



# 2017 Independent Evaluation Marion Barry Summer Youth Employment Program

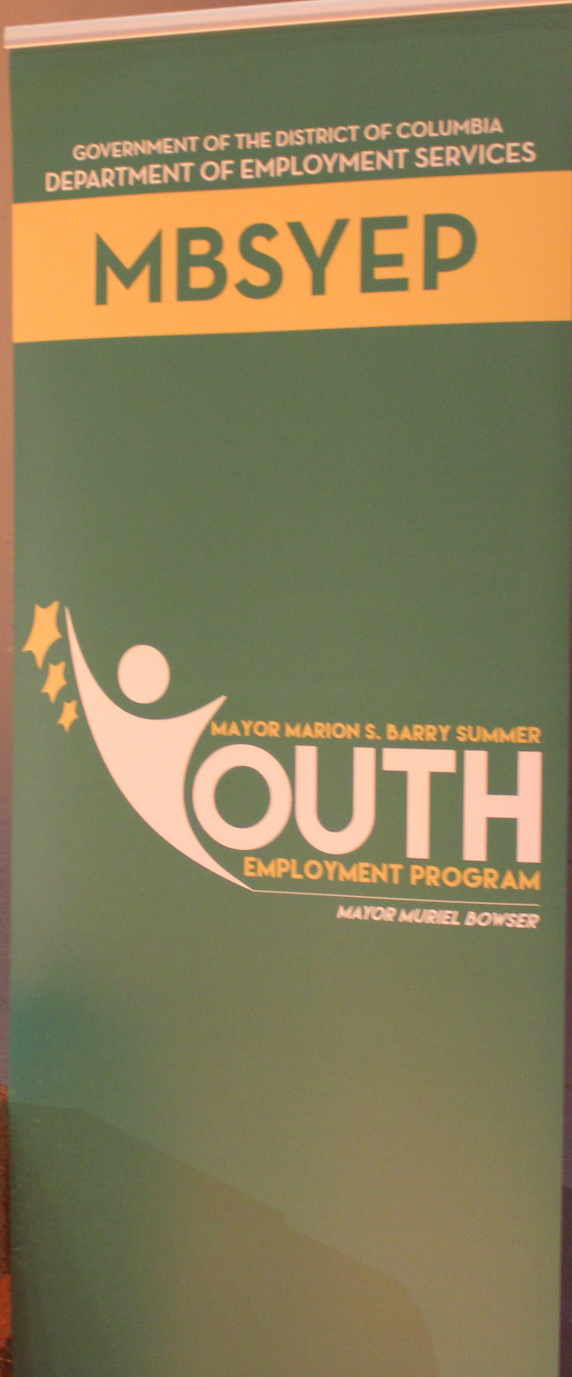
## Abstract

This independent evaluation of the Marion Barry Summer Youth Employment Program was conducted by BluePath Labs and satisfies the requirements of D.C. Code 32-244.

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## SECTION 1: EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The District of Columbia's Marion Barry Summer Youth Employment Program (MBSYEP) has a single mission: to provide enriching and constructive summer work experiences for youths 14 through 24 through subsidized placements in the private, non-profit, school, and government sectors. This 2017 Independent Evaluation<sup>1</sup> to determine whether the program is fulfilling that mission was conducted for the Executive Office of the Mayor and the Department of Employment Services (DOES) by BluePath Labs LLC. We focused primarily on how the program affects participants' job skills, workforce readiness, and opportunities for career exploration. We also evaluated the Program's financial impact on participants and the extent to which it may reduce crime.

We conducted our evaluation using the Logical Framework (LogFrame) methodology. Our conclusion was that despite its challenges, MBSYEP is accomplishing its mission. This document outlines our findings in detail, along with the significant opportunities we and previous auditors have found to improve the program.

MBSYEP is open to all District residents from 14 to 24 and serves some of the District's most vulnerable citizens. Their employability is crucial not only to their own futures but to the District's. Unfortunately, many participants face formidable challenges.

- The majority are economically disadvantaged and live in high-crime neighborhoods where jobs are scarce or nonexistent.
- 10% receive Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF)
- 26% receive food stamps.
- Some are homeless
- Although their average age is 17, 49% are already parents.

MBSYEP, \$20 million-a-year program funded almost entirely by D.C. taxpayer dollars, is under intense scrutiny to operate effectively and efficiently. Its mission is daunting. Yet throughout our evaluation, DOES employees' commitment and passion for their mission were evident, as were the support and enthusiasm of its youth participants, their parents, their employers, and the communities in which participants live.

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<sup>1</sup> This evaluation was conducted in accordance with D.C. Code 32-244 "Evaluation of the Summer Youth Employment Program" and employed the Logical Framework (LogFrame) evaluation methodology, described in this report.

## SECTION 2: MAJOR FINDINGS AND STRENGTHS

Below are the major findings of our evaluation.

- **Job Skills/Workforce Readiness:** Our most important finding was an analysis which showed that participants are at least 26% more likely than their peers to pursue post-secondary education. Additional education greatly improves future employment potential. 90% of participants and 98% of employers agreed that participants increased their knowledge of workforce readiness and career exploration over the course of the summer.
- **Career Exploration:** Although MBSYEP provides participants with many career exploration opportunities, few are with commercial employers, which poses problems for future employment.
  - Although 84% of US jobs and 69% of D.C. jobs are in the private sector, only 15% of MBSYEP jobs are. Nearly three-quarters of MBSYEP jobs are in classroom-based education/career exploration, child care, the performing arts, or sports, none of which are typical adult labor market jobs or professional environments. These non-profits and school employers help young people to explore careers and make them more likely to attend college, but they may not offer a direct path to full-time employment opportunities. Just 12% of all employers who responded to the survey have definite plans to hire a youth participant, while 37% say they are not sure they will.
- **Financial Support:** In 2017, MBSYEP's 6-week gross payroll was \$10,970,752. Our survey showed that participants spent the money they earned primarily on necessities. Also, because MBSYEP limits hours worked and pays below minimum wage, participants have a strong incentive to compete for jobs outside the program, where they can double or triple their summer income.
- **Effect on Reducing Crime:** Findings in this area are inconclusive. A growing body of research from other cities indicates that SYEP programs are reducing crime, which is a positive effect since criminal convictions have a huge negative impact on employability over the entire lifetime. 68% of employers we surveyed believe MBSYEP is reducing crime. However, the D.C. Metropolitan Police Department (MPD) and another 30% of employers believe there is not enough data to be certain.
- **Universal Admissions:** Unlike cities whose summer jobs programs are based on lotteries, MBSYEP accepts all who apply. Critics say this policy does not reflect the competitive nature of the labor market, that it's expensive, and that too many participants appear to receive little benefit. However, our research found strong support in the community for the policy as an important pathway for at risk youth. Based on how many MBSYEP participants return year after year and how many go on to post-secondary education, our findings support these community beliefs.

## SECTION 3: AREAS FOR IMPROVEMENT

**MBSYEP PERFORMANCE:** MBSYEP had four audits conducted in the past year which identified 46 findings and recommendations for improvement. Our evaluation showed that the program has not only made considerable progress in achieving those improvements, it continues to innovate, as illustrated by its first-in-the-country adoption of Career Edge, an online program that supports participants by providing online professional development and career exploration.

That said, here are the major areas we believe still need improvement.

- MBSYEP needs a Strategic Plan to guide its day-to-day management of resources, schedules, dependencies, and performance measures. Right now, DOES employees use their experience and “muscle memory” to carry out these functions. The recently released DCPS 2017-2022 “Capital Commitment Strategic Plan” could serve as a useful starting point in developing such a plan, given its focus on youth outcomes in D.C.<sup>2</sup>
- MBSYEP should improve its job matching process. It is by far the worst-rated process by participants, many of whom were slotted into jobs they had no interest in by a process they did not understand. It was also the second worst rated process by employers.
- MBSYEP should consider additional ways to reward participants’ job performance, such as higher pay and job preference in future years. The DOES staff supports more competition, but members say that in the past District leaders have discouraged them from incorporating it.
- MBSYEP could improve the value proposition for commercial employers by mitigating burdensome rules and processes identified in this evaluation. MBSYEP could lessen those burdens by hiring a third party to recruit employers and match them for direct summer hire with highly rated participants from previous years, creating a win-win-win for employers, youth, and the city. The third party could be a non-profit, a contractor, or the American Job Center.
- MBSYEP quality assurance and quality control processes should be improved so that managers would have more reliable and actionable data. This would improve the MBSYEP experience for both youths and employers.
- MBSYEP should drive more participants to use the entire Career Edge learning portal. Currently, participants use it only during Orientation, and then only because it is mandatory.

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<sup>2</sup> [Dcps.dc.gov/capital commitment](https://dcps.dc.gov/capital-commitment)

## SECTION 4: BACKGROUND AND RECENT AUDITS

MBSYEP, which was founded in 1979, is one of the largest youth employment programs in the country. But since it began, both the labor market and the program have changed significantly. In late 1979, 60% of American teens were working or looking for summer work. By 2015, only 30% were. Competition for available jobs has become more intense, increases in the minimum wage have reduced the number of jobs available, and employers are less willing to hire inexperienced young workers. At the same time, teens are also focusing on college preparatory activities in far greater numbers.

MBSYEP has had to adapt to these changes. Historically, the program was primarily funded with Federal dollars and participants qualified based on need. But by the 1980s, when federal funding for such programs was dramatically reduced, D.C. and many other large cities determined that the programs were beneficial enough to justify local funding. With that decision, of course, came an increased need to justify the programs' results. Recent studies show that summer youth employment programs are achieving their short-term objectives of giving youth jobs. But demonstrating their long-term impacts has proven to be much more difficult.

In 2016, MBSYEP opened the program to youths from 22 to 24, regardless of need. MBSYEP has always been a highly visible D.C. program, but that expansion has placed it under additional scrutiny. In the past year alone, the D.C. auditor conducted four separate audits of MBSYEP:

- "Review of Summer Youth Employment Programs in Eight Major Cities and the District of Columbia," published 4/21/2016.
- "Review of Marion S. Barry Summer Youth Employment Program Data and Activities," published 6/2/2016.
- "Site Visit Observations: 2016 Marion Berry Summer Youth Employment Program," published 12/21/2016.
- "Internal Control Weaknesses Found in Marion S. Barry Summer Youth Employment Program," published 3/21/2017.

In response to the audit findings, DOES leadership put MBSYEP under a Corrective Action Plan (CAP). Under the CAP, MBSYEP staff have worked to address the issues identified by the audits. This includes the audit finding that the independent evaluation mandated by D.C. Code 32-244 "Evaluation of the Summer Youth Employment Program" had not been completed as required.

## SECTION 5: CURRENT EVALUATION

This independent MBSYEP evaluation, which employed the LogFrame methodology, focused on evaluating the program's outcomes, as opposed to its processes, and fulfills the requirements of D.C. Code 32-244. We did not conduct a participant pre-survey because of contract timing issues, but we did survey participants and employers at the end of the summer of 2017.

- The participant survey consisted of 20 questions and was sent to 12,656 participants. 2,492 participants completed the survey for a 95% confidence level, with a 2% margin of error.
- An employer survey consisted of 20 questions and was sent to 531 employers. 122 employers completed the survey for a confidence level of 95% with an 8% margin of error.

LogFrame was developed by USAID more than 40 years ago for program design and evaluation and has been widely used by government agencies since then. LogFrame uses a NARRATIVE SUMMARY table to causally link INPUTS and ASSUMPTIONS with their expected OUTPUTS. We created the MBSYEP narrative summary shown in Figure 1 (below) after reviewing material and speaking with MBSYEP leadership and other stakeholders and experts.

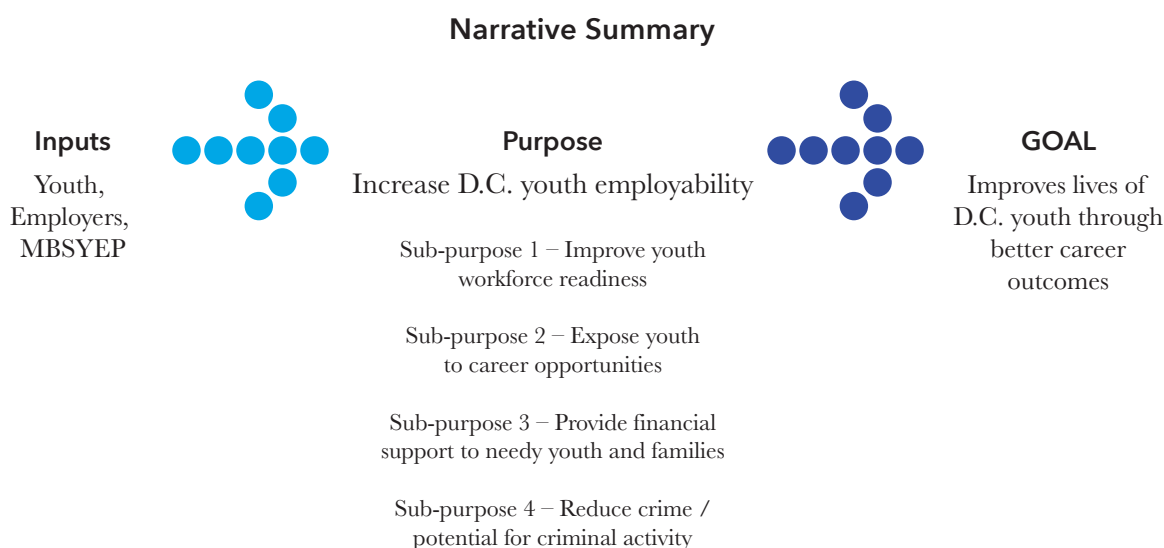


Figure 1 – MBSYEP LogFrame Narrative Summary

- MBSYEP's GOAL is improving the lives of D.C. youth through better career outcomes. Many federal and state, educational, non-profit, and commercial programs also contribute to the goal.
- The specific PURPOSE of MBSYEP is to "develop work ready youth who will have the necessary skills to obtain unsubsidized employment" (MBSYEP 2017 Supervisor Handbook).

This purpose is broken down into four sub-purposes:

- Sub-purpose 1: Improving workforce readiness of participants.
- Sub-purpose 2: Exposing participants to various career paths.
- Sub-purpose 3: Providing the opportunity for participants to earn money.
- Sub-purpose 4: Help keep MBSYEP participants from getting a criminal record or being a victim of crime.

Finally, the inputs to the MBSYEP program greatly affect the outputs.

- Inputs: MBSYEP, employers and the participants themselves are the critical inputs to the program.

In the following sections, we evaluate each of the foregoing LogFrame components using qualitative and quantitative analysis to determine if MBSYEP is achieving its program objectives and identify opportunities for improvement.



## SECTION 6: GOAL

The DOES 2017 Unemployment Profile report found that 60% of D.C. jobs require a bachelor's degree. District residents without such a degree comprise the majority of unemployed and under-employed residents.

Unemployment among District residents with a bachelor's degree or higher is only 2.4%, while residents with a high school degree or less is three to five times higher. Only 24% of African Americans have a bachelor's degree versus 87% for Whites. The literacy and educational disparity drives vastly different employment and economic outcomes in the District. While Whites and African Americans constitute nearly the same percentage of the population, African Americans make up a significantly lower percentage of the workforce and constitute 75% of the unemployed and 86% of the aggregate weeks on unemployment.

Only 60% of African American males in the District are meeting their literacy benchmarks, and only 57% are graduating from high school (OSSE, 2016). Low literacy is also strongly related to crime, with 70% of prisoners falling into the lowest two levels of reading proficiency (National Institute for Literacy, 1998).

In this evaluation, we focused on D.C. Wards 7 & 8 because the majority of MBSYEP participants live in these Wards. Additional information on Ward 7 & 8 includes:

- 24% of the D.C. population lives in Ward 7 & 8 and 94% are African American (US Census).
- Only 3% of D.C.'s jobs are in Ward 7 & 8 (2015 D.C. Annual Economic Report).
- These Wards are also home to the lowest rates of education and the highest rates of poverty and unemployment in the District (2015 D.C. Annual Economic Report).

## SECTION 7: PURPOSE

The purpose of MBSYEP is to provide enriching and constructive summer work experiences for youths 14 through 24 through subsidized placements in the private, non-profit, school, and government sectors.

Although qualitative feedback collected on MBSYEP was positive, it highlighted the challenge of running a program of this nature given the participant population that MBSYEP serves.

- 79% of participants surveyed found the 2017 MBSYEP experience to be “excellent” or “good” while only 6% found it to be “poor.”
- Employers surveyed agreed, with 71% being “very satisfied” and only 2% not “satisfied at all.”
- MBSYEP leadership and staff are passionate about MBSYEP and believe it is achieving its purpose. Although some view MBSYEP mainly as a jobs program, MBSYEP leadership and staff want to provide participants with the tools and mentorship they need to inspire participants to achieve richer lives. Some participants said in their survey comments that they did find mentors and inspiration through MBSYEP.
- Employers and other stakeholders were likewise passionate about MBSYEP and shared many stories about participants who were positively impacted by the program.
- Some anecdotal evidence indicated that some participants exhibited a sense of entitlement about their summer jobs, while others lacked “basic professionalism.” One employer said their summer employees didn’t show up, wanted to communicate with supervisors and coworkers via text (these were 22- to 24-year-olds), and could not understand why these were issues. After participating in MBSYEP for several years, this employer was giving up on the program.
- 88% of employers who responded said they will “definitely” continue to participate. On the other hand, many private sector employers who are currently registered with MBSYEP do not hire anyone.
- Particularly at larger employer sites, there is concern that participants might not actually be working, as noted in the D.C. auditors report “Site Visit Observations: 2016 Marion Berry Summer Youth Employment Program.” When we held several focus groups with the MBSYEP monitors responsible for monitoring sites, we heard that the monitors do not often observe these issues.
- We have found that the quality of the individual participant’s experience decreases when employers host many participants.
- 55% of participants do not think they would have a job without MBSYEP and 32% are unsure. Only 19% of employers said they would “definitely” participate in MBSYEP if wages were not subsidized. These statistics show that without MBSYEP, summer employment for these youths would likely not exist.

The foregoing data indicates that from the perspective of both participants and employers, MBSYEP is achieving its purpose of increasing participant employability. We analyzed each of the supporting sub-purposes of MBSYEP to further evaluate if MBSYEP is achieving the desired outcomes.

## SUB-PURPOSE: WORKFORCE READINESS

We surveyed participants to find out how well MBSYEP helped them to learn workplace skills.

- 90% said that they learned work skills from MBSYEP. 66% thought that they had learned “a lot.”
- Among employers, 98% of respondents thought that youth learned about workforce readiness and career exploration. 77% thought the youth had learned “a lot.”

These findings were strongly echoed in all the interviews we conducted. We then asked the participants in survey question 11 what job skills they learned or improved over the summer. Their answers are shown in Figure 2.

**Question 11: What job skills did you learn and/or improve this summer in SYEP? You can select more than one answer.**

ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES	
Being on time	62.88%	1,579
Working with others	69.85%	1,754
Financial management	26.68%	670
Completing assignments	39.03%	980
Problem solver	32.54%	817
Respecting others	42.73%	1,073
Following work rules	44.17%	1,109
Computer skills	19.16%	481
Dressing appropriately	33.33%	837
Being responsible	54.20%	1,361
Organizational skills	38.35%	963
Customer service	26.13%	656
I learned nothing from participating in MSYEP	7.45%	187
Total Respondents: 2,511		

Figure 2 – Youth Survey Question 11

We also asked employers in question 13 (Figure 3) what they found to be the greatest challenge working with youth.

**Question 13: What do you feel was the greatest challenge in employing youth? Select up to 3 answers that apply.**

ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES	
Encouraging youth to be on time	32.52%	40
Keeping youth on task	30.89%	38
Lack of experience of the youth	13.01%	16
Finding common understanding of expectation	22.76%	28
Providing adult supervision	7.32%	9
Assisting youth in developing a positive work ethic	31.71%	39
Encouraging youth to use appropriate language and behavior	15.45%	19
Keeping youth busy with things to do	18.70%	23
Handling youth transportation issues	11.38%	14
Providing additional job training during the summer	4.88%	6
Finding dependable, committed youth	27.64%	34
No challenges	20.33%	25
Other	7.32%	9
Total Respondents: 123		

Figure 3 – Employer Question 13

We also searched for data about if and how MBSYEP improved participants' workforce readiness.

We conducted an analysis that compared MBSYEP data with U.S. Department of Labor American Community Survey (ACS) data. ACS collects extensive data about American communities. The last comprehensive survey for D.C. was conducted in 2014/2015 and included information on educational achievement in Wards 7 and 8. When we compared the two data sets, we found that MBSYEP participants were 3.5% more likely to graduate from high school and 26% more likely to pursue post-secondary education. A detailed description of the analysis is provided in Appendix A.

The national research on SYEP program impacts on educational achievement is limited. To our knowledge, this is the first study that found a positive correlation between educational degree obtainment and MBSYEP. Impact evaluations on other SYEP have found the following:

- Higher school attendance (Leos-Urbel, 2014)<sup>3</sup>
- Enhanced understanding of the value of education (Shanks, 2014).<sup>4</sup>
- Better test scores that increase with the number of years in SYEP. (Schwartz, et al, 2015)<sup>5</sup>

<sup>3</sup> Leos-Urbel, 2014

<sup>4</sup> Shanks, 2014

<sup>5</sup> Schwartz, et al, 2015

Why did we find such a strong correlation between MBSYEP and degree obtainment in our analysis, when studies based on more statistically rigorous impact evaluations of other SYEP programs have not?

Based on our qualitative and quantitative research, we suspect that D.C.'s non-competitive application process gives D.C. youth and their families a dependable pathway to college that is unique. Youth in other cities are often subject to a lottery. In New York, which uses a lottery system, only half the youths who apply for SYEP are selected each year.<sup>6</sup> Multiple studies show that youths who fail to win a summer job are unlikely to find another job.<sup>7</sup> In contrast, D.C. youth clearly leverage the MBSYEP pathway. 70% of MBSYEP 2017 participants had previously participated in MBSYEP and 25% had participated for 4 or more summers.

## **SUB-PURPOSE: CAREER EXPLORATION**

Career exploration gives youth direct experience that can help them make informed choices at a critical time in their lives.<sup>8</sup>

In 2017, MBSYEP had 531 different employers. The vast majority of employment opportunities are voluntary, although MBSYEP does competitively award a few contracts that provide specific services the program requires. Here are some examples of career exploration opportunities:

- Solar Works: Participants receive job training for careers in the green economy.
- CommunityTech Net teaches 22-24-year-old MBSYEP participants skills and shared tools for success in the high-demand, information technology field.
- KBEC Group, Inc. provides job where participants can learn kitchen basics, knife skills, kitchen safety and proper sanitation.
- The Young Money Managers (YMM) program trained 26 participants to become financial education facilitators. Participants completed a three-week boot camp in banking, saving, investing, credit and insurance.
- DC Youth Corp gives young people work experience in data science, web development, user experience design or ecosystem building.
- The Atlas Center of Performing Arts jobs make participants responsible for set design, full dress rehearsals, media production, lighting, staging and Wardrobe.
- MBSYEP participants can learn about the Japanese language and culture while gaining firsthand knowledge about Asian heritage, dress, social behaviors and etiquette.

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6 <http://www.cssny.org/news/entry/testimony-on-summer-youth-employment-program-syep>

7 Sum et al, 2013; Gelber et al, 2015

8 Duckworth, et al, 2007; Heckman, 2008; Mortimer, 2010

Because D.C. Code 32-244 requires an assessment of the participants' jobs, we reviewed the descriptions of the 11,630 youth jobs. Based on those reviews, we created seven categories and mapped each position accordingly:

1. Education / Career Exploration - Jobs are typically classroom-based and focus on education, college preparation, and career exploration
2. Childcare / Camp Supervision Role - Jobs involve childcare/youth oversight for different age groups.
3. Sports & Fitness - Jobs focusing on sports and fitness for the participant.
4. Business & Administration - Office jobs with clerical, marketing, project management and related requirements.
5. Customer Service - Customer-facing positions such as cashiers, retail, and elderly assistance.
6. Technical / STEM / IT - Jobs requiring some technical knowledge.
7. Labor - Manual labor jobs such as cooking, cleaning, landscaping, or construction.

Figure 5 below provides the breakout of jobs by category, divided by “traditional” and “non-traditional” work environments. We did this because we noticed that 70% of the jobs were in educational/career exploration programs (likely classroom-based), child care, theater, sports and fitness. While these job categories can provide great opportunities for career exploration and education, they are not usually direct pathways to jobs in the District.

Age Group	Non-Traditional Work Environment			Traditional Work Environment				Summary	
	Education / Career Exploration	Childcare / Camp Counselor	Sports & Fitness	Business & Administration	Customer Service	Technical / STEM / IT	Labor	Total	% of Age Group in Traditional Work Environment
Under 18	4,466	1,063	248	690	79	73	193	6,812	15%
18-24	1,217	1,057	57	1,425	434	287	341	4,818	52%
<b>Total</b>	<b>5,683</b>	<b>2,120</b>	<b>305</b>	<b>2,115</b>	<b>513</b>	<b>360</b>	<b>534</b>	<b>11,630</b>	<b>30%</b>
% in Job Category	49%	18%	3%	18%	4%	3%	5%		

Figure 5 – MBSYEP 2017 Job Analysis

The reason 70% of MBSYEP jobs are in non-traditional fields is that more than half the participants are under 18. Under MBSYEP rules, these younger participants are limited in the number of hours per week they can work. They are also less ready for the commercial workforce and therefore MBSYEP emphasizes workforce readiness training for these younger participants. Because of these and other limitations we will discuss later, it is more difficult for MBSYEP to place under 18 participants in traditional work environments. Figure 6 highlights the lack of private sector participation in MBSYEP.

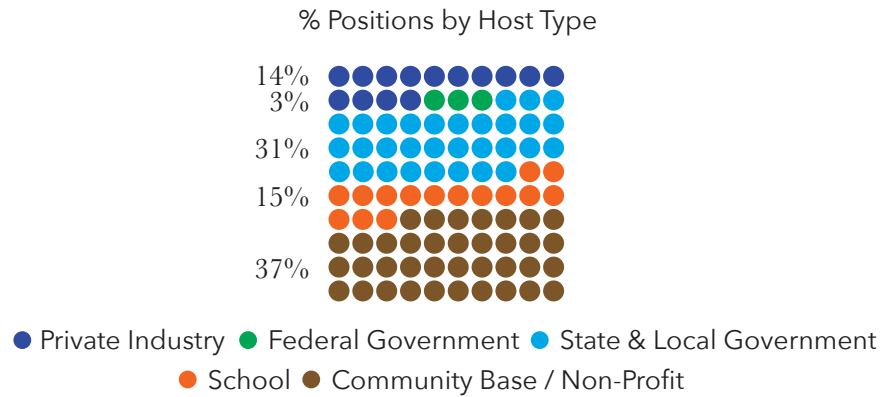


Figure 6 – MBSYEP employer breakdown

This issue has been identified in both previous audits and the 2016 MBSYEP evaluation. As MBSYEP has pointed out, that D.C. is unique in its heavy emphasis on government and non-profit jobs in the local economy. However, Figure 7 shows that despite that factor, private industry still accounts for 69% of jobs in D.C. and 84% of jobs nationally.

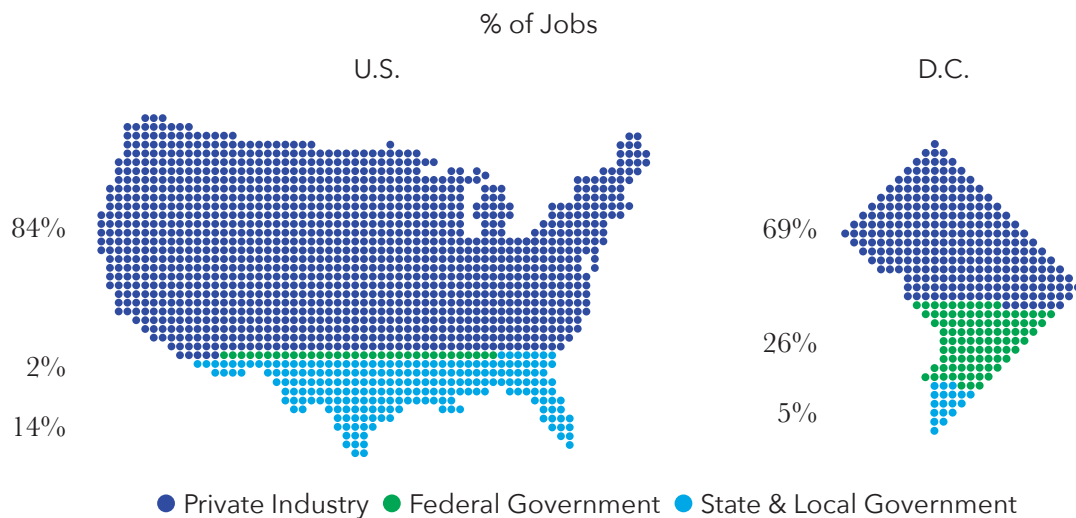


Figure 7 – Industry Job Mix (2015 D.C. Annual Economic Report)

MBSYEP has hired a full-time corporate liaison to pursue new employer partners but so far, the results are mixed. The number of private employers registered is up substantially in the past two years, but many of them don't actually provide any jobs (analysis shown on page 26). What is impeding private employer's participation?

There are significant barriers to bringing on more private sector employers.

- MBSYEP lasts for six weeks and severely limits the number of hours participants can work according to their age. Thus, private employers may not get the workers they need.
- Many youths are not ready to work in the private sector. A number of employers say participants lacked such basic skills as being on time and staying on task. The employer investment needed to train and manage participants is difficult to justify given the limited number of hours participants can work and other burdens.
- D.C. Code 4-1501 requires that anyone supervising participants under 18 on behalf of the District must submit to a criminal background check. This is a D.C.-specific barrier that employers hiring directly can bypass.
- MBSYEP processes for timekeeping, training, etc., requires time and resources from employers.

## SUB-PURPOSE: FINANCIAL SUPPORT

Another sub-purpose of MBSYEP is to give participants the opportunity to earn money during the summer. Participants face economic challenges, and research shows that even minor increases in income can have lasting beneficial effects.<sup>9</sup>

We conducted an analysis of the financial support 2017 MBSYEP provided to participants and their families. Figure 8 shows by age group the total gross pay as well as the average estimated take-home pay per youth.

Age group for 2017	Total Gross Pay	Estimated Average Gross Income
14-15	\$1,859,943	\$621.53
16-18	\$5,030,188	\$1,155.97
19-21	\$2,265,951	\$1,149.35
22-24	\$1,814,671	\$1,895.22
Total	\$10,970,752	

Figure 8 – MBSYEP Youth Payroll (through August)

Asked how they spent their summer earnings, participants' responses to Question 10 were encouraging.

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<sup>9</sup> Furman, 2015

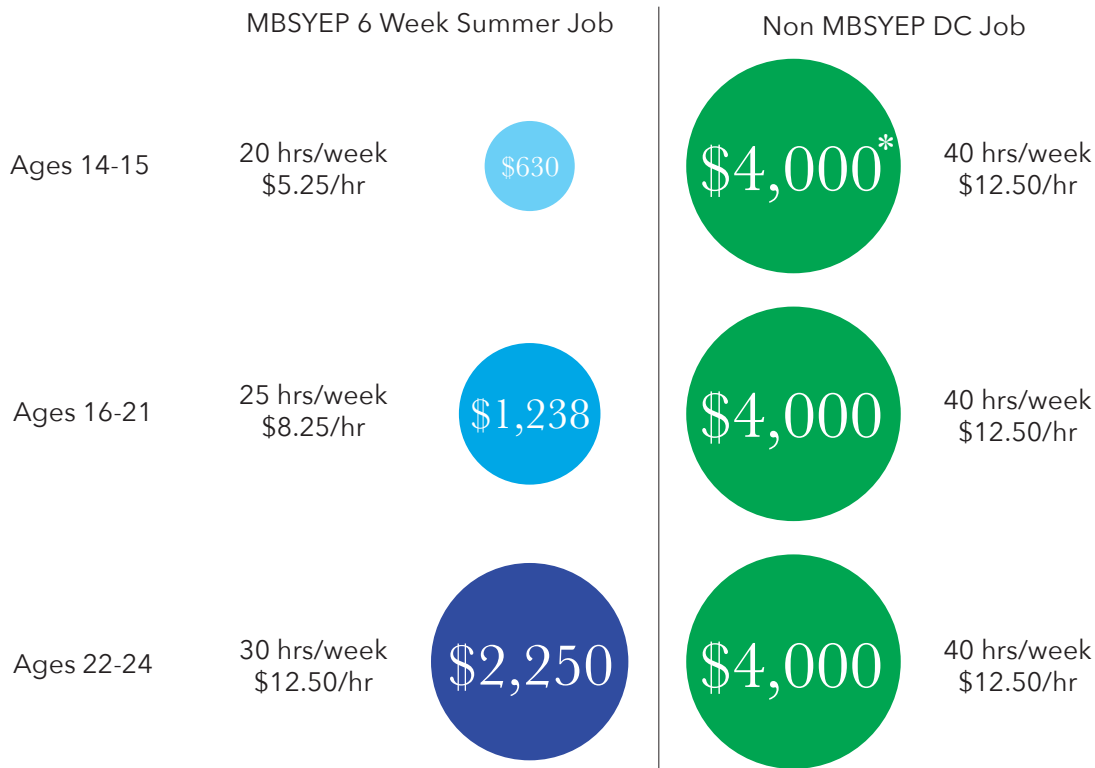
**Question 10: What did you do with most of the money you earned from your summer employment?  
You can select up to two answers.**

ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES	
Saved it for college	24.79%	623
Saved it for something I really need	45.64%	1,147
Spent it on something I really need	38.48%	967
Gave it to my family	15.00%	377
Used it to pay off money I owed	6.92%	174
Spent it on something I want, but really don't need	14.09%	354
Spent it on food	25.35%	637
Other	18.30%	460
Total Respondents: 2,513		

Figure 9 – Youth Survey Question 10

The wages offered to participants of MBSYEP are below D.C.'s minimum wage of \$12.50 an hour. Youth wages range by age groups from a low of \$5.25 hour for 14-15 year-olds to a high of \$12.50 for the 22-24 year-olds. There are also limitations on the number of hours participants can work based on age. There are no performance-based pay opportunities for the participants although there are scholarship opportunities.

We found that MBSYEP participants earn significantly less than their peers who can find employment in the open market. Figure 10 below shows the difference between what MBSYEP participants can earn through the program and what their peers may earn by obtaining a job outside the program at minimum wage – provided they can find such jobs. Surveys show few jobs exist in participants' own neighborhoods.



\*High end of range (\$4,000) assumes youth work 40hrs/week for 8 weeks at minimum wage.

Figure 10 – MBSYEP Income Analysis vs Unsubsidized Job

Participants complained in the survey feedback about not being paid minimum wage and about age-based pay differentials for the same job. This is valid commentary, particularly since many of these participants experience financial stress. However, experience competing for jobs is a critical component of future employability and the pay differential shown in Figure 10 creates a powerful incentive for youth to search for unsubsidized employment. There is also the issue of the additional subsidies paying minimum wage would require from tax payers. MBSYEP walks a fine line between being fair to participants and overburdening the tax payer.

The following Figure 11 shows the 2017 MBSYEP population by age range.

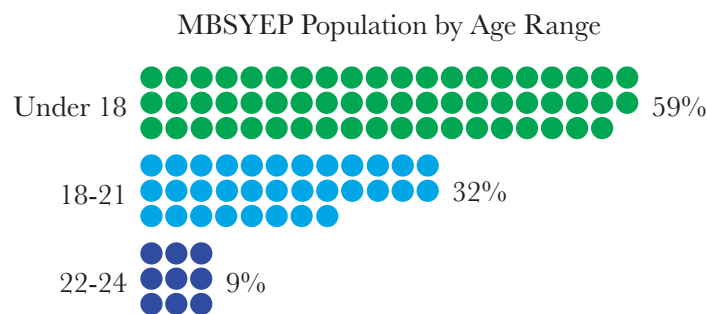


Figure 11 – MBSYEP Participant Age

Clearly the number of youths who participate in MBSYEP declines as they get older, but we were unable to determine why participants move on. We also analyzed the data to determine if the educational demographics of the youth in the program changed over time, hypothesizing that youths who were more workforce ready might opt for better paying jobs. We were not able to establish this pattern, probably because the most important thing participants look for in their summer job is the chance to gain useful work experience and position themselves for full-time jobs.

In summary, we found that MBSYEP achieved this sub-purpose and delivered its intended economic outcomes. We were not able to determine whether participants typically leave MBSYEP to pursue better opportunities, because they become disconnected from it, or for other factors.

## **SUB-PURPOSE: CRIME REDUCTION**

African-American young people are five times as likely to be incarcerated<sup>10</sup>. That those who have been incarcerated face even greater challenges in finding jobs has been documented in many studies. A study in Michigan found that 60-75% of “returning citizens” remained jobless a year after release<sup>11</sup>. An Urban Institute study showed 55% of returning citizens remained unemployed eight months after release.

Considering this data, any impact of Youth Employment Programs on reducing crime and criminal behavior among participants would significantly increase the future employability of the affected youth. We found data showing such impact.

- A randomized control study in Chicago found a significant decrease in violent crime arrests for youths who participated in SYEP<sup>12</sup>
- A randomized control study in New York found SYEP reduced the probability of incarceration by 10.36 percent and the rate of mortality by 19.92 percent, when compared to baseline incarceration and mortality rates.<sup>13</sup>
- A survey-based study found that Boston SYEP participants were significantly more likely to reduce risky and violent behaviors, including the use of drugs and alcohol, physical fighting, damaging property, and threatening someone with a weapon than a comparison group on the SYEP waiting list.<sup>14</sup>

In our survey, we found that 68% of MBSYEP employers believe that MBSYEP is reducing crime and another 30% of employers are not sure. Only 2% responded that they thought MBSYEP had no impact on crime. On the other hand, the Metropolitan Police Department stated, “There is not enough evidence to suggest participation in these programs prevents incarceration or a decrease in mortality rates. We focus on conflict resolution, so the participants can make better decisions if confronted with a conflict.”

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10 Center for Disease Control and Prevention, 2014; Bureau of Labor Statistics, 2016

11 Morenoff, et al, 2003

12 Heller, 2014

13 Gelber, et al, 2015

14 Sum, et al, 2013

MPD’s decision to focus on conflict resolution is supported by research. The Chicago SYEP study suggested that life skills learned on the summer job, such as better coping and dealing with adversity, may help youths deal more effectively with dangerous situations that arise in their own lives and thus explain the observed decreases in crime and mortality.<sup>15</sup> This same study found that especially true when combined with 15 hours per week of “social-emotional learning.”

Our evaluation on this sub-purpose did not find enough data to be conclusive. However, the strongly positive view of supervisors and the research that has been conducted elsewhere suggests that MBSYEP may be having an impact in this area as well. Given the potential benefit to youth and the community, we recommend further study on this topic in partnership with MPD.



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<sup>15</sup> Gelber, et al, 2015

## SECTION 8: EVALUATION OF MBSYEP INPUTS

LogFrame evaluates program inputs as well as outcomes. For MBSYEP, the critical inputs are from youth participants and employers as well as the DOES personnel, processes and technologies that support MBSYEP. Following are the inputs from each.

### YOUTH

The success of MBSYEP as a program depends heavily on the capabilities and motivations of participants. We wanted to find out:

- if they are prepared to make the most of MBSYEP
- if they are adequately motivated.

#### Are they prepared?

As we established at the outset, many of the youth who participate in MBSYEP face major challenges, all of which affect their readiness to take part in the workforce. It is hardly a surprise that some employers say participants are not ready for the work force.

#### Are they motivated?

Yet regardless of participants' backgrounds and challenges, most are trying to do well. 85% of survey respondents said they tried hard to be successful at their summer jobs. Employers agreed, with 76% saying most participants were interested and engaged. For the few who didn't try at all, a major issue was job matching, with 73% of those who did not engage rating this process as "poor."

The top considerations for participants in selecting a summer job were work experience (57%) and the potential for a full-time job (38%). Also ranking high were job location (35%) and safety (24%). With so few jobs near the homes of participants, most participants must travel to their summer jobs, which means time, expense and concerns about safety. These considerations require individual attention from MBSYEP staff during the same few weeks that 12,000+ youth are surging into their summer jobs.

Yet participants appreciate their jobs. 55% of survey respondents said they didn't think they would have a job without MBSYEP. Other studies indicate the respondents are probably right to think that finding another job is unlikely (Sum, et al, 2013; Gelber, et al, 2015). Youth were asked what they would have done if they had not gotten a job through MBSYEP. Their responses are shown in Figure 12.

**Question 17: What do you think you would have done if you had not participated in SYEP? Select all that apply.**

ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES	
Stayed at home	42.14%	1,059
Looked for another job	48.91%	1,229
Worked somewhere else	26.66%	670
Played sports	18.82%	473
Attended other summer programs	17.87%	449
Volunteered	20.65%	519
Hung out with friends	35.61%	895
Educational studies	12.46%	313
Traveled	20.41%	513
Babysat	21.17%	532
Other	8.79%	221
I don't know	11.98%	301
Total Respondents: 2,513		

Figure 12 – Youth Survey Question 17

According to the data gathered, participants are generally prepared for, and motivated to, make the most of MBSYEP despite the challenges they face. They are aware that without MBSYEP they would likely be unemployed for the summer. But we wanted to better understand the underlying system dynamics of MBSYEP.

We asked the following questions:

- Do participants see MBSYEP as the best opportunity to better themselves or are they here because it's the only option available to them? Does this vary with age or some other factor?
- Do youths leave the program because they have better opportunities (education, higher paying jobs) or are they becoming more disconnected?
- Why do more than ~22,000 youths initially sign-up every year, but only around ~12,000 participate? Are the other 10,000 who don't show up getting better opportunities? If they're not participating, what are they doing instead?
- Why does participation fall so dramatically in older age brackets? At the same time, why do so many college-bound participants continue to participate in the program when they might make more money elsewhere?

According to the survey, 70% of participants participated in MBSYEP for more than one year, with 46% having participated for three or more summers. The high retention rate, along with high customer satisfaction scores indicates that MBSYEP is delivering valuable experiences to participants. MBSYEP

retains even those who presumably have other options by virtue of their educational level. 79% of the participants currently pursuing college degrees have participated in MBSYEP three or more times.

Among the 22-24 year-old participants, 37% were either in college or have already obtained their BS (10 also had Master's degrees). Figure 13 shows the educational levels of the 22-24 year-olds.

Education Level	%
Less than high school graduate	13%
High school graduate (includes equivalency)	50%
Some college or associate's degree	30%
Bachelor's degree or higher	7%

Figure 13 – Educational Obtainment of MBSYEP 22-24 Year-olds

Although MBSYEP is open to all, this data shows that it continues to attract not only those who are disconnected, but also those with advanced degrees who might find employment elsewhere. College educated participants can use the work experience and access MBSYEP provides to position themselves to land a good paying full-time job while getting paid, when many of their peers take unpaid internships.

As to what happens with the 10,000 or so youths who apply to MBSYEP but don't join, what are they doing instead? We found that they were slightly more likely to be out of school and looking for a full-time job. However, their average age was 18, while the average age of those who participated on MBSYEP was 17. It is not surprising that 18-year-olds are more interested in jobs than 17-year-olds who are still in school. We found no other significant differences between the application data of the two groups. More research is needed to better understand why so many applicants apply for summer jobs only to opt out voluntarily or fail in the certification process.

## EMPLOYERS

Having determined that MBSYEP needs more commercial employers who offer traditional jobs, we investigated two additional factors.

First, are there enough high-quality employment opportunities available through the program?

Beyond the limited, competitively awarded contracts that MBSYEP issues, the program does not formally evaluate the quality of the summer jobs. MBSYEP's informal measures of job quality are feedback: from youth and employers, from monitors, and from the issue resolution process. Youth and employer feedback is very positive.

Monitors' feedback is important as well, since they, along with liaisons, ensure sites meet specifications. They also help employers and youth resolve issues. Many monitors are previous participants in MBSYEP and their personal investment and belief in the program was evident from the multiple focus groups we held. Monitors are typically in their 20's and many are in college. They receive training at the beginning of the summer and many have acted in this capacity in previous years. Monitors are required to visit sites

three times per summer and report on findings. With several hundred sites to check on, the monitors have a busy schedule. Asked about the report by the D.C. auditor that found youth less than engaged at various sites, the monitor focus groups said that in their experience this was not the case.

Figure 14 on the next page shows the 50 biggest employers of 2017, along with the number of participants they employed. Of the 7,730 jobs provided by MBSYEP top 50 employers, only 8% are private industry. 63% of employers in the program have 10 participants or less. The auditor focused on large employers. The monitors spend more time at small employers (10 participants or less) because there are many more of them. 49% of these small employer sites are provided by the private sector.



Host Name		Host Name	
D.C. Department of Parks & Recreation (DPR)	1162	Red Sprinkle, LLC	82
D.C. Department of Employment Services (DOES)	1086	Agape Cabbage Patch Early Learning Development Center	81
Friendship Public Charter School	534	Safe House DC	80
DC Public Schools - NAF/CTE "Career Ready Internship Initiative"	356	Empowerment Enterprise II Incorporated	79
Marion Barry Youth Leadership Institute (MBY-LI)	351	CHILDREN & CHARITY INTERNATIONAL	78
The College Success Foundation-	216	Ballou High School	78
D.C. Department of Environment (DOEE) (GZEP)	193	Washington Mathematics Science Technology PCHS (WMST)	77
CITIWIDE COMPUTER TRAINING CENTER	186	Pendergrast Alston Consulting Services	76
The MusicianShip	158	AUTOZONE INC	73
The Jarmal Harris Project	153	HOPE Project	72
Do The Write Thing Foundation of DC	148	H Street Main Street	71
Metropolitan Police Department (MPD)	125	Department of Public Works	70
Life Success Center for Children, Youth and Families	124	KBEC Group	70
Amy Jacques Garvey Institute, Inc.	117	D.C. Department of General Services (DGS)	66
D.C. Department of Transportation (DDOT)	115	Calvin Woodland Sr. Foundation	62
CommunityTech Net	115	Edward C. Mazique Parent Child Center	61
Youth Entrepreneur Institute	104	Freddie Simmons developmental Football Camp	61
George Worrell Style LLC	103	YMCA of Metropolitan Washington	61
Siblings Together USA, Inc.	102	Bradley & Associates, LLC	60
U.S. Internal Revenue Service (IRS)	102	TJ Maxx	60
Latin American Youth Center	101	Kids Elite Sports, Inc	59
Youth Organizations United to Rise	101	Columbia Heights Education Campus	58
D.C. Housing Authority (DCHA)	99	Community Services Foundation	54
Woodbridge Day Care	96	Healthy Babies Project	54
DC Commission on the Arts and Humanities	86	US Department of Agriculture	54

Total Top 50 7,730

Private Industry 631

% of Top 50 Employers 8%

Figure 14 – 2017 MBSYEP Largest Employers

We also analyzed the survey responses by size of employer and found that the likelihood of a supervisor providing a recommendation for participants is inversely related to the number of participants the employer hosts: the more participants the employer hosts, the less likely a participant is to get a recommendation. Figure 15 shows this relationship.

**Survey Question:** What percentage of youth that you worked with this summer would you provide a recommendation for?

	Number of Participants Hosted		
	1-10	10-25	25+
Nearly all of them	57%	47%	35%
75%	10%	18%	22%
50%	17%	23%	30%
Less than 25%	16%	12%	13%

Figure 15 – Likelihood of Recommendation

Conversely, the fewer participants an employer hires, the more likely a supervisor is to provide a recommendation. The willingness of an employer to provide a recommendation can be considered a proxy for the overall quality of the experience for both the participant and the employer. Therefore, the quality of the SYEP experience is higher at sites hosting fewer participants. This finding helps explain the inconsistency between what the D.C. auditor found when visiting large sites and what the monitors, who spend most of their time visiting smaller sites typically run by private employers, say they observe. In meetings with leadership and other key stakeholders, the importance of fostering mentorship was a recurring theme. A mentoring relationship is more likely to form when supervisors and participants spend more time together, which is more likely at sites with a lower participant-to-supervisor ratio.

Second, are employers prepared to provide the youth with a valuable experience?

Employers attend a mandatory orientation and training session at the beginning of the season, and each employer has both a liaison and a monitor assigned to them. MBSYEP also provides employers a detailed reference guide at the beginning of the year that covers policy, procedures, and learning objectives. Based on the employer survey, these were our findings.

Most employers are already experienced with MBSYEP according to the survey.

- 64% of employers have participated for three or more summers.
- 71% of supervisors have previous experience with MBSYEP and 54% have three or more years of experience.
- 97% of all supervisors felt prepared or well prepared for their role as a supervisor.
- 97% of first year supervisors also felt prepared or well prepared for their role.

However, we identified the following opportunities to improve employer preparedness:

- MBSYEP (and other applicable D.C. stakeholders) should improve communication with employers about participants with known issues. In one instance, an employer repeatedly found a participant sleeping on the job, only to later discover a medical condition was causing the issue.
- Employers were not adequately prepared to integrate the new Career Edge online training program into their operations this year. While the portal was demonstrated at the orientation, it was seldom used thereafter, and there was little follow-up to encourage supervisors or participants to continue to use it, even though the Career Edge portal provides very useful content.

The data from youths and employers also shows that employers are prepared to oversee participants. 87% of employers say they will participate in MBSYEP, including 79% of organizations in their first year. Less than 1% of employers who responded said they are leaving the program. But since the quality of the job experience at larger employers tends to be lower, MBSYEP should further explore why, and ramp up its recruitment of employers, particularly from the commercial sector.

## **MBSYEP STAFFING AND MANAGEMENT**

Each year, MBSYEP receives applications from more than 20,000 D.C. youths and must accept them all. Recruiting so many participants and coaching them through application, certification, payroll, and so on taxes staff resources. But in addition, the staff must recruit, train, and manage hundreds of employers and job sites. Managing a program of this size, scope, and complexity would be challenging even if it were not under intense scrutiny by District leadership and the community at large.

Figure 15 and the previous analysis suggests that the quality of participant experience may be increased by adding smaller sites predominantly run by private industry. As Figure 16 shows, MBSYEP has significantly ramped up its recruitment of private sector hosts in response to previous recommendations to do so. The number of registered hosts has increased by 120 since 2015 and all of the gain is attributable to MBSYEP private sector recruitment. Unfortunately, Figure 16 also shows that many of these private sector hosts never hire a participant and therefore the ratio of active hosts to registered hosts has declined from 93% to 85%. In 2017, non-hiring private sector hosts accounted for 64% of all non-hiring hosts in the program. That is nearly double the ratio from 2015, before the surge in private sector host registration began. Why so many private sector employers register for the program but then fail to participate requires additional study, but we suspect the barriers we previously identified are a factor.

Host Analysis	2015	2016	2017
Registered Hosts	508	656	628
Active Hosts (1 or more youth)	470	551	531
<b>Difference</b>	<b>38</b>	<b>105</b>	<b>97</b>
	93%	84%	85%
Registered Private Sector	126	254	242
Active Private Sector	113	190	180
<b>Difference</b>	<b>13</b>	<b>64</b>	<b>62</b>
<b>Private Sector % of overall difference</b>	<b>34%</b>	<b>61%</b>	<b>64%</b>

Figure 16 – Comparison of 2015, 2016, and 2017 MBSYEP participation metrics

We also analyzed the average number of youth employed by type of employer. As Figure 17 shows, MBSYEP places a higher number of youth per employer at local agencies and with schools than it does with the private sector. Every additional employer requires additional management resources on the part of MBSYEP. As Figure 17 shows, one Local Agency is the equivalent of seven private sector employers in terms of youth placement.

	Active Hosts	Avg. # Youth
Local Agency	56	70
Charter School	20	46
Public School	22	38
Community Base / Non-Profit	208	22
Federal Agency	29	12
Private School	15	10
Private Sector	180	10

Figure 17 – Average # of Youth by type of Host

It is much more resource efficient for MBSYEP to work with Local Agencies and Schools than the private sector because they take more participants. However, this program efficiency results in lower quality experiences for the youth assigned to large host sites.

One metric that MBSYEP does get evaluated on is the number of participants. As such, the program works hard to recruit as many participants as possible. Unfortunately, as Figure 18 shows, the number of participants decreased this year by 5%. It is important to note that a decrease in participation is not necessarily a bad thing as we discuss in the next section which looks at External Factors. Figure 18 also shows the significant difference between the number of applicants each year and the number of participants. As previously noted, we found no material differences between the applicant data of participants and non-participants. Additional analysis is recommended to understand the large delta between applicants and participants.

	MBSYEP		
	2016	2017	% Change
Applicants	23,031	22,365	-3%
Eligible Participants	13,017	14,296	10%
Participants	12,128	11,473	-5%

Figure 18 – Comparison of 2016 and 2017 MBSYEP participation metrics

## EXTERNAL FACTORS

We examined why youth participation in MBSYEP is falling among youths when, according to the surveys, the program is well liked and accomplishing its mission.

We found that the first reason is the decline of summer jobs nationally. Figure 19 shows that since the founding of MBSYEP in 1979, the percentage of youths participating in summer jobs has decreased dramatically.<sup>16</sup>

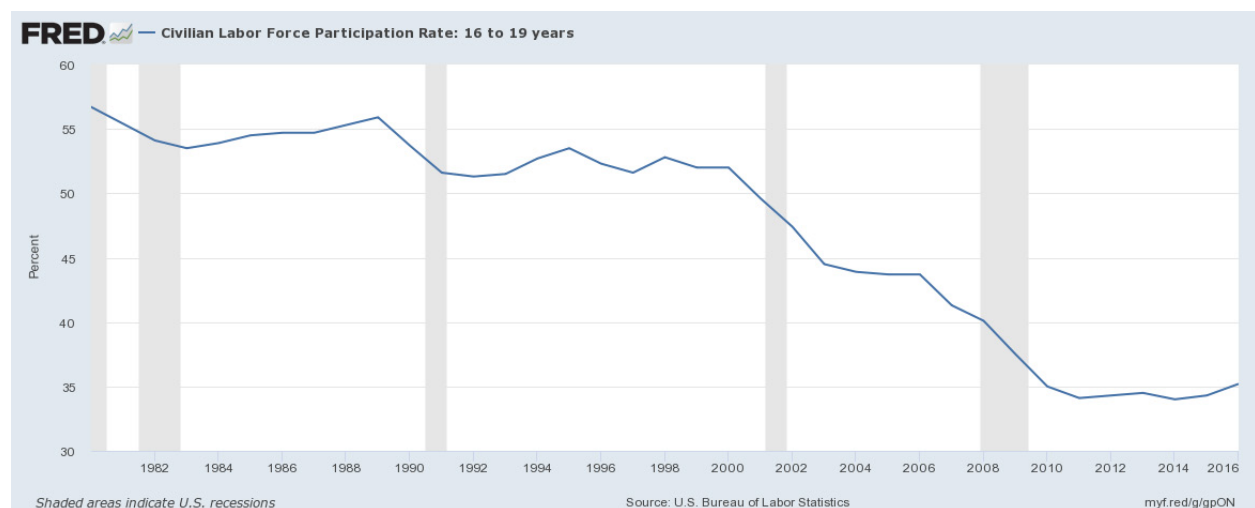


Figure 19 – Percentage of 16 – 19 year-olds unemployed during the summer

<sup>16</sup> <https://fred.stlouisfed.org>

One reason is that youths are investing more heavily in college preparatory activities. College admission is more competitive today and youths are spending more time in the classroom, in unpaid internships, and in other college application boosting activities. Figure 20 shows the degree to which summer jobs have decreased at the same time college admissions have increased.<sup>17</sup>

### Teen Participation Rate vs. Share of New High School Graduates in College

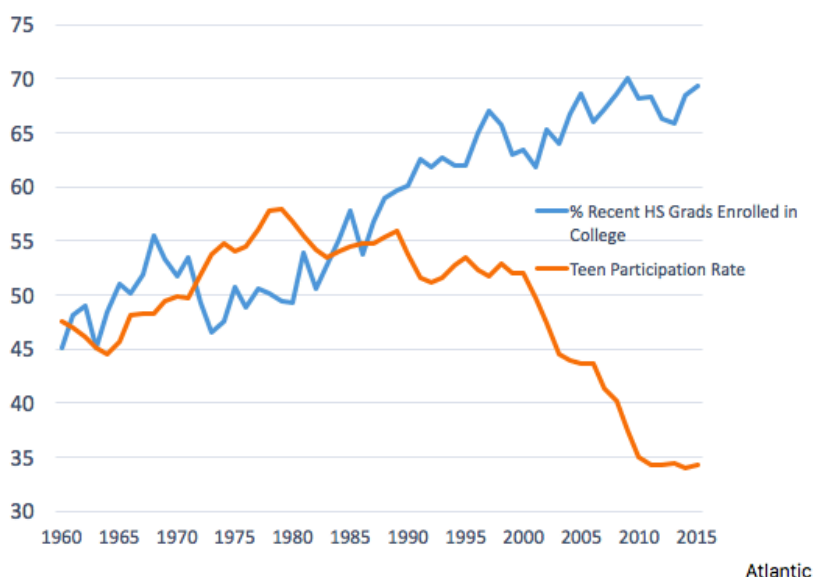


Figure 20 – Comparison of summer job participation and college enrollment

MBSYEP’s declining participation is consistent with national trends. The program’s emphasis on education and career exploration for high school age participants, as opposed to traditional jobs, is also consistent with national trends.

Perhaps ironically, another factor is the booming local economy. D.C. unemployment rate in April 2017 was 5.9% and unemployment is down across the board, including in Wards 7 and 8. Since 2015, unemployment has decreased from 11.8% to 9.1% in Ward 7 and from 14.6% to 11.4% in Ward 8. Given the booming job market and the financial incentive for youths to find a job outside of MBSYEP, it is likely that more potential participants are finding unsubsidized jobs than in the past.

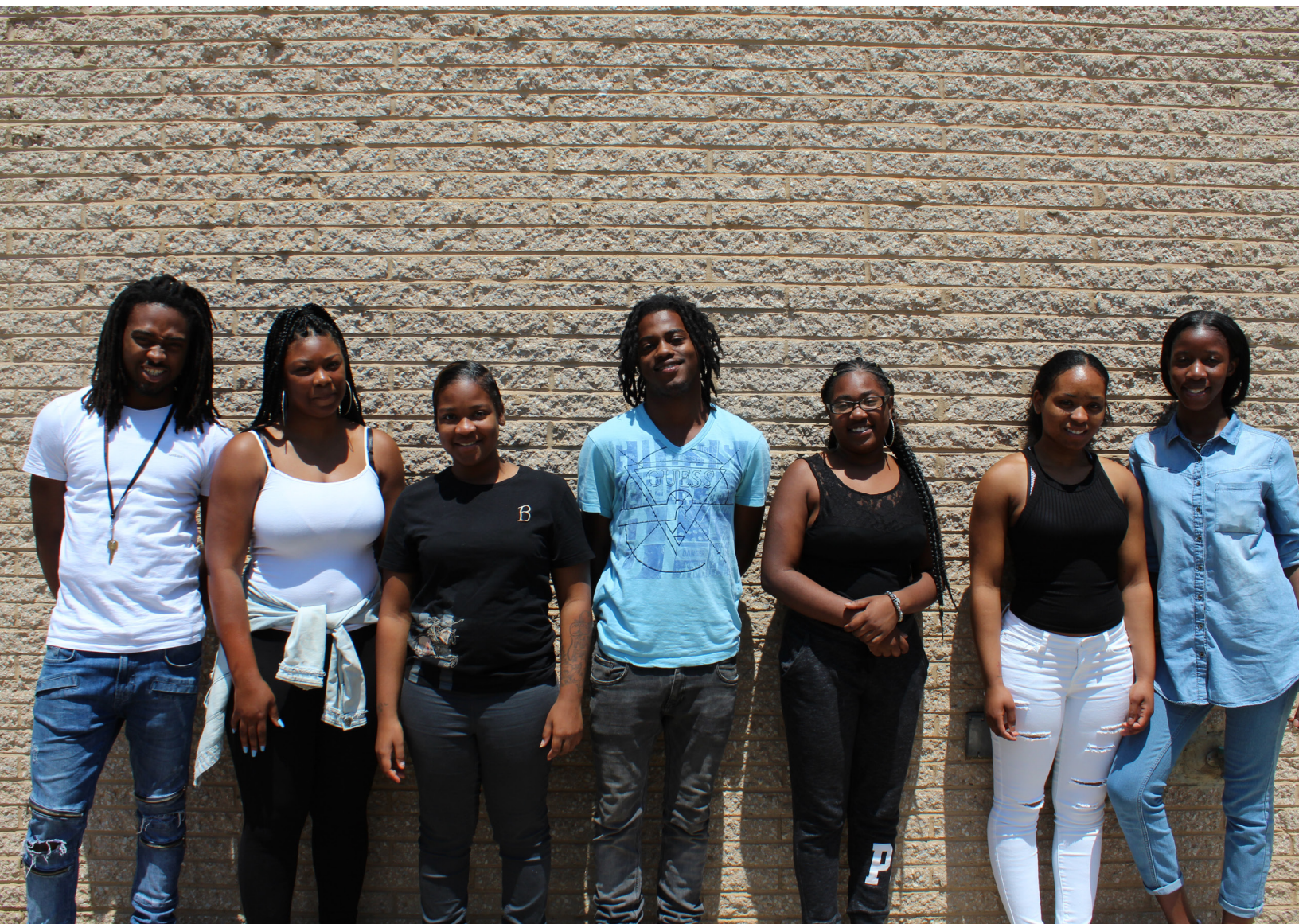
Finally, from a longer-term perspective, the demographics of Washington DC have changed, but the demographics of MBSYEP have not. According to the US. Census, D.C was 70% African American and 27% White in 1980. By 2016, D.C. was 48% African American and 45% White. The MBSYEP participants were 84% African America and only 1% White in 2017. Non-African American youths are an opportunity for growth that MBSYEP has not yet taken advantage of.

<sup>17</sup> Thompson, 2017

## INTERNAL FACTORS:

Internal factors affected MBSYEP performance in 2017 as well. As a condition of expanding the program to include 22 to 24-year olds, the DC council requested that the DC auditor review the program. As noted earlier, between 2016 and 2017, four separate audits were conducted on MBSYEP that resulted in MBSYEP being put on a corrective action plan (CAP) by DOES leadership.

Thus, in addition to their usual workload, staff were working with auditors and addressing the 69 findings covered by the 2016 evaluation and the corrective action plan. Typically, such a situation has significant organizational impact. However, in our meetings with MBSYEP, we were unable to qualify or quantify what impacts those factors had.



## SECTION 9: PREVIOUS EVALUATIONS & AUDITS

D.C. Code 32-244 requires that there be an analysis of previous MBSYEP evaluation recommendations along with steps taken to address them. Below are evaluators' recommendations from 2016 and BluePath Labs' assessment of MBSYEP's progress in each area.

### 2016 MBSYEP PROGRAM EVALUATION RECOMMENDATIONS

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1. Need for Strategic Planning: The current year plan provided a macro view of the major program steps to be taken and their due dates, but lacked specificity. A program of this size and magnitude needs a detailed written strategic plan, with short term and longer-term goals and objectives clearly stated.

2017 Finding: MBSYEP has not complied with this recommendation.

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2. Need for Enhanced Branding: Program branding should be enhanced to attract a wider array of employer employers. The current brand was developed years ago and does not convey the scope and importance of this program.

2017 Finding: MBSYEP is complying with this recommendation with a new branding and messaging campaign.

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3. Need for More Comprehensive Support for Youths with Disabilities: MBSYEP should develop a broader and more robust approach to supporting youths with disabilities. Current efforts address individual needs only as they are identified, often after placement.

2017 Finding: MBSYEP is complying with this recommendation, including bringing on a grant-funded employer specializing in working with disabled youth.

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4. Need to Enhance the Employer Orientation Process: Employers often do not attend an in-person orientation but instead review a PowerPoint orientation document. Supervisors who interface directly with youths often do not receive any orientation.

2017 Finding: MBSYEP is complying with this recommendation. In 2017 all employers attended an in-person orientation and training session. MBSYEP did not offer a tiered approach and some longtime employers complained. We concur with MBSYEP decision to require attendance at orientation in 2017, including for experienced employers due to the roll out of Career Edge.

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5. Enhance the Youth Orientation Process: Youths are required to participate in a brief orientation session provided by SYEP. This session provides basic information about the program's requirements and expectations, such as getting to work on time and dressing appropriately for work, but the process needs to be strengthened. This is especially important for youths entering the workforce for the first time.

2017 Finding: MBSYEP is complying with this recommendation. 12,890 youths took the mandatory Career Edge online orientation and gave it an average rating of 4.4 out of 5.

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6. Enhance Employer Recruitment: Outreach efforts are limited in breadth and scope, and many desirable employers are not contacted directly. Nor have potential employers been adequately analyzed, segmented, and mined.

2017 Finding: MBSYEP is partially complying with this recommendation by asking its liaisons to be more strategic in their employer relationships. Manpower is an issue, with 7 liaisons spread across over more than 500 employers.

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7. Consider Creating A Corporate Outreach Liaison Function. According to the 2014 US Census, there were over 22,000 private sector businesses operating in the District of Columbia. With fewer than 300 current private sector employers participating in the program in 2016, there is a substantial opportunity to grow the program to provide more opportunities to youths.

2017 Finding: MBSYEP is complying with this recommendation by hiring a corporate liaison.

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8. Recruitment of Youth: In 2015, the Office of the DC Auditor found that approximately 75 percent of youths determined eligible for SYEP resided in Wards 5, 7, and 8, and more than half of those resided in Wards 7 and 8. These statistics held true in 2016.

2017 Finding: MBSYEP is complying with this recommendation by advertising throughout the District. However, the results have lagged beyond MBSYEP traditional demographics and Wards.

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9. Standard Operating Procedures: Current SOPs do not provide detailed guidance on how to perform required tasks. While key staff members have largely been with OYP for a number of years and know their processes, more specific SOPs would promote consistency in execution and be helpful when staff members change.

2017 Finding: MBSYEP has SOPs and provided training on key processes last year. However, the staff still relies primarily on their experience to accomplish their tasks.

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10. Lack of Written Performance Metrics: Current plans provide a broad outline of tasks to be performed and due dates, but lack specific goals and outcomes.

2017 Finding: Complying with this recommendation will have to wait until MBSYEP develops a strategic plan tied to performance measures.

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11. Transfers and Consequential Payroll Issues: While OYP has made progress in reducing the number of youth transfers in 2016, many youth participants for various reasons continue to show up at workplaces other than the ones they were assigned to. Though SYEP has rules to prevent youths from getting paid by employers they were not originally assigned to, these rules are often not enforced. This subverts the job matching process.

2017 Finding: MBSYEP is largely complying with this recommendation, though individual situations sometimes mitigate rules. Overall, we found that MBSYEP prioritizes youth needs over compliance only when necessary.

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12. Youth Performance Evaluations Must Be Performed Consistently: OYP contacted employers to evaluate youths, but requests were not made uniformly for all participants. Employers reported that they were called randomly with requests for evaluations of some youths but not others.

2017 Finding: MBSYEP is partially complying with this recommendation by mandating that employers evaluate youths. However, MBSYEP cannot mandate that employers complete youth evaluations unless the employers are under contract. According to MBSYEP, only about 35% of participants will receive feedback. As discussed in recommendations, improving this process can be part of a larger quality assurance/performance management initiative that rewards deserving youths with helpful reviews.

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13. Tiered Placement of Youth: Currently, the process of assigning youths to jobs does not consider the level of effort and preparedness of each individual.

2017 Finding: MBSYEP is not complying with this recommendation and lacks the necessary operational framework to do so. Tiered placement of youths requires reliable youth evaluation feedback which the program currently does not have.

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14. Standardize Feedback Mechanisms for Program Enhancement: DOES holds employer focus groups and conducts surveys at the end of the program each year, but have engaged relatively few participants to obtain feedback. In 2015, only 20 of 706 employers attended a focus group and in 2016 only youths in the 22 to 24 age range were surveyed for feedback.

2017 Finding: MBSYEP is complying with this recommendation as demonstrated by the comprehensive surveys administered as part of this evaluation. Some stakeholders perceive a lack of follow-up on the feedback that was previously provided during after summer focus groups.

---

15. Improve Communication Between MBSYEP and Employer/Youth Participants: In some instances, program features were not communicated to employers until the day the program began. For example, in 2016, employers reported that they had no prior knowledge of OYP's plans for youths to go offsite for professional development activities and some older youths reported that they did not know that they would have job coaches.

2017 Finding: MBSYEP has rolled out a new communications plan (including branding and marketing) but communications still need improvement on all sides. Although Liaisons send out regular email communications, many employers seem to disregard them. 25% of participants surveyed were unaware that there was a hiring fair. The fact that Career Edge is not used after Orientation is due in part to employers' lack of adequate communication. On the other hand, employers want timelier communication about job assignments and acceptable eligibility documents, particularly for non-citizens.

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16. Increased Vetting of Service Delivery by CBO Sites: There is currently minimal vetting of the quality of CBO programs and analysis of actual service delivery. Furthermore, youth focus group participants reported that staff at one CBO were involved repeatedly in overt disagreements and arguments amongst themselves, and wore clothing that youths were prohibited from wearing.

2017 Finding: MBSYEP is partially complying with this recommendation as some of the program staff have educational backgrounds. Career Edge is intended to provide high quality curriculum to help improve CBO service delivery. But only 1,330 participants used it in 2017. We concur with the previous evaluation that additional steps need to be taken to improve CBO service delivery.

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17. Handbooks Should Be Posted Online in Advance: Employer and youth handbooks were not posted in their entirety on the OYP website in 2016.

2017 Finding: MBSYEP now posts handbooks online.

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18. Data Management Needs Improvement. There were 3,154 youth transfers in 2016, so that OYP staff had to process many payroll changes. Frequent timekeeping entry issues added to their administrative burden.

2017 Finding: MBSYEP is making these improvements, particularly with respect to time-keeping processes.

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19. Need for Single Sign-on for Employers: There are currently two portals for Employers—one for signing up as an employer and the other for time and attendance – but portal labels do not clearly designate content. This creates extra work for program liaisons because employers frequently call to ask where to find information that should be easily accessible.

2017 Finding: MBSYEP is partially complying with the recommendation. The functionality has not yet been updated, but information system upgrades are underway that should fix the problem. We concur with the previous evaluation that there should be a single, better-organized portal.

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20. Need for More Robust FAQs: Frequently Asked Questions (FAQs) for youth and their answers are less detailed and helpful as they could be. Participants report problems downloading W4 forms and difficulty completing them.

2017 Finding: MBSYEP is complying with this recommendation. FAQs are now available through the PeopleFirst portal.

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21. Robust Online Proof of Eligibility: Currently, documentation to establish youth eligibility must be presented in person. The fact that OYP's systems do not facilitate electronic submission of proof of eligibility and they are not integrated with those of other agencies which may have such data. This may contribute to attrition early in the process. According to SYEP, 6,060 youth were not eligible in 2015 because of failure to submit required eligibility documentation before the deadline. In 2016, that number grew to 7,798.

2017 Finding: MBSYEP is not complying with this recommendation and does not agree with it. Requiring robust quality assurance on the back-end is necessary to ensure validity of both the person and their residence. According to the survey, 97% of participants thought the document certification process was good or “ok.” We conclude that the youths who are eligible are fine with the existing process. However, we also note the significant drop-off between initial application and final certified participants. This attrition rate needs to be studied to understand the root cause. If the current eligibility process is found to be a significant barrier to otherwise legitimate youths obtaining jobs through MBSYEP, then the process should be reengineered.

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22. Consider the Potential Advantages of Instituting A Multi-Year Registration Capability: The current registration portal facilitates the tracking of current year activity only, which limits the ability of the agency to register employers for future years in advance.

2017 Finding: MBSYEP is complying with this recommendation. The portal recognizes returning users.

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23. Implement 100% Automated Timekeeping: Currently some employers complete manual timesheets. As a result, there are cases where OYP staff pick up timesheets from employer sites and then enter participants' time directly, which is inefficient.

2017 Finding: MBSYEP is complying with this recommendation to the extent that all employers must enter participants' time electronically. However, they also must fill out and submit paper timesheets, signed by the youth, via email, which is inefficient and time-consuming for employers. Youth should fill out their timesheets online and sign them electronically, after which employers should approve and sign them electronically. This is how the timekeeping process works in a typical professional environment and MBSYEP should adopt the same practice as a convenience to employers and a learning experience for participants.

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24. Position Profiles: While employers currently provide job descriptions, there are no requirements specifying the level of detail to be provided. Consequently, employers often provide such succinct descriptions that youths have no way of knowing what positions entail.

2017 Finding: MBSYEP is partially complying with the recommendation to the extent that information system upgrades are underway to fix the problem. Currently, the job description entry remains freeform, which complicates the analysis required by D.C. Code 32-244. Adopting standard fields for the job descriptions would improve the ability of participants to find jobs matching their interests and enable other data analytics as well.

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25. Youth Pay Issues: Youths did not always have their pay where they wanted it deposited. On numerous occasions, the first payment went to a Citibank card, even when the participant had selected a credit union for deposit.

2017 Finding: MBSYEP is correcting this problem. Other than some communications issues related to the Fourth of July week, few participants complained about payroll issues and only 2% of employers surveyed have found the payroll process to be poor.

Figure 21 – 2016 Evaluation Recommendations / 2017 Assessment

## 2016 EVALUATION RECOMMENDATIONS / 2017 ASSESSMENT

In addition to the recommendations from the 2016 independent evaluation, the four DC auditor reports from the past year contained 44 additional observations and recommendations. MBSYEP has concurred with and/or resolved most of the auditor's findings as a condition of exiting its management Corrective Action Plan (CAP). Several of the auditor's findings and recommendations were salient to the 2017 independent evaluation findings. Below are the relevant findings and recommendations, along with our assessment.

### Strategy Recommendations

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In 2016, 78% of MBSYEP participants' jobs were assigned to District government agencies and community-based nonprofit organizations. 19% were assigned to private companies and public charter schools, while the remaining 3% were assigned mainly to Federal Government agencies.

- DOES should intensify its efforts to recruit and develop employers that can provide high quality career exploration and work experience. We recommend working between summers to identify high-quality providers and offer them training and technical assistance.
- DOES should consider drawing on private-sector expertise to administer various aspects of MBSYEP to increase efficiency and effectiveness. Steps could include partnerships with business organizations or non-profit organizations to identify summer placements for youth, placing youth in those jobs, and monitoring implementation of the summer program, as well as handling such internal functions as payroll and timekeeping.

2017 Finding: Our evaluation identified the same issue with the employer mix and, through our detailed job analysis, we found that the work experience participants are gaining is often not typical of traditional employment environments. We agree that MBSYEP should develop a comprehensive strategy to increase private sector participation.

Underlying the allocation of high quality job opportunities is MBSYEP's highly complex job-matching process, which must consider job availability, transportation, career interests, and safety issues. A large volume of matching must occur in a very short time. Given the job-matching's complexities, it is not surprising that it was by far the worst-rated process by youths. Many were slotted into jobs they had no interest in by a process they did not understand. Employers also found it frustrating, with 14% saying it was done poorly, the second-worst score overall. MBSYEP should study possible ways to improve and explain this process to participants.

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D.C. policymakers should consider establishing a competitive, private-sector component of MBSYEP that would place students 16 years of age or older in summer jobs that could lead to full-time employment.

- DOES officials should seek to re-introduce unsubsidized summer placements to MBSYEP and gradually increase the number and percentage of positions that are unsubsidized or partly subsidized.
- The District should consider giving enrollment priority to youths who are low-income or otherwise disadvantaged, as defined by the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act.

2017 Finding: Nearly all MBSYEP staff felt the program could benefit from more competition, as did 47% of employers. Asked about increasing merit-based aspects to the program, support among employers rose to 76%. We agree that program participants would benefit from more competition/merit and in our recommendations, so we offer a strategy that would accomplish this.

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### Management Recommendations

DOES should expand the range of performance measures for MBSYEP by reporting annual data on program attrition, the number and percentage of placements in high-growth industry sectors, and the number and percentage of youths in unsubsidized or partly subsidized jobs. These measures would supplement the existing data on enrollment levels and youth and employer satisfaction.

2017 Finding: We concur with this finding and suggest that developing these performance measures be incorporated into the strategic planning process.

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DOES should consider providing the transportation subsidy via payroll rather than purchasing SmarTrip cards from WMATA, to better ensure the funds support only MBSYEP participants.

2017 Finding: There is substantial anecdotal evidence that transportation costs and logistics are a barrier to participants that the SmarTrip cards address. However, we also agree with the auditor that the potential for waste is high. We recommend MBSYEP reduce the value of the initial SmarTrip card to cover participants costs until they receive their first paycheck. Each paycheck throughout the summer would then include a stipend for transportation that is earned through work except for the final paycheck (which would provide the true-up for the initial SmarTrip card).

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DOES should contract for an independent evaluation of MBSYEP by June 1 of each year, as required by law, and ensure that the evaluation covers the operations and outcomes set forth in D.C. Official Code § 32-244.

2017 Finding: This independent evaluation meets the requirements of D.C. Code 32-244. In the future, we recommend contracting with the independent evaluator earlier in the year, possibly for a two-year term to reduce the learning curve and improve continuity. This would enable a more comprehensive pre-survey presence at such key Spring events as initial application, eligibility determination, and the career fair. It would also enable more longitudinal studies.

Figure 22 – Auditor Findings / 2017 Assessment

## SECTION 10: 2017 RECOMMENDATIONS

We found many opportunities to improve the program. Our top recommendations are:

- MBSYEP needs a strategic plan and a comprehensive project plan that the program uses for day to day management (including resourcing, dependencies, etc.). These are essential for effectively managing and continuously improving a program of this size, scope, and complexity. This was the first recommendation in the 2016 independent evaluation and it is this evaluation's number one recommendation as well. The strategic plan should include detailed performance measures. The recently released DCPS 2017-2022 "Capital Commitment Strategic Plan" can serve as a useful starting point, given its focus on youth outcomes in D.C.<sup>18</sup>
- The QA/QC processes need to be improved to deliver reliable and actionable data that improves the MBSYEP experience for both youths and employers. Current processes do not adequately assess quality. The program monitors lack the backgrounds necessary to assess program quality, nor are they asked to do so. Their QA/QC role is limited to addressing obvious deficiencies and issues. Participants do not evaluate specific employers and the job experiences they provided. Likewise, only an estimated 35% of participants are evaluated by their employers, and this data is not used by MBSYEP. The result is that MBSYEP lacks reliable data on the quality of jobs and the quality of participants. This data is the foundation needed to build merit based rewards into the program.
- MBSYEP should consider additional ways to reward good job performance (better pay, preference for jobs, etc.). 75% of employers agree and 47% also think more competition would be good (21% are uncertain). The DOES staff supports more competition as well but say they have been discouraged from incorporating it by District leaders in the past. Consider implementing an end of summer bonus program for participants whose employers 1) complete their comprehensive assessment, 2) give the participants a rating of "outstanding" and 3) meet time and attendance goals. This bonus process could be managed, as it is commercially, with the number of "outstanding" ratings capped. In the subsequent summer, participants who had an "outstanding" rating could also be given first preference in the job matching process by MBSYEP and be eligible for our next recommendation.
- MBSYEP should consider hiring a third party (non-profit, contractor, American Job Center) to recruit employers and match them with highly rated participants from previous years. Using a third party would eliminate a number of the DC specific barriers that are discouraging private sector participation. The program would work as follows:
  - o 3rd party/MBSYEP prescreens participants with heavy emphasis placed on their prior year MBSYEP evaluation, skills, interest, and workforce readiness.
  - o 3rd party sends prescreened youth to employers. Employers interview and hire these participants directly and pay them at least minimum wage. Because participants are hired directly by the employer, the employers and youth are not subject to MBSYEP rules governing work hours, background checks and related business processes.

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<sup>18</sup> [Dcps.dc.gov/capital commitment](https://dcps.dc.gov/capital-commitment)

† Employers win because they get a youth proven and prescreened by MBSYEP/3rd party and they are not subject to MBSYEP rules regarding hours and processes.

† The participant wins because they get paid more and get a better chance at a private sector full-time job. Youth also win because meritorious performance in MBSYEP one year leads to better opportunities in the following year.

† MBSYEP wins because it accomplished its mission while saving money.

- MBSYEP should improve the job matching process as previously discussed.
- MBSYEP should find a way to drive more youth interaction with the Career Edge learning portal after orientation or end the program.

#### Additional Recommendations:

- Study why there is a steep drop-off between applicants and participants each year.
- Study why some private sector employers register but fail to hire participants.
- Study why the quality of the summer job experience diminishes with the number of participants.
- Start the independent evaluation earlier, preferably prior to the career fair. MBSYEP should consider making the period of performance multi-year to enable more in-depth analysis that directly builds on previous evaluations.
- Reduce the value of the initial SmarTrip card to cover participants costs until they receive their first paycheck. Each paycheck throughout the summer would include a stipend for transportation that is earned through work, except for the final paycheck (which would provide the “true-up” for the initial SmarTrip card).
- Work with partner agencies and participants to alert employers to known issues youth may have.
- Adopt 100% electronic timekeeping. Do not require employers to email signed back-up copies.
- Create a single sign-on employer portal with improved organization.
- Refine current communications plan to address gaps identified in this evaluation, including 1) lack of career fair awareness 2) confusion around job matching process, 3) confusion around eligibility documentation requirements for non-US citizens 4) outreach to different demographics
- Adopt standard fields for the job descriptions.
- Document feedback received internally and externally from focus groups etc. and provide resolution reports at least annually to the applicable focus groups so employees and employers know that MBSYEP both considers and, as appropriate, acts on the recommendations and feedback of its stakeholders.

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## APPENDIX: EDUCATIONAL ANALYSIS

Programs such as MBSYEP are evaluated using either of two major methodologies: Impact Evaluations or Performance Evaluations. Impact Evaluations are the more rigorous and prove that a given outcome was caused by the program being evaluated. Summer youth employment programs such as those in New York and Chicago use a lottery system to assign youths into the program randomly. The random nature of the lottery makes it possible to compare youth who take part in the program with those who do not. Thus New York, Chicago, and other cities that use lotteries for their youth employment programs have been able to do Impact Evaluations.

The Impact Evaluations that we reviewed have not shown evidence that SYEP programs significantly improve educational outcomes. Because MBSYEP allows universal admittance, we could not conduct an Impact Evaluation.

Instead, we used the data gathered by the Department of Labor's American Community Survey (ACS). The ACS 2014/2015 provided us with detailed data from Ward 7 & 8 including educational attainment for the 18-to-24 population. We used this ACS data to create a control group of 18,349 residents aged 18-24 in Ward 7 & 8.

We then identified from MBSYEP data 4,075 from participants from the same Wards, age range, and timeframe. The 4,075 MBSYEP participants we found represented 22% of the ACS control group. We had educational attainment information on both groups which we then compared.

Initially, the MBSYEP group showed less educational achievement. However, we noticed that the MBSYEP groups average age in 2014 was only 19. If the ACS control group's age has a normal distribution, their average age is 21. It is not surprising that the ACS cohort at an average age of 21 would have more educational achievement than the MBSYEP cohort whose average age was only 19.

Many of the MBSYEP cohort return year after year. As the MBSYEP cohort gets older, more of them hit educational milestones such as graduating from High School and entering college. We were able to track this progression as shown in Figure 21.

By MBSYEP 2016, the average age of 2014 cohorts was 21, making it a better comparison year against our ACS control group. Comparing the two groups at age parity showed the MBSYEP participants were 26% more likely to pursue post-secondary education ( $.42 / .333 = 1.26$  or 26%) and were 3.5% more likely to graduate from high school ( $.771 / .745 = 1.035$  or 3.5%)



Ward 7 & 8 2014 ACS DATA	Progression of 2014 MBSYEP Participants				
	Control Age 21*	2014 Avg. Age 19	2015 Age 20	2016 Age 21	2017 Age 22
Population 18 to 24 years					
Less than high school graduate	26%	46%	32%	23%	20%
High school graduate (includes equivalency)	41%	23%	29%	35%	38%
Some college or associate's degree	29%	31%	38%	41%	40%
Bachelor's degree or higher	4%	0%	1%	1%	3%
Total	18,349	4,075	4,075	4,075	4,075

Figure 21 - Educational Progression Longitudinal Analysis

The difference in educational attainment between the two groups is understated because 41% of the 2014 participants we tracked had left the program before the “age parity” year in 2016. Any additional educational achievement on their part was not captured in this analysis. Regardless, the MBSYEP cohort continued their progress in 2017, and they are on track to earn a much higher percentage of college degrees than the ACS control group.

Why did our analysis show an educational impact while statistically more rigorous Impact Evaluations of other programs did not? Two possible explanations we considered are:

1. The analysis depends on the key assumption that the ACS control group has an average age of 21.
2. The lottery based admittance systems of other SYEP programs which enable impact evaluations may also inadvertently eliminate the educational impacts of the programs. In DC, participants and their parents can rely on MBSYEP as an educational pathway beginning at 14 and continuing to 24. This pathway does not exist for youth in other cities.

While not an impact evaluation, this analysis provides evidence that D.C. taxpayers are getting a good return on their investment in MBSYEP. This analysis also supports many of the evaluation’s qualitative findings, including where non-profits stated they used MBSYEP as an important bridge to remain productively engaged with participants through the summer.