

WORKER-CENTERED BENCHMARKING PROJECT

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About CSW

CSW envisions a society in which every person is able to earn a family-sustaining income, achieve upward mobility, and adapt to the future.

We are deeply committed to intentionally stimulating change in educational and labor market systems to increase the upward mobility of workers, particularly those historically excluded from economic advancement. CSW does this through its five strategy teams:

Competencies & Credentials

Federal, State, & Local Systems Change

Improving Practices & Outcomes

Research & Evaluation

Trauma & Resilience at Work

TODAY, WE WILL ANSWER:



What is the Worker Centered Benchmarking Project?



What was our research methodology?



Why the metrics we selected are important?



How these metrics can be measured?

PROJECT OVERVIEW

Supported by Annie E. Casey Foundation, the WCBP seeks to identify and understand the outcomes that matter most to those the workforce system serves—**learners & workers.**

WHY DO THIS WORK?

- 1 Create workforce development metrics that are more reflective of worker/learner voice
- 2 Fill critical knowledge gaps in the workforce system
- 3 Pave the way for providers, funders, and policy makers to consider alternative definitions of workforce program success
- 4 Allow workforce providers the agency to create & run the programs they believe will best support their participants

Workforce programs are often designed and measured according to labor market demands, business needs, “best practice” models, and/or funder requirements.

Are programs achieving their **intended impact** within the communities where they operate?

How do we know what communities want from workforce programs, or even **how success is defined** by the learners we are serving?

WHY IS THIS PROJECT IMPORTANT?

LET WORKERS & LEARNERS DEFINE SUCCESS

If we are going to modernize the workforce system, we need workforce program metrics that are:

- ✔ More inclusive and culturally responsive
- ✔ Reflective of the local community context and conditions
- ✔ Flexible to the unique challenges faced by different workforce communities
- ✔ Reflect worker/learner perspectives and lived experiences
- ✔ Better position practitioners for a shared understanding of success

Decades of workforce system reform have not moved employment or income outcomes for BIPOC populations and others historically excluded from opportunity.



Research Process & Methodology

All research protocols and questions were developed by advisory council with support from CSW's research and evaluation team

Focus Groups

- 15 focus groups in two languages with more than 55 participants and alumni attending workforce programs in Michigan, Pennsylvania, and New York.

Survey

- Completed by 121 participants and alumni attending workforce programs in Michigan, Pennsylvania, and New York.

METRIC #1

Participant's sense of safety and belonging in a workforce development program

PARTICIPANT'S SENSE OF SAFETY AND BELONGING
IN A WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT PROGRAM

“If I don't feel safe and like I belong I shut down and I can't learn. That is why I wasn't successful in college, where I was laughed at and got eye rolls for asking too many questions.”



WHY SHOULD THIS METRIC BE CONSIDERED?

PARTICIPANT'S SENSE OF SAFETY AND BELONGING IN A WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT PROGRAM

- Participant sense of safety and belonging is directly linked to learning, career preparedness, and barrier removal.
- Feeling safe and belonging fosters trust, engagement, and motivation.
- Inner growth is nearly impossible to achieve when participants do not feel safe.
- Participant sense of safety and belonging is a key motivating factor for participants to overcome barriers that might prevent workforce program completion.
- Participants who feel safe are more likely to recommend the program to their networks and more likely to participate in alumni, mentorship, and community engagement activities.

HOW TO MEASURE THIS METRIC

**PARTICIPANT'S SENSE OF SAFETY
AND BELONGING IN A WORKFORCE
DEVELOPMENT PROGRAM**

- **Methods to Collect:**
 - Disaggregated participant survey data before, during and after workforce program participation.
 - Focus groups (particularly those facilitated by workforce program alumni)
 - Pulse surveying about safety, belonging, inclusivity
- **Questions to Consider:**
 - To what degree do you feel seen and understood in your workforce program?
 - To what extent do you feel welcome at your workforce program after you graduate?
 - Do you trust workforce program staff?
 - Do you feel supported by workforce program staff?

METRIC #2

Participant's sense of safety
and belonging in a job

PARTICIPANT'S SENSE OF SAFETY AND BELONGING IN A JOB

“A program that does not provide safe opportunities for their participants contributes to an already hostile labor market for populations primarily served by the workforce system.”



WHY SHOULD THIS METRIC BE CONSIDERED?

**PARTICIPANT'S SENSE OF SAFETY
AND BELONGING IN A JOB**

- Participants, particularly women, and persons of color, expressed significant concerns entering industries that are white, male dominant, or historically plagued by harassment.
- Participants who feel safe at work are more likely to retain employment, maintain a mindset of advancement, and progress along a career pathway, making this a great predictor of long-term economic mobility.
- Understanding participant sense of safety and belong could inform future internship and job placements.

HOW TO MEASURE THIS METRIC

**PARTICIPANT'S SENSE OF SAFETY
AND BELONGING IN A JOB**

- **Methods to Collect:**
 - Alumni reporting and surveys
 - On-site visits with hiring partners
 - Focus groups with program alumni, those participating in work-based learning activities
- **Questions to Consider:**
 - Do you feel respected at your job?
 - To what extent do you feel physically and emotionally safe at work?
 - Do you feel comfortable raising a workplace concern to your supervisor?
 - Do you feel informed of your rights and protections at work?

METRIC #3

Change in participant
self-confidence/self-esteem

CHANGE IN PARTICIPANT SELF-CONFIDENCE/SELF-ESTEEM

“I can get and lose ten jobs in a year. It doesn't matter. Increased sense of self-confidence and sense of self-esteem will stay with me for life.”



WHY SHOULD THIS METRIC BE CONSIDERED?

**CHANGE IN PARTICIPANT
SELF-CONFIDENCE/SELF-ESTEEM**

- Building self-confidence and self-esteem is fundamental for personal and professional growth. It empowers individuals to take on challenges, pursue opportunities, and succeed in their careers.
- By creating more confident participants you create more confident and effective ambassadors for your program.
- Change in self-confidence and self-esteem will better predict economic mobility than how much you make after three months in a job.
- Participants are more likely to successfully complete programs, gain and retain employment, and advocate for themselves with a positive shift in self-confidence.

HOW TO MEASURE THIS METRIC

**CHANGE IN PARTICIPANT
SELF-CONFIDENCE/SELF-ESTEEM**

- **Methods to Collect:**
 - Surveys before, during, and following program completion
 - Self-reporting scales like the Employment Hope Scale
 - Interviews conducted by trained peers and not program staff (due to sensitive nature of subject)
- **Questions to Consider:**
 - How confident do you feel in your abilities to perform the tasks required for your desired job?
 - To what extent do you feel able and confident to be the authentic version of yourself?
 - Do you feel confident and prepared to participate in a professional interview?

METRIC #4

Growth in emotional
intelligence, regulation/shift
in mindset

CHANGE IN PARTICIPANT SELF-CONFIDENCE/SELF-ESTEEM

“Emotional intelligence and mindset play key roles in navigating workplace challenges, building relationships and achieving career goals. Developing these skills enhances adaptability and resilience.”



WHY SHOULD THIS METRIC BE CONSIDERED?

GROWTH IN EMOTIONAL INTELLIGENCE, REGULATION/SHIFT IN MINDSET

- This metric is a direct reflection of a participant's growth because of workforce program participation.
- Positive shifts in emotional regulation allow participants to look beyond the now and toward long-term success.
- This metric is key given the near universal educational and labor market traumas experienced by workforce program participants.

HOW TO MEASURE THIS METRIC

**GROWTH IN EMOTIONAL
INTELLIGENCE,
REGULATION/SHIFT IN MINDSET**

- **Methods to Collect:**
 - Qualitative interviews by peers or workforce program staff.
 - Assessments of perceived employment barriers or "the shift from not possible to work to very possible to work."
 - Pre-, mid-, and post-focus groups.
- **Questions to Consider:**
 - Have you noticed any changes in your mindset or attitudes towards learning, growth, and resilience since participating in the program?
 - To what extent are you able to see things from different perspectives?
 - To what extent are you able to look beyond the now and towards long-term success?
 - How confident do you feel in navigating workplace challenges, and using them as opportunities to learn, grow, and improve?

METRIC #5

Career preparedness/readiness

CAREER PREPAREDNESS/READINESS

The workforce system is not just trying to produce skilled drones. It should focus on equipping individuals with the skills, knowledge, and abilities to ascend a career ladder, become leaders, and inspire change”



WHY SHOULD THIS METRIC BE CONSIDERED?

CAREER PREPAREDNESS/READINESS

- Our survey confirmed that most of the participants we spoke to prioritize learning over job placement.
- Preparedness directly reflects a program's ability to train and empower participants for employment.
- In focus groups, participants expressed a need to be informed and trained in a way that is relevant to the jobs they were going into, beyond the surface-level idea of being "job-ready."
- When participants are presented with real-world information and industry-level training, they are more likely to complete, attain employment, and thrive.

HOW TO MEASURE THIS METRIC

CAREER PREPAREDNESS/READINESS

- **Methods to Collect:**
 - Simulated work scenarios
 - Employer feedback
 - Performance assessments
- **Questions to Consider:**
 - How comfortable are you explaining your training to someone outside of your workforce program?
 - How prepared are you to have professional interviews after your workforce program?
 - What percentage of your workforce program training do you use in your job?

METRIC #6

Social Capital

SOCIAL CAPITAL

“Often, networking transcends things that may have hindered participants such as lack of experience or a criminal record. Participants who have been able to use the network and gain opportunities despite such barriers directly reflect the effectiveness of a program and relationship/relevancy with employers and within the industry participants are entering.”



WHY SHOULD THIS METRIC BE CONSIDERED?

SOCIAL CAPITAL

- In our survey of workforce participants and alumni, professional networks and relationships were prioritized over placement in a job.
- In focus groups, participants expressed the importance of networking. Often, networking transcends things that may have hindered participants such as lack of experience or a criminal record.
- Participants who have found value and have been able to use their network and gain opportunities, despite such barriers, directly reflect the effectiveness of a program's overall reputation.

HOW TO MEASURE THIS METRIC

SOCIAL CAPITAL

- **Methods to Collect:**
 - Peer-lead one-on-one and/or group interviews
 - Participant and alumni surveys
 - Pre- and post-program questionnaire compare/contrast
- **Questions to Consider:**
 - Has participation in your workforce program opened additional opportunities for you either personally or professionally?
 - Do you notice a change in the way that you communicate now versus before the program?
 - How comfortable do you feel communicating your goals and interests after the program versus before and during?

Q&A



NEXT STEPS

- 01** Slides and webinar recording shared 3/7 by email.
- 02** *No Decisions About Us Without Us* to be released by April 2024.
- 03** Research and recommendations presented by Asher at the *Further Together* conference in Alexandria, VA.
- 04** Contact Alex Breen, abreen@skilledwork.org for inquiries.

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THANK YOU



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