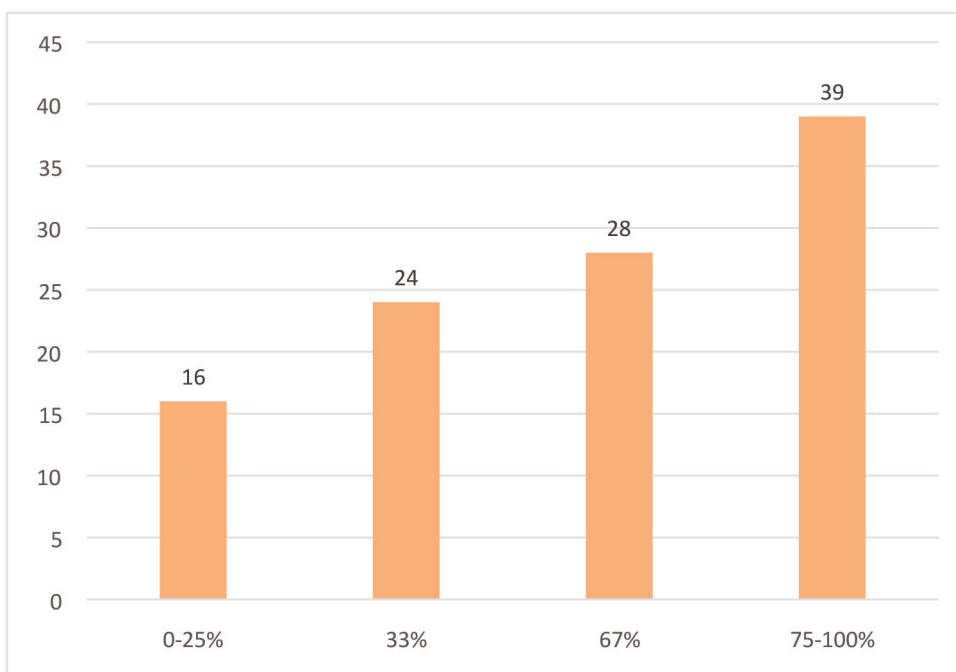
The first column is a complete list of goal requirements set for youth across all grantees during the summer. The second column shows the number of youth that worked toward a particular goal requirement. The third column identifies the completion rate of youth. Fifty-eight percent of goal requirements set in FY 2015 summer programming were successfully completed by youth. Youth were most successful at completing career-readiness training, working toward their HiSET, and orientation training goal requirements.

| Goals Requirement | Number of Youth with goal requirement | % of Goal Requirements Completed | |
|------------------------------|---------------------------------------|----------------------------------|------------|
| | | NO | YES |
| Arts and Cultural Activities | 32 | 75.0% | 25.0% |
| Career Readiness Training | 68 | 36.8% | 63.2% |
| HiSET | 11 | 0% | 100% |
| Orientation Training | 101 | 24% | 76% |
| Subsidized employment | 53 | 52.8% | 47.2% |
| Vocational Training | 17 | 58.8% | 41.2% |
| Youth Development Training | 33 | 63.6% | 36.4% |
| Grand Total | | 42% | 58% |

Table 2.1:
Goal Requirements
Completion, FY 2015
Summer

Overall Goal Requirement Completion

Throughout FY 2015 summer programming individual youth typically worked on three to four goal requirements. Graph 2.0 depicts the percentage of goal requirements set for youth that were completed. Thirty-nine of the BOG summer participants completed at least 75% of their goal requirements.



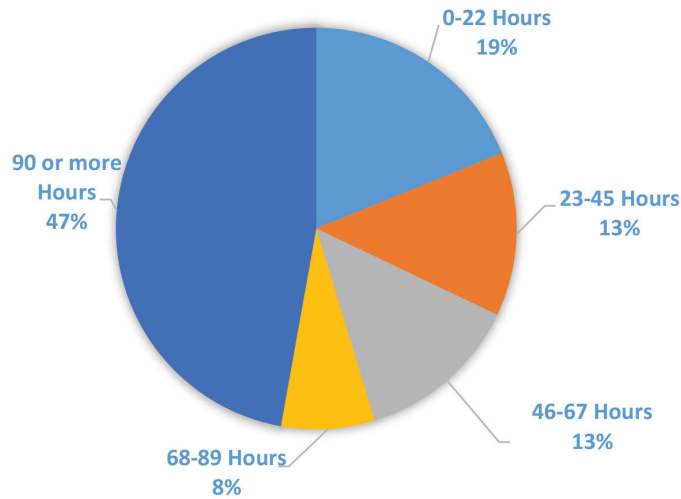
Graph 2.0:
Percentage of Goal
Requirements
Completed, FY 2015
Summer

Completion of Goal Requirement Hours

The two graphs below provide further detail on the completion of the vocational training and subsidized employment goal requirements.

Graph 2.1 shows the hours completed by youth who worked towards the subsidized employment goal requirement. Forty-seven percent of those youth completed or exceeded the 90 hour goal, 8% completed between 68-89 hours, and 13% completed 46-67 hours of subsidized employment.

Graph 2.1: Hours of Subsidized Employment Completed, FY 2015 Summer



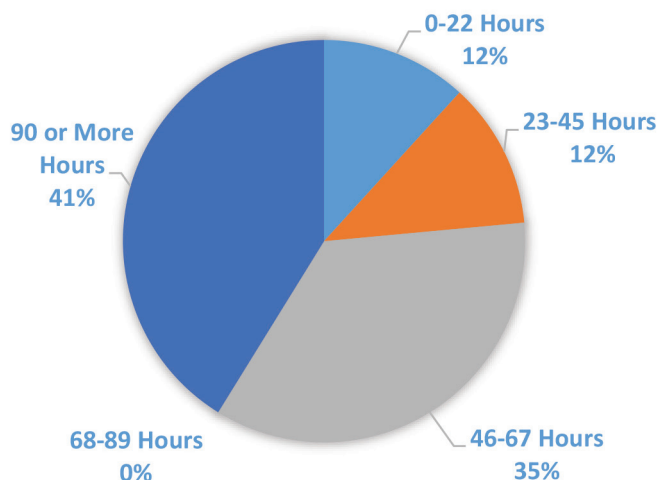
Youth who were provided subsidized work experience were employed in a variety of industries¹. Table 2.2 shows the various industries youth were employed in as well as the number and percent of youth who were provided with subsidized employment. Thirty-two percent of subsidized employment placements were in maintenance/landscaping.

Table 2.2: Industry Placement, FY 2015 Summer

| Industry | # of Subsidized Employment Placements | % of Subsidized Employment Placements |
|--|---------------------------------------|---------------------------------------|
| Business | 2 | 4% |
| Child Care/Camp Counselor | 1 | 2% |
| Culinary Arts | 6 | 11% |
| Environment, Natural Resources and Agriculture | 7 | 13% |
| Health Care | 1 | 2% |
| Human Services | 10 | 18% |
| Information Technology | 1 | 2% |
| Law, Government and Public Service | 4 | 7% |
| Maintenance/Landscaping | 18 | 32% |
| Retail and Services | 4 | 7% |
| Transportation | 2 | 4% |
| Total | | 100% |

¹ The total number of industries exceeds the amount of youth who have received this service because youth may have multiple work placements during the FY15 summer programming.

Graph 2.2 shows the hours completed by youth who worked towards the vocational training goal requirement. Forty-one percent of youth completed or exceeded the 90 hour goal requirement, and 35% completed between 46-67 hours of vocational training.



Graph 2.2:
Hours of Vocational
Training Completed, FY
2015 Summer

SERVICES

Services are the various elements of programming youth received while working towards their goal requirements. While youth may not have completed a goal requirement, this does not mean that they did not work towards completing the goal requirement. Prior to the launch of our new database we were limited in the amount of service information we could collect. Therefore, we only captured information on a general list of services for summer programming. For instance, during career readiness training youth are being instructed in topics such as workplace etiquette and how to write a resume. Because the database was not available in the summer we were not able to capture the various topics youth received training for and were only able to capture the service as ongoing career readiness training.

The table below identifies a list of services provided to youth during the fiscal year 2015 summer BOG programming. The first column provides a list of services. The second column shows us the total number of youth that were trained in specific workforce development areas, and the third column shows the percent of total youth participants who received each service. Forty-nine percent of youth received services towards orientation training, 47% of youth received services towards subsidized work experience, and 38% of youth received services towards ongoing career readiness training.

Table 2.3:
Services, FY 2015
Summer

| Services | # of Participants | % of All Youth Participants |
|------------------------------------|-------------------|-----------------------------|
| Arts and Culture Programming | 30 | 28% |
| CAREER READINESS TRAINING | | |
| Ongoing Career Readiness Training | 41 | 38% |
| Ongoing Youth Development Training | 6 | 6% |
| Orientation Training | 52 | 49% |
| Subsidized Work Experience | 50 | 47% |
| Tutoring / HiSET Services | 12 | 11% |
| VOCATIONAL | | |
| Machine Tech | 12 | 11% |
| Vocational Training | 5 | 2% |

Reasons for Non-completion

Table 2.1, shows that 42% of all goal requirements were not completed during FY 2015 summer programming.

The table below identifies a breakdown of reasons for non-completion of goal requirements. This table shows that the number one reason a goal was not completed was due to youth not attending the minimum amount of hours needed to complete the goal requirement. BOG's open exit/open entry policy allows youth to re-enter programming after having left for an extended period. In addition, youth may have entered programming after the start date of July 1st and therefore did not have enough time to receive the amount of services needed during programming to complete their goal requirements. This policy makes it possible for youth to continue working on goal requirements, although they may not always be able to complete the hours required during a program session.

Table 2.4:
Reasons for Non-
completion of Goal
Requirements, FY 2015
Summer

| Reasons for Non-Completion of Goal Requirements, FY 2015 Summer | % of Youth |
|---|-------------|
| Did not attend minimum # of hours | 63% |
| DYS AWOL | 4% |
| DYS revocation | 4% |
| Other | 20% |
| Quit program | 9% |
| Grand Total | 100% |



“ The best part of the program for me was being able to be more open with my work experience, and become more confident in job sites.”

– YOUTH COMMENTS FROM A COMMONWEALTH CORPORATION SURVEY

Year-round FY 2015

GOAL REQUIREMENTS

In total 268 youth participated in BOG year-round programming. Of those youth 63 continued on from summer FY 2015 BOG programming. Similar to BOG summer programming, there are a range of goal requirements that youth work on while participating in the year-round session. These goal requirements are similar to those set during summer programming, however, the completion requirements differ. Like summer programming, all youth are required to participate in orientation training that reviews program expectations and workplace documentation. Other goal requirements vary based on program option. Some examples include career readiness training, subsidized employment, vocational training, certification training, and arts and cultural activities. Table 3.0 provides a breakdown of BOG year-round program goal requirements.

| Program Option | FY 2015 Year-round Goal Requirements |
|---------------------------------------|---|
| Option 1: BOG Work-based Learning | <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Completion of 10 hours orientation career readiness training per youth• Completion of Youth Career Portfolio per youth• Completion of 20 hours career readiness and youth development sessions• Completion of 48 hours of subsidized employment per youth |
| Option 2: BOG Vocational Training | <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Completion of 10 hours career readiness training per youth• Completion of Youth Career Portfolio• Completion of 10 career readiness and youth development sessions (20 hours)• Completion of 96 hours of exploratory training in one or more vocational trades |
| Option 3: HiSET and Tutoring Services | <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Completion of 40 hours of classroom instruction• Attainment of a High School equivalency credential such as GED or HiSET |
| Option 4: Arts and Culture Activities | <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Completion of 10 hours of program orientation per youth• Completion of 10 youth development sessions (20 hours)• Completion of 48 hours of project-based exposure to arts and culture |

Table 3.0:
Program
Requirement, FY
2015 Year-round

Table 3.1 shows a breakdown of the completion of goal requirements throughout the BOG FY 2015 year round programming. The first column is a complete list of goal requirements that grantees set for youth during the year round session. The second column shows the number of youth that had the goal requirement and the third column shows the completion rate for youth. Fifty-four percent of goal requirements set in FY 2015 year-round programming were successfully completed by youth. The Arts and Cultural Activities goal has the highest completion rate at 78%. The subsidized employment goal was successfully completed by 54% of youth. In addition, 73% of youth completed orientation training, and 62% of youth completed certification training.

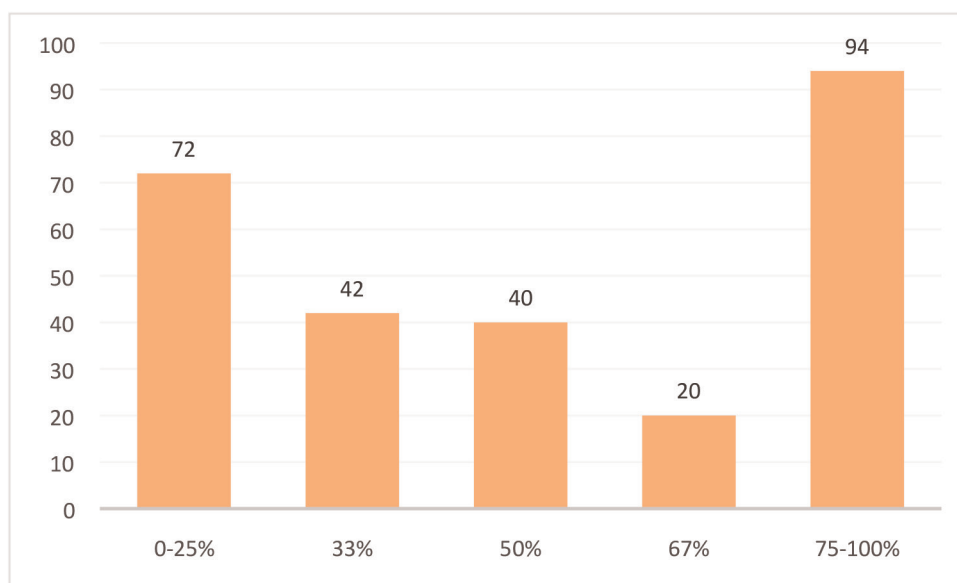
Table 3.1:
Goal Requirements
Completion, FY 2015
Year-round

| Goals Requirement | Number of Youth with goal requirement | % of Goal Requirements Completed | |
|------------------------------|---------------------------------------|----------------------------------|------------|
| | | NO | YES |
| Arts and Cultural Activities | 61 | 22% | 78% |
| Career Readiness Training | 151 | 72% | 28% |
| Certification Training | 13 | 38% | 62% |
| Obtain HiSET | 30 | 50% | 50% |
| Orientation Training | 201 | 27% | 73% |
| Subsidized employment | 119 | 46% | 54% |
| Unsubsidized Employment | 7 | 71% | 29% |
| Vocational Training | 47 | 89% | 11% |
| Youth Development Training | 24 | 42% | 58% |
| Grand Total | | 46% | 54% |

Overall Goal Requirements Completion

Graph 3.0 depicts the percentage of goal requirements set for youth that were completed during FY 2015 year-round programming. Ninety-four of the BOG year-round participants completed at least 75% of their goal requirements.

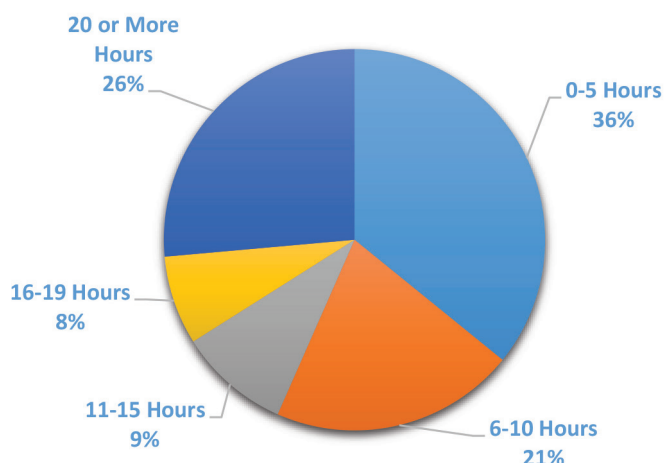
Graph 3.0:
Percentage of Goals
Completed, FY 2015
Year-round



Completion of Goal Requirement Hours

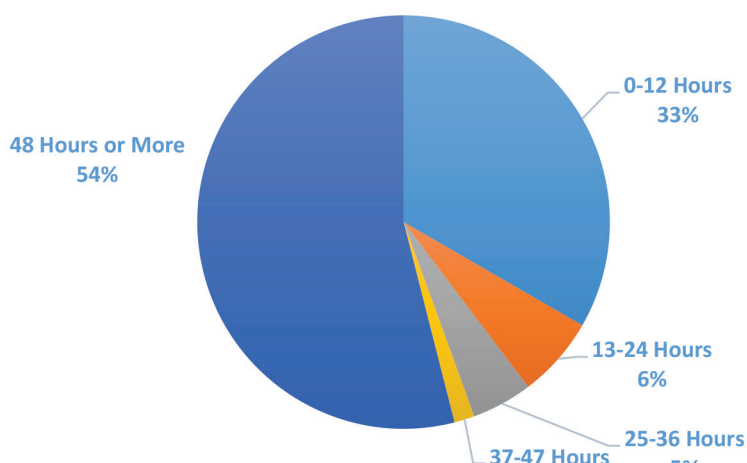
As depicted in Table 3.0, forty-six percent of all goal requirements were not completed during FY 2015 year-round programming. The graphs below provide more detail on the completion of career readiness training and subsidized employment goal requirements.

Graph 3.1 shows the hours completed by youth who worked towards the career readiness goal requirement. Twenty-six percent of those youth completed or exceeded the 20 hour goal requirement, 8% completed between 16-19 hours, and 21% completed 6-10 hours of career readiness training.



Graph 3.1:
Hours of Career Readiness
Training Completed, FY
2015 Year-round

Graph 3.2 shows the hours completed by youth who worked towards the subsidized employment goal requirement. Fifty-four percent of those youth completed or exceeded the 48 hour goal requirement, 2% completed between 37-47 hours, and 33% completed 0-12 hours of subsidized employment.



Graph 3.2:
Hours of Subsidized
Employment
Completed, FY 2015
Year-Round

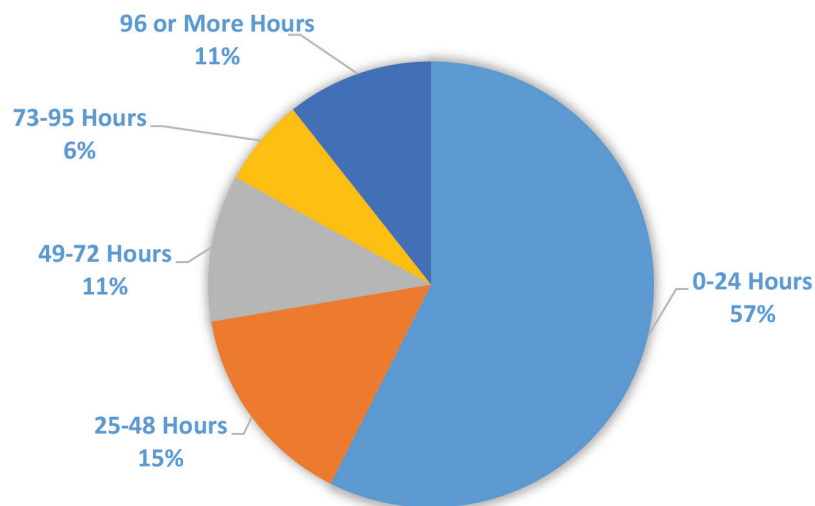
Youth who were provided subsidized work experience were employed in a variety of industries². Table 3.2 shows the various industries in which youth were employed, as well as the number and percent of youth who were provided with subsidized employment. Forty percent of subsidized employment placements were in Retail and Services.

Table 3.2:
Industry Placement, FY
2015 Year-round

| Services | # of Subsidized Employment Placements | % of Subsidized Employment Placements |
|--|---------------------------------------|---------------------------------------|
| Arts, Media and Communications | 1 | 1% |
| Business | 2 | 2% |
| Child Care/Camp Counselor | 3 | 3% |
| Culinary Arts | 12 | 10% |
| Education | 2 | 2% |
| Environment, Natural Resources and Agriculture | 7 | 6% |
| Health Care | 3 | 3% |
| Human Services | 17 | 15% |
| Information Technology | 6 | 5% |
| Law, Government and Public Service | 5 | 4% |
| Maintenance/Landscaping | 10 | 9% |
| Retail and Services | 46 | 40% |
| Transportation | 1 | 1% |
| Total | | 100% |

Graph 3.3 shows the hours completed by youth who worked towards the vocational training goal requirement. Eleven percent of those youth completed or exceeded the 96 hour goal requirement, 15% completed between 25-48 hours, and 57% completed 0-24 hours of vocational training.

Graph 3.3:
Hours of Vocational
Training Completed,
FY 2015 Year-Round



² The total number of industries exceeds the amount of youth who have received this service because youth may have multiple work placements during the FY15 year-round session.

SERVICES

Once the new database was launched we began to collect information on the types of services offered to youth during year-round programming. These services are the various elements of programming youth received while working towards their goal requirements. In the past, we only collected information on the amount of hours spent in programming. By tracking youth services we get a more detailed picture of what youth worked on during BOG programming. While youth may not have completed a goal requirement, this does not mean that they did not work towards reaching the goal requirement.

Table 3.3 shows a list of services provided to youth during the FY 2015 year-round BOG program session. The first column shows us the total number of youth that were trained in specific workforce development areas, the second column shows the percent of total youth participants who received each service. Overall, 55% of youth received services towards orientation training, and 41% of youth received services towards ongoing career readiness.

Even though only 28% of youth completed the Career Readiness goal requirement (Table 3.1), the table below shows us that the highest percentages of youth participants were provided services within the category of career readiness training:

| Services | # of Participants | % of Youth Participants |
|--|-------------------|-------------------------|
| VOCATIONAL | | |
| Carpentry | 26 | 10% |
| Automotive | 50 | 19% |
| CAREER READINESS TRAINING | | |
| Workplace Etiquette | 51 | 19% |
| Preparing youth Portfolio | 87 | 32% |
| Program Expectations/Workplace documentation | 77 | 29% |
| Field Trips | 65 | 24% |
| Searching and obtaining a Job | 88 | 33% |
| Maintaining Employment | 59 | 22% |
| Orientation Training | 147 | 55% |
| Ongoing Career Readiness | 109 | 41% |
| SUBSIDIZED EMPLOYMENT | 104 | 39% |
| CERTIFICATIONS | 18 | 7% |
| HiSET | 37 | 14% |
| ARTS | 107 | 40% |

Table 3.3: Services, FY 2015 Year-round

A requirement of Career Readiness training is a development of a Youth Career Portfolio. The table below shows the total number of youth participants who completed documents to include in their portfolio. The number of youth that completed document column includes duplicate youth as some youth completed multiple documents. Overall, 53 youth completed a resume and 50 completed at least one cover letter.

Table 3.4: Completion of Youth Career Portfolio Components, FY 2015 Year-round

| Career Portfolio Document | Number of Youth that Completed Document |
|---|---|
| Certifications and/or Training Certificates | 4 |
| Completed Job Application | 35 |
| Cover Letter #1 | 50 |
| Cover letter #2 | 34 |
| Reference letter #1 | 28 |
| Reference letter #2 | 25 |
| Resume | 53 |
| Sample Employment e-mail inquiry | 38 |
| Sample Thank You Note | 41 |
| Writing Sample | 34 |

Reasons for Non-completion

The graph below provides a breakdown of reasons for non-completion. Because of our new ClientTrack database we are now able to gain a more detailed understanding of why youth are not completing goal requirements. As a result, compared to our summer reporting, we have a more comprehensive list of reasons for non-completion. This graph shows that the number one reason a goal requirement was not completed was due to youth quitting the program, followed closely by youth not attending the minimum number of service hours.

Table 3.5: Reasons for non-completion, FY 2015 Year-round

| Reason for Non-Completion | % youth |
|---|-------------|
| Did not attend minimum # of hours | 21% |
| DYS AWOL | 5% |
| DYS revocation | 15% |
| For reasons of safety | 1% |
| Moved out of area | 9% |
| Other | 9% |
| Quit program | 25% |
| Terminated at request of program or DHS | 3% |
| Youth Entered the Program Late | 11% |
| Grand Total | 100% |

REVOCATIONS

As a result of our new ClientTrack database we are now able to gather more information on youth revocation. When BOG grantees are informed that a youth has been revoked they record the date and length of revocation in the database. This is done each time they are informed that a youth is revoked. Revocations often prevent youth from completing their goal requirements. At worst, a youth may have to quit the program due to a revocation and does not complete his or her goal requirements. Table 3.5 above portrays this instance. However, revocations also prevent youth from completing the hourly requirements because they miss programming. Additionally, when a youth is revoked it can be difficult to re-engage the youth in programming; which also impacts completion. The following tables show a breakdown of youth revocations.

In total 21% (55 youth) of participants were revoked during the FY 2015 year-round program session amounting to a total of 87 revocations. As seen in Table 3.6 below, of those participants, 67% were revoked only once, and 16% twice.

| Number of Revocations | % of Revocated youth |
|-----------------------|----------------------|
| 1 | 67% |
| 2 | 16% |
| 3 | 11% |
| 4 | 4% |
| 6 | 2% |
| Total | 100% |

Table 3.6:
Number of Revocations,
FY 2015 Year-round

Of the 87 total revocations, as depicted in Table 3.7 below, 34% were for 1-7 days, and 34% were for 35 or more days.

| Length Of Revocation | % of Revocations |
|----------------------|------------------|
| 1 - 7 | 34% |
| 7-21 | 17% |
| 21 - 35 | 13% |
| 35+ | 34% |
| Grand Total | 100% |

Table 3.7:
Length of Revocation,
FY 2015 Year-round



“ It’s nice to work with youth because you feel like you make an impact. Even if they don’t work out with our business, it’s nice to know that you made an impact and gave them a positive experience”

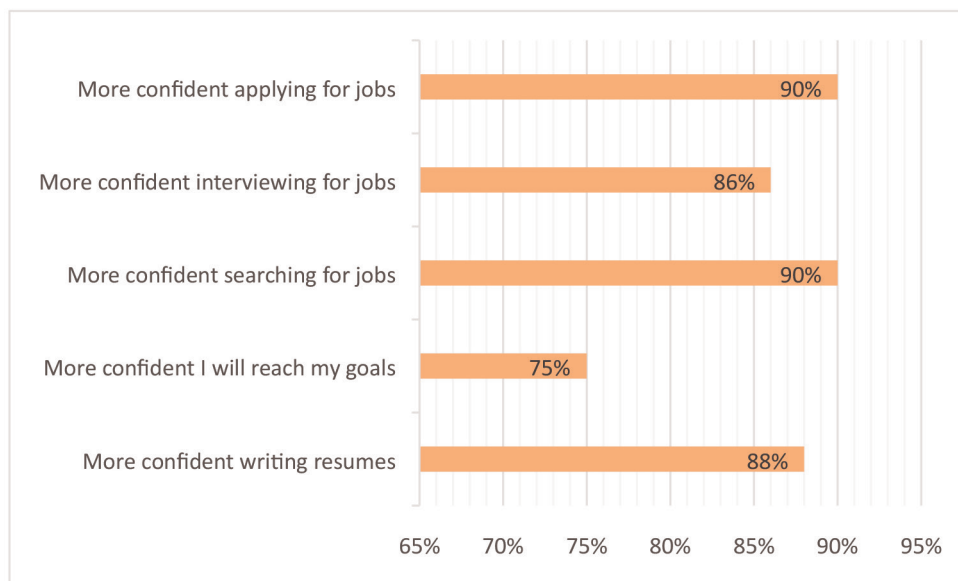
– EMPLOYER COMMENTS FROM A COMMONWEALTH CORPORATION SURVEY

Survey Responses

YOUTH

During BOG year-round programming a sampling of youth (49) were surveyed on their thoughts about BOG programming while working towards their goals. Most youth respondents stated that they were at least mostly satisfied (90%) with the program. As shown in the graph below 88% of respondents felt that they were more confident they would reach their long-term goals as a result of BOG programming. Respondents also noted that they are now more confident writing resumes (75%), searching for jobs (90%), interviewing for jobs (86%), and applying for jobs (90%).

Graph 3.4:
Improvements in
Youth Confidence, FY
2015 Year-round



"I think it is a great program and opportunity to teach responsibility and to help students get and keep jobs and stay out of trouble"

"I think it is very helpful and useful as a resource and also the way to go when trying to build experience to find a permanent job placement"

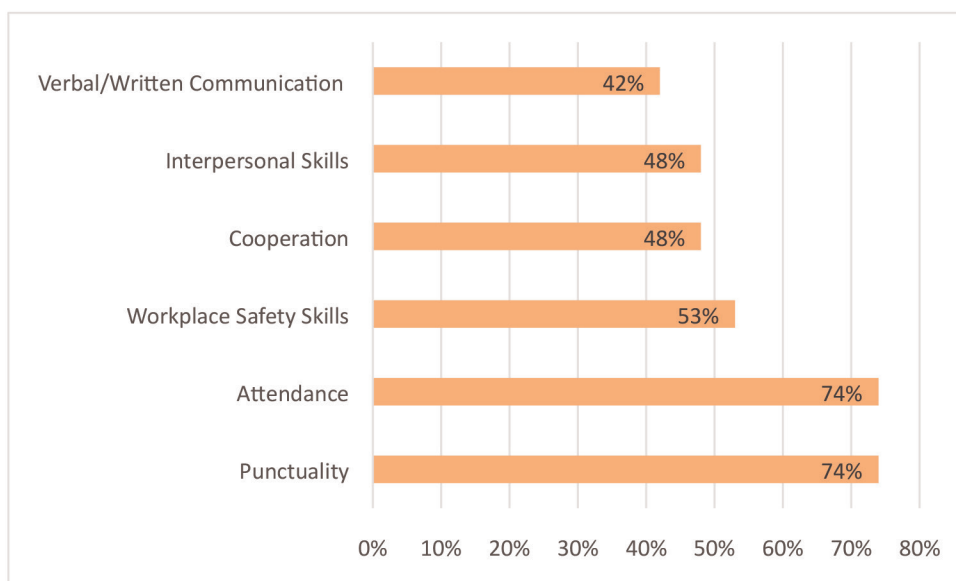
With regard to program staff, 90% of respondents noted that the program staff helped them challenge themselves to succeed, and about 80% said they would most likely or very likely recommend the program to other DYS youth. Survey respondents felt that they receive feedback often and that they can take what they learn from BOG and use it in other aspects of their life.

"I think it's a great thing. The staff really care about you succeeding and want you to do your best"

Respondents felt that caseworkers play a vital role in program participation. 72% of respondents said that's why they participate. Also important according to respondents is the programs emphasis on employability and the youth's ability to get job experience. Most respondents also noted that DYS told them about the program, and that DYS has helped them participate by helping with transportation and scheduling.

EMPLOYERS

Community employers, that provided subsidized work placements for BOG participants, were also surveyed during the year-round program session. Overall, 68% of respondents (19) said that the youth were well prepared to start their job placements. As displayed in the Graph 3.5, employer respondents also noted that punctuality and attendance were the top two skills that were developed by youth during the work placements (74%). The next most developed were workplace safety (53%), cooperation (48%), interpersonal skills (48%), and verbal/written communication skills (42%).



Graph 3.5:
Youth Skill Development
During Work Placement,
FY 2015 Year-round

Here's what some employers had to say about the skills they observed in youth working for them:

"He comes from a rough background, and started with really bad attendance but when he returned for the second time he improved greatly and is one of the top workers and has secured an internship"

"A youth was consistency late, but after a while, he was on time and exceeded time and expectations"

"One youth is learning a lot and has improved her communication skills becoming more personable"

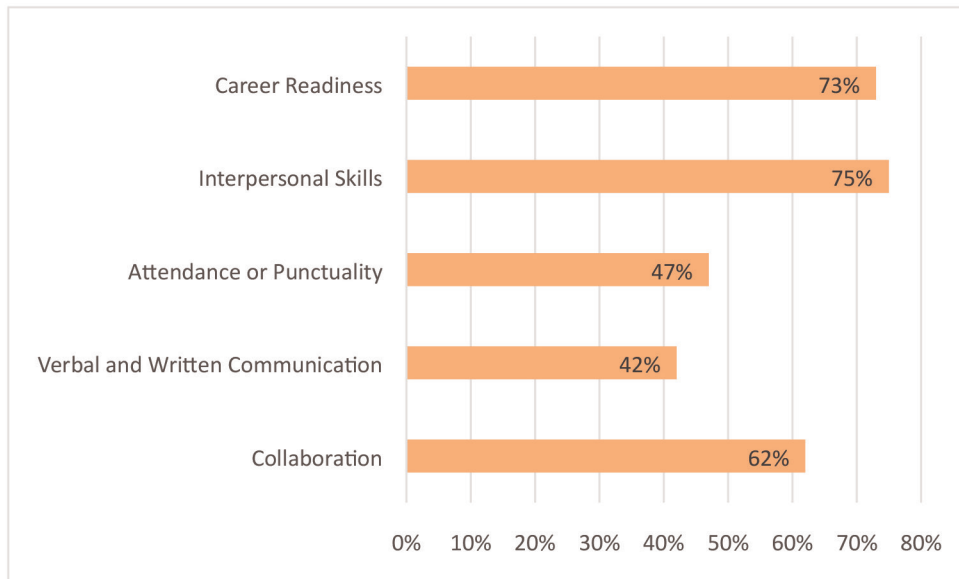
Overall employers find it a positive experience to offer subsidized employment to youth in BOG programming. Employers are observing skill gain that is essential to youth being successful in the workplace. Eighty-nine percent of respondents noted that they would offer a subsidized work experience next year. Ninety-five percent of respondents would offer an unsubsidized job to any youth in the program. Seventy-eight percent of respondents noted that youth had a positive or very positive effect on their organization.

"Getting to know the youth more, there was a better sense of community in the workplace. They also brought customers"

"It's nice to work with youth because you feel like you make an impact. Even if they don't work out with our business, it's nice to know that you made an impact and gave them a positive experience"

PROGRAM STAFF

Grantee program staff were also surveyed during the year-round program session. Graph 3.6 displays respondents' (15) views on student improvement. Respondents reported youth significantly improved on their collaboration skills (62%), verbal and written communication skills (42%), and youths' attendance and punctuality (47%). Program staff reported they saw a significant improvement in youth interpersonal skills (75%) and career readiness skills (73%).



Graph 3.6: Youth Improvement, FY 2015 Year-round

While respondents saw improvements in youth throughout programming 46% of respondents noted that retention of participants is difficult.

Respondents also noted that they would like to receive future technical assistance around gang violence and involvement (62%), managing continuous quality improvement (62%), and recruiting and retaining youth participants (70%).

Respondents also noted several things that worked to positively support programming. They responded that in person meetings (69%), support from CommCorp fiscal staff (49%), and the new BOG database (46%) worked in supporting programming.



Key Learnings

- Changes in the DYS population (size, location, demographics, etc.) impacts BOG program implementation. For example, some districts within a specific region are geographically spread out making it difficult for youth to get to programs for weekly or bi-weekly meetings, creating a challenge for youth to participate in programming and meet their goal requirements. Another example, was reported increase in gang activity in some areas, which made it a safety concern for some youth to participate in programming.
 - Changes in the DYS population has uniquely impacted the vocational program option. Only 11% of youth were able to complete the 96 hour goal requirement for vocational training. With less youth available to participate in programming the vocational option is not always of interest to the youth in a particular community. We had to suspend the vocational program in the western region during the FY 2015 year-round program due that reason and offer a work-based learning program. Two other vocational programs experienced high turn-over rates due to revocations and youth quitting the program. Because of the high turn-over many youth entered these programs at varying times which did not allow them to meet the minimum number of hours for the goal requirement.
- The 20-hour career readiness training requirement was not completed by the majority of youth in FY 2015 year-round programming. However, youth completed the 10 hour orientation that is required and is part of career readiness training. During the 10-hour orientation youth are trained in workplace documentation, program expectations, workplace etiquette, and begin the career portfolio.
- The new ClientTrack database allowed us to collect information on revocations that included the length. Thirty-four percent of youth received 1 – 7 and 34% of youth received 35 plus days. The high percentage of youth that received over 35 days could contribute to the lower outcomes. Youth often return to BOG programming after short term revocations but could still impact youth completion of goal requirements. With the longer revocation youth may not return to programming in the same grant period or due to longer time away have more difficulty completing goals. In addition, the ClientTrack database allows us to better understand which parts of the program youth are participating in and narrow down areas where we should focus on to provide technical assistance to support program improvements.



Recommendations

- Because of the smaller population size, the changing needs of the youth across the state, and geographic spread within regions; Commonwealth Corporation recommends reducing the emphasis on a cohort model. In order to support the needs of the youth, grantees should provide more individual career-readiness meetings or smaller group of youth when possible.
- Commonwealth Corporation will review and implement an improved approach to capture career readiness training in the database. Commonwealth Corporation will also work with DYS to determine if there is a need to reduce the hours required after the initial 10 hour orientation and/or a need to combine the various goals that make up career readiness training.
- Commonwealth Corporation recommends working with vocational programs and DYS to gain feedback on how many hours are needed to gain entry level skills in the trade that will help youth in seeking employment and change the requirement accordingly.
- Commonwealth Corporation will work with DYS to develop strategies that will allow youth to work on goals continuously regardless of grant session. We found that 59% of youth continued from summer programming into year-round programming. Enhancing the BOG model to implement a tiered approach that does not distinguish between summer and year-round requirements may better support youth in reaching their goals. This approach will allow youth to work on their individualized goals that build throughout their participation in the program and allow grantees to support a more personalized approach for youth.

FISCAL YEAR
2015

Bridging the Opportunity Gap Initiative