



Dallas-Fort Worth Workforce Benchmarking Collaborative

2016-2017 Phase One Report

July 2017

JPMORGAN CHASE & CO.



Acknowledgements

This report was authored by **Marty Miles** and **Megan Elyse Williams** of the Workforce Benchmarking Network (WBN), an initiative of Corporation for a Skilled Workforce (CSW). Taryn MacFarlane and Kysha Frazier of CSW also contributed to the report's development.

The success of the Workforce Benchmarking collaborative in the Dallas-Fort Worth (DFW) area is made possible by the active support and partnership of these organizations and individuals:

- JPMorgan Chase Global Philanthropy (Michelle R. Thomas)
- Communities Foundation of Texas (Wende Burton and Ashley McIver)
- United Way of Metropolitan Dallas (Greg Mangum, Andrea Glispie, and Nissy New)

Most importantly, CSW and the WBN are grateful to the 21 DFW organizations that participated in the initial Benchmarking data collection and peer learning activities, for their commitment to improving services and results for job seekers and employer customers.

About the Workforce Benchmarking Network

The Workforce Benchmarking Network (WBN) connects community-based providers of workforce development services across the nation—along with public and private funders and other intermediaries—to support better results for job seekers, employers, and communities. Started in 2004 with support from the Annie E. Casey Foundation, the WBN has collected results data on more than 500 programs operated by more than 200 organizations. For over a decade it has increased the field's knowledge about what “good” performance looks like, with the nation's largest dataset of outcome information for nonprofit workforce service providers.

Housed at Corporation for a Skilled Workforce, the WBN makes quality data about program services and outcomes available, and builds the field's capacity to *use* that data to create more effective programs and policies. Engaged at the organizational, community, and national levels, the WBN:

- Conducts data analysis of program-level outcomes among similar organizations across the nation, generating “apples to apples” comparisons that enable new understanding and insight for program leaders
- Expands the ability of community workforce development providers to use data for continuous improvement, helping them strengthen their learning culture as a means to higher performance
- Spotlights the practices and strategies of high-performing programs
- Partners with funders, providers, and other stakeholders to tackle system-wide policy issues and enhance data reporting, in order to generate a more comprehensive picture of workforce outcomes across fragmented funding streams.

The Dallas-Fort Worth Workforce Benchmarking Collaborative utilizes all of these strategies and builds on the experience of similar WBN initiatives in Chicago, New York City, and Minneapolis-St. Paul (Twin Cities). See the most recent report on the WBN's capacity-building work, [Learning to Thrive: How Data Can Fuel Better Workforce Development Results](#), highlighting results and lessons from the Twin Cities initiative.

For more general information, please see the Workforce Benchmarking Network [website](#).



The Workforce Benchmarking Collaborative – Laying the Foundation for Better Results

Dear Dallas-Fort Worth Community:

Our rich network of community-based organizations ensures that more workers with fragmented work histories, major barriers to employment or limited basic skills can thrive in our booming economy. The critical career exploration, coaching, technical training, job placement and retention services provided by these organizations assist thousands of these workers to secure family-supporting jobs and achieve financial stability each year.

The DFW Workforce Benchmarking Collaborative has provided a valuable look at the real impact of this work by gathering and analyzing program-level data of 21 organizations. We now have a better understanding of their collective strength and opportunities for innovation.

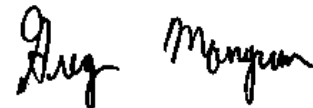
We hope the DFW Benchmarking Phase One Report spurs new conversations among funders and key stakeholders about the ways in which we can deepen the capacity and increase the impact of these vital programs.



Michelle R. Thomas
Global Philanthropy
JPMorgan Chase



Wende Burton
Communities Foundation of
Texas



Greg Mangum
United Way of Metropolitan
Dallas



Introduction: Improving Results and Opportunities for DFW Residents

As noted in a 2015 report prepared by Jobs for the Future for JPMorgan Chase's *New Skills at Work* initiative, growth in some segments of the Dallas-Fort Worth (DFW) labor market remains strong, with 42,000 middle-skill job openings projected every year through 2018. These jobs are projected to pay an average of \$24.27 per hour, which is 35% higher than the local "living wage."¹

And yet, a growing segment of the region's population is sliding further away from these opportunities. About 950,000 DFW adults lack a high school credential, which is often needed to be successful in education and training programs for mid-level skills. The region's community-based nonprofits—often the entry point for low-income, low-skilled persons seeking assistance—work hard to help their clients access further training and entry-level jobs that are on a pathway to family-sustaining careers. But the multiple personal and family challenges faced by residents mean that this can be very difficult work.

Given these challenges—and the limited availability of public and private resources to address them—it is critical to maintain a focus on data and the tangible outcomes being produced by nonprofit providers of workforce development services. It's not just a matter of accountability to the funders who are investing in these services. It's important to understand how "well" different services are working (and for whom), so that organizations can continuously adapt and improve their strategies. Developing a culture of learning within programs and across organizations—informed by data—is essential to this improvement.

In this context, in 2016 United Way of Metropolitan Dallas, Communities Foundation of Texas and JPMorgan Global Philanthropy set out to help community-based workforce development organizations build their capacity for learning—including the use of data to enhance results for those they serve. These funders contracted with Corporation for a Skilled Workforce (CSW) to lead this effort, asking CSW to bring the tools and insights of its Workforce Benchmarking Network (WBN) to the DFW region.

Since 2004², the WBN has assisted community-based workforce organizations with improving their use of data to advance an internal culture of learning and continuous improvement. The Benchmarking approach is based on the belief that an active learning culture is vital to innovation, adaptation, and resilience—three essential traits for any nonprofit that wants to be effective in a dramatically changing environment and era of shrinking resources



¹ [Strengthening Dallas-Fort Worth, JPMorgan Chase & Co., New Skills at Work](#)

² In 2004, with support from the Annie E. Casey Foundation, Public/Private Ventures (P/PV) launched The Benchmarking Project to better understand the results of local workforce development programs. With P/PV's closing in 2012, The Benchmarking Project entered into partnership with CSW and became the Workforce Benchmarking Network. CSW believes the Benchmarking work is an essential part of strengthening local and national capacity to respond to existing and emerging workforce needs.






Dallas-Ft. Worth Benchmarking Collaborative: Goals and Activities

The specific goals of the DFW 2016-2017 Workforce Benchmarking Collaborative were to support better long-term performance results by:

- Comparing recent results produced by DFW nonprofit workforce service providers to those of other programs across the country, using the WBN’s national dataset as a reference point to understand how local programs are performing
- Beginning to deepen local providers’ capacity to use data to improve services and results
- Strengthening the DFW system overall by increasing the level of peer sharing across programs about effective program practices

Recruitment for the Benchmarking collaborative began in February 2016, and 21 DFW organizations participated in one or more activities. Table 1 below summarizes the collaborative’s components.

Table 1: DFW Design Components and Activities: February 2016-April 2017

	Design Component	Activities
	Data Survey	Organizations completed the national survey and received confidential reports showing how their outcomes compare to similar organizations. Funders and key stakeholders received presentations on aggregate findings.
	Peer Learning	Workshop introducing the Benchmarking tools, followed by four quarterly peer forums. Forums included data discussion and peer interchange on topics of recruitment, employer engagement, job retention, and overall data trends.
	Organizational Performance Improvement	Quarterly mini-projects focused on improving use of data and applying ideas from peer forums in various program areas; follow-up conference calls maintained momentum and captured progress.
	Organizational Data Culture	Organizations completed a data culture self-assessment at the final peer forum and identified priorities for further work.
	Senior Leadership Engagement	Leaders made initial commitment to their team's participation and attended the final peer forum.



Dallas-Ft. Worth Benchmarking Collaborative: Phase One Key Findings & Recommendations (Summary)



DFW data is represented in **blue**, whereas data from the **National Dataset** is represented in **green**. Data presented reflect the **20 DFW** programs completing surveys and the **259 National Dataset** entries unless the “n” (the number of programs providing data) is otherwise noted in the charts.

Data submitted to the national Workforce Benchmarking Network survey were analyzed from 20 DFW programs operated by 17 organizations.³ When compared to national data, these themes emerge:

Broader Service Mix, Varied Workforce Experience, Shorter Programming

- The **DFW** workforce provider organizations are **more likely to also provide other services** (e.g., housing, domestic violence shelter, emergency assistance) than those in the **National Dataset**. Nationally, **59%** of organizations surveyed were primarily offering workforce-related services (those focused on preparing participants to obtain and succeed in employment), compared to only **15%** of DFW respondents noting that as a sole focus.
- **DFW** provider organizations are **more varied in their years of experience** providing workforce services. One quarter (**25%**) of DFW organizations have been offering workforce services for five years or less, compared to **10%** nationally.
- Compared to the national dataset, **more DFW programs** connected participants to **skills training related to industry certifications** (**35%** vs. **27%**) and to **financial literacy services** (**60%** vs. **41%**).
- Even with more skills training, **participant time spent in DFW pre-employment activities** is **significantly less** than for participants in other **National** programs (a median⁴ of **61** hours for DFW vs. **160** hours nationally).

The Good News

- Despite fewer service hours and more varied experience, **DFW job placement rates are comparable** to the **National Dataset** for participants completing services (average of **70%** vs. **69%**).
- **DFW job quality indicators** are **much stronger** than those in the **National Dataset**. The DFW average **starting wage** is **\$13.24** vs. **\$11.07** nationally, and DFW programs reported an average **64%** of jobs with access to **health benefits** vs. **39%** nationally.
- Although job retention data was limited (see below), **DFW three-month retention rates are also slightly higher**. For those reporting, an average of **73%** of those placed in jobs were confirmed as still working after three months vs. **70%** nationally.

These higher rates may also be partly due to Dallas-Ft. Worth’s strong economy, which did not experience as much of a downturn during the Great Recession as did other parts of the country.

³ Of the 24 programs originally submitting information, two primarily offered literacy-related services and did not have sufficient data on job placement and job retention results to be included in these findings. One program submitted data from outside of the DFW area. We were unable to verify data from one other program.

⁴ The median is the value located in the middle of the distribution of responses. Medians are helpful to view with means (averages), as they are resistant to very high or very low outliers that can “skew” the average.



Opportunities for Improvement & Innovation

Despite the fact that some DFW provider results are comparable to or stronger than those of their national peers, the data also reveal opportunities for organizations to improve in areas such as data collection and engagement with employers:

- **Insufficient data is available on longer-term job retention** after placement, which is essential in assessing the effectiveness of services. The percentage of DFW programs able to report retention was **35%** at six months (vs. **55%** nationally), and **20%** at 12 months (vs. **70%**).
- For the DFW programs covered in the survey, there was often **less data available on participant demographics** such as reading level, educational attainment, and criminal background status than in other national programs. This is information which could help programs better understand who's being successful (and who's not), in order to make improvements to services and target needed community partnerships.
- There appears to be a **heavier reliance by DFW programs on client self-reporting** to confirm wages and job retention, versus employer confirmation, pay stubs or other means of validating that information. For example, only **15%** of DFW programs reported verbally contacting employers for verification vs. **41%** of programs nationally.
- While the average number and types of employer services offered by DFW programs were roughly the same as those of programs nationally, **DFW programs offering two or more employer services (half of the programs) had much better job placement and retention results**. This points to the potential of deepening employer engagement.

Strategic Recommendations

These recommendations are the result of insights from both the data survey and Phase One peer learning activities, and will inform plans for a proposed Phase Two of the Benchmarking Collaborative:

1. **Continue to improve processes for collecting and sharing long-term employment retention and earnings information.** For both funders and providers, this information is essential to confirm that services are having the intended impact on participants' financial sustainability while also effectively meeting employer needs. At the provider level, securing longer-term retention data will require better strategies to sustain long-term participant engagement. But funders should also consider innovative work happening in other states to help make aggregate public wage record data more available and useful to providers on the ground.
2. **Expand and deepen employer engagement strategies, to support retention and better results.** To take full advantage of the robust DFW economy, improved employer engagement is critical. More intentional activities will ensure that programs better understand and meet business needs, while increasing retention through better job matches and post-placement support.
3. **Improve the collection and use of participant information to drive improvement and collaboration.** Improved strategies for capturing and analyzing participant information will help programs better understand which sub-groups of participants are not as successful and where new strategies or collaboration with other community partners could be useful. Better data will also assist funders to identify "gaps" in the larger workforce system for potential investment.
4. **Continue the sharing and application of information about "what works".** Given the varied experience of DFW providers offering workforce services, it is important to continue sharing information about effective workforce practices overall. But the strengths in other services offered by DFW providers also need to be better leveraged by more strategic collaboration.



Dallas-Ft. Worth Organizational Participation

A total of **21** organizations from the DFW area participated in one or more components of the 2016-2017 Benchmarking activities:

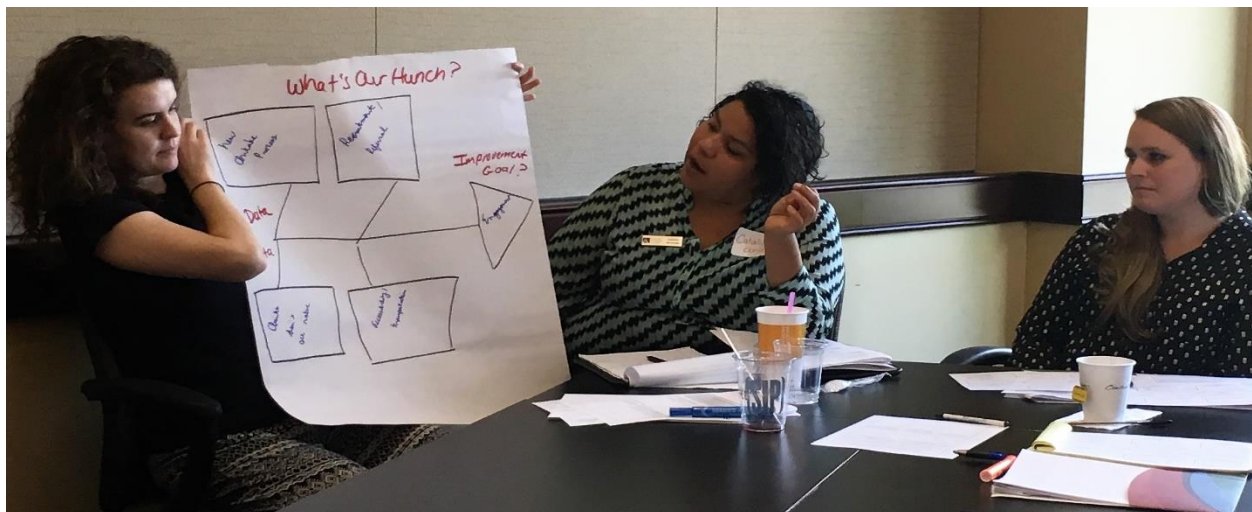
- **20** organizations provided data on one-year cohorts from **24** programs for the national WBN survey.
- **17** organizations participated in quarterly peer learning forums with teams of managers and frontline staff. An estimated **78** staff members attended one or more forums or related conference calls and webinars that occurred between forums.

Table 2: 2016-2017 Participating Organizations

◆ Catholic Charities of Dallas	◆ Literacy Instruction for Texas*
◆ Catholic Charities of Fort Worth	◆ NPower Dallas*
◆ CitySquare	◆ Per Scholas--Dallas*
◆ Community Enrichment Center	◆ Prison Entrepreneurship Program
◆ Community Learning Center	◆ The Senior Source
◆ The Family Place	◆ Sharing Life Community Outreach/El Centro
◆ Goodwill Industries of Fort Worth*	◆ Skill QUEST
◆ H.I.S. BridgeBuilders	◆ The Wilkinson Center
◆ Interfaith Family Services**	◆ WiNGS
◆ International Rescue Committee--Dallas	◆ The Women's Center of Tarrant County
◆ Jewish Family Services of Greater Dallas	

*Participated in data collection only, not peer learning forums

**Participated in peer learning forums only



Benchmarking Data Survey Process

The Data Survey

The national Workforce Benchmarking Network survey completed by DFW programs in Fall 2016 focuses on participants who were enrolled during an earlier one-year period. The survey's questions capture data on organizational type, program staffing, funding, services that were provided to participants and employers, and the amount of time services were provided. It also asks for aggregate data on the demographics of enrolled participants and on a variety of short- and long-term outcomes: program completion, credential attainment, job placement, average placement wage, and job retention and wages at three, six, and 12 months. The survey also asks respondents to indicate how various outcomes were defined. A final set of questions covers the methods used and frequency with which programs confirm the accuracy of their reported outcomes.

In order to report on program cohorts whose job placement and retention results were already known, most DFW organizations chose one-year groups enrolled during the 2014-2015 period (with placement and job retention outcomes occurring in 2015-16). The online survey contains 110 questions in total, but most organizations did not answer all questions. Because data collection capacity varies across organizations, many survey questions have "we do not collect" or "data not available" answer options. DFW organizations reported that they spent an average of 7.4 hours completing the survey.

For a more detailed summary of the Benchmarking survey questions, see Appendix A.

Data Analysis Process and Reporting

DFW survey data was integrated into the larger national Benchmarking dataset, which contained information on 259 other programs from across the country with enrollments during the period 2010-2014. The national dataset has been analyzed to look at which program characteristics correlate in a statistically significant⁵ way with differences in outcomes. For example, the data show that programs that offer skills training related to industry certifications have higher job placement rates and wages than programs that do not offer such training. (See Appendix B for a description of the analysis methodology and a listing of program characteristics that correlate in a statistically significant way with differences in outcomes.)

Participating DFW organizations were able to access confidential online reports (through the CSW Benchmarking website) showing how their outcomes compared with results of a peer group that shared a similar characteristic (e.g., also offered skills training for certifications).

A sample of the online reports is in Figure 1. It focuses on another of the characteristics that analysis indicates is related to differences in outcomes: the percentage of young adults (age 18-24) served by the program. The report shows that the job placement rate of the sample program ranks in the 71st to 80th percentile among other programs that also served groups that had a majority of young adults.

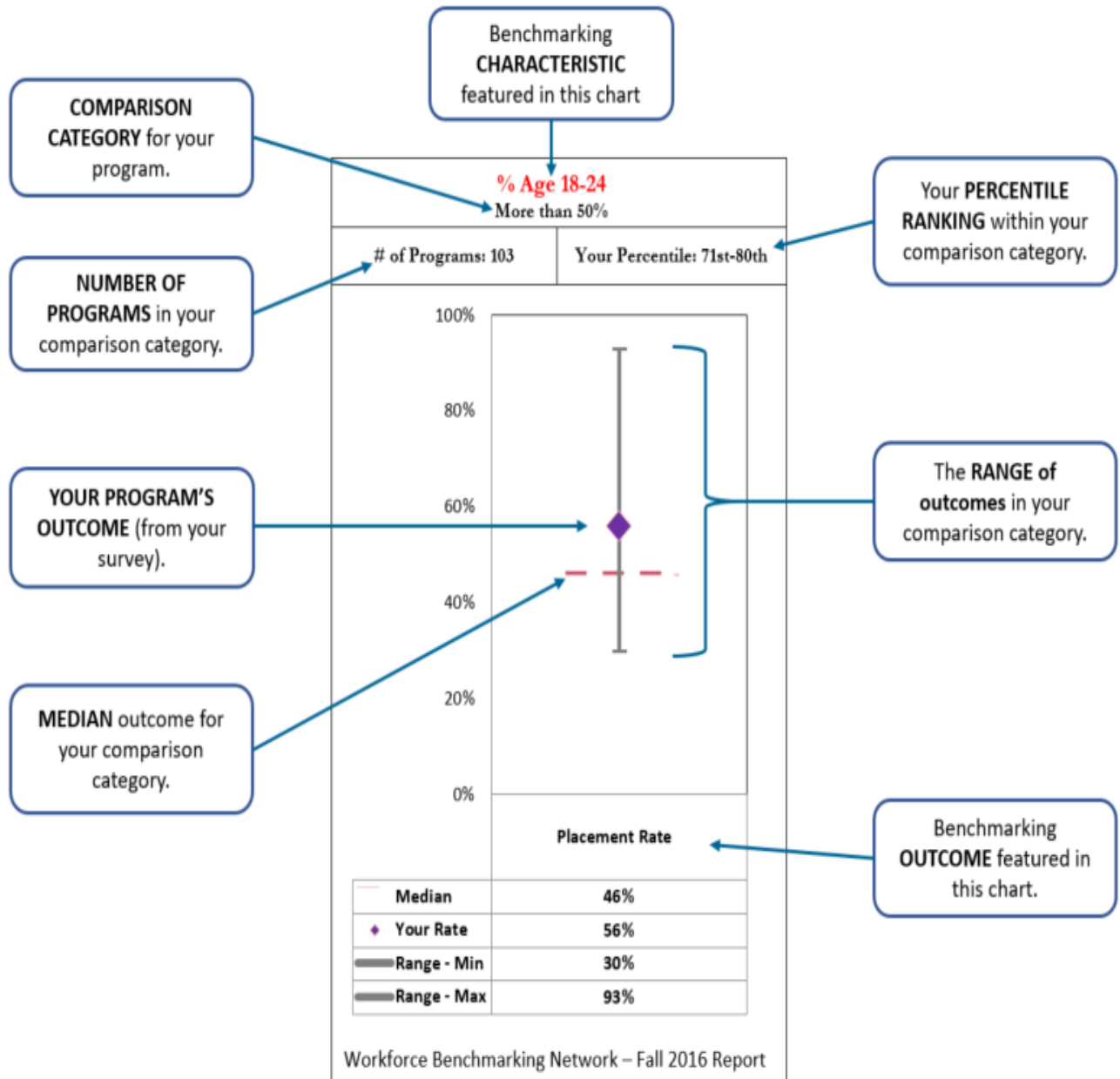
While individual program data and comparison information remain confidential, the WBN periodically releases reports showing the aggregate performance levels of programs in the national dataset, offering useful information to the field about "benchmarks" for programs with various characteristics. The most recent report, [Apples to Apples Data Update: Making Data Work for Community-Based Workforce Development Programs](#), was released in January 2016.

⁵ "Statistical significance helps quantify whether a result is likely due to chance or to some factor of interest."

<https://hbr.org/2016/02/a-refresher-on-statistical-significance>



Figure 1: Example of available confidential comparison charts



Benchmarking Data Survey Findings: More Details

DFW Organization Profile

The programs in the **DFW** Phase One Benchmarking cohort were **more likely** than their national counterparts to **offer non-workforce development programming** (e.g., housing-related services, food or emergency assistance, domestic violence shelter and counseling, or re-entry counseling for incarcerated persons). Only **15%** of **DFW** programs **offered solely workforce development services**. **DFW** organizations overall were more varied in their experience providing workforce services, with **25%** offering them for **5 years or less**.

Figure 2: **DFW** organizations are **more likely** than their **National Dataset** counterparts to offer non-workforce development programming.

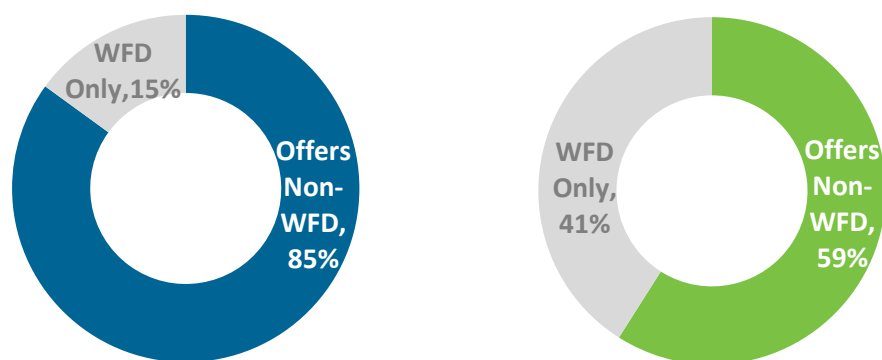
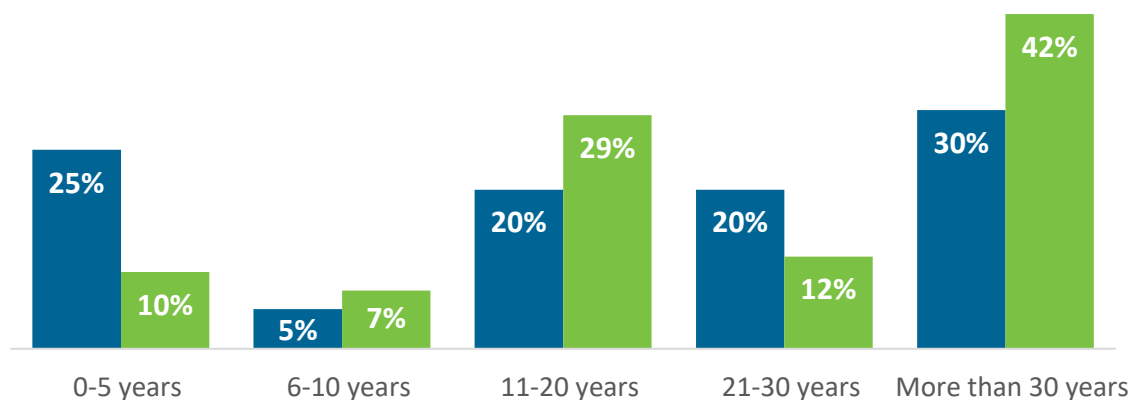


Figure 3: **DFW** organizations are **more varied in their experience** providing workforce services, whereas most **National Dataset** organizations have been operating **over 10 years**.



Enrollments and Performance Outcomes: DFW vs. the National Dataset

The median number of participants enrolled⁶ in **DFW** programs during a one-year time period was **118**, compared to a median of **142** for the rest of the **National Dataset**. Table 3 provides more details on the outcomes achieved by **DFW** program enrollees compared to their national counterparts—including the average and median results as well as “75th percentile” results (higher performers).

Table 3: Workforce Benchmarking Network Outcomes: Fall 2016 Dataset

Outcome	DFW Programs (n=20)				National Dataset Programs (n=259)			
	n ⁷	Mean ⁸	Median ⁹	75 th Percentile ¹⁰	n	Mean	Median	75 th Percentile
Program Completion	14	84%	88%	100%	184	74%	81%	95%
Completer Placement	10	70%	73%	77%	107	69%	70%	85%
Enrollee Placement	20	52%	54%	65%	259	50%	49%	66%
Wage	18	\$13.24	\$12.11	\$14.85	239	\$11.07	\$10.30	\$11.96
Full-Time	16	81%	91%	99%	228	64%	66%	88%
w/Health Benefits	13	64%	63%	86%	164	39%	33%	56%
3-Month Retention	13	73%	75%	92%	204	70%	73%	84%
Wage	9	\$14.29	\$11.61	\$17.70	122	\$11.25	\$10.15	\$12.33
6-Month Retention	7	60%	63%	92%	143	56%	59%	76%
Wage	5	\$14.80	\$12.41	\$20.99	94	\$11.46	\$10.37	\$12.75
12-Month Retention	4	49%	47%	88%	87	44%	44%	65%

⁶ Most DFW programs defined someone as “enrolled” when they completed an admissions process and received initial services. A few programs considered someone enrolled at the time they first walked in, if they were eligible.

⁷ “n” refers to the sample size, or in this case, the number of organizations that participated in the survey.

⁸ The mean represents the average of the responses.

⁹ The median is the value located in the middle of the distribution of responses. Medians are helpful to view with means, as they are resistant to very high or very low outliers that can “skew” the average.

¹⁰ The 75th percentile, or entry into top quartile, can be used to further interpret the spread of results. For WBN, responses above the 75th percentile are considered “higher performers”.



Higher DFW Program Completion Rates

While a few programs offered open-ended, individualized services to participants, 70% of **DFW** programs offered workshops, classes or a set of activities where “completion” was a relevant milestone. Those **DFW** programs had a **higher completion rate** than programs nationally (average **84%** vs. **74%**).

DFW Job Placement Rates Comparable to National

Overall, **DFW** programs reported **similar average placement rates** as those in the **National Dataset**. This was true whether placement rates were figured as a percentage of total participants enrolled or as a percentage of those who completed services. This result was accomplished although DFW programs overall had less experience in providing workforce-related services and offered services that were shorter in length. It likely reflects the advantages of a strong regional economy that did not experience the same employment downturns during the Great Recession as other parts of the country.

Figure 4: **DFW** has a **slightly higher average** placement rate out of total enrollments than the **National Dataset**.

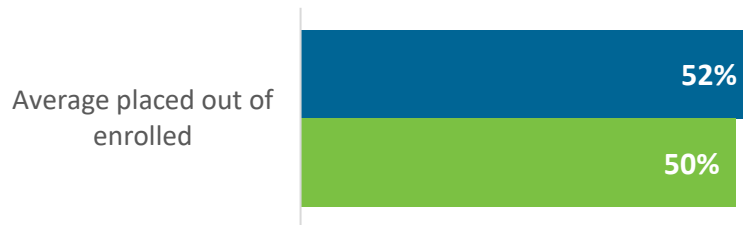


Figure 5: **DFW** has roughly the **same average** placement out of completers rate as the **National Dataset**.

n= 10, 107



When comparing the outcomes of the “higher performers” (those at the 75th percentile), **DFW** and the **National Dataset** had very similar rates for placements out of the total enrolled (**65%** vs. **66%**). However, for placements out of program completers, the **National Dataset** “high performer” rate was higher (**77%** vs. **85%**).

Placements most frequently occurred in these five industry areas (arranged by frequency for each dataset):



Table 4: Top 5 Industries for Placement			
DFW		National Data Set	
Transportation and Warehousing	45%	Retail/Sales/Customer Service	55%
Accommodation and Food Service	45%	Accommodation and Food Services	53%
Retail/Sales/Customer Service	35%	Health Related Services	42%
Health Related Services	35%	Transportation and Warehousing	39%
Manufacturing	30%	Manufacturing	33%

Stronger DFW Job Quality: Wages, Hours, and Benefits

DFW programs had an **average wage at placement that was 20% higher** than the average in the **national dataset (\$13.24 vs. \$11.07)**. Program placements were also more likely to be full-time and to offer health benefits than those of national counterparts. Again, this difference is probably partially a reflection of a stronger base of employers that was “slower to get in/earlier to get out” of the employment downturn affecting other regions. It may also reflect the fact that fewer DFW jobs were in Accommodation and Food Service or Retail/Sales/Customer Service industries, where part-time and lower-paying jobs are more prevalent.

Figure 6: DFW participants on average are more likely to work full-time than their counterparts in the National Dataset.

n= 16, 228



Figure 7: DFW participants on average are more likely to receive health benefits than their counterparts in the National Dataset.

n=13, 164



DFW Job Retention Data is Limited – But Rates Are Slightly Better

Only **65%** of DFW programs were able to report **three-month** job retention data, compared to **80%** of **national** programs. **One-third** of programs had information on **six-month** job retention, compared to **55% nationally**. **Four** programs (**20%** of the DFW cohort) had **twelve-month** retention data, compared to **33% nationally**. Nationally, there is growing agreement among public and private funders around the



importance of obtaining retention data at 12 months (or even longer), to understand how program services have contributed to sustained employment and increased earnings.

Definition of retention: DFW and national programs reported that they defined “job retention” in three different ways. For example, in reporting three-month job retention rates,

- 30% of programs (both DFW and national) defined retention as “working continuously with the same employer”
- 45% defined retention as “working continuously, but with any employer”
- 25% used the “snapshot” method, e.g., participant was working on the 90th day after start date.

As seen in Table 3 on p. 13, for those programs that were able to report job retention results, the **DFW retention rates on average were slightly better** than those of the **National Dataset** at three, six, and 12 months after placement. Again, these results are not surprising given the overall strong economy in the DFW region—as well as its higher wages and better provision of full-time employment and benefits.

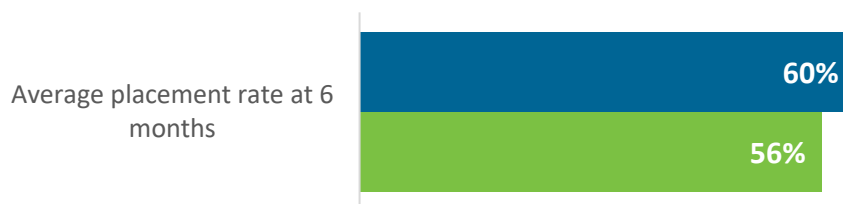
Figure 8: On average, DFW participants are as likely to still be employed as their counterparts in the National Dataset at 3 months.

n= 13, 206



Figure 9: On average, DFW participants are as likely to still be placed as their counterparts in the National Dataset at 6 months.

n= 7, 143

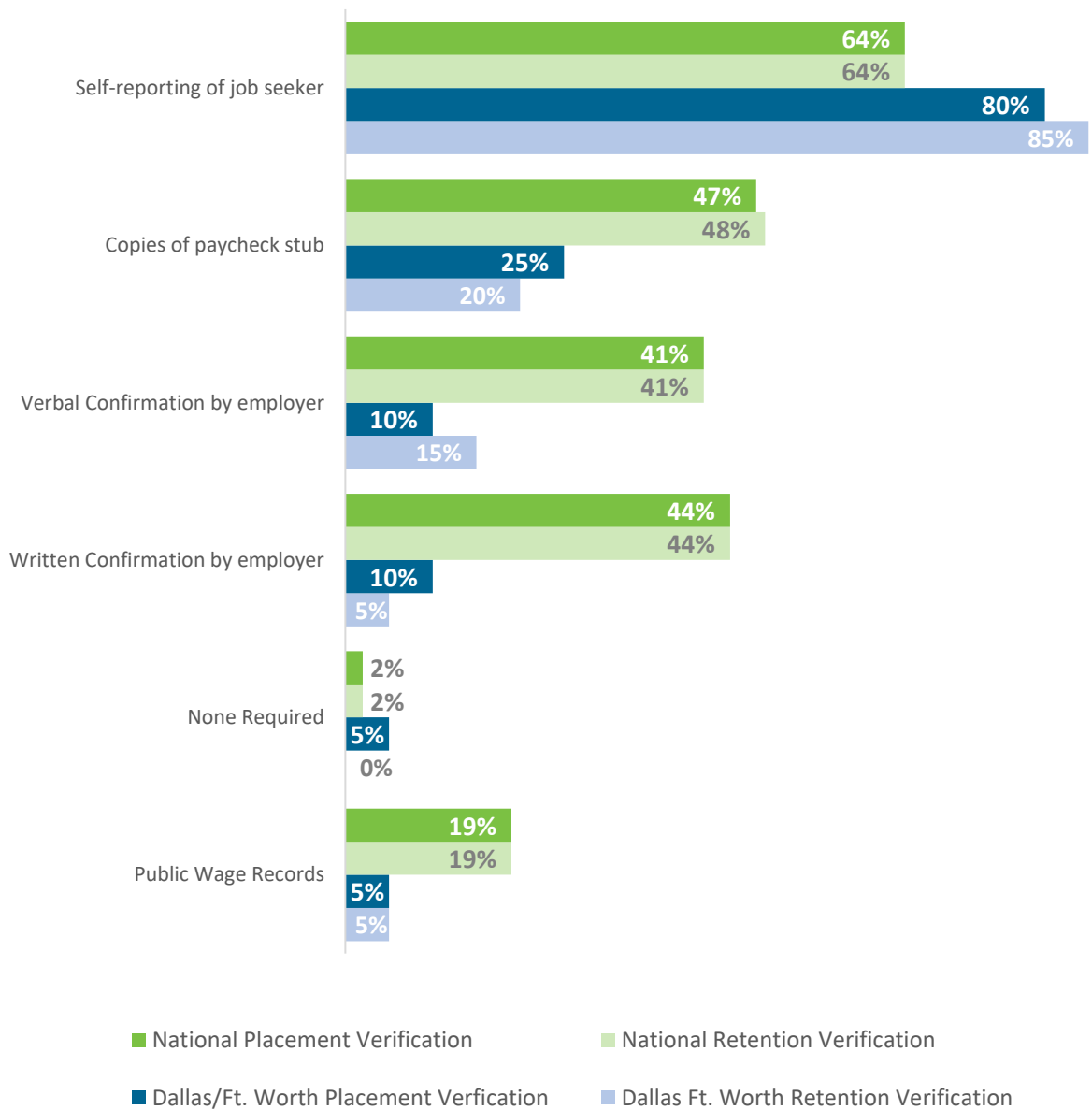


Outcome Data Validation Primarily “Self-Report”

DFW programs, similar to those nationally, were **most likely to use client self-reporting** to secure job placement or job retention information. However, programs in the **National Dataset** were **much more likely to use more than one method** to verify these outcomes, including pay stubs, employer confirmation, and information from public wage records.



Figure 10: National Dataset programs are much more likely to use multiple methods to confirm outcomes.



Demographic Data: Who Are Programs Serving?

Survey data provided by DFW programs provided good clarity in some areas and less in others around the characteristics of those they were serving. Almost all programs collected information on gender, age, race, and ethnicity. Data reveal that:

- Like the **National Dataset**, **DFW** program participants were **split almost equally between men and women** (51% vs. 49%).
- **DFW** programs reported an average of **21%** of participants as “**race unknown**” (compared to **8% nationally**). But where race and ethnicity data were available, **DFW** programs reported a **higher percentage of white participants** than the **National average** and a **lower percentage of black participants**. Programs served similar percentages of participants who were Asian or of Hispanic/Latino origin.
- The **DFW** cohort of programs served **more participants age 25-34** and **age 55 and older** than the national dataset, but **fewer young adults age 18-24**. In the national Benchmarking dataset, those programs serving fewer young adults have tended to have higher job retention rates.

Figure 11: Average race and ethnicity of **Dallas/Ft. Worth** and **National Dataset** participants.

n= 19, 237

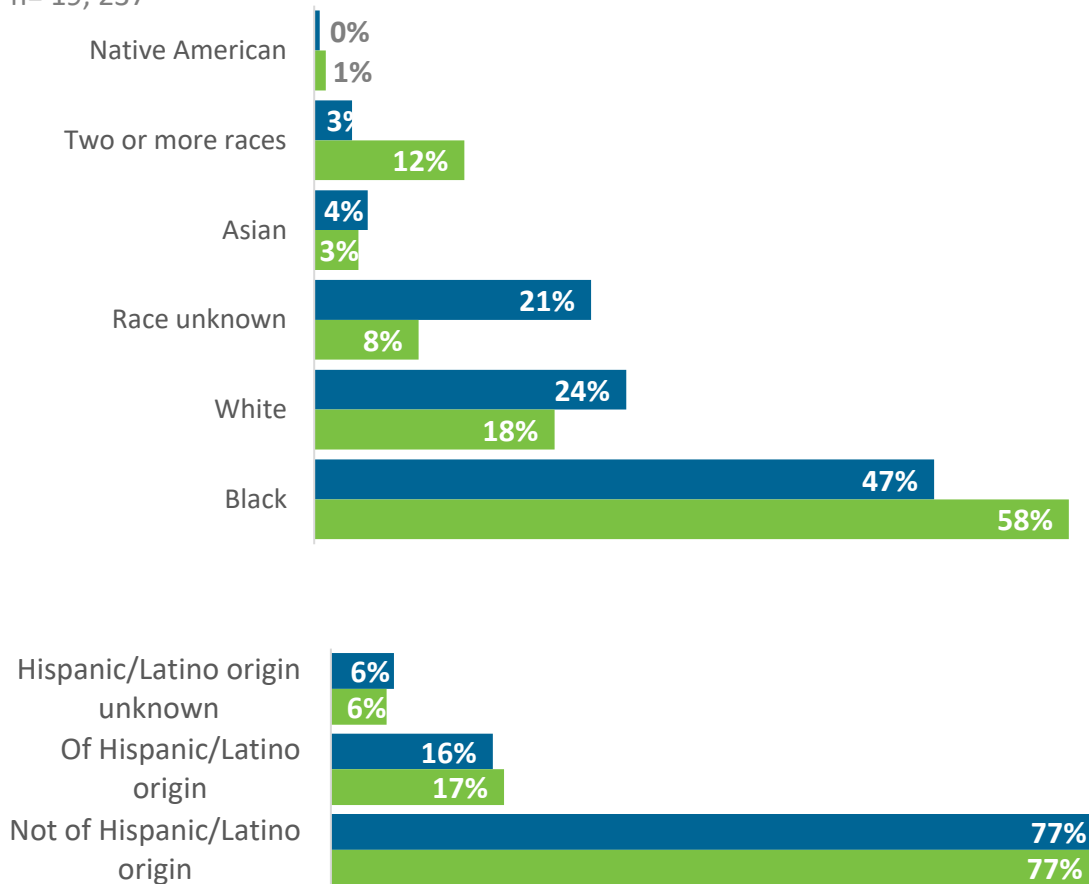
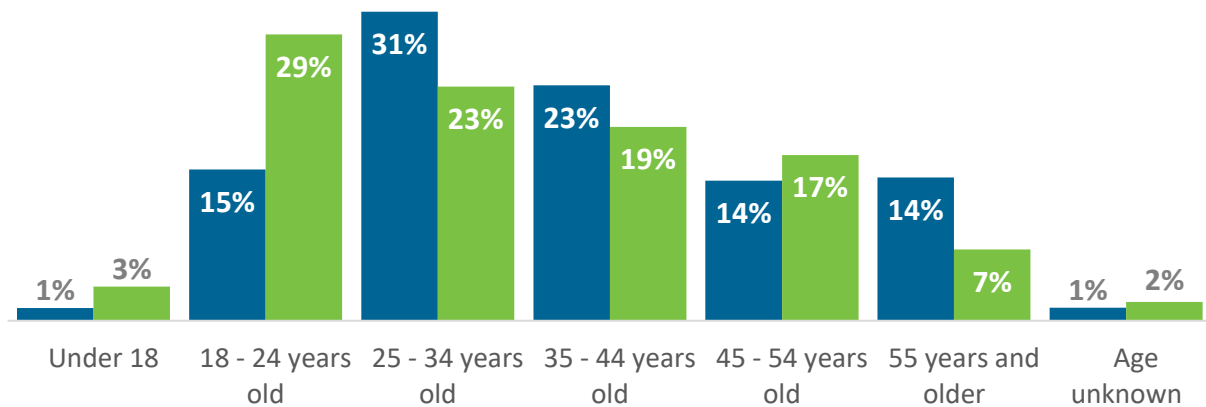


Figure 12: Average age of DFW and National Dataset participants.

n= 19, 234



As seen below in Figure 13, data was not available from at least **30%** of the **DFW** programs on some other participant characteristics, e.g., criminal status, educational attainment, etc. But where data was available from at least two-thirds of programs (13), it appears that the **DFW** program cohort overall served:

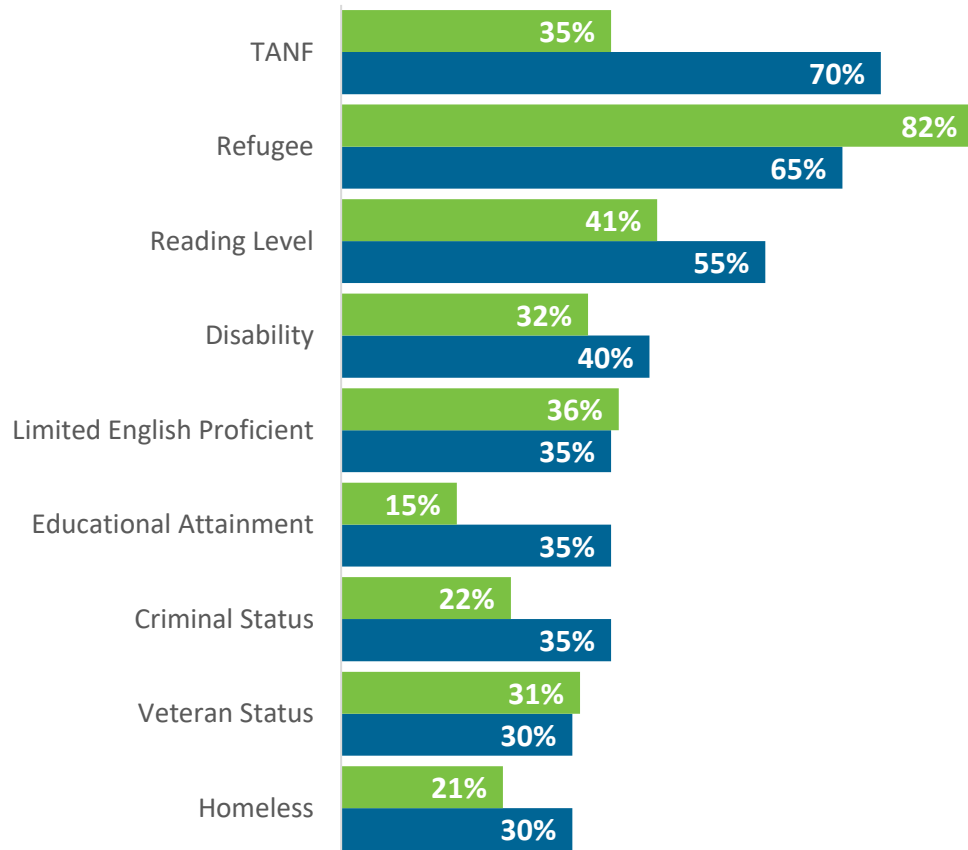
- **Fewer participants with homeless status** than the national cohort (average of **11%** vs. **23%**)
- **Fewer participants with a criminal background** (average of **20%** vs. **34%**)
- **More participants with veteran status** (average of **14%** vs. **5%**)

Earlier analysis of the national Benchmarking dataset has shown strong correlation between job placement or job retention rates and specific participant characteristics such as homelessness, criminal background and being age 18-24¹¹. So it's possible that higher DFW outcomes—in addition to reflecting a stronger economy—are also related to overall differences in population served. But without more consistent data collection across the DFW system this is hard to explore. More importantly, better data collection around participant characteristics would help organizations understand if specific sub-groups are not succeeding as well as others. As already mentioned, this could help in identifying needed community partnerships or other improvement strategies.

¹¹ [Apples to Apples Data Update](#)



Figure 13: Percentage of **DFW** and **National Dataset** programs that **do not collect** this data.



Participant Services Offered

The **median number of hours of pre-employment services** provided by **DFW** providers was **significantly less** than the median hours nationally: **61** hours vs. **160** hours.

Benchmarking survey questions asked for estimates of percentages of participants receiving a variety of services (e.g., 0-25% received, 26-50%, etc.) As seen in Figure 14 below, the **“core services”** (those offered to 75% or more of participants) most frequently provided by DFW programs were these:

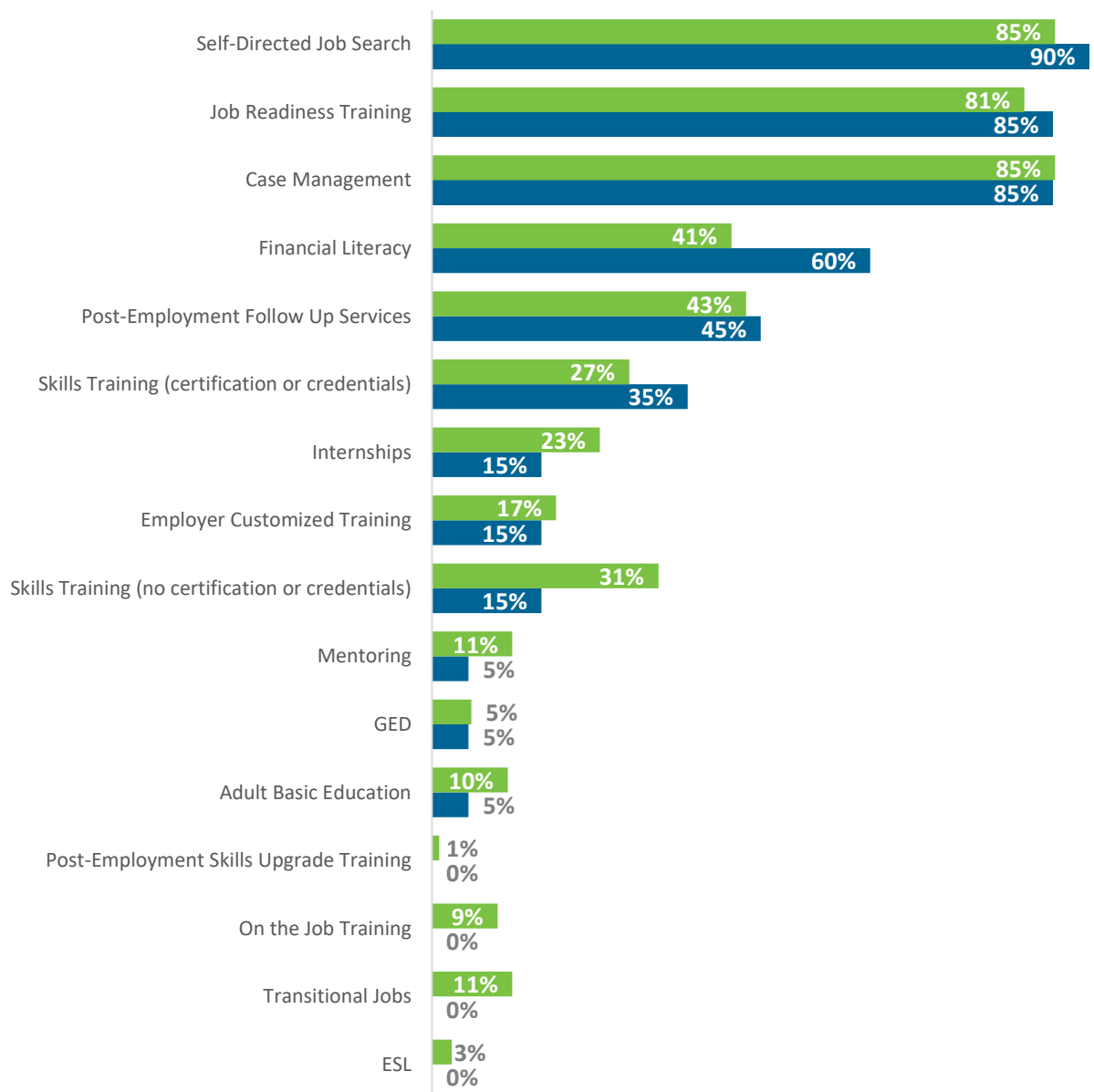
- ◆ Self-directed job search
- ◆ Job readiness training
- ◆ Case management
- ◆ Financial literacy training
- ◆ Post-employment follow-up



Compared to the national data set, **DFW** programs were **more likely to offer financial literacy services**—a reflection of the significant investment that Communities Foundation of Texas and other stakeholders have made since 2014 in the Working Families Success Network, to support the integration of these services with other workforce activities. **DFW** programs also offered **more skills training for industry certification or credentials**, with a primary focus on Certified Nursing Assistants, Forklift Operators, and Welding.

DFW programs were **less likely to offer Internships, general skills training (that with no certification or credentials), mentoring, adult basic education, and transitional jobs**.

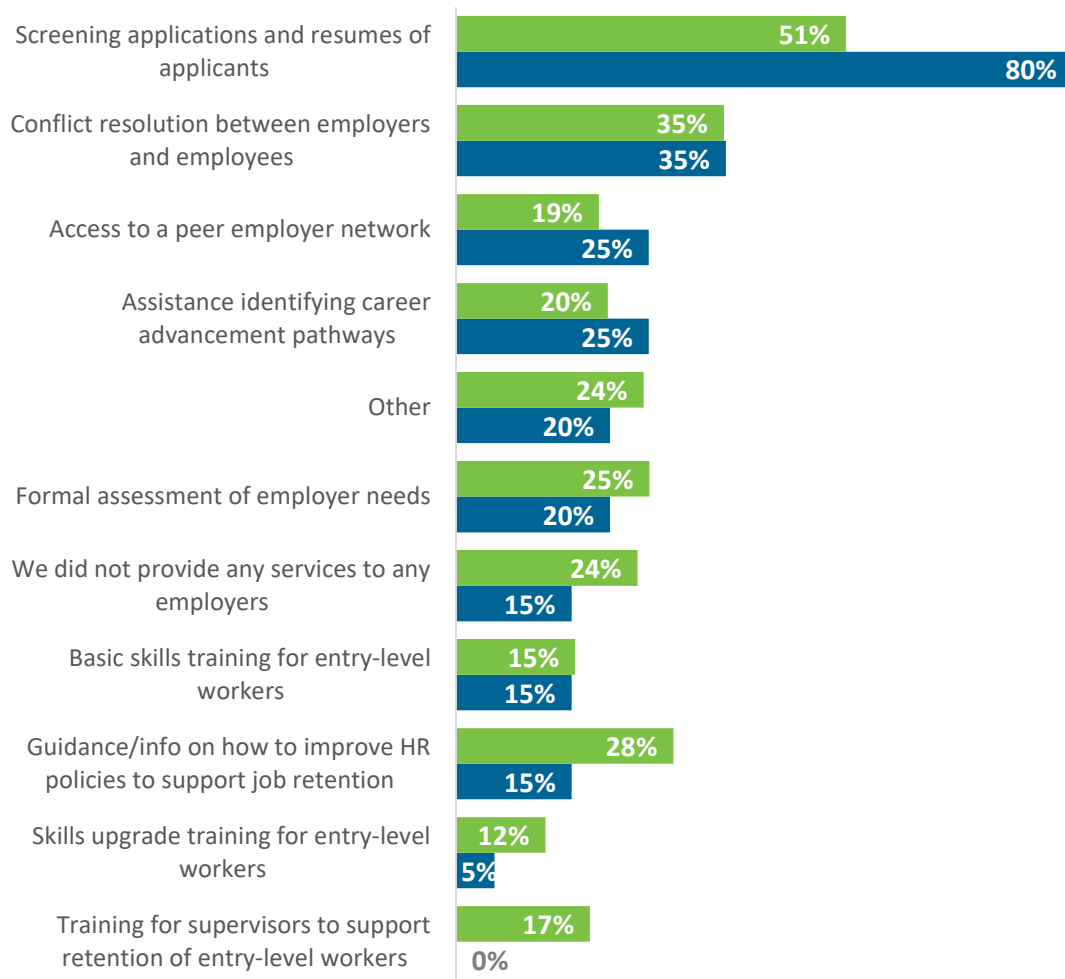
Figure 14: Percentage of programs offering service to most or all participants (76% to 100%)



Employer Services Offered

Overall, the average number of **DFW services offered to employers** was the same as in the **National Dataset (2.5 vs 2.5)**. For **DFW**, the **most frequently offered service** was **resume and application screening**, offered by **80%** of programs. **One-quarter** to **one-third** of programs offered a variety of other employer services such as conflict resolution assistance, access to other employer peers, and assistance identifying career advancement pathways for entry-level hires.

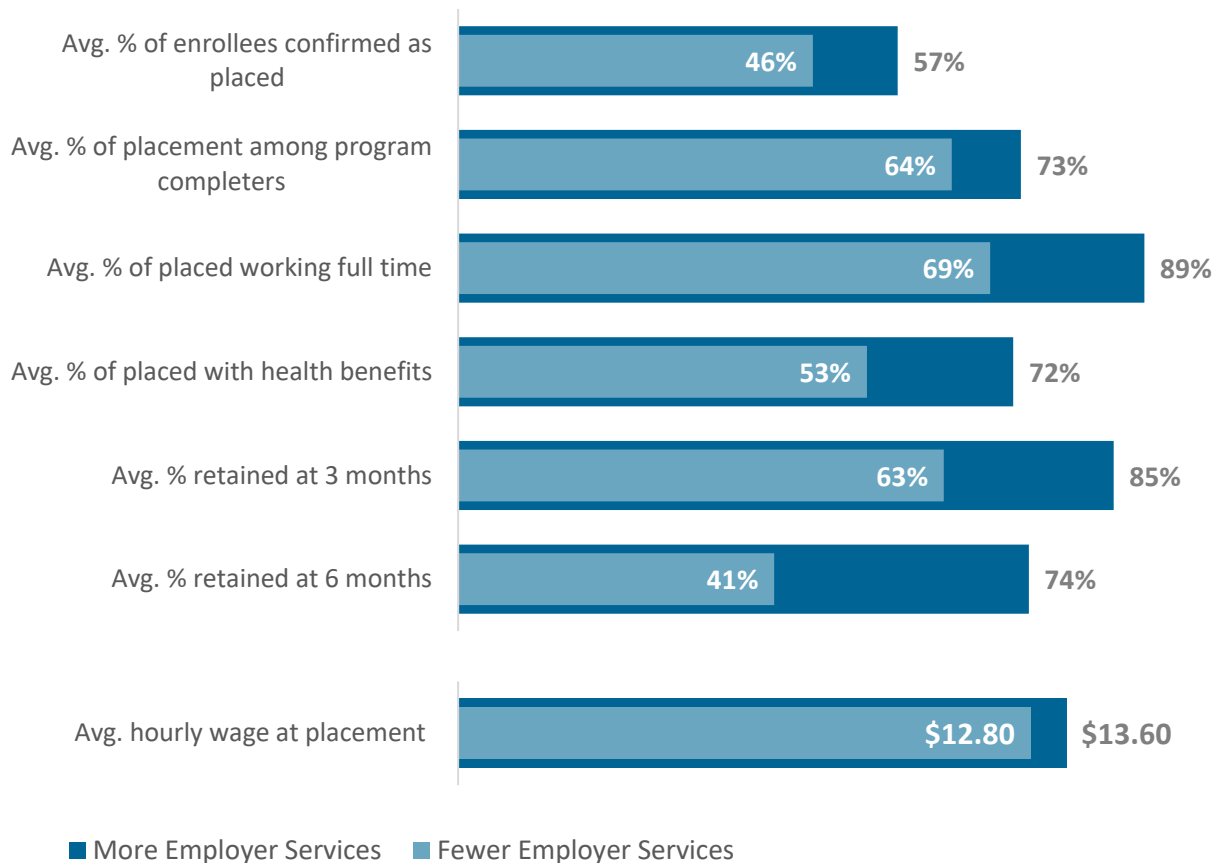
Figure 15: Employer Services. DFW offered applicant and resume screening the most frequently.



Additional analysis shows that **DFW** programs offering **two or more employer services (10 of the 20 programs)**—not counting resume and application screening—**had better outcomes** than those offering less than two employer services. This reflects the broad consensus in the workforce field that deeper engagement by workforce service providers with local industries and businesses is critical to ensure that their needs are being effectively met and that job seekers find and advance in sustainable employment.

Figure 16: Outcomes of DFW programs offering 2 or more employer services compared to outcomes of DFW programs offering less than 2 employer services.

This analysis does not include screening of application and resume services.
n=10, 10



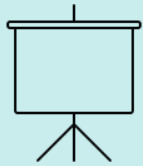
Peer Learning Forums: Focusing on Data to Improve Results

To complement the Benchmarking survey, quarterly peer forums of the 2016-2017 Workforce Benchmarking collaborative also helped organizations look at short-term process results that contribute to placement and long-term retention outcomes, and to strategize on how those could be improved. The first three peer forums each focused on a different program process: **recruitment**, **employer engagement**, and **work readiness/job retention services**. In the final forum in January 2017, programs reflected on their **overall data culture** and priorities for strengthening it.

Each forum had similar components:



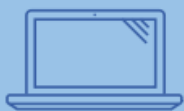
Identifying specific data or other evidence that could be used to measure the effectiveness of that program strategy



Sharing information about effective practices in that area—through presentations on lessons from the larger field as well as interchange with peers from other organizations



Significant planning time for organizational teams to identify specific actions or approaches—called “mini-projects”—to incorporate ideas from the session into their work



Follow-up webinars after each forum to provide both accountability and support for organizations as they reported on progress or challenges in implementing their mini-projects.

Tools

In the introductory Benchmarking workshop and throughout the Phase One peer forums, participants specifically found two tools and related questions to be very helpful:

Interim Milestones – “Where’s the Leak?”: With this tool and question, organization teams first identified the short-term “milestone” results needing to be accomplished in a specific part of their process and what data they have about that result. They then used their data to understand where those results were not being reached (the “leak”). For example, in the program recruitment process teams looked at milestone results such as the number of eligible persons expressing interest, the number showing up for an orientation, the number successfully completing assessments, and the number showing up for the first day of services—and how those numbers decline in the process.



Potential Influencing Factors / The Fishbone Diagram – “What’s My Hunch?”: With this tool and question, teams brainstormed factors that might be related to a “leak” or lower results in a specific area. Factors could include participant or employer characteristics, how services were being delivered, and other staffing or environmental issues. Teams then chose particular factors to learn more about through deeper analysis of their data or conversations with staff, participants or employer customers.

Samples of the Benchmarking tools are included in Appendices of this report.

Mini-Projects

Based on discussions during each of the forums, organization teams identified “mini-projects” to apply the Benchmarking tools and questions to their work in different areas. Below are examples of those projects:

Recruitment: Using data analysis to identify the most effective methods of outreach or the referral sources that most provide appropriate candidates, in order to make better use of staff time and program resources.

Employer Engagement: Better use of data to create employer profiles including current contacts, hiring frequency, wages, part-time or full-time status of jobs, retention and advancement results, and levels of program involvement—in order to set priorities for further employer relationship building.

Work Readiness/Job Retention: Increased use of work readiness checklists, initial skills assessments, post-placement follow-up plans, employer feedback tools and data related to the reasons for job loss—to inform both program curriculum design and follow-up with participants and employers.

Feedback

Participant feedback on the Peer Forums indicated that DFW organizations found them to be very useful. An average of 65% of participants rated the sessions overall as “excellent,” with an average of 35% rating them as “good.” These quotes give a feel for the value that participants perceived:

- “Extremely valuable ideas to eliminate ‘leaks’ in our process flow”
- “Small group discussions were very helpful as we develop our program; I have good takeaways from other agencies!”
- “Appreciated the practical tools and charts, which I can use with my team and in assisting clients. I love the ‘what’s my hunch?’ process.”
- “I’m looking forward to dissecting our employer data in order to build better relationships and pipelines.”
- “The facilitators taught the material, gave us great examples, and engaged us in a way that made me comfortable to discuss our program with others.”



Conclusion & Strategic Recommendations

It is important to note again that the DFW program data discussed in this report was from program cohorts of participants enrolled primarily in 2014 or 2015. When reviewing their individual Benchmarking comparison reports with CSW, many DFW programs noted that both data collection processes and workforce-related outcomes had already begun to improve since that time. Some also commented that the process of completing the survey itself had helped them review and focus on what was needed to strengthen their data use moving forward.

Likewise, the current data in the national Benchmarking dataset includes cohorts with enrollments between 2010 and 2014. A new national round of data collection for the Workforce Benchmarking Network is planned for 2018, and DFW organization participation in that round will offer an opportunity to see updated comparisons that reflect these changes in both program strategies and data practices.

However, the Benchmarking Phase One data survey and peer learning activities already point to these priorities for further work:

- 1. Continue to improve the collection—and sharing—of long-term employment retention and earnings information.** For both funders and providers, this is critical in order to know that program services are having the intended impact on participants' financial sustainability and that DFW employer needs are being effectively met. At the provider level, this will require strategies to improve data collection and sustain long-term participant engagement.

At the workforce system level, DFW regional funders might also consider innovative approaches happening in other states to assist providers with obtaining information beyond the initial 6-12 months after placement. For example, the Greater Twin Cities United Way has partnered with the Minnesota Department of Employment and Economic Development (DEED) to be able to offer United Way agencies aggregate results data about their program cohorts' long-term employment and earnings trends, based on available wage record data. This information can be viewed by several variables, including race/ethnicity, age, education, services provided, etc.
- 2. Expand employer engagement strategies to support better placement and retention results.** The data survey revealed that few DFW organizations are using employer contacts to support and confirm job retention. It also showed that those organizations that are engaging with businesses to add value in multiple ways have better results. To take full advantage of the robust DFW economy, improved employer engagement is critical.
- 3. Improve the collection and use of participant information to drive improvement and collaboration.** Program staff often collect a tremendous amount of information about participants' demographics and needs, but that data may be in interview or case management notes and not easily accessible. Improved strategies for capturing and analyzing this information will help programs better understand where their services need to be improved and where collaboration with other community partners could be useful. Better information will also assist funders to assess "gaps" in services across the system that need additional investment.
- 4. Continue the sharing and application of information about "what works".** Given the Benchmarking survey data showing that most DFW workforce providers offer multiple other services—but have varied experience offering workforce services—it is important to continue sharing information about effective workforce practices overall. But the variety of other services offered by DFW providers is also a "system" strength that needs to be better leveraged through more strategic collaboration.



A **proposed Phase 2** of the Workforce Benchmarking Collaborative in 2017-2018 will provide more specific technical assistance to participating DFW organizations. Informed by the results of their initial Benchmarking survey, interested organization teams will target specific data collection and performance challenges they want to address (e.g., employer engagement, participant follow-up). They will work with CSW staff, using the Benchmarking tools, to identify the factors affecting those challenges and generate ideas for improvement. Additional peer forums and phone calls will deepen cross-site peer interchange around effective practices and support better collaboration.



Appendix A: Summary of Requested Data for Benchmarking Survey

Organization Profile

- Organization type
- Number of years providing workforce development services

Individual Program Information

For the designated one-year period. Optional responses of “we did not collect this information” or “number unknown” available.

- Types of services received—with approximate participation rates for each:
 - ◆ Adult Basic Education
 - ◆ English as a Second Language
 - ◆ GED Test Preparation
 - ◆ Self-Directed Job Search Resources
 - ◆ Case Management
 - ◆ Job Search or Job Readiness Training
 - ◆ Occupational/Vocational Skills Training (general)
 - ◆ Occupational/Vocational Skills Training (leading to recognized certification)
 - ◆ Employer-Based Customized Skills Training
 - ◆ Internships
 - ◆ Transitional Jobs
 - ◆ On-the-Job Training
 - ◆ Mentoring
 - ◆ Post-Employment Follow-Up Services
 - ◆ Post-Employment Skills Upgrade Training
 - ◆ Other Services for Employers
- # of hours/weeks in structured and individualized pre-employment activities
- # of weeks in post-employment activities
- Types of financial supports and incentives provided to participants
- Total program expenses for the one-year period
- Sources of program revenue, with relative percentages for the one-year period
- # staff (FTE) employed in a specified program
- Use of performance-based contracts

Program Participant Information

Optional responses of “we did not collect this information” or “number unknown” available.

- Ability to be selective in accepting participants into program
- Definition of enrollment for “countable” participants
- Total # of program participants enrolled in the one-year reporting period
- # men/women
- # in age groups
- # in race groups
- # of Hispanic/Latino origin
- # in educational levels attained
- # reading at specified grade level
- # TANF recipients



- # receiving unemployment insurance
- # veterans
- # homeless at intake
- # dislocated workers
- # with limited English proficiency
- # refugees
- # with physical or mental disability
- # with a history of substance abuse
- # with a criminal record
- # any other notable demographic characteristics
- # non-custodial parents

Initial Completion and Placement Outcomes

Optional response of “we did not collect this information” available.

- # of enrolled cohort completing program
- Definition of placement—# days, job type, minimum earnings
- # of enrolled cohort who were placed according to definition
- # of program completers who were placed
- Targeted or more frequent industries or occupations for placement
- Average hourly wage at placement
- # with further education as outcome, if not placed
- # jobs that were full-time, according to program definition
- # jobs that offered health benefits

Employment Retention Outcomes

Same questions for 90 days, 6 months, and one-year retention periods.

- Method used for defining “retention” (continuous employment, same employer, “snapshot”)
- # of placed participants who were retained
- Average wage at each point of retention

Data Verification Capacity

- Type of verification required to validate job placement information
- Type of verification required to validate job retention information
- Type of computerized database used to track participant outcomes
- Presence of funder-provided data system to record outcomes
- Verification of outcomes by funder or outside entities
- Reconciliation of internal reports with funder summaries of outcomes
- Internal monitoring of data for accuracy and completeness (method/frequency)
- Perceived challenges and strengths of data collection and verification process



Appendix B: Workforce Benchmarking Survey Data Analysis Methodology and Comparison Characteristics

Data submitted in 2016 by DFW programs were integrated into the [national data analysis](#) completed in 2015 of surveys from 259 other programs. For that larger research, an Analysis of Variance (ANOVA) methodology was used to analyze the data from the national Workforce Benchmarking Network surveys. This is a statistical procedure that is widely used in program research and evaluation, and it was particularly useful in working with the Benchmarking dataset, which consists of aggregated program data rather than individual client information. This analysis was completed using Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS) v.23.

The statistical analysis looks at the strength of association between certain program characteristics—for instance, length of pre-employment services or percentage of participants with a criminal background—and an employment outcome such as job placement or three-month retention. While the analysis cannot establish causality between a program attribute and an outcome, it provides some direction as to what outcomes might be expected from programs with certain attributes or what strategies might be tried to improve performance.

The program characteristics found to be associated in a statistically significant way with differences in outcomes served as the basis for the “comparison groups” used in the confidential Benchmarking reports available to participating DFW organizations. These characteristics are listed below:

Table 5: Characteristics Found to be Statistically Significant

Program Characteristics	Service Characteristics
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Cohort size (number served annually) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • % receiving general vocational skills training
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ability to select clients 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • % receiving skills training for certifications
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Client to full-time staff (FTE) ratio 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • % receiving employer-customized training
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Placements counted only if full-time 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • % receiving adult basic education services
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Placements counted if temporary 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • % receiving financial literacy services
Client Characteristics	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • % receiving internship opportunities
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • % of clients age 18-24 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • % receiving transitional job opportunities
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • % of clients with criminal background 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • % receiving mentoring opportunities
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • % of clients with a disability 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • % receiving transportation assistance
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • % of clients who were homeless at intake 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • % receiving post-employment services
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • % of clients without HS diploma or GED 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Length/intensity of pre-employment services

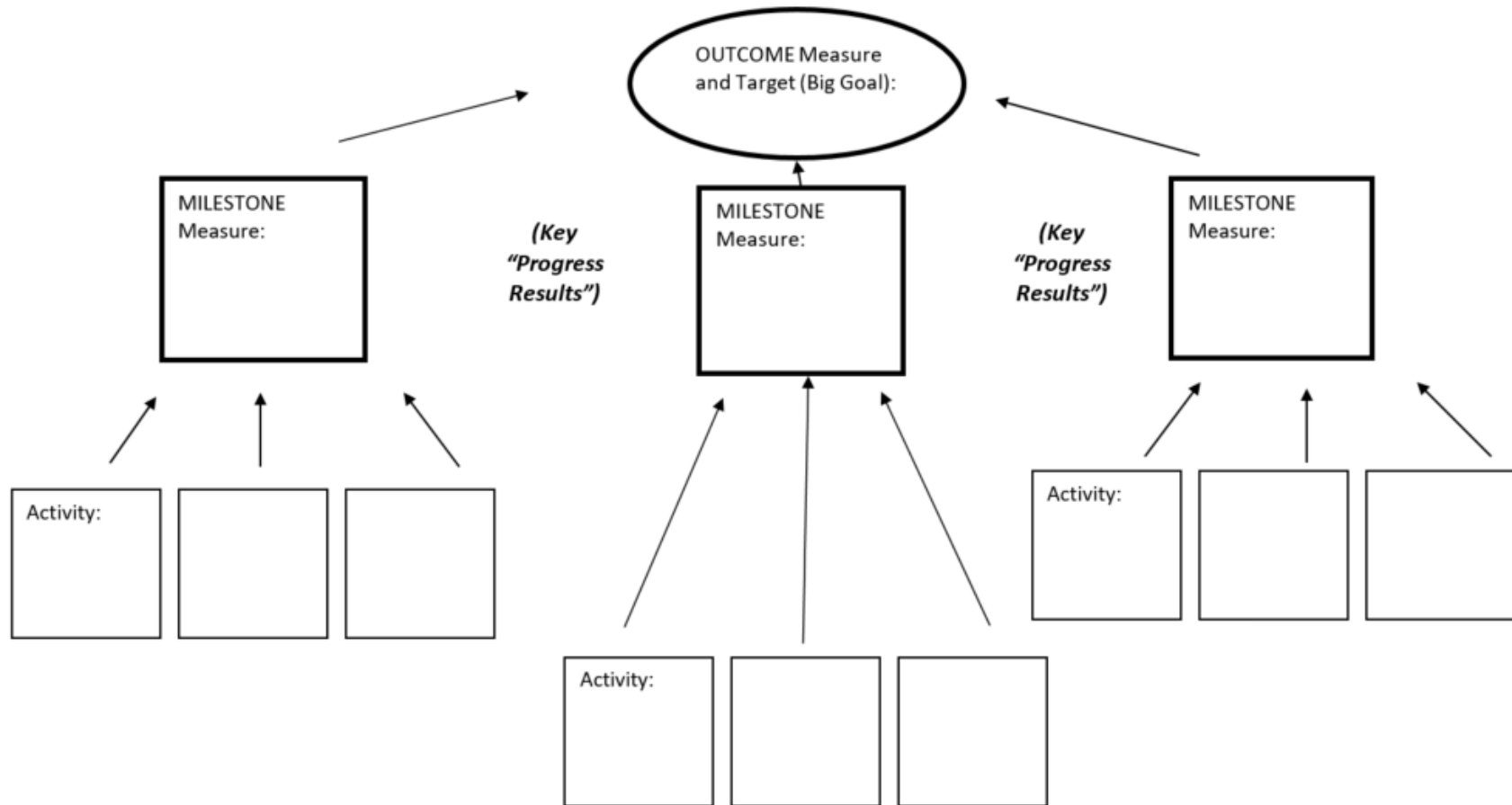


Appendix C: Interim Milestones Tool

“OUTCOME” – the “Big Goal” - A long-term outcome or result that indicates we’re accomplishing the “changes” needed to accomplish our mission. These can be changes in knowledge, attitude, behavior, status or condition.

“MILESTONES”: - the “smaller goals” - The most important short-term “progress results” that keep us on track to accomplish a long-term outcome

“ACTIVITY”: A specific activity that would most likely lead to successful accomplishment of a milestone.



Appendix D: Influencing Factors Brainstorm Tool

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Potential Influencing Factors – WHAT’S OUR HUNCH?

Result We’re Focused On (long-term or short-term) _____

What are our hunches about the factors related to success with this result?

Which factors do we have more control over? Which might be most important to focus on?

POTENTIAL PARTICIPANT* FACTORS

What characteristics or qualities do they “bring to the table?” that could be a factor?

Demographics, location, skill levels, work or education history, interests and motivators, health or family issues, specific needs, etc.

POTENTIAL SERVICE/STRATEGY FACTORS

What is it about what we do (or don’t do), how we do it, how often or how well we do it that could be a factor?

Types or length of activities, content or quality of services, effectiveness of processes (could also apply to services of community partners we work with)

**Could be adapted for Employer, Funder, Partner, etc.*

STAFF TEAM FACTORS

Staff allocation, staff knowledge and skills, staff communication

DOCUMENTATION FACTORS
What do we “not know” or need more info about?

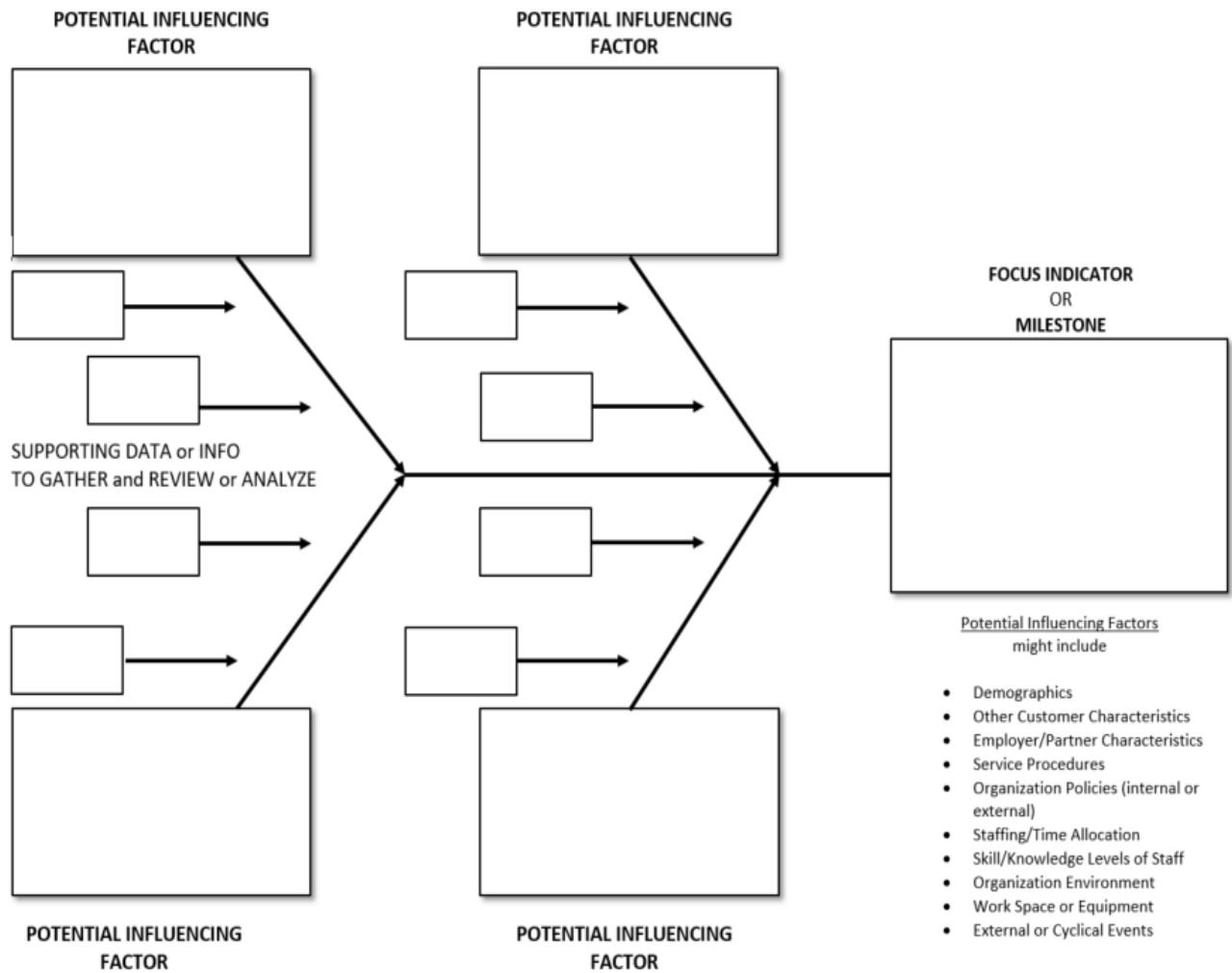
Unknown or unavailable information: Assessment data, data on results, reasons for leaving, etc.

ENVIRONMENTAL FACTORS
What affects the situation but we have less control over?

Time or money limitations; funder, employer or partner policies; economic or seasonal issues; space or equipment limitations

Appendix E: Fishbone Diagram Tool

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