



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.¹ 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.² 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)³

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.

302

Young people trained

75% 89%

employed or enrolled in education

earned job-specific certifications

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.⁴ Our model employs the following evidence-based practices and strategies:

- ✓ **Learning by doing:** Young adults learn best when they have opportunities to practice new skills and behaviors.⁵ Our participants begin with pre-apprenticeship training designed as a true work environment with expectations to meet, projects to complete, deadlines to honor, and colleagues to work with.
- ✓ **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.⁶ Participants move through phases, building and practicing new competencies as they go. If they disengage or drop out, they can always earn their way back in. We have a no-reject/no eject policy.
- ✓ **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.⁷
- ✓ **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.⁸
- ✓ **Neighborhood-based approach:** Our programs are based initially in the neighborhoods where 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



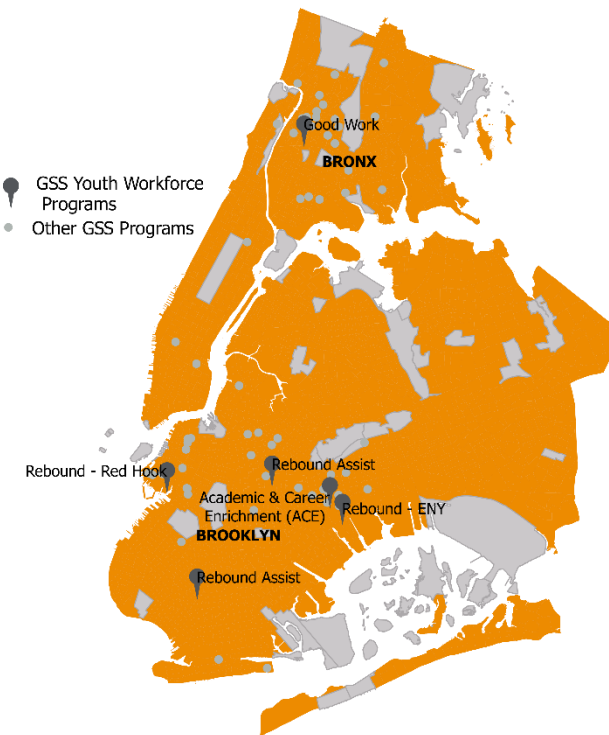
SOURCES

¹ American Community Study, 2016. 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. ⁴ Holzer, Harry. “Sector-based Training Strategies: The Challenges of Matching Workers and Their Skills to Well-paying Jobs.” Georgetown University, 2015. ⁵ Conlan, J., et al. Current Trends in Adult Education in M. Orey (ed.) Emerging Perspectives on Learning, Teaching and Technology, 2003.

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



We tailor our strategies to meet the needs of **different target groups** and **neighborhoods**:

ACE (East New York) provides job readiness training to young people in GSS' transformational mentoring programs for justice-involved youth (AIM, Arches + Next Steps) and to young people leaving Rikers Island. Distinct program features: in-house high-school equivalency (TASC) prep course, partnership with programs providing industry-specific trainings, and deep ties to local employers in the community who are looking to fill entry-level openings. Ages 17-24.

Good Work (Central Bronx) GSS' first sector-based employment program launched 3 years ago to provide structured, employer-driven workforce training and coaching opportunities to young people in our Family Foster Care and BRAG/Cure Violence programs. Good Work partners with employers to co-create training activities and apprenticeship opportunities for young people aging out of foster care and those who are street-involved. Ages 17-24.

Rebound Assist (Bedford-Stuyvesant + Borough Park) provides a path for YABC students who want to work before, or instead of, college. The program serves young people who are over-aged, under-credited and working toward their diploma, offering them training, certification opportunities and sector-based apprenticeships. Participants have the mutually enhancing support of a Rebound job coach to help them build employment skills, and a YABC advocate counselor to guide them through to graduation. Ages 17-21.

Bridge-to-Employment Program

Rebound (Red Hook + East New York) uses basketball and dance to engage disconnected or ambivalent young people and as a foundation for teaching teamwork and leadership. Participants develop social and emotional skills while enhancing their job readiness through structured workshops and one-on-one coaching. Graduates are encouraged to enroll in ACE or other GSS sector-based training if they haven't found employment or enrolled in school upon completing the program. Ages 17-24.

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SOURCES (cont'd)

⁶ Prochaska, J., et al. *The Revolutionary Program that Explains the Six Stages of Change and Teaches You How to Free Yourself from Bad Habits*. New York: W. Morrow, 1994. ⁷ Drago-Severson, Eleanor, et al. The Power of a Cohort and of Collaborative Groups. National Center for the Study of Adult Learning and Literacy, Vol. 5, Issue B, October 2001. ⁸ Gambone, Michelle, et al. Finding Out What Matters for Youth: Testing Key Links in a Community Action Framework for Youth Development. Philadelphia: Youth Development Strategies, Inc., and Institute for Research and Reform in Education, 2002.

⁹ Sheila Maguire, Joshua Freely, Carol Clymer and Maureen Conway. *Job Training That Works: Findings from the Sectoral Employment Impact Study Public/Private Ventures Issue Brief*, May 2009. ¹⁰ Sum, Andrew, et. al. The Path Dependence of Teen Employment in the U.S.: Implications for Youth Workforce Development Policy. Center for Labor Market Studies, Northeastern University, 2007