

### Citation

Roder, A., & Elliott, M. (2014). Sustained gains: Year Up's continued impacts on young adults' earnings. New York: Economic Mobility Corporation.

### Highlights

- The study's objective was to examine the effect of the Year Up program on employment, earnings, and education outcomes. Year Up is an intensive, yearlong program that provides training and internships in financial operations and information technology for young adults from low-income urban communities.
- About 200 students in three cities were randomly assigned to the treatment group, which was eligible to participate in Year Up beginning in September 2007, or the control group, which was not eligible to participate in Year Up in 2007. Members of the control group were eligible to reapply to the program after 10 months, and many did. The authors compared the outcomes of the treatment and control groups using data collected through telephone interviews with participants four years after random assignment.
- The authors reported a positive, statistically significant impact of Year Up on earnings measured three years after random assignment, but these impacts did not extend to the fourth year after random assignment. Cumulatively, treatment group members earned \$13,645 more than the control group over years 2 through 4 after random assignment, and they were more likely to have been employed in a field targeted by the program.
- The quality of the causal evidence presented in this study is moderate because, although it was based on a randomized controlled trial with high attrition, the authors demonstrated that the treatment and control groups were similar before the intervention. This means we have confidence that the estimated effects are attributable at least in part to Year Up, although other factors could also have contributed.

### Features of the Year Up Program

The Year Up program provides intense, focused training and a paid internship to prepare young adults for careers in information technology and financial operations. The program targets young adults ages 18 to 24 from low-income urban communities. Participants in the three programs examined in this study were primarily African American (54 percent) or Latino (34 percent), most lived with a parent or guardian (84 percent), and 17 percent lived in public housing. In addition, most participants had a high school diploma (89 percent) and had some previous experience working for pay (90 percent).

Through Year Up, youth received six months of intensive training followed by a six-month internship. The training included general skills training, such as the use of basic software and computer operating systems, and specific training in either the information technology or financial operations fields. Those in the information technology track learned about computer repair, installation, and networks; those in the financial operations track learned about financial portfolio management. Training also addressed business

communications skills such as grammar, verbal communication, and writing and editing emails, and professional skills such as appropriate dress and body language, interacting with coworkers, and how to network.

Internships took place at major corporations in the area such as Merrill Lynch, JPMorgan Chase, and CVS Caremark. Participants were offered support services, including access to social workers and a mentor outside of the program to provide professional guidance and development and to help with job searches or college applications when participants finished the program. Participants also received stipends for both the classroom training and internship, depending on their attendance and adherence to a performance contract.

## Features of the Study

Because more youth applied for the program than there were slots available, 195 participants in three sites were randomly assigned to the treatment (135 participants) or control group (60 participants) in September 2007. Those in the control group were placed on a waiting list and were allowed to reapply to the program in 10 months.

The authors compared the outcomes of the treatment and control groups using data collected through telephone interviews with participants in September 2011, four years after random assignment. Of the participants, 102 treatment group members and 41 control group members responded to the survey.

## Study Sites

- Boston, Massachusetts
- New York, New York
- Providence, Rhode Island

## Findings

- The authors reported a statistically significant impact of Year Up on earnings measured three years after random assignment (\$19,955 versus \$14,922), but this impact did not extend to the fourth year after random assignment. Cumulatively, treatment group members earned \$13,645 more than the control group over years 2 through 4 after random assignment (and, hence, after participation in Year Up would have ended).
- Treatment group members were more likely to have been employed in a field targeted by the program—financial operations or information technology—over the follow-up period than control group members (49 versus 17 percent).
- Among those employed at the end of the follow-up period, treatment group members were significantly more likely to be employed as permanent rather than temporary staff (85 versus 70 percent) and have tuition assistance available through their employers (34 versus 17 percent) than control group members.
- There were no statistically significant impacts on educational achievement.

## **Considerations for Interpreting the Findings**

Twenty-nine percent of control group members participated in Year Up in some capacity. This could dilute the estimates of program impacts because they received a similar set of services as treatment group members. In addition, the sample size is small, which means that only relatively large differences in outcomes between the treatment and control groups would be detectable.

## **Causal Evidence Rating**

The quality of the causal evidence presented in this study is moderate. Although the design was a randomized controlled trial, there was high attrition among the study sample, making the study ineligible to receive a high causal evidence rating. However, the authors demonstrated that the treatment and control groups were similar on a range of key characteristics before the intervention. This gives us confidence that the estimated effects are attributable at least in part to Year Up, although other factors could also have contributed.