Evaluation of the Career Pathways Initiative Final Report

Presented to the Hartford Foundation for Public Giving

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1. Introduction

1.1.   The rationale behind CPI

In January 2016, the Hartford Foundation for Public Giving (the Foundation) launched the Career Pathways Initiative (CPI), defining career pathways as a "systemic framework that integrates education programs, support services, and career development to assist adult learners to expand their academic and job skill levels to reach self-sufficiency." The overall goal of the initiative was to increase the employment of residents of the Greater Hartford region with limited literacy and job skills, who had historically lacked access to career services and opportunities for advancement. The premise behind the cross-sector design of CPI was that – through partnerships among community colleges, workforce development and adult education organizations, and employers – the programs would address the educational, job training, and employment needs of disenfranchised residents and help them succeed on a career pathway.

1.2.   The context for CPI

In the early 2010s, as the United States recovered from the Great Recession of 2008, concern grew – among philanthropic, business, and civic leaders, educators, and policymakers – over an evident anomaly in the labor market: while many aspiring workers remained unemployed and underemployed, employers across the country, in all industries, struggled to fill open positions. In particular, middle-skill jobs – those requiring education and training beyond high school (an associate's degree, occupational certificate, or apprenticeship), but less than a four-year college degree – consistently went unfilled, prompting experts from the Harvard Business School in 2013 to warn the the failure to fill those jobs "is inflicting a grievous cost on the competitiveness of American firms and on the standard of living of American workers."

The same pattern was evident in Connecticut where, in 2013, 47% of jobs required middle skills, but only 37% of residents had such skills. The Hartford Foundation saw in this gap an opportunity to steer residents supported through its adult basic education portfolio into career training programs that would allow them to access these unclaimed middle-skills jobs. Nevertheless, it was evident that the existing workforce development programs in the region – most of which assumed, and required, a certain threshold of literacy and basic skills prior to enrollment – were not equipped to serve this population.

The Foundation recognized both the opportunity and the difficulty of developing workforce development programs for low-skilled, low-literate adults: 1) the state's separate administration of public funding streams for workforce development, adult education and training, and social services would make coordination across agencies difficult; 2) the amount of public money available for social services may be limited, given local and state budget deficits; 3) and employers would likely be reluctant to hire from this high-needs population whose challenges included limited literacy and language skills, criminal records and substance abuse, homelessness, gaps in employment history, as well as common poverty-related issues like housing, transportation, and childcare. Overcoming these barriers and building sufficient skills to succeed in a career pathway would require support and training, and engaging employers to help them appreciate the value of including these workers in their workforce. The premise was

grounded in the expectation that integrating education, job readiness, and technical training with tailored individual supports before and after job placement would produce well-prepared workers with the potential to advance in work settings. The Foundation also recognized the need to orient and work closely with employers not only to support hiring, but also to inform training and to explore strategies to ensure a supportive work environment after placements. The Foundation also recognized that many individuals would come to programs looking to secure a job as quickly as possible and may be reluctant to commit to long programs if it meant foregoing immediate income.

In the four years since CPI launched, the local and state-level economic context in Hartford has improved: deficits are smaller; unemployment is lower; and job growth – particularly in the education, health, and manufacturing sectors – is stronger. Nevertheless, these improvements have not been felt evenly. In some areas of Hartford, unemployment remains high and public transportation – to access those jobs that do exist – is limited. Additionally, cuts in federal funding, particularly in subsidized housing, have negatively impacted the affordable housing sector in Hartford. At the same time, changes in the national political climate have created new challenges, including increased discrimination against immigrants.

1.3. The CPI response

"Career pathway systems offer a more efficient and customer-centered approach to workforce development because they structure intentional connections among adult basic education, occupational training, and postsecondary education programs […] to meet the needs of both adult learners and employers."[1]

To address the skills gap in the Greater Hartford region, the Foundation opted for a career pathways model, a nationally recognized approach to bringing workforce development and education together in support of adult learners and non-traditional students. Design of CPI

> **Box 1: Career Pathway Program Characteristics**
>
> **1) Sector strategy** – align with needs of regional industries.
>
> **2) Stackable educational/training options** – offer non-duplicative progression of courses leading to industry-recognized and/or postsecondary credentials.
>
> **3) Contextualized learning** – use curriculum and instructional strategies that make work a central context for learning.
>
> **4) Integrated education and training** – combine occupational skills training with adult education services to accelerate educational/career advancement.
>
> **5) Industry-recognized credentials** – lead to attainment of industry-recognized degrees or credentials that have value in the labor market.
>
> **6) Multiple entry and exit points** – allow workers of varying skill levels to enter or advance within a specific sector or field.
>
> **7) Intensive wrap-around services** – incorporate academic/career counseling and wrap-around services.
>
> **8) Designed for working learners** – meet needs of adult and non-traditional students who often need to combine work and study; provide child care, flexible schedules, class times and locations.
>
> *Characteristics Recommended by the US Department of Labor, Employment and Training Administration, Career Pathways Technical Assistance Initiative*

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[3] Career Pathways Toolkit, Six Key Elements for Success" by Social Policy Research Associates (SPR), on behalf of the US Department of Labor, Employment and Training Administration, under the Career Pathways Technical Assistance Initiative Project, September, 2011.

included the eight characteristics recommended in the US Department of Labor's Career Pathways Technical Assistance Initiative *(see Box 1)*. In the request for proposals, the Foundation required lead applicants to have expertise in workforce development, adult education, and/or post-secondary education *(see Box 2)* and to seek partners with complementary expertise. The Foundation also encouraged applicants to identify employer partners from the outset, seeking the alignment of employers' human resource needs and the programs' training curricula. The Foundation posited that if employers were involved from the beginning, they would be more likely to offer internships, hire, and retain participants long-term.

To address the multiple needs of low-skilled residents, the Foundation funded organizations with experience serving specific populations in need. For example, they invested in Journey Home to serve homeless adults and individuals in transitional housing, Community Partners in Action to serve formerly incarcerated adults, the Capital Region Education Council to serve English language learners, and the YWCA to serve low-income, low-literate women with children. Additionally, they invested in a variety of program models, with differing lengths and approaches attempting to balance the participants' immediate need to earn money with their need for intensive skill-building programs.

> **Box 2: Lead Partner* and CPI Project Name**
>
> **Capitol Region Education Council** (adult ed)
> Contextualized English Language Learner/
> Medical Office Assistant Program
>
> **Chrysalis Center** (workforce)
> Chrysalis/Urban League Career Pathways Initiative
>
> **Community Partners in Action** (reentry, workforce)
> STARR Training to Work 2
>
> **Goodwin College** (post-secondary ed)
> Manufacturing Career Pathway
>
> **Hartford Public Library** (adult ed)
> Immigrant Career Pathways: Food Service
>
> **Journey Home** (workforce)
> Aerospace Employment Placement Program
>
> **Literacy Volunteers of Greater Hartford** (adult ed)
> Business Plan for Success
>
> **Our Piece of the Pie** (workforce, youth devpt, secondary ed)
> Opportunity Academy College Scholars (Year 1)
> Pathways to Careers Initiative (PCI) Online (starting Year 2)
>
> **YWCA Hartford Region** (workforce)
> YW Career Women at Manchester Community College
>
> *Organization's primary expertise noted in parentheses.

1.4. Goals and strategies

The three primary goals of the initiative, as articulated in the Hartford Foundation for Public Giving's CPI Theory of Change (May 2016), were to:

1) Build and refine career pathways to help traditionally underserved low-literate and low-skilled residents succeed in the workforce.
2) Support and promote cross-sector partnerships in developing career pathways for low-literate and/or low-skilled residents.

3) Foster an integrated career pathways system to respond to the workforce needs of low-literate and low-skilled residents.

The Foundation provided three-year grants (2016-2018) to nine partnerships, representing a diversity of geography, population served, partnership scale, and existing and new programming. All nine grantees met the Foundation's initial criteria for selection, including representing a cross-sector partnership, emphasizing collaboration, possessing prior experience in workforce development and/or adult or post-secondary education, and including an employer partner or a strategy for engaging employer partners. The Foundation expected the grantees to learn and refine their approaches as they built and implemented their career pathway models. With this intent, the Foundation invested in a developmental evaluation of the initiative, emphasizing ongoing feedback and learning to inform the work as it evolved. As emerging findings pointed to additional programming and service needs, in Year 2 the Foundation provided sites with the opportunity to apply for supplemental funds to address identified gaps and enhance programs. Several sites took advantage of this opportunity, using additional funds to cover additional needs such as child care costs for participants. The Foundation also extended their flexibility in funding when sites experienced delays and therefore did not spend down their full grants in the initial three year period. Several sites received no-cost extensions into 2019 to spend down their grants.

In addition to funding the partnerships, the Foundation provided technical assistance to the partners - on topics such as contextualized learning, development of career pathways, partnership management, and data collection - through technical assistance, learning convenings, and program evaluation.

To achieve the larger goal of fostering an integrated career pathway system, the Foundation's planned strategies included: 1) facilitating cross-partnership relationships through the learning community; 2) sharing CPI lessons and results with the workforce development field; 3) pursuing policy and advocacy efforts; and 4) looking for funding streams to sustain the work.

To achieve the first two goals, the partnerships funded through CPI were expected to pursue the following strategies:

- Building and/or refining career pathway models that combined adult literacy, job training, social support services, and job development, placement and retention supports.
- Recruiting and working with employers as partners (input into curriculum, job exposure, job placement, etc).
- Recruiting target population; informing clients of program requirement, benefits, and trade-offs.
- Using findings from CPI's developmental evaluation to refine program over time.
- Formalizing partner relationships and plans, including vision, goals, and workplan; structure and processes; roles and responsibilities; and data sharing.
- Leveraging resources for sustainability and utilizing technical assistance, as needed.

1.5. About the evaluation and this report

In early 2016, the Foundation contracted with Victoria Dougherty Consulting to conduct a developmental evaluation of CPI. Through this approach, we provided feedback to site-level decision-makers and had ongoing discussions with the Foundation on emerging lessons, allowing for changes and improvements to the individual programs and the initiative as a whole along the way.

Our focus evolved with the initiative: in Year 1, the evaluation focused on clarifying initiative and site-level theories of change, determining evaluation readiness, and gleaning lessons from early implementation. In Year 2, the focus was on examining whether programs had gained traction and partnerships were solidifying. In Year 3[2], the focus shifted to assessing the results of the programs and identifying promising approaches in career pathways, partnership development, and systems change.

Our guiding evaluation questions were as follows (the relevant report sections noted in parenthesis):

1. *How well did grantee implement their CPI strategies over the course of the initiative?* To what degree did grantees follow planned designs for the work? Which elements were implemented as planned and which were altered? How and why were these changes made? What challenges did grantee encounter and how were they addressed? How likely is it that grantee will continue to implement these strategies after the grant ends? How likely is it that the partnerships will continue? What grantee strategies might be critical for success if this type of initiative were pursued in other communities? *(Section 2)*

> **Box 3: Key Assumptions Underlying the CPI***
>
> **About the strategy:**
> - Contextualized learning moves students ahead faster
> - CPI training is tied to industries with job opportunities
> - Partners are engaging employers and aligning curriculum to employers' needs
> - Partners are thinking not only about career "ladders," but also about career "lattices"
> - Employers are facing enough of a labor demand that they will be willing to invest in career advancement for low-literate, low-skilled workers
> - Partners will provide enough training and support to produce skilled workers that employers want to hire.
> - Partners are recruiting clients that fit their identified target population
> - There are enough residents meeting target criteria to benefit from CPI
> - Partners have the capacity to implement the program with fidelity to best practice
>
> **About partnerships:**
> - Cross-sector collaborations can address intractable problems in complex environments
> - CPI collaboration is built on partners' strengths
> - Partners share resources and risk
> - Partners have the commitment, capacity, and know-how to develop and manage working partnerships
> - Partnerships can adjust to leadership changes and turnover among partner organizations
> - Partners have the capacity to engage employers
>
> **About systems change:**
> - A regional, multi-sector, collaborative approach is needed for lasting impact
> - The CPI learning community will promote systems change by fostering collaboration across partnerships
> - CPI will make an impact on the region's quality of life by focusing on issues keeping low-literate, low-skilled adults from achieving a livable wage

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[2] Given that many CPI sites were granted no-cost extensions by the Foundation, in actuality, the initiative extended into a fourth year. For clarity and consistency, however, we have continued to use the terms "Year 3" or "final year" in this report. Please note that these refer to any CPI-related activities occurring in 2018 and in 2019, up through the date of our last set of site visits in September 2019.

2. *What was the impact of CPI?* To what degree did the initiative achieve its short-term outcomes and its longer-term outcome of developing an integrated career pathways system in the region? Did achievement of outcomes vary across grantees? If so, how? What factors influenced the achievement of outcomes? Did the initiative achieve any unforeseen outcomes? If so, what were they and how did they come about? *(Section 3)*

3. *What are the lessons from CPI?* Which of the initiative's assumptions proved to be true or false? What did it take to successfully accomplish CPI's desired outcomes? What lessons were learned about what it takes to grow successful partnerships? What are the broader implications of these lessons learned? *(Section 4)*

To answer these questions, we used a mixed-method approach. We collected quantitative data on participant enrollment, completion, and employment outcomes from the programs, providing organizations with technical assistance on data collection to develop their capacity to track data over time. To understand how the programs were being implemented and what factors were supporting or hindering success, we collected in-depth qualitative data through interviews, focus groups, and program observations.

Our methods included:

- Reviewing relevant CPI grantee documents, including program marketing and training materials.
- Conducting annual mid- and end-year phone interviews with the Foundation.
- Conducting annual mid-year phone and in-person interviews with site lead organizations.
- Collecting annual self-assessments of partnership development indicators.
- Collecting annual enrollment, completion, and employment data from CPI partners.
- Conducting annual site visits to interview lead organizations, partners, and participants and to observe programs, when possible.

In section 2 of this report, we discuss the implementation of CPI, from recruitment to job placement and retention. We also discuss program management, building and maintaining partnerships, and fostering system integration. In section 3, we present the impact of CPI on participants, grantee organizations, partnerships, and on the Hartford career pathways system. Lastly, in section 4, we share lessons learned from CPI. In the appendices we provide detail on participant demographics and enrollment, participation, and completion data, as well as technical notes, the theory of change, and site level final reports.

2. The Implementation of CPI

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Box 4: Characteristics of Strong Implementation

Recruitment & Enrollment
1. Recruitment attracted necessary number & type of candidates.
2. Candidates received in-depth orientation before applying.
3. Enrolled participants were good "fit" for program/pathway.
4. Participants understood expectations of program and potential career tracks.
5. Staff conducted individualized needs assessments to understand training & supports needs of participants.

Preparing Participants for Employment
6. Language, technical, & soft skills training – with input from employers – raised participants' skills to level required for employment.
7. Case management and social supports helped participants overcome barriers to success.

Finding Job Placements & Supporting Participants into Employment
8. Program offered internship opportunities.
9. Employers contacted staff when positions became available.
10. Program ensured participant/employer matches met needs of both parties.
11. Program provided support to participants and employers post-employment.

*By these criteria, five CPI sites were "strong implementation sites": CREC, Goodwin, Hartford Public Library, Journey Home, and Literacy Volunteers of Greater Hartford. HPL and Goodwin are noteworthy for making marked improvements over the course of the initiative.

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In 2016, all CPI sites entered program implementation with a design in mind – based on their own expertise and understanding of best practice in the field – which they proceeded to carry out. Some sites, those that were ultimately most successful, almost immediately began refining their programs, in large and small ways, based on what they were learning through implementation. Other sites, by contrast, struggled to adapt when they faltered in implementation. Successful implementation ultimately depended less on the specific characteristics of the programs themselves – like pathways of focus, length of programs, and mix of trainings – or on the track-record of the organization, and more on the quality of the team brought together to manage the program and the commitment of the organization's leaders.

2.1. Implementing the CPI programs

2.1.1. Recruiting and enrolling participants

The Hartford Foundation's Career Pathways Initiative sought to target "hard to serve" individuals, defined as low-literate or low-skilled residents who may not qualify for traditional workforce training programs. Within that definition, individual sites enjoyed broad leeway in proposing specific target populations for their CPI programs.

Box 5: How did sites define their targeted "low-literate/low-skilled" population at CPI's onset?*	
Chrysalis	Low-income residents of Hartford's North End neighborhoods.
Community Partners in Action	Formerly incarcerated Hartford residents transferred to a Work Release Program from a Connecticut prison.
CREC	English-language learners (with GED or HS diploma) with language skills within ten points of minimum for enrollment at Manchester Community College (CASAS score of 236).
Goodwin*	Adults from Greater Hartford (SNAP recipients [Year 1 only] and American Job Corp participants) with GED or HS diploma.
Hartford Public Library*	Work-authorized immigrants (>21 years) with CASAS scores of: >201 for Food Handler Program; >221 for Food Manager Program.
Journey Home	Greater Hartford Resident (with GED or HS diploma) in transitional or rapid rehousing program at Open Hearth or participating in an education and training program at the Hartford Jobs Center.
Literacy Volunteers of Greater Hartford	English-language learner or low-literate resident of Greater Hartford.
Our Piece of the Pie*	Under-credited, over-aged (>17), low-income students at OPPortunity Academy who are residents of Greater Hartford. Had to be seniors and meet academic criteria.
YWCA*	Low-income, low-literate single mothers (with GED or HS diploma)

* *Denotes sites whose targeted population shifted over the course of the initiative.*

Most sites defined low-literate and low-skilled as those individuals whose skills were below the requirements of the specific workforce programs to be offered through CPI, but close enough that they might gain access to those programs with some basic-skills remediation. Because they sought to place participants in college-level certificate or degree programs, several CPI sites (CREC, Goodwin, Journey Home, and YWCA) required participants to have a high school diploma or GED. Indeed, Table 1 shows that around three-quarters of CPI participants had high school diplomas or GED at enrollment (71%, 2016; 73%, 2017; 76% 2018/9).

Because culinary arts does not typically require high school credentials, it was a pathway of focus for those sites serving the most challenging populations: HPL's immigrants, CPA's returning citizens (Culinary Arts program), and LVGH's low-literacy and ELL individuals (Sodexo Cohort).

OPP was an exception, straddling both categories: because it was originally conceived as a dual-enrollment program, it required that participants be in their senior year of high school and on-

track to graduate, assuming that they would obtain their high school diploma and an associate's degree in allied health or business administration concurrently.

TABLE 1

CPI Enrollment & Completion, by Year			
	2016	**2017**	**2018/9**
Enrollment & Completion			
Total Enrolled [1]	336	377	751
Completed Program [2]	79%	78%	82%
Participant Status at Enrollment [3]			
With High School Diploma or GED	71%	73%	76%
Average CASAS [4]	220-245	210-240	219-240
With Dependent Children	N/A	34%	34%
Not Employed	N/A	47%	58%

1) Number enrolled at any time during a given year. Because participants may have enrolled in multiple cohorts and over multiple years, the numbers may contain duplicates. For this reason, we cannot aggregate across the three+ years.

2) "Completed Program" calculated out of total enrolled minus those continuing enrollment into next year: 2016 N=300 (336-36); 2017 N=272 (377-105), 2018/19, N=589 (751-162 continuing beyond 8/31/19)

3) Dependent children and employment status at enrollment were not collected in Year 1.

4) CPA, Goodwin, and Journey Home did not provide CASAS scores.

Even those programs requiring high school credentials targeted participants with significant barriers to jobs that offer living wages and opportunities for progression. For example, CREC targeted English-language learners; Journey Home, individuals transitioning from homelessness; and YWCA, single mothers. Table 1 shows that about one-third (34%) of CPI participants had dependent children and around half (47%, 2017, 58%, 2018/19) were not employed at the time of enrollment.[3] Most CPI participants were women (53%, 2017; 61%, 2018/19) between the ages of 25 and 44 (56%, 2017, 61%, 2018/19), with a plurality between 30 and 44 years old (42%, 2018/19). About four-fifths were of Hispanic origin or black/African American[4], although the proportion of each shifted from year to year (2017, 32% Hispanic/49% black; 2018/19, 44% Hispanic/34% black).[5]

Of the four sites that adapted their target populations over the course of the initiative, two did so in response to recruitment challenges. OPP made the most significant changes: after having difficulty finding OPPortunity Academy seniors who were willing and able to pursue the model's online dual-enrollment program, the site opened recruitment to other high school seniors and, finally, facing continued challenges, limited enrollment to high school graduates.[6] YWCA expanded its target population in Year 2 – from only single women with children to including

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[3] See Appendix A, Table 8 for more detailed breakdown.

[4] Most programs did not track Hispanic origin separately from race so these categories are largely mutually exclusive in this report.

[5] See Appendix A, Table 7 for demographic breakdown.

[6] As will be discussed below, by the program's last year, OPP had moved away from its dual-enrollment model to one more in line with other CPI sites, offering case management supports and access to stacked-credential programs through area partners.

some women without children – in response to the loss of the program's primary recruitment partner, Manchester Adult and Continuing Education's (MACE) Reaching Educational Achievement for College Transition (REACT) program.[7] In Year 3, having regained its footing on the recruitment front, YWCA went back to its original target group.

By contrast, HPL broadened its initial narrowly defined target population – ELL immigrants – to include non-immigrant ELL individuals (i.e. Puerto Ricans), as well as immigrants from English-speaking countries (i.e. West Indian natives) in response to robust demand for its program. Goodwin, which had sought to target SNAP recipients early on, expanded its outreach to any interested adults with GED living in Greater Hartford to align with their adult education partners. The remainder of the sites – Chrysalis, CPA, CREC, Journey Home, and LVGH – maintained their target populations as originally defined for the duration of the initiative.

As the initiative progressed and CPI programs built robust reputations, most CPI sites were able to cut back on recruitment-specific activities, relying almost exclusively on word of mouth to attract participants. While sites had assumed that significant resources would be spent on recruitment, in reality, successful programs soon began self-generating demand as participants spread the word and other agencies began referring clients. Journey Home was proactive in inviting current and past participants to promote the program at Open Hearth. For others, like CREC and HPL, demand was so high that it made active recruitment unnecessary. Goodwin, after a sluggish start, found that working with their adult education partners earlier in the academic year to promote the program boosted recruitment. Sites that did not focus on single career paths, like Chrysalis and LVGH's GCC, also enjoyed strong enrollment, partly thanks to the flexibility they offered in allowing participants to direct their own career options.

Goodwin, after a sluggish start, found that working with their adult education partners earlier in the academic year to promote the

By contrast, OPP and YWCA had to strengthen their recruitment strategies towards the end of the initiative, given persistently low enrollment; as a result, these two sites actually recruited most of their total participants in CPI's third year. After broader outreach efforts were not as successful as they had hoped, OPP and YWCA moved towards targeting individuals who were already motivated, making recruitment much easier. For example, in the last year, OPP began attending information sessions at community colleges hoping to attract individuals who intended to enroll in a credentialing program but might need the OPP's wraparound supports to boost their chances of success. OPP also generated more internal referrals from other programs in the third year. Similarly, YWCA began working with the office of student services at MCC to get referrals of students already enrolled there but who could use YWCA's supports.

Ultimately, all CPI sites met the enrollment goals set forth in their proposals. Nevertheless, while most had firm definitions of what it meant to be enrolled in the program (CREC, Goodwin, HPL, Journey Home, LVGH Sodexo), others had such broad – and sometimes

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[7] In the original design, MACE would refer participants from its Reaching Educational Achievement for College Transition (REACT) program to YWCA's Young Women Career Women program. Early in Year 1, MACE lost its funding for REACT.

fluctuating – criteria for considering someone "enrolled" that the meaning of metric was eroded. CPA, for example, lost most of its available workforce training slots when its bid for the continuation of the federal STARR T2W2 grant failed. While, at the outset of the initiative, CPA had counted only those in specific workforce training programs (i.e. culinary arts, masonry, manufacturing) as enrolled in CPI, by Year 3, it was counting any returning citizen expressing interest in a career pathway as a CPI participant, whether or not the individual was enrolled in a career training program. Similarly, although OPP reported meeting its enrollment numbers in the final year of the program, ten of their participants had yet to enroll in any certificate or training program.

Those sites that enjoyed robust demand for their CPI programs were able to tighten enrollment standards to ensure better fit among participants. In screening candidates, Journey Home tried to ensure that participants' existing skills would enable them to succeed in the Goodwin classroom, and eventually, the workplace, and that they had a genuine interest in working in the manufacturing field long-term. Similarly, after an initial marketing push at program launch, CREC's program eventually attracted more than enough recruits through word of mouth to meet its enrollment goals. The large pool of candidates allowed CREC to tighten its enrollment criteria to ensure that participants were truly interested in a career in the medical field. Both Journey Home and CREC took care to only recruit those participants who were able to dedicate the time and effort – like attending all classes, doing homework, participating in tutoring sessions, meeting with case manager and/or job developer – the program required.

Most programs had to exclude a certain number of interested candidates, either because demand exceeded the available training slots or because candidates did not meet one or more enrollment criteria. In general, CPI sites assisted anyone who came through their doors, referring them to other programs, either within their organizations or to external partners, if they did not meet the program criteria or if slots were full. Larger organizations often referred individuals to other in-house programs for services. For example, CREC encouraged people interested in the Advanced ESL/Medical Office Assistant (MOA) program but whose English-language skills were too low to enroll in their beginner ELL classes, where they could build up skills and eventually qualify for the program. Similarly, Journey Home established a priority waitlist to enable highly motivated Open Hearth residents who needed additional computer skills to enroll in the next available cohort once they were sufficiently prepared. Most CPI programs also referred individuals to external programs, both within the CPI network and beyond. All sites had open-door policies, so that participants who were not admitted at first or who left the program without completing, were welcome to return when they were ready.

2.1.2. Training participants and supporting them into employment

Because the Foundation sought to test different models for helping low-literacy, low-skilled adults enter and succeed in the workforce, CPI sites were free to structure their programs and emphasize certain elements over others as they saw fit; as a result, CPI programs varied considerably from each other.

TABLE 2

The CPI Programs*: Structure and Key Elements									
	CHR	**CPA**	**CREC**	**GW**	**HPL**	**JH**	**LV**	**OPP**	**YW**
Number of pathways									
One			✓	✓	✓	✓			
Multiple	✓	✓					✓	✓	✓
Length of program									
Short (less than 1 month)	✓						✓		
Medium (approx. 6-12 weeks)	✓	✓			✓		✓		
Long (approx. 6-12 months)	✓	✓	✓	✓		✓	✓	✓	✓
Enrollment frequency									
Fixed point(s) in time			✓	✓		✓			
Open/Frequent	✓	✓			✓		✓	✓	✓
Programming elements**									
Basic skills remediation/ contextualization			✓	✓	✓		✓		✓
Technical training	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓		
Soft skills	✓		✓	✓	✓	✓	✓		
Social supports and/or case management	✓	✓	✓			✓	✓	✓	✓
Internship***		✓	✓		✓	✓	✓		
Job placement supports	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓		
Post-employment supports		✓	✓		✓	✓	✓		

The programs highlighted in blue had the strongest outcomes in terms of employment and/or continuing education.

**Check marks indicate that element was a well-developed part of the program. If an element was present but weak or not emphasized, we did not mark it.

***All internships were paid or stipended, except LVGH's where Sodexo participants volunteered bi-weekly at a community kitchen as their internship.

Variations in program structure

In terms of structuring the programs, sites considered the number of career pathways to offer, the length of the programs, and whether enrollment would be at fixed times during the year or ongoing. Each option presented opportunities and challenges, but, with the exception of OPP, all sites maintained the basic structure of the programs as described in their proposals to the Foundation.

1) Number of pathways

Whether sites focused on one or several career pathways depended on both practical and mission-based considerations. With single pathways, sites could steer participants into fields

known to have unmet demand for middle-skill workers, thus, theoretically, setting them up better for success. At the same time, limited resources could be used more efficiently, for example, by coordinating with just one training partner versus multiple partners. For other sites, however, organizational missions mandated a more client-driven approach in which participants had more say in the type of training they received. While this approach seemed more responsive to participants' needs, it could be more resource-intensive.

Four of the sites focused their CPI efforts on single career pathways, the remainder on multiple pathways *(see Table 2)*. CREC targeted health care, Goodwin and Journey Home targeted manufacturing, both sectors with high demand for middle-skills workers. HPL – whose target population had more limited English-language skills – chose culinary arts, a field with high demand for workers, but more suitable for lower-literacy individuals. OPP and YWCA similarly sought to target pathways with high demand, although rather than choosing a single focus, they opted to offer more than one: allied health and business administration for OPP; health, manufacturing, and technology for YWCA.

Because LVGH's mission places high value on responsiveness to clients, its CPI programs were less prescriptive, offering training based primarily on participants' interests, as captured in individualized career plans. Because the plans were open-ended, many LVGH GCC participants received only non-technical training. For example, if participants' individualized career plans focused on building pre-employment skills, they might receive training and support in resume development, interviewing, and career exploration, with no expectation that they enroll in technical training during a set time period.

> *Because LVGH's mission values responsiveness to clients above other considerations, its CPI programs were less prescriptive, offering training based primarily on participants' interests.*

Chrysalis also offered a wide array of training options through CPI, as was its practice historically. Its most popular courses were security guard card and fork-lift training; other in-house training courses included construction, transportation, healthcare, hospitality, and public safety. While CPA also offered multiple pathways, their options were driven more by what industries were likely to hire returning citizens – masonry, truck driving, manufacturing, food service – than by other considerations.

2) Length of program

How long participants would be in the program – including technical training, basic-, soft-, and life-skills training, and internships – presented tradeoffs for sites. On the one hand, their target populations needed considerable training and support to be on even footing with others in the workforce. On the other, the opportunity costs of remaining out of the workforce for an extended period of time posed a disincentive both to enrolling and to persisting in the programs. While the length of the technical components were often fixed – by the training partner, pathway standards, or other external constraints – many sites experimented with how the training was delivered, for example, testing different options for scheduling, pacing, and location to find the best mix for participants.

The longer CPI programs (approx. 6-12 months) were those associated with community colleges, which followed the academic semester schedule. Participants in Goodwin's *Manufacturing Career Partnership* attended a six-week (36-hour) summer bootcamp to refresh math and literacy skills, then enrolled in two manufacturing courses per semester for one year (180 hours), for a total of 216 program hours. Goodwin held classes in the evenings to allow participants to pursue employment during the day, hoping to facilitate persistence in the program by minimizing the potential loss of income from the extended training period.

CPA also offered some slots in Goodwin's manufacturing program to their CPI participants; participants had the choice between enrolling in a more intensive 15-week program and the standard year-long program. Most participants opted for the longer program: the more moderate pace was attractive to those who had been out of school for a long time and were anxious about keeping up with the coursework, as well as those who wanted to be able to work and take classes simultaneously.

CREC's Advanced ESL/MOA Program included an 8-week (72 hour) Advanced ESL course at CREC; three MOA courses at MCC over 9 weeks (135 hours, or 15 hours/week); and at least 80 hours of internship (2 weeks), for a total of 287 hours. While CREC required the most program hours of all the college-based CPI programs, its 19-week total timeline was relatively compressed, an important feature for participants eager to enter the workforce. In addition, MCC scheduled classes between 9 AM and 3 PM, ensuring that participants – two-thirds of whom had dependent children – could attend the program while fulfilling family responsibilities. Participants in Journey Home's Aerospace Employment Placement Program enrolled in two manufacturing classes at Goodwin College over the course of one semester (15 weeks), for a total of 90 hours, the shortest period among this group of programs. Following the training, participants entered full-time employment – subsidized through the CPI grant for the first six weeks – at one of the partnering companies (Belcan, Cyient, or Best Logic). The guarantee of a well-paid job after a relatively brief training provided a strong incentive for participants to complete the program.

> *The guarantee of a well-paid job after a relatively brief training provided a strong incentive for Journey Home participants to complete the program.*

While YWCA and OPP's programs were also conceived as longer-term programs for participants to gain certificates or associate's degrees (through MCC and Southern New Hampshire University, respectively), their recruitment was limited until the very end of the initiative, making it difficult to assess the models (see *Managing the Programs* below). Indeed, OPP was the only site to change the structure of the program altogether during the course of CPI. Originally, OPP's Opportunity Academy College Scholars program was conceived as a two-year, dual-enrollment program through which participants would receive their high school credentials and associates' degrees simultaneously. In the initiative's final year, faced with persistent recruitment difficulties, OPP reconfigured its program (renamed Pathways to Careers Initiative Online) towards shorter-term certificates, in a variety of pathways, through local partners. Because OPP's program will extend beyond the timeframe of this evaluation, we are unable to assess the effectiveness of this new strategy.

Programs with medium-length technical training components (approx. 6-12 weeks) included the initiative's three culinary arts programs, LVGH's Early Childhood Cohort, and some multi-week programs offered by CPA, Chrysalis, and LVGH's General Counseling Cohort. HPL's Immigrant Career Pathways program enrolled participants for roughly[8] 70 hours over 10 weeks, providing ServSafe instruction, customer service and digital literacy training, and an internship. LVGH's Sodexo Cohort offered two hours of training per week for six weeks, plus a 14-week internship of eight hours per week, for a total of 124 hours. In Year 3, LVGH added an Early Childhood Cohort – 100 hours of training over 14 weeks – to its CPI portfolio. Depending on their interests, some in the General Counseling Cohort received training in a variety of sectors, including marketing and health sciences. CPA's Culinary Arts program, the most time-intensive program in this category, consisted of 30-35 hours on-the-job training per week for 10 weeks, totaling over 300 hours. Because participants were paid minimum wage for these hours, the incentive to persist in the program was strong. Over the course of the initiative, CPA offered other multi-week programs in areas such as construction and truck driving, depending on funding, participant interest, and training options available through partners. Finally, Chrysalis offered some training courses of medium-length, such as certified nursing assistant and culinary arts.

In addition to those mentioned above, Chrysalis and LVGH also offered shorter-term options – to build literacy skills, workforce skills, or gain quick, skill-based credentials –, allowing them to serve more participants by minimizing the burden placed on their time. To all individuals who expressed an interest in employment, LVGH offered its General Counseling Cohort, whose core component was four to eight one-hour meetings over two months, covering literacy, soft-, and technical skills. Chrysalis staff found that very short trainings were appealing to the majority of their participants who were eager to work as soon as possible. The three-day Security GuardCard was Chrysalis' most popular offering, as well as Forklift Operator, HAZPOWER, and OSHA-10.

3) Enrollment frequency

Programs with ongoing enrollment – or with frequently run sessions – offered participants more opportunities to participate than programs requiring enrollment at one or two specific times during the year. Longer programs tended to offer enrollment less frequently, naturally resulting in fewer participants trained per year: CREC - 30 participants per year; Goodwin- 22; Journey Home - 15.

By contrast, sites with rolling or frequent enrollment – usually those running short or medium-length in-house trainings – enrolled much larger numbers of participants: Chrysalis – avg. 67 participants per year; HPL – approx. 100[9] per year; LVGH – avg. 148 per year. Neither Chrysalis nor LVGH had limits on how long someone could be enrolled in the program. Participants could

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[8] The exact total depended on whether participants enrolled in the Food Handler or Food Manager cohorts (see Appendix B).

[9] Because sites reported enrollment numbers by cohort (rather than by individual participants) and because graduates of HPL's Immigrant Career Pathways Food Handler Cohort often re-enrolled in other courses, we cannot estimate HPL's average yearly enrollment without double-counting some individuals. Nevertheless, what we do know is that enrollment in HPL's Immigrant Career Pathways grew considerably over the course of the initiative, with about ten cohorts running in each of the final two years of implementation.

receive services or participate in additional training at any time. Although HPL's cohorts had firm beginning and end dates, participants were encouraged to return for additional training.

Variations in programming elements

All sites launched implementation with a mix of services and approaches – basic skills remediation and contextualization, case management, workforce skills training, technical training, internships, job development, post-employment supports – based on their own expertise and their understanding of best practices in the field. Over time, as sites learned through implementation, all made numerous adjustments, both minor and major, to the mix of services provided through CPI. Several made use of supplemental funds available from the Foundation to enhance their programs.

1) Basic skills remediation and/or contextualized learning

CPI sites varied widely in terms of their focus on literacy skills, depending on participants' education and literacy levels, the requirements of particular pathways, and their own organizational expertise, or that of their partners. Most sites provided tutoring or other academic supports during their technical training components. Some sites provided (or required) basic skills remediation before participants could enroll in the program. Through its six-week summer boot camp, Goodwin brought participants' math and literacy skills up to the required level for the college's manufacturing classes. YWCA offered remediation in math, reading, and writing in preparation for the Accuplacer, although not all participants went through this component of the program. Journey Home did not provide remediation directly, but required candidates not meeting basic criteria in computer literacy, for example, to build up their skills before enrolling; these candidates would then receive priority for the following cohort.

Given their organizational mission, literacy was a natural focus for LVGH. Notably, LVGH contextualized their Sodexo Cohort, that is, the ServSafe content was taught at a more basic literacy level. Similarly, HPL contextualized the culinary arts program by training their ESL instructors to deliver the ServSafe curriculum. Given the high demand for their program, by the close of the initiative, HPL was differentiating its ServSafe Food Handler course for three different literacy levels: ESL, low-literacy, and standard.

CREC was alone among sites in contextualizing both its in-house, pre-enrollment Advanced ESL course, as well as the technical MOA courses offered through MCC. The contextualization was expanded in the second year of the initiative when CREC received an

> *CREC was alone among sites in contextualizing both its in-house, pre-enrollment Advanced ESL course, as well as the technical MOA courses offered through MCC.*

Integrated Basic Education and Skills Training (I-BEST) grant from Connecticut's Department of Education. Through this grant, the program had CREC's Advanced ESL instructor accompany the participants to MCC to provide them with integrated language support on-site at the college. Apart from direct language assistance to participants, the instructor provided useful feedback to

the MCC professors that helped them better contextualize their lessons. At the same time, she used her observations at the college to add content from the MOA curriculum to her own Advanced ESL course at CREC.

Neither remediation nor contextualization were elements of CPA or Chrysalis' programs, although Chrysalis did refer low-literacy individuals to LVGH for support, as needed. OPP's program was originally designed as a dual enrollment program, in which participants would acquire basic skills and technical skills simultaneously. OPP also provided academic support through OPP's academic services and SNHU's online tutoring, although, in practice, students made little use of the online tutoring, preferring OPP's face-to-face support when needed.

2) Technical training

CPI programs offered a variety of technical training options, ranging from traditional classroom courses at community colleges, to hands-on training in work settings, to quick skills-building workshops. Those programs offering multiple pathways operated with more flexibility in training clients in their preferred fields. Chrysalis, for example, ran training sessions on a set schedule. In LVGH's GCC, staff worked with each participant to develop individualized career plans, identifying incremental educational, technical, and employment-readiness goals. For those interested in specific careers, LVGH offered technical training in a variety of sectors, including food services, security, marketing, transportation and distribution, and health sciences. In Year 3, LVGH added an Early Childhood Education cohort. By providing on-the-job training at their new onsite child care center, LVGH not only responded to the interest of CPI participants, but also provided much-needed childcare to other LVGH parents. In CPA's case, given returning citizens' barriers to employment, participants' choice of pathway was guided more by the likelihood of securing employment than by interest in any particular field. Indeed, CPA participants often trained in more than one program, hoping to increase their chances of employment. Because all of CPA's training options were provided through partner organizations, participants were also limited by whatever partnerships CPA had in place at any given time.

OPP and YWCA offered their participants a limited number of pathway choices, providing training through partner institutions in the selected pathways. In its original model, OPP partnered with Southern New Hampshire University's (SNHU) College for America, an online competency-based program, to provide students with applied content and skills in allied health or business administration. Once OPP revised its model in Year 3 to include stackable credentials in allied health and business, students could obtain technical training in subjects like phlebotomy and entrepreneurship via certificate programs at local partner institutions. Similarly, YWCA offered training in health, manufacturing, or technology through certificate programs at its partner institution, MCC.

The CPI sites that focused on specific career pathways maintained a singular approach to their technical training for the duration of the initiative, while making improvements – both major and minor – to their technical curricula over time.

HPL was the only CPI site to build out a career pathway as a series of stackable, sequential courses meant to provide opportunities for upward mobility along a particular career pathway.

CPA and LVGH's culinary arts programs remained fairly consistent in terms of content over the course of the initiative. HPL, on the other hand, expanded their course offerings within the culinary arts pathway in response to demand from current and past participants. By the end of the initiative, HPL was not only offering the ServSafe Food Manager training as the next level for graduates of the entry-level ServSafe Food Handling course, it had also added courses that would serve as stepping stones for participants hoping to make a long-term career in the food-service industry – restaurant server, bartending, and farm-to-table. HPL was the only CPI site to build out a career pathway as a series of stackable, sequential courses meant to provide opportunities for upward mobility along a particular career pathway.

Of the nine sites, Journey Home and Goodwin made the most significant adjustment to their core program curriculum while maintaining their focus on the manufacturing sector. In Year 2, Journey Home modified the courses offered through the Aerospace Employment Placement Program to better match their employer partner's workforce needs. Goodwin, also in Year 2, changed its manufacturing curriculum to quality assurance (QA) after conducting an external scan that showed QA was more universally applicable in the workforce than their previous curriculum which involved more demanding physical work. While a more modest change, CREC's partner Manchester Community College added a vital signs module to its medical office assistant curriculum in response to a specific request from employer-partner St. Francis Hospital.

3) Soft skills

While the technical training components remained relatively stable over time, most CPI sites learned early on that soft skills – particularly communication and problem solving skills, time management, work ethic, and customer service – would need stronger emphasis if participants were to succeed, both in the programs and in the workplace. Whether they devised separate modules or provided coaching on these skills through case management, most sites undertook significant efforts to bolster the soft skills components of their programs. For Journey Home and CREC, soft skills were a strong emphasis throughout the program. Later in the initiative, CREC added a financial literacy component to its Advanced ESL/MOA program, realizing that participants would need new skills in budgeting and money management as their earnings rose.

HPL, in response to feedback from its primary employer partner, Hartford Public Schools' Child Nutrition Services (HPS-CNS), developed a four-hour customer service module, which it continued to adapt based on input from HPS-CNS. The Library also added a computer training course to its CPI requirements after learning from HPS-CNS that interns and new hires were having trouble operating cash registers.

While the 20-hour pre-technical Employability Skills Training (EST) – offered by Urban League – was part of Chrysalis's initial CPI design, few participants attended the session in Year 1. In response, Chrysalis worked more intentionally with Urban League in subsequent years to require more participants go through EST before enrolling in technical training courses. To accommodate more participants, Urban League began offering EST more frequently and offered an abridged one-day workshop for those unable to commit to the full two weeks. The EST course eventually added a financial literacy module.

Shortly into the initiative, LVGH's staff found participants lacked a "job-ready mindset," which they defined as "being able to articulate what jobs they want and what they need to obtain that job." As a result, LVGH's case managers began focusing on engagement, goal attainment, coaching, and individualized supports designed to enable participants to understand their strengths and weaknesses and to develop the "job-ready mindset" needed to succeed in the workplace.

> *LVGH's case managers sought to develop the "job-ready mindset" participants would need to succeed in the workplace.*

OPP and YWCA both promoted personal development and life skills through group workshops and individualized coaching in topics such as stress management, time management, financial literacy, and emotional development. Both also offered short-term courses in career competency development. OPP required participants to participate in their two-week *Career Competency Development Training* (CCDT), an interactive, classroom-based session that taught foundational employment skills. YWCA encouraged all participants to participate in the national career readiness certificate program, an online training program, covering areas such as problem solving and critical thinking. Outside of these discrete courses, however, OPP and YWCA did not integrate or emphasize workplace skills training in their programs.

In Year 1, CPA's job developer ran a weekly employability skills workshop for participants. Unfortunately, with the loss of the federal STARR T2W2 grant in Year 2, CPA did away with the job developer position and coaching participants on soft skills fell on the CPI case manager. Depending on the pathway, soft skills were also addressed within the technical training component. The Culinary Arts program, as befits the hospitality industry, addressed soft skills as part of its customer service focus. Participants in CPA's manufacturing track received a $100 stipend to complete a two-week (60-hour) boot camp on workforce preparedness skills

– through Capital Workforce Partners' Best Chance program – before entering Goodwin.

4) Social supports and/or case management

Most CPI sites included case management or other social supports in the design of their pathway models, having offered these as core services prior to the initiative. Chrysalis, CPA, CREC, Journey Home, LVGH, OPP, and YWCA all offered intensive case management focused on removing participants' barriers to successful program completion. For HPL, whose immigrant and low-literacy clients were particularly high-needs, case management was a real struggle given that the Library had no case manager on staff and no social-services infrastructure. Over time, the Library was able to strengthen this area of weakness buy building out a referral system. But even without case management functions, HPL staff still provided individualized supports to participants. Similarly, Goodwin's program manager met weekly with the students, both individually and as a cohort, to make sure they had everything needed to "stay on track," referring them to counseling and academic supports, when needed.

Although all sites understood from the outset the many challenges facing the populations they would serve through CPI, some were nonetheless surprised by the level of need they encountered and had to dedicate more resources to social supports than initially planned. The most common barriers included:

- **Transportation** – every CPI program noted lack of transportation as a common barrier to accessing both training and employment opportunities. All were able to offer bus passes to participants during training. HPL offered CPI participants — and many took advantage of — a drivers 'education course and YWCA had a fund for car repairs that participants could access. Nevertheless, transportation remained a serious concern in terms of CPI graduates being able to accept jobs outside the public transportation system or get to work consistently.

- **Child care** – the most frequent barrier – and costliest to address – was childcare. CREC provided in-house childcare during the ESL portion of the program and MCC arranged its MOA classes to fall during the school day to accommodate participants with school-aged children. Nevertheless, childcare remained a barrier to eventual employment and one that CREC could not entirely solve other than by ensuring candidates had childcare options lined up before enrolling in the program. In Year 3, LVGH offered limited childcare for CPI participants and added an early childhood education cohort to its CPI offerings, but comprehensive childcare offerings remained a longer-term challenge.

- **Housing insecurity** – for some sites, lack of secure access to housing was a significant barrier, as participants were unlikely to be able to focus and complete a training program if this basic need was unmet. CPA, whose population consistently experiences discrimination in housing, secured supplementary funds from the Foundation to assist CPI participants with security deposits. HPL was concerned to find that a number of participants were homeless or living in poor or overcrowded conditions; by the end of the initiative, the

> *CPA secured supplementary funds from the Foundation to assist its CPI participants – all re-entering citizens – with housing security deposits.*

Library was regularly referring such cases to Catholic Charities and other nearby agencies. And Journey Home considered the partnership with Open Hearth, a housing provider, as an important element of AEPP's success: with stable housing in place and case management supports, participants had a firm footing as they prepared to enter the workforce.

- **Mental health or substance abuse challenges –** several programs encountered mental health or substance abuse issues among participants that were beyond the capacity of their case managers to address. In such cases, sites referred participants to external agencies for treatment. OPP, in particular, raised mental health and substance abuse challenges as a pervasive barrier among their young adult population. For CPA, relapse into substance abuse was the most common reason for participants' inability to complete the program.

5) Internships

Five of the CPI sites successfully established internship[10] components, providing opportunities for participants to hone skills, gain work experience, and network with potential employers. For the three CPI sites with culinary arts programs – CPA, LVGH, HPL – hands-on experiences in commercial kitchens was an integral component. CPA's Culinary Arts program was a ten-week, paid, on-the-job training program; participants received minimum wage for 30 to 35 hours per week as they gained skills and experience in both front and back restaurant operations in the active kitchens of restaurant partners. LVGH's Sodexo Cohort was a hands-on training program where participants worked with a job coach from employer-partner Sodexo to prepare and serve community dinners at a local church two times per week. While the work was unpaid, participants gained skills and experience in kitchen etiquette, food preparation, storage techniques, and food service. Participants also had the opportunity to interview for positions with Sodexo as these became available.

Hartford Public Library's Immigrant Career Pathways included a 27-hour (Food Handler Cohort) or 42-hour (Food Manager Cohort) internship at an HPS-CNS cafeteria kitchen (other internship locations were later added)

HPL used a supplementary grant from the Foundation to provide internship stipends, reducing the opportunity costs to participants of remaining out of the workforce for a prolonged period.

after completing the classroom portion of the program at HPL. While the internship component was meant to be unpaid, it soon became clear that the opportunity costs of staying out of the workforce for a prolonged period were too high for many participants. In Year 2, HPL requested (and received) a supplemental grant from the Foundation to provide stipends to participants who completed their internships ($250 for Food Handler Cohort, $350 for Food Manager Cohort). The inclusion of the stipend also allowed HPL to make the (originally optional) internship component mandatory, responding to employer-partner HPS-CNS's request to vet participants

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[10] We use the term "internship" in the broadest sense, including hands-on training in real-world work settings (CPA Culinary Arts, LVGH Sodexo & Early Childhood Education), periods of subsidized employment prior to guaranteed paid employment (Journey Home), and traditional internships through which interns work for an employer during a specified period of time to acquire experience, with or without the likelihood of a permanent job offer (CREC and HPL).

through internships in order for the District to be able to guarantee positions for program graduates.

CREC came to a similar conclusion as HPL after first attempting to include an unpaid internship. Early in the initiative, it became apparent that participants could not afford foregoing income during the 80-hour internship period: many felt compelled to take jobs immediately after completing the training portion of the program, even if these jobs were outside the medical field and paid less than they might eventually earn with an internship experience on their resumes.

In Year 2, CREC secured internship subsidies through an external partner (YWCA) and in Year 3 applied (and received) a supplemental grant from the Foundation to provide a $600 stipend to participants during their internships (some participants were eligible for additional subsidy through partner Capital Workforce Partners). This change, combined with more aggressive employer engagement efforts *(discussed in section 2.3 below)*, led to a highly successful internship program for CREC's Advanced ESL/MOA Program by the end of Year 3.

Because Journey Home's employer partners guaranteed full-time positions to those who completed required courses at Goodwin College, AEPP's internship component was technically a period of subsidized employment: the first six-weeks of participants' salaries was paid through the CPI grant, a strong incentive for employers to participate in the program.

The rest of the programs – Goodwin, CPA and LVGH's non-culinary tracks, Chrysalis, YWCA, and OPP – did not place particular emphasis on internships. Chrysalis's case managers sometimes explored job shadowing and internship opportunities to augment participants' resumes, with little success. Similarly, OPP made a more concerted effort in Year 3 to secure internships and was ultimately successful in placing a couple of students. Nevertheless, Chrysalis and OPP's efforts remained underdeveloped as of our final site visit in September 2019.

6) Job placement supports

All CPI programs included some type of job placement assistance, yet few built the robust job development practices that the Foundation envisioned in its theory of change. Supports common across sites included resume writing, interviewing skills, and networking skills. Several sites also worked to ensure that participants had work-appropriate clothing for attending interviews (CREC, CPA, HPL), sometimes accompanying participants to Dress for Success or similar locations to help them choose outfits.

While all sites helped participants locate job openings, in many cases, this assistance consisted of little more than searching job banks or referring participants to upcoming job fairs and occurred primarily toward the end of the program (Chrysalis, CPA non-culinary cohorts, Goodwin, LVHG General Counseling Cohort, OPP, YWCA). Goodwin realized after Year 1 that preparation for job searches had to begin much earlier if their efforts were to lead to employment. Goodwin brought in its workforce development partner to meet with CPI participants early in Year 2, not just to develop skills, but also to build trust so that participants would turn to her when they needed support. Nevertheless, her support mainly consisted of helping with resumes, interview skills, and online job searches. LVGH knew that participants passively filling out job applications or emailing letters of introduction was not sufficient to secure employment. They

coached participants to take a more "assertive approach" to job searches. For example, they helped participants understand that to obtain a job at a restaurant, they might have to show up during a slow time and ask to speak to the hiring manager.

Proactive, personalized job development activities were much more limited among sites. Journey Home was alone among sites in running AEPP cohorts *only* when its employer partners had

Because Journey Home ran cohorts only when its employer partners had specific job openings and then only for the number of open slots available, AEPP served as a direct pipeline to employment.

specific job openings and then *only* for the number of open slots available. In this way, AEPP served as a direct pipeline to employment. The culinary arts programs of CPA, HPL, and LVGH were hybrid models: while partnered with specific employers that guaranteed job placements (HPL) or at least job interviews (CPA and LVGH), they did not limit enrollment based on job openings and served participants whether or not they were interested (or qualified) for jobs with the particular employer partner. For example, while the Library placed many graduates in school cafeterias through partner HPS-CNS (which guaranteed entry-level jobs to program participants), it also assisted graduates who were not interested in (e.g. those who needed full-time or evening hours) or did not qualify for (re-entering citizens) District jobs in identifying and securing other employment.

In CPI's first year, CREC realized that securing medical office assistant positions for their graduates would require preparing participants much earlier (e.g. as soon as they entered the Advanced ESL component, rather than waiting until they were at MCC) and developing relationships with area hospitals and medical practices. After it shifted its job development strategy in Year 2, CREC's internship and job placement rates improved dramatically.

7) Post-employment supports

At the outset of the initiative, most CPI sites naturally focused on establishing the training and supports needed to get participants in and through the program and, eventually, into employment. Roughly midway into the initiative, several[11] programs began to attend to the retention components of their programs, recognizing that their participants' long-term success required continued support post-employment. Employers also needed support in understanding – and addressing – the particular challenges CPI graduates might face on the job. CPA and HPL reassured participants and employers that they had an open-door policy for any graduates needing ongoing supports. CREC and LVGH took a more proactive approach, checking in with employers and graduates regularly to identify and address any issues arising on the job. Even when participants did not need much hand-holding, these regular check-ins helped them maintain an active relationship with each employer, facilitating the placement of future participants.

Of all the sites, Journey Home developed the strongest set of post-employment supports, both to ensure participants' successful transition into the workforce and to build the capacity of

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[11] Because OPP and YWCA struggled with basic program implementation, participants' post-employment needs were not areas of focus. At the time of our last site visit, Chrysalis and Goodwin were still working on strengthening their job development supports; what would happen after employment was not a focus yet.

employers to manage any issues that may arise. After the first year of implementation, however, it became apparent that AEPP graduates needed more support than the average Belcan employee to succeed in the workplace, including hands-on benefits counseling and continued soft skills development. In Year 2, Belcan assigned a manager to dedicate 10 hours per week to mentoring and assisting AEPP employees. The company also increased the involvement of its human resources staff during the onboarding of AEPP graduates. In addition, all AEPP graduates at Belcan attended a peer support group every other week. In year 3, Journey Home hired an employment retention specialist from partner Connecticut Center for Advanced Technology (CCAT) to work part-time at Belcan with both AEPP participants and Belcan managers to improve employment retention outcomes. Belcan leadership highly valued the fact that Journey Home remained committed to supporting AEPP participants indefinitely and influenced the company's decision to take a risk on this population. As a requirement of participation, the two employer partners brought on to AEPP in Years 2 and 3 also had to provide post-employment staff support.

2.2. Managing the Programs

The Foundation chose CPI lead organizations based on their long-established, solid track-records in the region and their expertise in workforce development, adult education, and/or post-secondary education. Despite this careful vetting, success seemed ultimately to depend not on track record or expertise, but on the quality of the team brought together to manage the program and the partnership and the commitment of the organization's leadership to goals of the initiative.

When it came to program implementation, the most important factor was the presence of an effective program manager, whether dedicated full-time to CPI or overseeing CPI along with other responsibilities. Several sites – Goodwin, HPL, Journey Home, and LVGH dedicated full-time program managers to the initiative. Chrysalis, CPA, OPP, YWCA and CREC assigned CPI to managers who also had responsibility for other projects.

Whether a CPI program manager dedicated all of his or her time to the project ultimately mattered less than whether that person had the skills to manage a complex program and to engage and manage partners; had a strong project team to rely on; and had the commitment and resourcefulness to tackle challenges as they emerged. CREC's program manager had responsibilities beyond CPI, but with highly qualified and proactive professionals in the case manager and job developer positions, she could confidently delegate the day-to-day activities of the program. By contrast, CPA's program operations director, who lost all but one part-time case manager with the end of the federal STARR T2W2 grant in Year 2, had effectively no support staff to delegate CPI responsibilities to and was overwhelmed by competing demands.

In the case of OPP and YWCA, turnover in the lead CPI position, coupled with leadership transitions at the organizational level, resulted in a level of instability that never quite allowed implementation to take root. For YWCA, staff transitions hindered the growth of nascent CPI partnerships; for OPP, unanticipated enrollment and partnership challenges proved daunting to the CPI lead, a junior-level youth development specialist who lacked the skills to navigate the program through its beginning stages.

The most effective program managers were committed to the vision of CPI and moved aggressively to remedy areas of weakness. For example, HPL's immigrant career pathways coordinator steeped herself in the theory of CPI and set out to develop her culinary arts program into a true career ladder *(discussed in section 2.1.2. above)*. Recognizing early on that unpaid internships posed a burden to their their populations, both HPL and CREC sought funding for internship stipends. And when LVGH staff noticed that participants had trouble articulating their career goals, the career pathways facilitator strengthened coaching to develop participants' "job-ready mindset."

Beyond program management, CPI required strong case management and job development functions. Most sites had case management staff they could assign to CPI participants; for HPL, however, addressing the many needs of participants without an in-house case manager – especially as recruitment grew – proved an ongoing challenge. In Year 2, HPL brought on a half-time staff person to improve the participant intake process, allowing the program to identify participants' needs and refer them to external agencies for services.

Fewer sites had expertise in job development as extensive as their expertise in case management. In some sites, the program manager assumed responsibility for job development or shared the function with other staff members. Journey Home's CPI manager came with 30+ years experience in the aerospace industry (the targeted CPI job sector) and so, naturally, was responsible for building, managing, and maintaining relationships with employers. At HPL, the executive director of The American Place, where CPI was housed, and the ICP coordinator together shared responsibility for seeking out employer relationships beyond the original partnership with HPS-CNS. At LVGH, the responsibility was shared by the career pathways facilitator – the full time project manager and a case manager for CPI – and a program supervisor, dedicated part-time to CPI.

At CREC the original program design assumed that the CPI case manager would also fulfill the job development function. Nevertheless, it soon became apparent that building relationships with employers in the medical field would require a full-time person with specialized skills. In Year 2, CREC brought in a full-time job developer (through a supplemental grant from the Foundation) who, by the end of Year 3, was successfully securing internships and job placements in area hospitals and medical practices.

Box 7: Factors of strong program management

At the program level

1) Program manager…
- was dedicated full-time or had limited responsibilities outside CPI.
- delegated effectively to team members.
- was energetic, resourceful, and focused on improving program.
- focused on relationships – within team, and with partners, employers, and participants.
- understood and was committed to CPI's vision.

2) Case management and job development functions were allotted sufficient attention and resources.

At the organizational level

3) The organization's leadership…
- viewed initiative as aligned with mission.
- made organizational resources available to CPI staff.
- sought ways to integrate CPI into core programming.
- leveraged additional resources to facilitate program's sustainability.

4) Staff turnover was low and finances relatively stable.

5) Organizational culture encouraged adaptability and risk-taking.

Apart from staffing considerations at the program level, certain organizational characteristics facilitated implementation of CPI. Among successful sites, the organization's leadership viewed the initiative as integral to or aligned with their agency's mission and actively sought resources to sustain the effort. Through CPI, LVGH's leadership committed to workforce development programming for the first time in the agency's history. At the close of Year 3, CREC's leadership was actively seeking private funding to continue, and possibly expand, the Advanced ESL/MOA Program. With the infrastructure in place and having secured funding commitments from a variety of sources, Journey Home was prepared to continue the AEPP without significant adjustments and was exploring options for expanding the model both within and beyond the manufacturing sector.

Stronger sites found opportunities to collaborate and share resources with other departments within their organizations. HPL's CPI team found the ability to tap into other programs at no additional cost — for example, The American Job Center for resume building and in-house course offerings like digital literacy and drivers' education — was key to the program's success. By contrast, OPP's PCI Online program had been designed as an integrated program of both Opportunity Academy (OA) and the agency's workforce unit program. Instead, the workforce unit had trouble getting OA to refer students to the program and to collaborate successfully with college-partner SNHU.

An organizational culture that encouraged risk-taking and empowered staff to make decisions also facilitated CPI sites' success. For example, LVGH's executive director was initially leery of the career pathways facilitator's idea to sponsor a large job fair, but eventually agreed; the job fair was a big draw for potential employers, partners, and participants and will now be a recurring event. At HPL, the program coordinator met on a weekly basis with her supervisor, who typically trusted her recommendations and allowed her the flexibility to pilot different strategies to see what worked best.

2.3. Building and maintaining partnerships

To foster a cross-sector approach, the Foundation required CPI grantees to partner with organizations with expertise complementary to their own, seeing collaboration as critical to providing a seamless experience for clients. Within this framework, some CPI sites worked as collaborative partnerships, making programmatic decisions jointly. Others relied primarily on transactional partnerships, where a lead agency makes decisions independently and taps partners for specific services.

2.3.1. Partnering for implementation

As required by the CPI request for proposals, all sites had partners lined up at the launch of the initiative and most maintained – and strengthened – these partnerships over the course of the initiative. The initiative's overall theory of change envisioned these relationships as collaborative partnerships, where partners communicate closely, both at leadership and operational levels, and decisions are made through joint discussion. In this model, partners have a joint vision for, and understanding of, their CPI program model, including its desired outcomes and underlying assumptions. This alignment around shared goals, coupled with open

communication, results in a mutually beneficial feedback loop where each partner is ready to make quick adjustments to their own work in response to the input of the other partners.

While not all sites were able to establish partnerships of this sort, CPI produced some important examples of collaborative partnerships:

Lead agency + training partner –

CREC and MCC had worked together previously on a similar project, so their partnership had an advantage coming into CPI. In fact, not only did the two agencies have a shared history, the same staff members were leading the new initiative. CREC and MCC considered each other equal partners in the Advanced ESL/MOA Program, despite CREC being the lead agency for the grant. Neither organization made significant decisions without consulting the other, an approach based on mutual respect and alignment of purpose. With both organizations fully invested in the success of the program, each stayed apprised of the other's actions during the course of the initiative through frequent meetings, calls, and emails. Over the course of CPI, CREC and MCC staff very purposefully solicited feedback from stakeholders and responded with timely adjustments. At the end of each cohort, the two partners met to debrief and plan for the next. To inform these discussions, they sought feedback from participants, CREC and MCC instructors, and employer partners. This willingness of the partners to listen to stakeholders and adapt their approach in response to feedback was central to the overall success of the program. Towards the end of the CPI grant period, the MCC Foundation pledged to cover MCC tuition for participants in order to sustain the Advanced ESL/MOA Program.

> **Box 8: Characteristics of Strong CPI Partnerships**
>
> 1. Each partner agency benefits from participating in the partnership.
> 2. Each partner contributes sufficient time and resources to the joint work.
> 3. Partners have clearly defined roles and responsibilities.
> 4. Partners work through difficulties collaboratively.
> 5. Partners share information and data and use both to inform decisions.
> 6. Partners make decisions jointly.
> 7. Partnership is stable and weathers staff transitions easily.
>
> *By these criteria, the following were "strong partnership sites": CREC, CPA (culinary arts), Journey Home, HPL, LVGH (Sodexo).

Lead agency + employer partner –

Journey Home and Belcan jointly developed AEPP. Not only did AEPP meet Belcan's need for qualified, lower cost candidates with middle-level skills, it also fulfilled the company's commitment to give back to the community. Journey Home only ran AEPP cohorts when Belcan (and, in Years 2 and 3, Cyient) had openings for specific positions – the program was, in this way, a direct pipeline to employment. Because Belcan (and later Cyient) was guaranteeing employment to AEPP participants, the company was closely involved in all aspects of the program. In the first year, for example, Belcan observed weaknesses in workplace communication skills and certain technical skills among incoming AEPP employees and, in response, Journey Home modified the pre-employment training content. Despite frequent improvements to the program, Belcan recognized that AEPP employees had different and ongoing needs than typical employees and would need enhanced support to succeed in workplace. The company made a point of ensuring that all employees understood that upper

management was committed to AEPP out of a sense of social responsibility and that all employees were expected to assist AEPP employees integrate into the workplace. Providing the post-employment supports AEPP participants needed to succeed became top priority not just for Journey Home, but for Belcan as well.

HPL and HPS-CNS designed the Immigrant Career Pathways model jointly as a direct pipeline to employment with the school district. The head of HPL's immigrant services department (The American Place) and HPS's director of child nutrition services already had a strong relationship; both were public-minded and shared a commitment to CPI's vision. Throughout implementation, HPS-CNS staff worked closely with HPL staff to ensure the program served the District's workforce needs. For example, hearing from HPS-CNS that weak computer skills were a barrier to certain job functions (e.g. running cash registers), HPL added an 8-week computer literacy module to both their food handler and food manager programs. HPL also introduced a customer service module and began reinforcing soft skills more assertively throughout the program based on feedback from HPS-CNS supervisors during the internship period. The HPS-CNS manager assigned to the program conducted orientations for every ICP cohort; ensured that interns were placed in schools near their homes or easily accessible by public transit; provided two formal evaluations – midway and at completion – of the interns' performance; and participated in all graduation ceremonies. While considering the partnership a great success, on reflection, both parties recognized that HPS-CNS had done more than initially expected without compensation and determined that any future grants would need to cover some of HPS-CNS's costs.

In the case of CPA and LVGH's culinary arts program, the training partners were also associated with employers. Over the course of the initiative, CPA strengthened its relationship with the Pond House, which provided hands-on training in its kitchen and hired many of the participants completing the program. In Year 2, CPA realized that participants would need closer support to succeed in the program; the CPA case manager began visiting the Pond House every other week to discuss each participant's progress and to develop individualized interventions to address any problematic workplace behaviors (i.e. tardiness, resistance to feedback). In LVGH's case, while Sodexo did not provide the training directly, one of its staff members received part-time compensation from LVGH to train participants in a community kitchen. Sodexo guaranteed job interviews for participants completing the program, hiring those that were a good fit as positions became available.

Most CPI partnerships were primarily transactional in nature, with the lead agency running the program and tapping into partners, as needed. In these cases, partners provided discrete services and typically did not contribute to programmatic decisions. While partners sometimes troubleshooted together, the various program elements were fragmented and there were fewer opportunities for joint learning and for leveraging partners' perspectives in strategic decisions. All CPI sites, even those that had collaborative relationships with lead partners, utilized transactional partnerships to some degree to fill gaps in the programs.

Several sites designed their CPI programs around more collaborative models of partnership that never fully materialized:

- **OPP's partnership with SNHU** stumbled in Year 2 given staffing changes at both organizations. Although the two partners kept communication going around individual

students' progress, SNHU did not weigh in on strategic program decisions. In Year 3, given changes at SNHU, the partnership sunsetted earlier than originally intended.

- **YWCA's** original program design included **Manchester Adult and Community Education (MACE) and MCC** as the two primary partners. MACE's role was to recruit participants, provide remediation, and assist with internship and job placement. MCC's role was to accept participants into certificate or degree programs and provide financial aid. Given the frequent staff transitions at YWCA and a lack of clarity in its CPI strategy, the partnerships foundered. In Year 3, under the leadership of a new Director of Women and Girls' Programs (CPI's fourth program manager), YWCA's partnership with MCC began to improve. Nevertheless, while the partnership with MCC ended on stronger footing, the partnership with MACE dissipated before the program officially ended.

- **Chrysalis and Urban Leagues'** partnership endured for the duration of CPI, but each agency provided specific aspects of participants' experience independently, with minimal communication and without significant integration of services. The two agencies did not intend to partner around future workforce development efforts.

Besides the partners identified in their proposals, many CPI sites sought new partnerships or strengthened existing relationships as the need and opportunity arose. New partnerships were typically transactional, although some grew into collaborations, and served to complement the CPI programs in a variety of ways. For example, CREC partnered with Connecticut Association for Human Services, which provided financial literacy training to Advanced ESL/MOA participants, and with Capital Workforce Partners (CWP), which provided financial support to participants wishing to continue with higher education. HPL strengthened its own relationship with CWP to provide soft skills and job search supports to ICP participants, and formed a new partnership with Catholic Charities to provide case management for participants in need of social supports. Goodwin strengthened its partnership with Connecticut Business & Industry Association's (CBIA) job development specialist to better assist participants with resume development, career exposure, and job searches. LVGH provided additional training opportunities through partnerships with Billings Forge and Open Hearth. These partnerships also allowed LVGH to reach new target populations, the home-insecure through Open Hearth and returning citizens through Billings Forge.

2.3.2. Engaging employers

> *In their CPI proposals, sites had to show that they had specific employers lined up as partners or that they had the capacity – through their own networks or partners' networks – to engage employers in their targeted industries. Although many of the sites struggled with this element early on, many eventually were able to secure strong employer relationships, or at least to make notable progress towards this end.*

The most successful sites engaged employer partners at all stages of implementation, from informing the program curriculum, to orienting participants on the expectations of – and opportunities in – the field, to hosting interns, to providing job placements. Journey Home and HPL, the two sites that designed their programs around the specific workforce needs of

employers, were able to engage their employer partners fully in this manner. In addition to their input during implementation, these employers were committed – from top leadership to direct supervisors – to integrating CPI participants fully into the workplace and providing opportunities for continuing education and career advancement.

With a continual focus on expanding, replicating, and sustaining the AEPP, Journey Home sought new employer partners, both within and outside of the manufacturing sector. Using the Belcan partnership as a model, Journey Home successfully recruited two additional aerospace employers as partners: Cyient (Year 2) and Best Logic (Year 3). While it continued to rely heavily on HPS-HNS for internships and job placements, HPL also pursued partnerships with other area restaurants and institutional kitchens hoping to place participants who either did not qualify for positions with the district (for example, formerly incarcerated individuals) or who needed alternative internship options due to scheduling conflicts.

A few of the sites that did not have specific employer partners identified at the outset soon realized they needed to make concerted efforts to improve their employer engagement and that these efforts could not wait until participants neared graduation. Starting in Year 2, several sites began aggressively seeking out employer connections. After struggling in Year 1 to secure internships and job placements for participants, CREC hired a full-time job developer who built successful partnerships with St. Francis Hospital and Hartford Hospital, as well as with several smaller medical practices in the region. Once these partnerships were formed, CREC was systematic in maintaining and deepening the relationships. The job developer visited the employers regularly to check in on the interns and, later, on their newly-employed graduates. She also met with employers individually before the start of each cohort to request suggestions for improving the program, which she then brought back to CREC to adapt the Advanced ESL program or discussed with MCC for improvements to the MOA program.

For LVGH, the task of forming employer partnerships for their General Career Counseling cohort, given the many pathway options, was more difficult. Nevertheless, the Career Pathways facilitator and the job developers actively sought personal contacts with area employers in an effort to identify job opportunities for their participants. Despite the difficulty of forming deep connections without a specific career pathway to focus on, the job developers found employers mostly receptive, particularly when reassured that LVGH would remain committed to working indefinitely with participants post-employment.

Goodwin – with the support of partner CBIA's job development specialist – had redoubled efforts to bring employers in earlier in the program. It was not clear, however, to what degree that effort resulted in improved outcomes for their third cohort of graduates.

The remainder of the sites never successfully engaged employers in meaningful ways, continuing to approach job development as a discrete set of tasks – resume writing, searching job databases, attending job fairs – most often occurring at the end of the program. Although Chrysalis case managers were required to spend one day per week focused on job development, helping participants with job searches, its CPI program was not structured around fostering ongoing relationships with employers. While YWCA initially planned for Manchester Adult and Continuing Ed to partner with Manchester Chamber of Commerce to lead employer outreach, the partnership with the Chamber never took root and, by the end of the

initiative, YWCA had not engaged employers in any meaningful way. Despite, OPP's strong employer partnerships as an organization, there was little connection, if any, between employers and the OPP program (Pathways to Careers Initiative Online); this disconnect was primarily due to the fact that the staff managing the program had expertise in youth development, but not in workforce development, and that the leadership was hesitant to put the program's youth, who were not yet "employment ready," before the agency's existing employer partners lest they reflect poorly on OPP. CPA, for its part, never translated the successful employer-partner model from its Culinary Arts program to its other training pathways.

2.4. Fostering an integrated career pathway system

One of CPI's longer-term goals was to impact systems across education, training, employment, and social services by funding cross-sector partnerships that would approach the employment challenges of low-literacy, low-skilled individuals through a systems lens. In reality, however, the CPI sites were focused on developing new models for serving this higher-needs population. Although, in most cases, these models were based on sites' previous expertise, they nonetheless required new capacities and approaches, resulting in a fairly steep learning curve for most of the sites. Understandably, CPI sites were more focused on getting implementation right than on systems-change.

For similar reasons, CPI sites sought connections with other sites only to the extent that specific needs arose. Sites were simply too focused on getting their programs on firm footing to give such collaboration much thought, even though they understood it was an intended goal of the initiative. So, while some sites referred clients to – or receiving referrals from – other CPI sites, cross-site collaboration within the initiative was limited. To this end, nonetheless, the CPI program directory and learning convenings proved helpful for learning about other sites' efforts and making connections.

While the systemic changes envisioned did not materialize, at the close of the initiative, Foundation staff noted that the initiative brought attention in the region to what it takes to bring this population into the workforce. Importantly, the Foundation has been able to testify before the state legislature around the employment needs of these populations with much more authority given its experience with CPI. Foundation President Jay Williams will continue to influence state-level policy through in his recent appointment to Connecticut Governor Ned Lamont's new workforce council. Foundation staff is also sharing CPI lessons with other funders through the Connecticut Council for Philanthropy's new Workforce Funders Affinity Group (WFAG), which meets regularly and includes community, corporate, family, private, and public grantmakers.

3. The Impact of CPI

CPI sites understood from the beginning that the low-literacy, low-skilled population the initiative targeted would be hard to prepare for employment and harder still to place in jobs with growth opportunities and a path towards family-sustaining wages. Nevertheless, all of them found the task of getting participants through the programs, finding them good job placements, and ensuring that they persisted in their jobs much more difficult than expected. To make it to graduation, participants required strong case management services focused on overcoming

barriers to participation, like lack of child care and unreliable transportation. To find good jobs, participants had to radically improve their basic and soft skills and employers had to be willing to take a risk on hiring them. And finally, to adapt to their new workplaces and persist in their jobs, participants required continued support from program staff and from their employers, who in turn required insight into how to work best with this population.

3.1. Impact on participants

3.1.1. Participants completing the program

Box 9: Factors facilitating program completion

1. Rigorous pre-enrollment screening for interest and readiness
2. Basic skills remediation and academic supports
3. Social and emotional supports focused on removing obstacles to participation and motivating participants
4. Convenience of program location and of hours
5. Paid internships

By October 1, 2019, our final data collection point, 606 individuals[12] had completed at least one[13] CPI program *(Table 2).* Of these, nearly one-third, or 175 individuals, completed one or more of HPL's Immigrant Career Pathways programs *(Table 4)*; this number is noteworthy considering that the Library struggled with recruitment early on, graduating only 22 participants in Year 1.

The increased enrollment numbers came at a cost, however: while enrollment grew eightfold, HPL's program completion rates dropped from 88% in 2016 to 66% in 2018-19[14] *(Appendix C)*. Chrysalis followed HPL with the second largest number of individuals trained at 147 individuals (25% of the initiative's total); the site's program completion rate improved from 37% in Year 1 to 61% at the close of the initiative.

CREC, which graduated 88 individuals from its Advanced ESL/MOA program, consistently had the highest completion rate among the sites: 90% in Year 1, 100% in Years 2 and 3. From 2016 to 2018, LVGH graduated 58 individuals from its Sodexo program[15], 64% of the total 91 enrolled in the program. CPA graduated 37 individuals in total, while its completion rate fluctuated around 70%. Journey Home graduated 38 from AEPP, although the completion rate fell from 100% in Year 1 to 69% in Year 3. Goodwin graduated 37 participants, with an average completion rate of 54%.

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[12] An additional 344 participants served through LVGH's General Counseling Cohort are not included in the 606 CPI total used for analysis. Many GCC participants received only non-technical, job-related training and continued to participate in the program, yet were still counted as "completed the program" based on LVGH's definition: "achieved at least one career pathway goal on their individualized career plan." Given this broad definition, over 3 years, 100% of GCC participants "completed" the program, but because the definition of completion differed so significantly from other programs considering GCC alongside the other CPI programs made little sense analytically. The other CPI sites defined program completion as the moment when participants were ready to pursue employment or further education outside of the program.

[13] At four of the sites – Chrysalis, CPA, HPL, and LVGH – individuals sometimes trained in more than one program.

[14] While the original end-date for the initiative was 12/31/2018, several programs received no-cost extensions into 2019. Because end-dates varied widely, we have combined data for 2018 and 2019 as "Year 3" to facilitate analysis and maintain consistency across sites.

YWCA reported 27 individuals completing the YWCW program through June of 2019. While the site noted completion rates ranging from 83% to 100% over the program's duration, the definition of completion varied over the years and was at times very loose, making it difficult to assess this aspect of the program for the purposes of the evaluation. OPP, as of September 2019, had only four individuals complete the CPI program.

LVGH Participant Profile: Sanita

Sanita, a mother of two children ages 16 and 21, has lived in Hartford for 15 years. She initially went to LVGH because she wanted to improve her literacy skills. She learned about the Sodexo cohort from Leo, the Career Pathways Facilitator. At the time, she was working part time at three jobs – at a package store and at a Boys and Girls Club during the week and as a home attendant on weekends — and now she wanted a full-time job.

As a member of the first Sodexo cohort, Sanita found the people and program to be nice and a good fit for her since she "loved to cook lots of different things." Specifically, Sanita liked the hands-on part of working in the kitchen. She also appreciated the help she received to pass the ServSafe test. She liked that she learned something every day of the program and believed that "if you love what you are doing and get what you want you will continue coming." Perhaps most importantly, cooking and serving 50 to 60 people at each of the community dinners gave her "more confidence and trust in others and herself."

Sanita valued working with LVGH staff throughout the CPI program, trusting they "would find her a job doing what she liked." While she received resume and job search help, she believes she got her job at Sodexo because her Sodexo boss came to observe the training kitchen and Sanita was able to "impress her with her cooking and serving skills." She also works in the LVGH CPI training kitchen helping Shirley, the Sodexo teacher, teach the newest Sodexo cohort. She particularly enjoys "teaching others and giving them more ideas."

Sanita has now been working at Sodexo for three years in a full-time position. She finds that 'the wage so far is okay" and plans to stay in her current position. Sanita indicated that she has no worries when thinking about her future career plan or the career path she selected.

The experience of both more and less successful sites point to the following as the most important programmatic factors in retaining participants through program completion:

- *Careful screening* for readiness, interest, and willingness to defer employment for duration of program. At CREC, for example, most participants interviewed for our evaluation expressed longstanding interest in the medical field; some had worked in the field in their home countries. Programs looking to improve retention tended to start with their screening process, recognizing that some individuals were enrolling because the programs were free or they just needed something to do while searching for work. HPL began holding orientation sessions one week prior to the beginning of classes, giving candidates seven days to consider whether they were truly ready to commit. And YWCA's retention rates improved in Year 2 in

part because the new recruiter began vetting candidates carefully to ensure they were truly motivated to move towards a career path.

- ***Basic skills remediation and academic supports*** were critical, especially for the more academically demanding, college-based programs like CREC, Goodwin, and Journey Home. Goodwin's participants, for example, had to complete a six week bootcamp to refresh their literacy and math skills before core program enrollment. Through an IBEST grant, CREC's Advanced ESL instructor accompanied participants to their courses at MCC to provide language supports. Even in less academic programs, receiving extra help – in the form of tutoring or study skills – was helpful for participants, many of whom were returning to classroom environments after many years.

- ***Social and emotional supports*** – from peers, case managers, and other program staff – were commonly cited by participants as vital to their success. Participants appreciated that program staff had high expectations of them, found resources to help them overcome barriers, and offered coaching and advice in all aspects of their lives. Participants also appreciated that their peers in the program looked out for them, checking in on them if they missed class, helping them with tricky material, or encouraging them when they experienced self-doubt. Knowing that their peers and program staff were committed to their success not only motivated participants to do well, but it also built their self-confidence and determination to complete.

- ***Convenience of program location and of hours*** proved important in facilitating enrollment and completion. Both Chrysalis and partner Urban League reported that offering training in participants' own neighborhoods helped mitigate some common barriers, like transportation; participants concurred that not worrying about transportation allowed them to attend their training consistently. HPL found that participants from North Hartford had trouble getting downtown for training and so began offering its ServSafe courses at the neighborhood branch. Attendance was so strong and demand so high that HPL eventually began running sessions of its digital literacy and customer service components at the North Hartford branch, as well. HPL offered day, night, and weekend classes, maximizing options for students with a variety of schedules. CREC partner MCC ensured that its MOA courses coincided with the typical elementary school day to accommodate participants with school-aged children.

- ***Paid internships,*** by helping participants justify delaying paid work until the program's end, proved indispensable in boosting completion. In CREC's case, adding an internship stipend not only helped retain participants, in a few cases, it also enticed participants from earlier cohorts to return in order to complete the internship phase. HPL found that the promise of a relatively small stipend (below minimum wage) on completion of the internship was enough to entice many participants to stick with the program through graduation. For Journey Home participants, the guarantee of full-time jobs with advancement potential and benefits in the manufacturing industry was a strong incentive.

A tangible impact of completion for many participants was the industry credentials, certificates and/or college credits they received on graduation. These new credentials and skills served to materially enhance the resumes of individuals with limited or modest educational and employment histories. Certificates obtained by CPI participants included:

- ✓ Manufacturing
- ✓ OSHA 10
- ✓ OSHA Forklift Operator
- ✓ Electrician License
- ✓ Small Business Administrator
- ✓ Certified Nursing Assistant
- ✓ Medical Office Assistant
- ✓ EKG Technician
- ✓ Phlebotomist
- ✓ Security GuardCard
- ✓ ServSafe Food Handler
- ✓ ServSafe Food Manager
- ✓ NorthStart Digital Literacy

Along with the technical skills evidenced by these certificates, CPI participants gained important transferable skills. Most importantly, individuals completing programs that concentrated at least in part on basic skills – English language at CREC and HPL; digital literacy at HPL; basic literacy at LVGH; math at Goodwin – improved the foundational skills they need to access, and advance in, any career pathway. The soft skills elements, which in most CPI programs grew in emphasis over time, likewise built capacities among participants applicable in any work or educational setting. Participants themselves expressed confidence that the skills they gained through the programs, both technical and soft, would benefit them no matter the course their careers ultimately took. Significantly, beyond the specific skills gained, participants considered the relationships they formed through the CPI programs – with teachers, program staff, and peers – a lasting benefit of participation. For many participants, completing the CPI program was one of the most important accomplishments of their lives and they emerged from the experience with more self-confidence, and greater optimism, than before.

When participants did not complete their CPI program, common reasons identified were childcare and housing challenges. Other barriers included transportation challenges; family crises; and substance abuse or mental health issues. Whatever reason participants gave for leaving the programs, many CPI sites maintained an open-door policy, encouraging them to return to the program once they were ready or to access other in-house services, where available.

Despite efforts to improve candidates' screening and program orientation, some sites continued to experience a mismatch between participants' expectations and reality. At OPP and YWCA, CPI participants had trouble articulating specific career goals beyond "getting a job." While participants understood the requirements of the program itself, they did not necessarily know much about the career pathway choices they had available to them: what the work environment would be like; what tasks they might expect to perform on a typical day; what advancement opportunities they might eventually enjoy. Besides having a limited understanding of the career pathways available, some of the participants had a limited sense of the trade-offs they were making by enrolling in a CPI program (versus seeking immediate employment or

pursuing other educational options); they simply enrolled because it seemed like a good opportunity. Ultimately, some of these participants dropped out or – not understanding the value of what they got through CPI or how to take advantage of it – took any possible job upon graduation, even if it paid less than what they may have been able to earn in the pathway of their training.

Journey Home Participant Profile: Randy

As one of the members of the first Belcan cohort, Randy has worked at Belcan for over three years. He learned about the program from staff at Open Hearth where he was living in transitional housing. Randy met the Journey Home program manager when he came to Open Hearth to recruit participants. Randy was interested in the program because it offered him the opportunity to Improve his computer skills. And, most importantly, he hoped to "get out of [transitional housing at] Open Hearth and establish [himself] in society." Randy was looking for stable, full-time work and an "opportunity to advance." Prior to enrollment, he was doing tree removal and working in a lumber yard.

At Belcan, Randy has had the opportunity to try out different types of jobs including working in parts acquisitions and learning to read blue prints. He believes that to succeed at Belcan one must be willing to try new things and be patient and ultimately be comfortable with the ebb and flow in the amount of work to be done.

He has learned that he likes a job with a lot of hands-on work. His career goal is to become an electrical engineer; he is grateful that Belcan will pay for all the college classes necessary for him to obtain a degree. He plans to start taking classes next fall towards his goal. Over time Randy's wages have increased by over $10 an hour and with a degree he will earn even more. He is also looking forward to the work-from-home opportunities offered to Belcan employees after 5 years of employment.

Randy has learned a lot about how to deal with different types of people, including people of all ages. In fact, his current supervisor is tough but understanding and he "wouldn't want to work for anyone else." He also found it helpful to have other AEPP participants and other recovering addicts at Belcan. He looks to himself to be a mentor and support for new AEPP employees, especially because they may feel "disrespected" by their Belcan co-workers. For new AEPP employees to succeed, he finds they must spend time together building rapport and support each other on the job.

Randy has no worries when thinking about his future career plan or the career path he selected. In fact, Randy looks forward to retiring from Belcan.

3.1.2. Participants employed or continuing in education programs

TABLE 3

CPI Participant Employment & Education Outcomes (2016-2019)	One Month Outcomes[1]		Six Month Outcomes[2]	
	Total	**%**	**Total**	**%**
Completed Training[3]	606	**100%**	447	**100%**
Employment				
Employed	368	**61%**	250	**56%**
Unemployed	179	**30%**	76	**17%**
Unknown	59	**10%**	121	**27%**
Education				
Enrolled in Education Program[4]	131	**22%**	76	**17%**

1) Of all participants who completed CPI core training (as defined by site) no later than 9/1/19. See Appendix B for site-specific dates.

2) Of all participants who completed CPI core training (as defined by site) no later than 3/1/19. See Appendix B for site-specific dates.

3) For LVGH, includes only those participants in the Sodexo and early childhood ed cohorts.

4) Not exclusive of "employed"

Sixty-one percent (368/606) of CPI graduates were employed within one month of program completion, exceeding the Foundation's goal of 50% employment rate; twenty-two percent (131/606) were enrolled in education programs.[16] Although six-month employment data was much more incomplete[17], available data suggests that the six-month employment rate of CPI graduates is slightly slower than the one-month rate (56% or 250/447); seventeen percent (76/447) were enrolled in education programs.

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[16] Includes individuals who were both employed and enrolled in education.
[17] Six-month employment outcomes were "unknown" for 27% (121/447) of participants who completed the programs.

TABLE 4

CPI Participant Employment & Education Outcomes, By Site (2016-2019)										
	One Month Outcomes[1]					Six Month Outcomes[2]				
	Total	Employed	%	Enrolled Ed Prog	%	Total	Employed	%	Enrolled Ed Prog	%
Chrysalis	147	51	**35%**	20	**14%**	105	52	**50%**	13	**12%**
Community Partners in Action	37	29	**78%**	4	**11%**	37	20	**54%**	3	**8%**
CREC	88	49	**56%**	17	**19%**	72	52	**72%**	11	**15%**
Goodwin	37	30	**81%**	7	**19%**	20	13	**65%**	2	**10%**
Hartford Public Library	175	125	**71%**	46	**26%**	129	72	**56%**	34	**26%**
Journey Home	38	38	**100%**	3	**8%**	31	28	**90%**	2	**6%**
LVGH (Sodexo & EDE only)	53	31	**58%**	21	**40%**	39	12	**31%**	11	**28%**
OPP	4	2	**50%**	2	**50%**	3	1	**33%**	0	**0%**
YWCA	27	13	**48%**	11	**41%**	11	unk	**unk**	unk	**unk**
TOTAL CPI	**606**	**368**	**61%**	131	**22%**	**447**	**250**	**56%**	76	**17%**

1) Most programs were able to provide relatively complete data for one-month employment, with an average 10% "unknowns" and a range from 0% to 15% across sites: Chrysalis (14% unknown); CPA (8% unk); CREC (5% unk); HPL (12% unk); Journey Home (0% unk); LVGH Sodexo (11% unk); OPP (0% unk); YWCA (15% unk).

2) Completeness of six-month employment data was much lower, with an average of 27% "unknowns" and a range of 0% to 100% across sites: Chrysalis (6% unknown); CPA (46% unk); CREC (14% unk); HPL (40% unk); Journey Home (0% unk); LVGH Sodexo (54% unk); OPP (0% unk); YWCA (100% unk).

Four of the programs – Journey Home, Goodwin, CPA, and HPL – had one-month employment rates above the cross-site average of 61%. Two additional sites – CREC and LVGH (Sodexo and ECE cohorts only) – fell slightly below the average. Four of these six sites also counted a significant number of graduates enrolled in an education program one month after completing CPI.

- **Journey Home's** 100% (38/38) employment rate reflects the fact that graduates were guaranteed jobs upon completion with employer partners Belcan, Cyient, and Best Logic. Not surprisingly, considering they now had full-time jobs with benefits, few Journey Home graduates were pursuing further education.

- Eighty-one percent (30/37) of **Goodwin** graduates were employed at one month; thirteen individuals, a plurality, were working in manufacturing. Nineteen percent of graduates (7/37) were enrolled in an education program one month after completing the CPI program.

- **CPA** reported 78% (29/37) of graduates employed one month after completion. Nine individuals, about one-third, were working in food preparation or food service; others worked in construction, manufacturing, or logistics. Very few were pursuing further education.

- Of **HPL** graduates, 71% (125/175) were employed after one month. A plurality, 51 individuals, were working in public school cafeterias – taking advantage of the positions guaranteed by employer-partner HPS-CNS. About one-quarter (26%, 46/175) were enrolled in education programs, many pursuing some of the additional training options offered by the Library in the food service pathway.

- Fifty-eight percent (31/53) **LVGH's** Sodexo and ECE graduates were employed at one-month; forty percent (21/53) were enrolled in education programs, the highest proportion of all the sites.[18]

- Fifty-six percent (49/88) of **CREC's** graduates were enrolled one month post-completion. Nearly one-fifth (19%, 17/88) of MOA graduates were continuing their education in the medical field, building on the six college credits acquired through the program. In February 2019, at the time of our final site visit, at least five MOA graduates had completed or were working towards associate's degrees, three towards bachelor's degrees, and one was working towards completing a master's degree. Areas of continuing study included nursing, physical therapy, and billing and coding. An additional five graduates enrolled in MCC's nursing assistant/EKG certificate program and six in Capital Community College's phlebotomy technician certificate.

> ### CREC Participant Profile: Josie
>
> Josie was working at a loan-servicing company and raising a young daughter on her own when a friend told her about the Advanced ESL/MOA program. Her sister worked at the children's hospital and Josie had always seen herself following in her footsteps. Josie's old English teacher once told her she would make a good nurse and the words had stuck with her. She decided to enroll.
>
> The program was harder than Josie expected. At times she struggled with self-doubt – especially during the dreaded "Medical Terminology" course at MCC. But Sheila – her ESL instructor from CREC – was there for her (literally—Sheila was physically present in the MCC classroom) and Josie made it through. In fact, Josie found that so many people were looking out for her – the instructors, Six the case manager, Erika the job developer, all her classmates – that it was almost impossible for her to fail. Josie had a history of quitting when things got rough, but this time she finished.
>
> Josie had two job offers from St. Francis Hospital when she completed her internship. She accepted a position as a medical assistant; it required some additional on-the-job training but offered better pay than the patient services rep position she had been offered by her internship site. She's enjoying interacting with the doctors and getting to know how the office works. Now she's training to become a qualified interpreter at the Hospital, realizing that her bilingual skills will open more doors for her.
>
> "Definitely!" Josie replies enthusiastically when asked if she intends to remain at St. Francis. One day, she plans to take advantage of the Hospital's tuition assistance program to go back to school. Her daughter recently suffered an asthma flareup and got Josie thinking about becoming a respiratory technician. But, for now, Josie is just grateful that she can provide for her family and set an example for her little girl: "I'm doing everything I can to show her that with motivation and determination, you can achieve whatever you set your mind to. I'm doing it for her."

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[18] With just four individuals completing the program, OPP's total was too small to include it in our cross-site analysis in a meaningful way.

While six-month employment rates are less accurate, given the high number of "unknown's"[19] two of the programs with mostly complete data showed high rates of six-month employment:

- **Journey Home** with 90% (28/31) employed at six months. Although a 10-point decline from the 100% one-month employment rate, all of Journey Home's graduates who were employed at 6 months remained in the manufacturing sector earning $15 per hour or more.

- **CREC** with 72% (52/72) employed at six months. The 16-percentage point increase from the 56% one-month rate reflects the job developer's efforts to place graduates with medical sector employers no matter how long they had been out of the program. Indeed, the proportion of graduates employed in the sector increased from about one-third (32%) of at one-month to nearly half (49%) six-months after completion. Most of those employed in the medical field were employed in MOA positions at St. Francis Hospital or at Hartford Hospital. Others were employed in private practices, including several in ophthalmologists' offices.

  Starting salaries for CREC graduates exceeded initial estimates. At program onset, CREC estimated that MOA graduates would start at $12-per-hour; in reality, most graduates employed in the medical field were earning between $15 and $20 per hour. In early 2019, Hartford Hospital announced it would be raising its minimum wage from $10.10 to $15 per hour and other health systems were expected to follow suit, which promised to raise the salaries of all graduates still below $15 per hour. Salary prospects were even higher for the graduates who were continuing their post-secondary studies in the medical field. Several graduates employed at hospitals planned to take advantage of their employers 'tuition reimbursement benefits to continue their education in the future.

- **Chrysalis**, the only other site able to provide relatively complete six-month data, saw a 15-percentage point increase in employment between one month (35%, 51/147) and six months (50%, 52/105) post-completion. The increase is likely due to a combination of factors, including clients pursuing additional training programs before seeking employment and normal job search durations. Nearly two-thirds of Chrysalis graduates were employed either as security guards or as warehouse workers, positions earning between $11 and $13 per hour on average. Unfortunately, for the rest of the CPI programs, six-month data was too incomplete to draw conclusions from the findings.[20]

While we do not have salary data from all sites, we know that median 2019 salaries in other positions in which CPI program graduates were commonly employed ranged from nearly $11/hour to just over $19/hour ($10.91 for waiters and waitresses, $11.36/hour for bartenders, $11.89/hour for cafeteria and counter service employees, $14.47/hour for restaurant cooks, $18.04 for medical assistants, and $19.08 for phlebotomists).[21]

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[19] While CPI sites' ability to collect six-month data improved over the course of the initiative, the percentage of unknowns, at 27%, was still high at the time of our final data collection.
[20] We have limited our analysis to sites with no more than 30% of employment data unknown.
[21] 2019 Occupational Employment and Wages, Office of Employment Services, State of Connecticut

TABLE 5

Employment Outcomes of CPI Participants Unemployed at Enrollment (2016-2019)	Total	%
Unemployed at Enrollment (n=606)	421	**69%**
Employed at one month (n=421)	*212*	***50%***
Employed at six month (n=318)	*173*	***54%***

Sixty-nine percent of CPI graduates (421/606) were unemployed at program enrollment; of these, 50% (212/421) were employed one month after completion and 54% (173/318) were employed at six months. While below the average employment rates for all CPI graduates – whether employed or not at enrollment – at one month (50% vs. 61%), at six months, the proportion of those employed who had been unemployed at enrollment was only slightly lower than the CPI average (54% vs. 56%), suggesting that the benefits of CPI programs on those harder to employ (represented in our analysis by those unemployed at enrollment) actually improves over time. While analyzing whether these individuals were long-term unemployed versus recently unemployed might yield useful findings, most programs were not able to provide data on how long participants had been out of the workforce at enrollment.

TABLE 6

CPI Participant Employment Outcomes, By Career Path Trained In (2016-2019)										
	Trained in Cluster		Employed (Any Cluster)				Enrolled in Ed Program			
			One Month [4]		Six Months [5]			One Month		Six Months	
	Total [1]	%	# [2]	%	N [3]	#	%	#	%	#	%
TOTAL CPI	606	100%	368	61%	447	250	56%	131	22%	76	17%
Hospitality and Tourism	248	**41%**	168	68%	186	95	**51%**	64	**26%**	46	25%
Health Sciences	118	**19%**	65	55%	89	61	**69%**	30	**25%**	12	13%
Law, Public Safety, Corrections, & Security	62	**10%**	25	40%	44	27	**61%**	0	**0%**	2	5%
Manufacturing	60	**10%**	58	97%	44	34	**77%**	6	**10%**	4	9%
Transportation Distribution & Logistics	39	**6%**	19	49%	33	16	**48%**	8	**21%**	8	24%
Architecture and Construction	23	**4%**	12	52%	19	8	**42%**	0	**0%**	0	0%
Agriculture, Food, & Natural Resources	5	**1%**	2	40%	5	3	**60%**	0	**0%**	0	0%
Marketing, Sales & Service	3	**0%**	0	0%	3	1	**33%**	1	**33%**	1	33%

1) Participants completing training in cluster no later than 9/1/19. See Appendix B for site-specific dates.

2) Number employed as percentage of total trained in cluster.

3) Participants completing training in cluster no later than 3/1/19. See Appendix B for site-specific dates.

4) Cluster trained in was "unknown" for 10% of those employed at one month (60/606)

5) Cluster trained in was "unknown" for 27% of those employed at six month (121/447)

Four-fifths of CPI graduates (80% or 488/606) were trained in four career clusters[22]:

- *Hospitality and Tourism*, 41% (248/606) – the largest cluster, consisted of CPI graduates trained in food service and food management through four programs: HPL's Immigrant Career Pathways (175 individuals), LVGH's Sodexo Cohort (46), Chrysalis (14), and CPA's Culinary Arts program (12).

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[22] We grouped CPI programs among the sixteen career clusters described in the Connecticut Career Paths 2017 Report. Our analysis of cluster trained in only includes individuals who completed the programs.

- *Health Sciences*, 19% (118/606) – Consisted primarily of participants in CREC's Medical Office Assistant program (88). In addition, Chrysalis trained 21 individuals in the sector, mostly in the CPR/First Aid course. CPA (4), YWCA (3), and OPP (1) also trained some participants in health sciences.

- *Law, Public Safety, Corrections, & Security*, 10% (62/606) – made up exclusively of participants in Chrysalis' CT Guard Card program.

- *Manufacturing*, 10% (60/606) – mostly consisted of Journey Home graduates (38), as well as Goodwin (13) and CPA (9).

Of the four largest training clusters, manufacturing had the highest rate of employment, with 97% of graduates trained in this cluster employed at one month and 77% employed at six months. This high rate primarily reflects the successful placement of Journey Home participants, who represented two-thirds of manufacturing trainees. Law, public safety, corrections, & security had the lowest rate of employment: 40% at one month and 61% at 6 months.

Hospitality and tourism, the largest training cluster, saw two-thirds (68%) of graduates employed at one month, the rate falling to 51% at six months, the lowest among the clusters. Fifty-five percent of health sciences graduates were employed at one month (55%), a rate that improved considerably after six months (69%).

TABLE 7

CPI Participants Employed in Same Cluster as Trained In (2016-2019)		
	Total	**%**
One-Month Outcomes		
Total Employed in Any Cluster (n=606)	368	**61%**
Of Total, Number Employed in Same Cluster As Trained In [1]	*231*	*67%*
Six-Month Outcomes		
Total Employed in Any Cluster (n=447)	250	**56%**
Of Total, Number Employed in Same Cluster As Trained In [2]	*140*	*71%*

1) Excludes "Cluster Unknown": N = 368 employed - 23 unknown cluster = 345 (6% missing data)

2) Excludes "Cluster Unknown": N = 250 employed- 52 unknown = 198 (20% missing data)

CPI graduates were likelier than not to be employed in the same career cluster as their training: two-thirds (67%) of CPI graduates were employed in the cluster of their CPI training after one month (compared to 61% in *any* cluster), with a slightly higher proportion (71%) at six months (compared to 56% in *any* cluster). The difference of 15 percentage points at six months between those employed in the clusters trained in versus those employed overall suggests that graduates are either more likely to persist in jobs in the sectors they trained in or more likely to keep searching for jobs in their sectors even if they initially accept an unrelated job after graduation.

In focus groups with employed CPI graduates, most expressed gratitude towards program staff, confidence in the skills they built, satisfaction with their jobs, and enthusiasm about the future. Those who had entered the programs with the goal of getting into a specific industry, for example those enrolling with Journey Home or CREC, expressed high satisfaction with their jobs and their career prospects in the field. They were grateful for a job with standard working hours and benefits and could describe the various opportunities for advancement with their current employers or within the larger field. LVGH graduates employed with Sodexo and HPL graduates employed with the school district were also happy with their jobs and felt appreciated by their employers.

A few graduates were less satisfied with their jobs, usually due either to their unrealistic expectations or, simply, to a bad fit with their employer. Goodwin, for example, found that some of their cohort one graduates were passing up suitable manufacturing sector job offers to hold out for jobs with specific employers or for higher salaries. For subsequent cohorts, staff tried to provide more realistic information about starting jobs and salaries, letting participants know they could expect job security, a decent wage, and potential for advancement, but not necessarily a job with a specific employer. Some CPA graduates employed in the restaurant industry felt they were being treated unfairly, saying the pay was too low or that they were not given enough hours to make ends meet. A few seemed surprised by their inability to secure good paying jobs at the end of the training, suggesting a mismatch between expectations and reality.

Employers, for their part, expressed satisfaction with the skills their CPI employees acquired through the programs; gratitude for the ongoing, post-employment support they received from program staff; and interest in continuing to partner with the programs. Although acknowledging that CPI employees needed significant support once on the job, employer partners were confident that they could resolve most issues with the support of program staff.

> **Box 10: Factors contributing to positive employment outcomes**
> 1. Participants interested in employment in the sector.
> 2. Committed employer partners.
> 3. Well-prepared candidates.
> 4. Paid internships.
> 5. Careful matching of participants to internship placements.
> 6. Experienced and qualified staff performing job development functions.

The following factors contributed positively to participants' employment outcomes:

- *Participants interested in employment in the sector* – In some cases, CPI graduates were hesitant to leave currently held jobs (perceived as "safe") for new (perceived as "risky") jobs in the career pathway of their training. In a few cases, sites working with immigrants, CREC and HPL, were frustrated to find that their graduates either did not have work permits or were homemakers just looking to pass the time. In both cases, CPI resources could have been directed towards participants able to work, interested in employment, or willing to take risks in pursuing better opportunities.

> **HPL Participant Profile: Anatasia**
>
> Anatasia moved to the United States just two years ago from her native Jamaica; there, she had completed an associates 'degree in business and was working as assistant dean of discipline at Excelsior High School, her *alma mater.* Her mom had been living in Hartford with Anatasia's stepfather for several years and was eager to have her young-adult daughter join them. Knowing that Anatasia dreamed of becoming a chef, her mom started sending her links to culinary arts programs hoping to entice her.
>
> It worked. In 2017, Anatasia moved to Hartford and enrolled in MCC's associates' program in culinary arts. She had a setback early on, however, when she failed the ServSafe exam, a prerequisite for other courses. A cousin told Anatasia that she had seen signs advertising ServSafe training at the Library. Anatasia wasted no time; she enrolled in the Immigrant Career Pathways program, finding it a good supplement to her courses at MCC. When she failed the ServSafe test again, Anatasia was discouraged, but "Miss Beverly," as the ICP program coordinator is affectionately known to the students, did not abide self-pity: she helped Anatasia come up with a study plan, which Anatasia followed faithfully. "I was so happy!" Anatasia said of the moment she learned she had finally passed the exam.
>
> After interning at IHOP, Anatasia accepted a chef position at a local senior living facility, where she could work full-time while continuing her studies at MCC. She was not happy there, however; she felt overworked and did not believe the meals she was asked to prepare by the facility's management were meeting her elderly patrons 'nutritional needs. To make matters worse, her kitchen often ran out of produce and she was unable to offer some of the healthier items on the menu. When her managers dismissed her concerns, Anatasia resigned, trusting in her Christian faith to find her way.
>
> Sure enough, she was soon "blessed" with a position as chef at Seabury senior living facility, "a way better establishment," where she could be proud of "feeding the elderly and giving them healthy meals." The facility is much more organized and, importantly, Anatasia has help: she no longer has to toss the salads and plate the desserts, she can focus on the cooking. While she expects to earn more once she gets her degree, she was proud of having negotiated a starting wage of $14.75 with her new employer.
>
> Anatasia has ambitious plans for the future. One day she wants to open a buffet-style restaurant; she's using a project in her marketing and hospitality class at MCC to learn more about the buffet business. Once she finishes up her degree, Anatasia plans to pursue an EMT certification, a first step towards her second lifelong dream: being a fire fighter. She'll need to become a U.S. citizen first, though; she is already saving up for the $900-odd dollars she'll need to get naturalized. Anatasia is also focused on paying off her student debt: "I want to go to a four year college but I want to pay off my debt first." She plans to work and save until she can pay for college: but "I won't wait too long," she says smilingly. In the meantime, she's taking advantage of all that the ICP program at the Library has to offer: shes' completed the bartending and farm-to-table classes. Next, she'll enroll in the restaurant server class. She has no worries about the future, she says, "Why worry when you can pray?"

- ***Committed employer partners***, preferably from program inception, supporting the program in multiple ways, including:

  - Providing input into curriculum and design (HPL, Journey Home)
  - Orienting participants on what they can expect on the job (HPL, Journey Home)
  - Delivering some or all of the program's technical content (CPA Culinary Arts program)
  - Hosting interns (CPA, CREC, HPL)
  - Providing feedback to the program based on interns/new employees' performance (CREC, HPL, Journey Home)

- Guaranteeing job interviews or job placements (HPL, LVGH Sodexo Cohort, Journey Home)
- Supporting CPI graduates as they transition into the workplace, coordinating with program staff, as needed (CPA, CREC, HPL, LVGH Sodexo Cohort, Journey Home)

- *Well-prepared candidates* – no matter how committed an employer partner, ultimately CPI candidates had to have sufficient language/literacy skills, soft skills, computer skills (among others) to succeed in the workplace.

- *Ongoing support post-employment* – to succeed in their new jobs, many CPI graduates needed continued support from staff in overcoming life challenges (i.e. child care, housing) as they arose.

- *Paid internships* – internships were critical allowing employers to assess candidates before extending job offers. At the same time, internships provided participants the chance to see whether the particular workplace would be a good fit for them. Whether or not participants got permanent job offers, the internship nonetheless provided important experience to enhance resumes and contacts that could be tapped into for references.

- *Careful matching of participants to internship and/or employment placements* – because internships frequently resulted in job offers, successful sites took pains to make the best participant/employer matches. For Journey Home and CREC, having staff accompany participants while they attended their college courses provided crucial information used to compile summaries of each participant's skills and attributes for hiring managers to use in making placement decisions.

- *Experienced and qualified staff performing job development functions* – whether a separate position or assigned to existing staff, the job development function required a proactive strategy to engage employers, place participants, and support both in the early months of employment as graduates acclimated to the work environment.

3.2. Impact on organizations

For some of the CPI sites that had limited or no prior experience in workforce development, the initiative proved transformative. The most striking example was LVGH, whose leadership initially viewed CPI as a pilot to provide contextualized ServSafe training to a small group of students, but soon recognized that a significant proportion of students would benefit from a workforce development approach. Ultimately, LVGH updated its mission statement to reflect lessons learned from CPI – "to create a community of fully literate adults through student-centered instruction that catalyzes career readiness and advancement" – and restructured its continuum of services to include employment readiness, training, and placement.

While HPL's immigrant services program (The American Place, TAP) had always included workforce readiness as one of its three pillars (the other two being citizenship and education), it had always been the weakest of the three. According to TAP's executive director, CPI proved a "breakthrough" and workforce is now firmly woven into the fabric of the program, and of the

Library as a whole. Through a grant from the Connecticut Department of Education, HPL is set to launch a new career pathway program in the health sciences sector, providing contextualized ESL for home health aides and personal care attendants, in collaboration with a reputable local home-care provider.

Whether the CPI experience could be described as transformative or not, for most sites, participation in the initiative yielded new capacities, partnerships, and important lessons that impacted the way they do their work, for example:

- *Gained knowledge about what it takes to serve low-literacy, low-skilled adults* –
    - Basic skills remediation/contextualization (CREC, Goodwin, HPL)
    - Soft skills (Chrysalis, CREC, Goodwin, HPL, Journey Home, LVGH)
    - Case management and social supports (HPL, Goodwin)
    - Continued supports during transition into workforce (JH, LVGH, Goodwin)

- *Built robust, sustainable program model* – CREC, Journey Home, LVGH, HPL

- *Strengthened job development capacity* – CREC, HPL, Goodwin, LVGH, Journey Home.

- *Strengthened or built lasting programming or service partnerships* – CREC (with MCC), Goodwin (with CBIA), Journey Home (with Open Hearth, Goodwin), HPL (with HPS, CWP, Catholic Charities), LVGH (with Billings Forge, Open Hearth,).

- *Built new and sustainable partnerships with employers* – CREC (with Hartford and St. Francis Hospitals), Journey Home (with Belcan, Cyient, Best Logic), LVGH (with Sodexo)

- *Leveraged additional funding sources* – CREC (I-BEST, MCC Foundation, CWP), Journey Home (U.S. Department of Labor Apprenticeship and WIOA programs), LVGH (United Way).

For a few sites, the impact of CPI was less noticeable. Chrysalis, for example, gained the experience, through CPI, of working with a population broader than those in recovery from substance addiction. Nevertheless, Chrysalis did not fundamentally adapt its approach and will likely go back to serving the same population in the same manner as it had previously once the CPI grant ended. Similarly, CPA showed no particular evidence of having been impacted by the initiative. While staff interviewed noted how much they had learned from working closely with The Pond House – CPA had always sent participants out for training at external programs, this was the first time they had been involved in shaping and implementing the training itself – there was no set plan for how to continue the program.

For the sites that struggled with basic implementation, CPI yielded lessons on what it would take to do this work. While YWCA' model seemed to be stabilizing by the time of our final site visit in June 2019, the impact will likely be limited given that the grant period ended that month and the lead staff managing the program left soon after. Nevertheless, in interviews, the CEO and chief strategy officer both noted lessons learned from CPI about the staffing capacity necessary to manage a multi-partner initiative with many moving parts. The biggest impact YWCA claimed was improved data collection capacity. At OPP, the challenges experienced in trying to

implement CPI brought to light the need for major internal restructuring to allow for greater collaboration between its education and workforce development areas.

For many sites, an important outcome of CPI was an enhanced reputation, leading, in some cases, to new partnership and funding opportunities. HPL won national recognition in 2018 when it was awarded the Urban Libraries Council's Top Innovator Award for its Immigrant Career Pathways program. HPL staff interviewed credited CPI with an expanded understanding – among funders, partners, and residents – of what the Library does. Prior to CPI, Goodwin had little interaction with Connecticut Business & Industry Association; but, by Year 3, the CBIA's representative working with Goodwin was so impressed with the program that she was recommending it to the association's business members. Similarly, Goodwin's reputation grew among its adult education partners who had viewed Goodwin as a higher-priced alternative to community college, but, after CPI, recognized Goodwin's value and wholeheartedly recommended the college to their students. CREC's Advanced ESL/MOA program developed such a solid reputation for the quality of its graduates that, by the program's third year, its hospital partners were proactively reaching out to the job developer when new positions became available.

Some of the partners that collaborated closely with CPI sites also noted some outcomes within their own organizations. CREC partner MCC used lessons from the Advanced ESL/MOA program to improve their other grant-funded programs. Journey Home partner Open Hearth highly valued the fact that AEPP enhanced their clients' access to college-level manufacturing training and guaranteed, high-paying employment. AEPP also provided an essential opportunity for Open Hearth's clients to provide each other with peer support and peer modeling.

Aside from providing a pipeline to fill the workforce needs of their 47 school cafeterias, HPS-CNS's adapted the new-hire training program it developed for HPL's CPI graduates to use with all new hires. The partnership with HPL for CPI also brought to light new opportunities for collaboration between HPS-CNS and the Library; for example, HPS-CNS is now providing after school snacks and suppers for HPL's after school program. Like HPS-CNS, other employer partners involved in CPI appreciated the chance to vet candidates during the internship period before hiring. Employers also appreciated the mentoring opportunity afforded to their existing staff by working with CPI interns or new hires.

4. Lessons and Implications

Through the Career Pathways Initiative (CPI), the Foundation tested a variety of models for addressing the Hartford region's lack of workforce development services aimed broadly at low-skilled and low-literate adults. After four years, CPI yielded rich lessons about what it takes to help individuals within this heterogeneous population prepare for, access, and succeed in employment and about the characteristics of organizations and partnerships that facilitate success. Below we present CPI's most important lessons and note implications for future philanthropic investment.

Lessons about what helps low-literate, low-skilled adults access employment and succeed in the workplace

Because the Foundation sought to test different models and serve a diverse population, the nine CPI programs varied considerably in terms of how they were structured, and what elements received emphasis over others. The factors that proved most critical in helping CPI's population succeed were: individualized social supports; basic skills remediation; training in work-readiness skills; ensuring a good fit with the pathway; limiting the opportunity costs for participants; and using an assertive approach to job development.

LESSON #1. **Effectively serving low-literate, low-skilled adults requires individualized supports, academic remediation, and robust training in work-readiness ("soft") skills.** All CPI sites found the task of getting participants through the programs, finding them employment, and ensuring that they persisted in their jobs more difficult than expected.

- Most CPI participants faced numerous barriers to participation (i.e. childcare, transportation, housing) and required ongoing, hands-on assistance from program staff to stay on track towards program goals. While most sites had *case management* capacity predating CPI, several sites ultimately expended more resources than expected in providing supports to participants. Sites also found that participants' needs did not stop with employment. Most participants required continued support from program staff to adapt to their new workplaces and to remain in their jobs long-term.

- Many participants, returning to classroom environments after long absences, had poor study habits and weak literacy and numeracy skills, requiring significant coaching, tutoring, and other academic supports. Depending on participants' basic skills and the requirements of the career pathways, many sites provided (and some required) *remediation* in English-language, literacy, math, and/or digital skills before enrolling participants in technical training. A few sites contextualized their basic skills components with vocabulary and examples from the career pathway or contextualized the technical training curriculum to further develop the basic skills of participants. Nevertheless, contextualization remained the exception rather than the norm among CPI sites.

- Most CPI sites learned early on that *soft skills*, particularly communication and problem solving skills, time management, work ethic, and customer service, would need stronger emphasis if participants were to succeed, both in the CPI programs and in the workplace. Whether they devised separate modules or provided coaching on these skills through case management, most sites undertook significant efforts to bolster the soft skills components of their programs.

LESSON #2. **Maximizing an individual's persistence – in the program and, later, in employment – requires carefully screening participants for readiness and interest, as well as a thorough orientation to both the program and the career pathway.** Many CPI participants who left before completion did so to accept job offers, often outside the career pathway, and usually with lower salaries and growth opportunities, than if they had completed the CPI training. To counter this, some sites screened applicants for their willingness to defer

employment for the duration of the program and tightened enrollment standards to ensure participants were able to dedicate the time and effort – including, for example, attending all classes, doing homework, participating in tutoring sessions, meeting with a case manager and/or job developer – the programs required. Programs also strengthened their program orientations to give participants realistic expectations of the program requirements and a clear understanding of their career and educational options, including the long-term benefits of finishing the program and working in the field.

For some CPI sites, however, ensuring participant fit proved an ongoing challenge. Those sites that struggled with recruitment naturally emphasized "selling" the virtues of their programs to candidates over screening out candidates who were not a good fit. Unfortunately, without a good understanding of what to expect, some participants were disappointed on completion (i.e. salary was too low, not enough hours of work, not the type of work they had imagined), while others dropped out of the program or took any possible job upon graduation, not understanding the value of holding out for a job in the pathway or simply not able to wait for employment any longer.

LESSON #3. **In addition to thorough screening and orientation, programs must reduce participants' opportunity costs (real or perceived) of enrolling.** While shorter training programs are often more appealing to low-skilled unemployed or underemployed residents, these individuals often require more intensive – and often longer – training and support to be on even footing with others in the workforce. Some sites successfully used contextualized instruction – teaching basic skills tailored to a job along with the technical skills for that job – to move participants through the programs more quickly. Other strategies CPI sites used successfully to attract and retain participants included offering training at night or weekends (to allow participants to hold day jobs) and offering training at different locations (to minimize commute times). Finally, paid internships, by helping participants justify delaying paid work until the program's end, proved essential to boosting completion for several sites.

LESSON #4. **Helping low-literate, low-skilled individuals find employment in a career pathway requires proactive and personalized job development; traditional job placement assistance – resume writing, interviewing strategies, job database search – is not sufficient.** While all CPI programs included some type of job placement assistance, few built the robust job development practices that the Foundation envisioned in its theory of change. Yet the assumption that the CPI population would require a more assertive approach proved correct. The most successful sites allocated significant time and effort to building and maintaining relationships with local employers, convincing them of the benefits of partnering with the program, carefully matching participants to internship or job opportunities to ensure satisfaction on both sides, and offering ongoing, post-employment support to participants.

IMPLICATIONS FOR FUNDERS:

- ***Be prepared to make long-term (3-5 years), substantial investment.*** For adults with limited skills – who require intensive individualized supports of all types, at all stages of the program – the path to family-sustaining wages is not a quick or one size fits all. Funders looking exclusively at relatively short-term employment outcomes to gauge success may be disappointed or put undue pressure on grantees, while overlooking the

many incremental steps and achievements along the way that are indispensable for guiding this population towards longer-term success. Naturally, the intensive approach required makes serving low-skilled, low-literacy adults more costly than than standard workforce development programs.

- ***Allow flexibility in the use of the grants.*** The experience of CPI grantees shows that even organizations that had been doing similar work for a long time faced a steep learning curve in trying to weave together the many elements required to serve this population. The Foundation's flexibility in allowing them to experiment with different approaches and make course corrections as needed was vital to the success of this complex initiative.

- ***Given the high cost per participant, funders should prioritize (and reward) approaches that seek to minimize program attrition***. As described above, these approaches include an effective intake and screening process; a thorough and realistic orientation to the program, as well as to the career path; and reducing the opportunity cost of participation.

- ***To encourage efficiencies, fund programs that focus narrowly on a single career pathway.*** Not only can training resources be delivered more cost-effectively when concentrated in one pathway, but the intensive job development required to find good job placements for this population is simplified when focused within one career sector.

- ***For very low literate individuals and those not ready to commit to a specific pathway, consider funding less intensive, open-ended programs focused on skill remediation, career readiness and developing career goals.*** Such programs would not carry the pressure of expected employment outcomes, but could potentially serve as pipelines for the more employment-focused programs in the medium or long term.

Lessons about effective lead organizations

Ultimately, successful implementation depended less on the specific characteristics of the CPI programs, or on the track-record of the grantee organizations, and more on the quality of the team brought together to manage the program and the commitment of the organization's leaders.

LESSON #5. **When it comes to program implementation, the most important factor is the presence of an effective program manager.** Whether dedicated full-time to the program or overseeing it along with other responsibilities, successful program managers were energetic, resourceful, and focused on continual learning to improve the program. They effectively delegated tasks among team members, called on partners for input or support, and advocated on behalf of the program, as needed. They understood and were fully committed to the vision of CPI and were not timid about testing different approaches in improving areas of weakness.

LESSON #6. **Organizations serious about meeting long-term employment goals are intentional about assigning job development functions to staff with the appropriate set of skills.** As discussed above, effective job development requires a great deal more than helping participants write resumes or search job databases. It requires building, managing, and

maintaining relationships with employers, as well as understanding the strengths, weaknesses, and aspirations of each participant in order to make a successful match. Whether hired for that purpose or assuming job development along with other functions, successful job developers focused on relationships and saw both employers and participants as "clients" whose needs had to be met.

LESSON #6. To succeed – and, importantly, to be sustained – career pathway programs serving low-literate, low-skilled individuals require the commitment of the lead organization's upper-level leadership. While successful CPI sites were characterized by dynamic project teams at the program level, without exception, these teams had the support of organizational leaders fully committed to the initiative. Such leaders viewed CPI as integral to their mission and sought resources to sustain it. They made organizational resources available to CPI staff, encouraged collaboration across departments, and empowered staff to take risks and make programmatic decisions.

IMPLICATIONS FOR FUNDERS:

- *Adapt request for proposals and grantmaking process to better gauge presence of characteristics described above.* An organization's historic track record and experience in the field or with a particular population did not ultimately prove to be good indicators of its success implementing CPI. In fact, some of the most successful sites were ones with no prior experience in workforce development and some of the less successful sites had extensive prior experience. Although perhaps more subjective and qualitative than information typically captured in proposals, funders will be well-served to capture evidence of the following:

  - *Long-term vision of how initiative aligns with the organizational mission* – for example, "Please describe how this initiative will support your mission?" or, "In what ways do you foresee this initiative impacting the way your organization or other programs within your organization might work?"

  - *How the broader capacity of the organization will be leveraged for the initiative* – for example, "In what ways will the resources and capacities of other departments be leveraged in support of the initiative? Please provide examples of how such cross-departmental coordination has worked in the past?" (Look for evidence of specific processes, staff, and resources involved rather than generalizations.)

  - *Characteristics of key staff persons to be assigned to the initiative* – for example, "Please describe some the attributes of the person you have in mind to manage this initiative." (If person currently on staff), "Please provide an example of a time this person was faced with a serious work-related challenge and how they resolved it?" (Look for examples and stories versus vague descriptors.)

  - *Stability of funding, staffing, leadership* – Although hard to predict based on the past, asking broadly about the future direction of the organization and any foreseen changes

(e.g. upcoming strategic planning, retirements, changes in funding climate) may offer some hints as to possible disruptions to the initiative.

- ***Be prepared to fund staff capacity adequately and allow flexibility in terms of how the program is staffed over time.*** As noted earlier, there are no shortcuts when working with low-literate, low-skilled individuals and the success and failure of the programs rests primarily on the quality and capacity of the project teams.

- ***Be prepared to invest in organizational capacity.*** Whether through resources to build infrastructure or technical assistance to develop staff skills, investing in individuals requires investing in the organizations that are serving them.

Lessons about effective partnerships

Some CPI sites worked as collaborative partnerships, making programmatic decisions jointly; others relied primarily on transactional partnerships, where a lead agency makes decisions independently and taps partners for specific services. While both modalities could contribute positively to outcomes, the collaborative partnerships were more likely to be sustainable and to foster the cross-sector approach envisioned by the Foundation.

LESSON #7. **Collaborative partnerships (typically between two organizations with complementary expertise) are ideally suited for implementing ambitious, cross-sector initiatives.** The most successful CPI partnerships were built on personal relationships between leadership-level individuals within two organizations that had worked together in the past. These close relationships allowed partners to communicate closely and make important decisions together. Partners expressed a joint vision for and shared commitment to the desired outcomes of the project. This alignment around shared goals, coupled with open communication, resulted in a mutually beneficial feedback loop where each partner readily made adjustments to their own work in response to the input of the other partner. While often based on longstanding relationships at the leadership level, collaborative partnerships were made sustainable when leaders encouraged close working relationships across staff at the operational levels of their respective organizations.

LESSON #8. **Transactional partnerships – which provide complementary expertise and can evolve into collaborative partnerships – also serve an important role in cross-sector initiatives.** Most CPI partnerships were transactional in nature, with the lead agency running the program and tapping into partners, as needed. In these cases, partners provided discrete services and typically did not contribute to programmatic decisions. The most effective transactional partnerships ensured that, while each partner provided a specific service, the overall experience was seamless for participants. By leveraging expertise and resources across organizations, these partnerships can help allocate limited resources more efficiently and can sometimes grow into more collaborative partnerships.

LESSON #9. **Employer engagement must be purposeful and systematic, requiring dedicated effort at every stage of implementation.** An assumption behind the CPI initiative was that sites would tap into existing employer relationships – identified in their proposals – to align their

programs to employers 'needs. While this did not occur uniformly across CPI sites, it did, in fact, prove a strong factor of success. The most successful sites engaged employer partners at all stages of implementation, from informing the program curriculum, to orienting participants on the expectations of – and opportunities in – the field, to hosting interns, to providing job placements. The most engaged employer partners were committed — from top leadership to direct supervisors – to integrating CPI participants fully into the workplace and providing opportunities for continuing education and career advancement.

LESSON #10. **Engaging new employer partners requires mitigating the risk they perceive in hiring from high-needs populations.** The assumption that employers would be motivated to participate if they understood the long-term value of the initiative to their bottom line proved true. Nevertheless, getting to this point was not as simple as developing convincing talking points or presenting testimonials from current employer partners. In practice, new employers had to be enticed with lower-risk ways to test how CPI participants might perform in the workplace. Subsidized internships proved critical in allowing employers to assess candidates before extending job offers. Equally important was ensuring that CPI candidates were well-prepared: one bad experience with an intern or a new hire could be all it took for a potential employer partner to pass over future CPI candidates. Because internships frequently resulted in job offers, successful sites took pains to carefully match participants to their internship placements. Finally, the assurance that CPI program staff would be available as needed to support their former participants, and their employers, as they acclimated into the workplace, proved a further way to calm the doubts of potential employer partners.

IMPLICATIONS FOR FUNDERS:

- ***Funders can foster – but not force – collaborative partnerships.*** A history of joint work can be a good indicator of collaboration, as can a genuine interest in pursuing the goals of the initiative together. All partners should be able to articulate how participating in the partnership, and in the initiative as a whole, promises to benefit to their own agency. To hedge against possible disruption caused by staff transitions, funders can look for evidence of working relationships at the leadership and operational levels or encourage such relationships if not yet present. Funders can also encourage – and facilitate – transactional partnerships among partners who bring to the table different strengths and expertise, yet share aligned visions. These types of partnerships may be more successful for newly collaborating entities.

- ***When assessing a proposed partnership, funders should look for evidence of:***

    - ***An MOU or contract formalizing the relationship -*** By clarifying and detailing expectations and adding a layer of accountability, such documents can serve to establish a baseline level of trust that could lay the groundwork for a more collaborative partnership in the future.

    - ***Grant resources being shared*** – a process should be in place for the periodic review of how the grant is allocated across partners to ensure that partners feel fairly compensated for the time and resources they are each contributing.

- *Clarity around the specific staff persons who will be managing the partner relationship and how any staff transitions will be handled* – Any plan should include staff in leadership and operational positions.

- *Look for evidence of true employer partnerships and of plans to engage employers at every stage of implementation.* A simple market analysis of what fields have demand for middle-skill workers is not sufficient to lead to robust employment outcomes. Ideally, specific employers should be working with the program from the outset and additional employers can then be layered on as the programs gain momentum. Employer partners should be actively involved in the following types of activities:

  - Providing input into curriculum and design
  - Orienting participants on what they can expect on the job
  - Delivering some or all of the program's technical content
  - Hosting interns
  - Providing feedback to program based on interns 'performance
  - Guaranteeing job interviews or job placements
  - Supporting CPI graduates as they transition into the workplace, coordinating with program staff, as needed

5. Conclusion

From 2016-2019, the Career Pathways Initiative (CPI) succeeded in training and supporting over 1,000 individuals who – because of limited literacy or English-language skills, gaps in employment history, criminal records and substance abuse, homelessness, and other poverty-related barriers – would not have qualified for conventional workforce development programs in the Hartford region. Six-hundred six individuals completed technical training courses, obtaining industry-recognized credentials, certificates, and/or college credits; of these, 368 were employed upon completion in fields such as hospitality and tourism, health sciences, public safety and security, and manufacturing. One-hundred thirty-one individuals enrolled in additional education programs after completing CPI. In addition to the impact on individuals, CPI also produced several sustainable programs and lasting positive impacts on the organizations that participated. Finally, CPI yielded important lessons for the fields of adult education and workforce development that promise to inform future cross-sector career pathways efforts.

Appendix A: CPI Participant Characteristics

TABLE 8

CPI Participant Demographics, by Year [1]		
	2017	**2018/19**
Gender		
# Female	53%	61%
# Male	47%	39%
Age		
# 18-24 years old	15%	17%
# 25-29 years old	56% [2]	19%
# 30-44 years old		42%
# 45 years old or older	29%	21%
Hispanic Origin, Any Race		
# of Hispanic, Latino, or Spanish origin	32%	44%
Race [3]		
# Asian	11%	18%
# Black or African American	49%	34%
# White	12%	9%
# Other Race	22%	14%

1) Participant demographics were not collected in Year 1.

2) These two age categories were not disaggregated in 2017.

3) Most programs did not track Hispanic origin separately from race, so in some instances "Other Race" category captures Hispanic/Latino participants.

TABLE 9

CPI Participant Education, Family, and Employment Status at Enrollment, by Year [1]		
	2017	**2018/19**
# With High School Diploma or GED	73%	76%
Dependent Children		
# With Dependent Children	34%	34%
# With Children Age 5 and Under	*6%*	*10%*
# With Children Age 6 and Over	*12%*	*12%*
# With Children, Age Unknown	*15%*	*12%*
# Without Dependent Children	52%	47%
# Unknown	14%	18%
Employment Status at Time of Enrollment		
# Employed Full Time *(or FT Equivalent)*	10%	16%
# Employed Part Time	15%	22%
#Not Employed at Enrollment	47%	58%
# Never Employed	*2%*	*4%*
# Previously (though Not Currently) Employed	*24%*	*47%*
# Unknown	*20%*	*7%*
# Unknown	27%	4%

1) Participant demographics were not collected in Year 1.

Appendix B: Program Details

Chrysalis	- Short-term training, from 1-day (6 hours) to 7-week (140 hours), in various fields - Open, ongoing enrollment
CPA*	Culinary Arts program only: - 10-13 week (30-35 hours per week) paid training program (minimum wage) - 10 participants per year (no fixed start date)
CREC	- 8-week (72 hour) ESL program (CREC) - 9-week (135 hours) MOA program (MCC) - 2-week+ (80 hour) internship - 2 cohorts per year (spring/fall) of 15 participants each
Goodwin	- 6-week (36 hour) summer boot camp (math and literacy skills) - 4 Goodwin College Manufacturing Classes over one academic year - 1 cohort per year (summer boot camp, fall start)
HPL	Food Handler Program - 8-week (32 hours) classroom instruction - 27-hour internship - 3 cohorts per year of 15 participants each Food Manager Program - 6-week (24 hours) classroom instruction - 42-hour internship - 3 cohorts per year of 10 participants each Both programs - 4-hour customer service course - 8-hour digital literacy course - Resume writing & job search with American Job Center
Journey Home	- 2 semester-long manufacturing classes at Goodwin - 6-week paid on-the-job internship - Approx. 2 cohorts per year, depending on employer demand, of 6 to 10 participants each
LVGH	Sodexo Cohort - 6-week (12 hours) ServSafe test prep - 14-weeks (112 hours) internship at community kitchen - Offered 4 times per year Early Childhood Cohort - 14-weeks (100 hours) onsite childcare classroom training - 4 times per year (flexible start) General Counseling Cohort - 4-8 one hour meetings over 2 months covering literacy skills/workforce skills - Open enrollment; no fixed start/end dates; no specified length
OPP	- Competency-based education in allied health or business administration (SNHU) - Group coaching - social/emotional development; career competency; financial literacy - 2-week Career Competency Development training (employment skills) - Cohorts each Sept; ongoing enrollment; no firm endpoint; 3-27 participants per cohort

YWCA	- Remediation in math, reading, and writing in preparation for Accuplacer (YWCA) - Certificate or associate's program in health, manufacturing, or technology (MCC) - Individualized coaching and career guidance - Group coaching in life skills, time management, academic support, work readiness - Cohorts starting each Sept; ongoing enrollment; no firm endpoint; 5-17 participants per cohort

*CPA did not reply to requests for updated information; the information in this table is from the original application to the Foundation and may not reflect what was actually implemented.

Appendix C: CPI Sites at a Glance

Chrysalis

2016-2018 – CUL PROGRAM AT A GLANCE					
	2016	2017	2018	2019	TOTAL
Enrollment & Completion[1]					
Total Enrolled	59	64	97	48	268
Completed Program	37%	74%	61%	63%	59%
Status at Enrollment[2]					
With High School Diploma or GED	88%	72%	73%	88%	79%
With Dependent Children	N/A	13%	30%	31%	
Not Employed	N/A	83%	72%	67%	

1) Figures come from aggregate-level data sheets.
2) Because number of dependent children and employment status at enrollment were not collected for the first year of the initiative, we cannot calculate weighted totals over the total program years.

CREC

2016-2018 – ADVANCED ESL/MOA PROGRAM AT A GLANCE				
	2016	2017	2018	TOTAL
Enrollment & Completion[1]				
Total Enrolled	30	30	30	90
Completed Program	90%	100%	100%	97%
Participant Status at Enrollment[2]				
With High School Diploma or GED	100%	100%	100%	100%

	With Dependent Children	N/A	60%	67%	
	Not Employed	N/A	70%	77%	

1) Figures come from aggregate-level data sheets.

2) Because number of dependent children and employment status at enrollment were not collected for the first year of the initiative, we cannot calculate weighted totals over the three years.

CPA

2016-2019 – STARR T2W2 PROGRAM AT A GLANCE				
	2016	**2017**	**2018-19**	**TOTAL[2]**
Enrollment & Completion[1]				
Total Enrolled	11	26	17	
Completed Program[3]	73%	85%	65%	
Participant Status at Enrollment[4]				
With High School Diploma or GED	91%	88%	53%	
With Dependent Children	N/A	Unk	53%	
Not Employed	N/A	Unk	60%	

1) Figures come from aggregate-level data sheets.

2) Three-year total enrolled not available because annual figures double count those individuals enrolled over multiple years.

3) Percent completed *excludes* from total those participants still enrolled at time of data collection.

4) Because number of dependent children and employment status at enrollment were not collected for the first year of the initiative, we cannot calculate weighted totals over the three years.

Hartford Public Library

2016-2019 – IMMIGRANT CAREER PATHWAYS PROGRAM AT A GLANCE				
	2016	2017	2018-19	TOTAL
Enrollment & Completion[1]				
Total Enrolled[2]	25	94	290	
Completed Program[3]	88% N=25	67% N=48	66% N=201	68% N=274
Participant Status at Enrollment[4]				
With High School Diploma or GED	84%	72%	77%	76%
With Dependent Children	N/A	41%	42%	
Not Employed	N/A	55%	54%	

1) Figures come from aggregate-level data sheets.
2) Three-year total enrolled not available because annual figures double count those individuals enrolled over multiple years.
3) Percent completed _excludes_ from total those participants still enrolled at time of data collection.
4) Because number of dependent children and employment status at enrollment were not collected for the first year of the initiative, we cannot calculate weighted totals over the three years.

Goodwin

2016-2018 – GOODWIN CPI AT A GLANCE				
	2016	2017	2018/9	TOTAL
Enrollment & Completion[1]				
Total Enrolled	23	22	20	65
Completed Program	61%	27%	85%	54%
Participant Status at Enrollment				
With High School Diploma or GED	100%	100%	100%	100%
With (known) Dependent Children	39%	45%	75%	52%
Not Employed	83%	45%	45%	58%

1) Figures come from aggregate-level data sheets.

Journey Home

2016-2018 – AEPP AT A GLANCE				
	2016	2017	2018	TOTAL
Enrollment & Completion[1]				
Total Enrolled	16	13	16	45
Completed Program	100%	92%	69%	84%
Participant Status at Enrollment				
With High School Diploma or GED	100%	100%	100%	100%
With (known) Dependent Children	6%	0	0	2%
Not Employed	56%	77%	75%	69%

1) Figures are from aggregate-level data sheets

Literacy Volunteers of Greater Hartford

2016-2018 – LVGH CPI AT A GLANCE				
	2016	2017	2018	TOTAL
Enrollment & Completion[1]				
Total Enrolled	140	75	229	444
Completed Program	91%	100%	92%	93%
Participant Status at Enrollment[2]				
With High School Diploma or GED	47%	48%	67%	63%[4]
With (known) Dependent Children[3]	N/A	39%	14%	
Not Employed	N/A	N/A	56%	

1) Figures come from aggregate-level data sheets.
2) Because number of dependent children and employment status at enrollment were not collected for the first year of the initiative, and LVGH did not collect employment status in year 2, we cannot calculate weighted totals over the three years.
3) Includes a high percent of "unknown" dependent children.
4) 60% of participants with a HS diploma earned it outside of the U.S..

YWCA

2016-2019 YWCW PROGRAM AT A GLANCE					
	2016	2017	Spring 2018[1]	Fall 2018	Total
Enrollment and Completion					
Total Enrolled[2]	5	17	5	16	31
Completed Program[3, 4]	100%	83%	100%	100%	87%
Participant Status at Enrollment					
High School Completion or GED	100%	NA	NA	100%	NA
With Dependent Children[5]	NA	82%	100%	100%	NA
Not Employed[6]	NA	NA	NA	56%	NA

1) 2018 data reported by program staff may be incomplete due staffing changes in 2018.
2) Total enrollment numbers include duplicated individuals year to year because some individuals continued in the program from one calendar year to the next. The total number enrolled over the three years, is non-duplicated.
3) The program completion percentage is out of those who could have completed the program that year, meaning it does not include individuals who continued the program in the subsequent year.
4) The definition of program completion changed after 2017. New program staff leadership in 2018 changed the definition of core program to include participation in a certificate, degree or credentialing program accompanied by one-to-one coaching. Previous staff leadership in 2016-2017 defined the core program as the bridge/remediation portion of the program.
5) Because number of dependent children and employment status at enrollment were not collected for the first year of the initiative, we cannot calculate weighted totals over the three years.

6) Because the program staff reported a number of unknowns for the prior employment status of participants in 2017 and 2018, we are not able to report a total percentage of participants who were not employed at the time of enrollment in either of these years.

Appendix D: Technical Notes

Data Collection

To collect data on the participants enrolled in CPI programs and their employment and education outcomes, we asked each of the nine CPI programs to complete two Excel tools.

The tools were designed to collect the following information:

Aggregate Enrollment Profile - This tool collected aggregate information (by cohort, or class) on all participants enrolled in the program by year. For those programs that received extensions for the final year (Year 3), we have combined data for 2018 and 2019 to be consistent across the sites. Because the aggregate tools did not ask for individual student-level data, some individuals may be double-counted if they enrolled in multiple cohorts or over multiple years. For this reason, we cannot aggregate across the three-plus years of the initiative when working with the aggregate data (e.g. we cannot sum "total enrolled" in 2016, 2017, and 2018/19). As a result, we utilize the aggregate data primarily to understand what was happening within the programs from year to year (i.e. growth in enrollment; changes in participants' demographic characteristics, etc.).

Programs were asked to provide data on their "core program," defined as the portion of the program occurring before participants become employed but after the point at which the expected next step is employment or continuing education. By this definition, a participant who completed the education and/or training portion of a program would be considered as "completed" even if they continued to receive services and supports from the program.

The data collected in this tool included:
- Total number of participants enrolled;
- Aggregate demographics and other participant characteristics such as residency, dependent children, employment and education status, employment history, and literacy level at time of enrollment;
- Number of participants who completed the core program, number still enrolled, and number who left without completing.

Participant-Level Employment Outcomes - This tool collected individual-level employment and education outcomes for participants who completed the "core program," including participants from prior years, both at 1 month and at 6 months post-completion. Instructions adjusted for the various completion dates of the sites:

For sites completing by 12/31/18 (CREC, LVGH, JH), data due 2/1/19:
- 1-month data for all who completed

- 6-month data for all who completed by 7/31/18

For sites completing by 6/30/19 (Chrysalis, YWCA), data due 8/1/19:
- 1-month data for all who completed
- 6-month data for all who completed by 1/31/19

For sites completing by 8/31/19 (Goodwin), data due 10/1/19:
- 1-month data for all who completed
- 6-month data for all who completed by 8/31/18

For sites completing by 12/31/19 (CPA, HPL, OPP), data due 9/5/19:
- 1-month data for all who completed by 7/31/19
- 6-month data for all who completed by 3/1/19

Programs were given the option of entering participant names or unique identifiers, for greater confidentiality. For participants with more than one job, programs were asked to "enter data for the job that is in the career pathway or the job most relevant to the skills obtained in your CPI program or if neither of these apply, fill in the information about their primary job."

The data collected in this tool included:
- Participant name or unique ID;
- Program completion date;
- Name of program completed (for CPI programs with more than one program);
- Employment status at enrollment; if not employed at enrollment, whether employed in past five years;
- Outcomes at 1 month and at 6 months (if applicable), including: enrolled in education program, employed/unemployed, employed full time or part time, employer name, job title, job description (optional), and career cluster.
    - For career cluster, participants were asked to choose from a list of the sixteen career clusters in the 2017 Connecticut Department of Labor Report "Connecticut Career Paths," as well as an "other" option with an open field to write in an explanation.
- Programs had the option of indicating "unknown" for any of the variables requested.

Data Cleaning

Aggregate Enrollment Profile – To clean the data in each program's aggregate enrollment profile file, we:
- Checked that each cohort entered had a start and end date and included the year in question in its time span;
- Checked that the total number of participants tallied across response choices, including "unknown" for each information category (i.e. race, gender, age), equaled the total number of participants in the cohort;

- Checked that the total number of participants tallied across response choices in a given sub-category (i.e. of those participants with dependent children, how many had dependent children age 5 and under, 6 and over, unknown) equaled the total number of participants in the applicable sub-category.

Participant-Level Employment Outcomes - To clean the data in each program's employment outcomes file, we conducted the following steps:

Participants Removed:
- Participants who did not complete the program;
- Participants for whom program completion date was missing;
- Participants whose completion date was after September 1, 2019.

Data Removed
- Employment and education status data for 6 months post completion for any participants whose completion date was after 3/1/2019;
- Employment data for any participant in subsidized employment but with no commitment by the employer of providing a job after the trial period.

Determination of Clusters
- We selected "cluster trained in" using the CT DOL Career Path Report cluster lists based on the description of the training programs provided by the sites.
- For sites that did not offer specific career training tracks but rather provided general career and academic prep and/or let each participant choose their own customized training, we selected "unsure" for the career cluster trained in.
- If "cluster employed in" was missing for a participant employed at 1 month or 6 months, we filled in the cluster employed in where we could confidently determine it based on employer and job titles provided.
- We changed clusters employed in selected by sites using CT DOL cluster list if these appeared incorrect based on job title and employer.
- For participants trained in more than one cluster (only occurred in Chrysalis), we selected the cluster that matched the cluster employed in or – if not employed – the first cluster trained in.

Entering Unknown where Missing Data
We entered "unknown" for any missing data from the sites, including:
- Employment history at enrollment;
- Education or employment status post completion;
- If employed but did not know the cluster employed in (and couldn't be determined based on available job title or employer), we entered "unknown" for "same cluster as trained in";
- If employed but part time or full time left blank, we entered unknown;
- We did not enter unknown where blank for job title or employer, instead leaving it blank, as we did not analyze the fields.

Data Additions[23]
- We added a field next to "name of program completed" to designate a "career cluster" for the program. If a program, like LVGH's counseling program, was not set-up to train participants in a specific career cluster, we selected "other" as the career cluster.
- We added a field to collect "Is job in career cluster that this program is designed to train participants in." The evaluation lead for each site entered yes/no/unknown in this field based on whether the cluster trained in and cluster employed in matched.

Data Analysis

Program Enrollment and Completion:
- Total enrollment includes any participant enrolled in a program at any point in 2016, 2017, 2018, or 2019 regardless of whether the participant was enrolled in the program in prior years; as a result, some participants overlap across years (therefore the totals for each year cannot be aggregated).
- The denominator for program completion was all participants in cohorts with an end-date prior to 12/31/2016 for 2016 (Year 1); 12/31/2017 for 2017 (Year 3); and 9/1/19 for 2018/19 (Year 3 + extension).

Employment and Education Outcomes
- The denominator for all employment and education outcomes was all participants who completed the program prior to 9/1/19 (including those for whom employment and education status was unknown). We reported the total unknown for each calculation.
- "Employed" and "enrolled in education" were not mutually exclusive (e.g. a participant could be reported as both employed and enrolled in continuing education).
- The denominator for all six-month data was all participants who completed the core program by 3/1/2019.
- We excluded from this analysis the participants from Literacy Volunteers of Greater Hartford Counseling because many of its participants were continuing in LVGH counseling (rather than immediately pursuing education or employment). For this reason, participants in the LVGH counseling program were excluded from the denominator for the education and employment analysis. The LVGH Sodexo and Early Childhood Education participants were included in the analysis (and the denominator) because the program expects those participants to pursue employment upon completion of the "core program."

Decisions Made Based on Missing Data
- We excluded analysis of six-month outcomes any program that had more than 30% of unknown employment results.
- We were not able to conduct the analysis of employment results by detailed employment history (e.g. long term unemployed vs. participants employed within past five years prior to enrollment) because this data was missing for too many sites.

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[23] Entered by the evaluation lead for each program.

Appendix E: CPI Theory of Change [attachment]

Appendix F: Site-level Final Reports [attachment]