

### Citation

Callahan Consultants, Inc. (n.d.). YO! participants' employment and earnings. Ellicott City, MD: Author.

### Highlights

- The study's objective was to determine the effect of the YO! Baltimore initiative, which included a diverse set of programs offering comprehensive educational, employment preparation, support, and leadership development services to youth ages 14 to 21.
- The authors compared employment and earnings outcomes for participants and nonparticipants in YO! Baltimore.
- The study found that participants had increased earnings and employment after enrollment.
- The quality of the causal evidence presented in this study is low. This means we are not confident that the effects estimated in this study are attributable to the YO! Baltimore program.

### Features of YO! Baltimore

YO! Baltimore provided education, employment, support, and leadership development services to out-of-school youth, or those at risk of dropping out of school, between the ages of 14 and 21. Services were provided through locations in five centers and four high schools in Baltimore, Maryland. YO! Baltimore is one of several programs in the Youth Opportunity Grant Initiative funded by the Workforce Investment Act.

### Features of the Study

The authors assessed the impact of YO! Baltimore by comparing the outcomes of the treatment group, composed of 331 program enrollees who completed at least one program activity and obtained employment after program enrollment, with the outcomes of a comparison group, composed of 794 program enrollees who did not complete any program activities. Members of the treatment and comparison groups lived in the Baltimore Empowerment Zone, making them eligible for YO! Baltimore services.

## Findings

- Average post-enrollment earnings (constructed as the ratio of total post-enrollment earnings of group members to the total number of group members) were higher for members of the treatment group than for members of the comparison group.
- Members of the treatment group worked a greater percentage of quarters after enrollment than members of the comparison group did.
- The authors did not conduct testing to determine the statistical significance of these findings.

## Considerations for Interpreting the Findings

The treatment and comparison groups did not have similar demographic characteristics or educational attainment before program enrollment; the analysis did not account for these differences between the groups, and they could have influenced the findings. The way the comparison group was created—by focusing on youth who were eligible but never received a service—likely introduced bias to the estimates, because individuals who were more motivated or higher achieving were more likely to receive services (which is voluntary) and to have better labor market outcomes even in the absence of the intervention.

## Causal Evidence Rating

The quality of the causal evidence presented in the study is low because the treatment and comparison groups differed before the intervention in ways that were not accounted for in the analysis and could have influenced the findings. This means we are not confident that the YO! Baltimore program caused the estimated effects, and not other factors. To provide more convincing causal evidence that meets CLEAR criteria, the study could have included an array of control variables in the analysis to adjust for observed differences between the treatment and comparison groups.