LEVERAGING STRENGTHS AND EXPANDING OPPORTUNITIES: An Effective Approach to Youth Workforce Development

MARCH 2018 - Geography plays a major role in determining access to stable work. Nearly 1 in 5 young people, ages 16 - 24, in the Central Bronx and East New York, Brooklyn are “disconnected”—neither in school, nor working—and excluded from pathways to steady employment and mobility. Good Shepherd Services has designed a community-based employment program to address the needs and aspirations of system-involved young people in those neighborhoods, most of whom are not the recruitment focus of traditional youth employment programs, including those on probation in our transformational mentoring programs, those who are gang-involved in our violence interruption programs, and young people in our foster care and residential programs. We have developed a flexible, multi-tiered training & apprenticeship program that combines social & emotional learning, and social capital and skill development with apprenticeship opportunities that lead to employment.

**OUR IMPACT (FY17)**

We help young people break into growth sectors with career paths through coaching, access to certification and on-the-ground experience, helping them chart their own course.

![Image](image.png)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>302</th>
<th>Young people trained</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>75%</td>
<td>employed or enrolled in education</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>89%</td>
<td>earned job-specific certifications</td>
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**OUR MODEL**

Good Shepherd Services’ workforce model is developmental and dynamic, combining research-informed youth development strategies with what employers need in terms of entry-level qualifications and competencies. We meet participants where they are, and work with them to build the skills and aptitudes required by employers.

- **Learning by doing**: Young adults learn best when they have opportunities to practice new skills and behaviors.
- **Stages of change**: Informed by behavior change theory, our programming is designed to meet participants where they are in terms of their readiness, willingness, and ability to engage.
- **Cohort-based design**: Our training occurs in cohorts to foster a sense of belonging, shared purpose and interdependence. Being part of a tight-knit, reliable group of peers with a common goal enhances young adult learners’ skill development and positively impacts their persistence with a program.
- **Life coaching**: Participants are assigned a coach whose responsibility it is to support, guide, motivate, advise, role model and consistently show up for them. Relationships with pro-social adults and peers are key to young people’s capacity to feel connected, navigate day-to-day challenges and engage in productive activities.
- **Neighborhood-based approach**: Our programs are based initially in the neighborhoods where are participants live or go to school. Our training works with participants, training them to successfully enroll in apprenticeship and internship opportunities outside their communities, as we continue to provide coaching and advisement.

**GSS EMPLOYMENT PROGRAM STRUCTURE**

**RECRUITMENT**
- Outreach and networking between GSS programs
- Rolling admission to allow for cohort-building and enable participants to recruit peers

**PRE-APPRENTICESHIP TRAINING**
- Cohort-based and youth development informed
- Job readiness + soft skill development
- Line-of-sight supervision
- Industry-specific preparation
- Stipend for completion

**APPRENTICESHIP + PROFESSIONAL COACHING**
- Weekly supervision to track progress in competency-building
- Weekly Career Club to reflect on workplace experience with peers
- Access to further education training + certification programs

**POST-COMPLETION SUPPORT & RESOURCES**
- Modeled after college alumni services
- Continued coaching + advisement to support job/career growth and advancement

**SOURCES**

2. System-involved refers to those young people who are currently entangled, or have a history of entanglement, in the child welfare, juvenile justice and/or criminal justice systems, including those on probation, in detention, or in placement.
3. For FY17, total served figure includes ACE, Assist, Good Work and Rebound; employed or enrolled outcome is for Rebound; and certifications outcome is for Assist. FY18 stats will include all programs where outcome is applicable.
WHY OUR MODEL IS SUCCESSFUL

✓ Based on local & regional labor demands: Research shows that graduates of employer-driven programs earn significantly more, are more likely to work, work more consistently and, in their second year, earn higher wages, work more, and are more likely to have jobs with benefits than control group members.\(^9\) Our goal is to train young people to meet the specific qualifications our employers seek in their entry-level employees, addressing our partners’ HR needs. To date, our partners include companies and organizations in hospitality/food service, aviation services, building management and childcare services, and we have developed an in-house barber school in our ACE program (see below).

✓ Reciprocal relationships with employers: Employment tends to be path dependent; those with more work experience are more likely to work.\(^10\) That’s why we work closely with employers who have hiring needs, co-designing training activities and placing participants in roles that directly meet their HR needs. This increases the likelihood of our graduates’ successful attachment to employment upon completion, and it’s good for employers.

✓ Designed to address participants’ developmental needs, interests and experience of trauma: The young people with whom we work face elaborate and complex barriers to employment, including trauma, alienation from pro-social supports, and entanglement in juvenile and criminal justice systems. As a result, we use a trauma-informed approach that fosters self-awareness, growth, healing and social and emotional skill development. Furthermore, we are flexible in tailoring individualized apprenticeship opportunities for participants whose interests are outside the sectors we have available.

✓ Training for success in the workplace: We place a deep emphasis on preparing participants for the norms, unwritten rules and expectations of the workplace, so they not only get the job but keep it. Recognizing social capital as the value of our connections with people, institutions and organizations and an asset for career and job prospecting, we intentionally integrate social capital development into program activities, supporting young people in learning about the value of cultivating relationships that will serve them into the future.

OUR NETWORK OF YOUTH WORKFORCE PROGRAMS

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SOURCES (cont’d)
