



Business Needs. Youth Experience.

BrookLynk Youth Employment Program Year to Date
EVALUATION

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Executive Summary

In November of 2014 the Brooklyn Bridge Alliance for Youth Board of Directors approved the launch of a 2-year project with two goals: 1) Customize the Minneapolis STEP-UP model for the cities of Brooklyn Center and Brooklyn Park and 2) Build capacity amongst the Alliance partners to sustain this program. With technical support from Minneapolis STEP-UP staff were able to launch BrookLynk in less than 2 months. Staff also learned what supports will be needed to sustain BrookLynk in years to come. The following is a comprehensive internal evaluation of both the BrookLynk program and capacity building efforts from January 2015-August 2015.

Data indicate that initial objectives for customizing the STEP-UP program model have been successful and that significant progress has been made in building capacity. What follows is a summary of results from the two major goal areas 1) Program implementation and 2) Capacity-building activities.

100% of supervisors would participate in BrookLynk again

100% of interns would recommend BrookLynk to a friend

Program Results Summary

The success of BrookLynk hinges on participation from both youth and employers. In the first year the program exceeded internships participation goals. Additional data on program quality and the impact on participants, suggest that while there are areas for program quality to improve, participants were positively impacted.

Youth Participation

BrookLynk served youth 14-19, who were underserved and had at least one barrier to employment. Several youth were identified as Opportunity Youth (out of mainstream school or county involved youth).

- 234 youth applied for Get Ready! Work Readiness Training.
- 80 youth completed both days of Get Ready! work readiness training. Roughly 40% of the youth who applied attended. This is a similar attrition rate as STEP-UP
- 29 youth were matched to summer internship opportunities, the initial goal was 20
- 25 youth completed the entire summer internship (86% completion rate)

Community Participation

The following education, business, and community partners offered internships and supervisors/mentors for youth.

Business Partners

- Boston Scientific
- TNA Carpet

Education Partners

- Brooklyn Center Community Schools
- Hennepin Technical College
- North Hennepin Community College

Community Partners

- City of Brooklyn Center Building and Community Standards
- City of Brooklyn Center Fire Department
- City of Brooklyn Park Community Engagement Initiative
- City of Brooklyn Park Recreation and Parks
- Hennepin County Service Center
- Hennepin County Public Works
- Hennepin County Brookdale Library

Quality Assessment

The Youth Program Quality Assessment (PQA)® a validated youth program quality internal-assessment was completed during one of the work readiness trainings and one of the weekly intern check-ins. The internship was not assessed although this is where the youth spend the majority of their time. In both assessments the program scored highest in Safe Environment and Supportive Environment domains. The program scored slightly lower in the Interaction and Engagement domains. Changes to BrookLynk are underway to increase youth interaction and engagement.

Youth Outcomes

Participating youth gained work readiness and social-emotional learning skills, financial benefits, and social connections. The majority of youth were satisfied with their internship experiences.

- 100% of interns would recommend BrookLynk to a friend
- 100% of interns agreed that they received enough training and support to successfully complete their internships
- 96% of interns stated that their internship helped them increase the number of professionals in their social network
- Interns rated the BrookLynk program 4.4 out of 5 (1 being poor, 5 being excellent)
- Interns rated supervisors 4.4 out of 5 (1 being poor, 5 being excellent)
- 76% of supervisors said their intern(s) were prepared to enter the workforce
- The majority of interns were rated by their supervisors as having gained at least 30 out of the 40 assessed career skills
- The median internship salary was \$1000

Business Outcomes

Employers were satisfied with the program and their intern(s).

- 100% of supervisors would like to participate in the BrookLynk program again
- 100% of supervisors expressed that their intern provided great benefits to their organization, department, and work
- 100% of supervisors responded that their interns were the best part of their internship experiences

- Over 90% of supervisors reported that they were satisfied with the support they received from BrookLynk
- 90% of supervisors reported that their interns met or exceeded their expectations of job responsibilities and workload
- Almost 85% stated that their interns were good matches for their organizations

“(Our intern) helped us to create a welcoming and inclusive environment for students... we could never quantify how much value she brought to our organization.”

- BrookLynk Employer

Capacity Building Results Summary

Capacity building was measured by identifying program costs, assessing the degree of success in customizing Minneapolis STEP-UP and identifying the supports BrookLynk will need to operate long-term.

Results indicate that the degree of support for BrookLynk is high. Also, there were several resources identified that were not leveraged due to short implementation timelines. BrookLynk implemented two key changes to the STEP-UP model that had a positive effect on program outcomes 1) Weekly intern check-ins and 2) Integrating Measures of Human Achievement (MHA) a shared framework for 21st Century skill-building.

Degree of Supports

- The degree of support from employers was high. There was notable interest from the business community; so much so that BrookLynk staff secured 32 internships in less than 2 months.
- Alliance partners also showed a high degree of support. They provided use of their facilities, transportation, and printing resources upon request.
- The degree of support from partnerships to implement program components such as youth outreach or co-training was medium. Staff indicated that the extremely short implementation timeline made coordination of partnerships challenging.

Program Costs

- Revenue, costs, in-kind, and partnerships were identified and accounted for.
- Program costs were decreased when staff created successful partnerships.
- First year costs per youth were higher than cost estimates from STEP-UP. This was due to two factors 1) Start-up costs and 2) Untapped partnerships.

Political Will

- Staff report an increase in political will as measured by the increasingly broad base of stakeholders who support the program. Including parents and grandparents of program participants, some of which sent “thank you” cards to BrookLynk staff.
- One important aspect of political will identified during this evaluation was the customer satisfaction results gathered from youth, employers, Alliance partners,

and the community. Overall customer satisfaction was high as measured by program quality, youth outcomes and business outcomes.

- Alignment of resources was a key objective. Staff has 'mapped' state and local resources and has taken steps in aligning those resources.

Program Customization

- BrookLynk developed a customized logic model, program process map and a comprehensive evaluation plan.
- A Branding process created a program name, logo, and tagline. The process itself was instrumental in sharpening program focus.
- MHA 21st Century Skill building was added to work readiness training tools adopted from STEP-UP.
- The matching process was similar to Minneapolis STEP-UP. Nearly 85% of the supervisors agreed their intern was a good match.
- Short timelines for onboard youth interns were challenging for many employers (69%), most of which were employing a high school intern for the first time (92%).
- Unlike STEP-UP, BrookLynk internships were not separated into three tiers (Achieve, Discover, and Explore). More development in this area is needed.
- A weekly check-in during the internship period was added to the BrookLynk program, along with enrichment opportunities (financial literacy workshop, college visits, career fair). Youth participation was not required, and in general was low (55%). Interns who attended reported that they developed a sense of belonging and mutual support, were able to share and reflect on their experiences, discuss solutions to problems they were facing, and work on improving career skills.

Summary

Results indicate significant progress made in customizing STEP-UP and in building capacity to sustain BrookLynk.

The next steps in evaluating this program include understanding which program changes most improve youth and business participation, developing methods for tracking long-term student results, and further exploring how measuring social and emotional learning skills, such as grit, contribute to improved program outcomes.

Finally, as BrookLynk enters its second year of operation staff will prioritize and implement nearly 80 suggestions for program improvement identified in this evaluation. These improvements range from expanding outreach efforts in partnership with High School Career Resource Centers to continuing to ensure a positive experience for employers.

The following is an in depth report that documents and expands on the aforementioned results.

INTRODUCTION

Background

In a study of 400 companies across the country, employers reported that for the top skills they rated as very important, young people with only a high school degree scored deficient on all of them, including written communications, professionalism/work ethic, oral communications, ethics/social responsibility, teamwork/collaboration, and diversity (Casner-Lotto & Benner, 2006). From the Alliance's discussions with companies and local businesses in the Brooklyns, teenage youth in the two cities lack the same work readiness skills.

A population of special interest is opportunity (or disconnected) youth: young people between the ages of 16 to 24 who are not currently enrolled in school nor participating in the labor market (Belfield, Levin, & Rosen, 2012). The Congressional Research Survey (CRS 2009, Table A-1) estimates that 8% to 15% of 16-24 year olds are disconnected youth. The rates are significantly higher for minorities, immigrant youth, and urban youth. Many lack strong social networks that help to provide employment connections and other supports.

Alliance members recognize these needs and have efforts in place to address them, yet these efforts are not coordinated, marketed, or sustained/funded. The Alliance staff was tasked with developing a youth employment program for middle and high school aged youth who live in or go to school in the Brooklyns that prepares them with skills, ignites their motivations, and creates social connections to employment and college. This program has three components: 21st century skill building, experiential employment opportunities and local coordination.

The BrookLynk Youth Employment Program was designed to especially provide opportunities to youth with barriers to employment and who were at risk of becoming disconnected: those experiencing homelessness, who were no longer enrolled in mainstream high schools, teen parents, and youth involved in the county foster care or juvenile corrections systems.

Although the Alliance launched BrookLynk this year, and will operate it in 2016, the cities of Brooklyn Center and Brooklyn Park intend to take ownership of the program the following year. This evaluation will help answer key questions about capacity building and program development to facilitate the transition in 2017.

Program Description

The BrookLynk Youth Employment Program has three main components: pre-employment training, experiential employment opportunities, and local coordination. Youth participate in two days of work readiness trainings, including a separate day of mock interviews. Some of those students are then matched with a local employer and supervisor to participate in a paid summer internship program. Students attend regular check-in's to reflect and learn about their experiences. Local coordination involves promotion of the trainings, recruitment of businesses, continuous improvement efforts, and developing partnerships within the community.

Program Goals

1. Short-term Outcomes
 - a. Increased income (wealth creation) for targeted youth
 - b. Increase in targeted youth with work readiness training and early internship experiences (STEM, IT, government, education, manufacturing, service, etc.)
 - c. Increase in a more skilled and diverse workforce
 - d. Increase of new jobs in the community (job creation)
2. Long-term Outcomes
 - a. Increased opportunities for employment for youth
 - b. Increase in youth graduating from high school
 - c. Increase in youth pursuing post-secondary education to support career development

Project Description

The Brooklyn Bridge Alliance for Youth Board authorized the Alliance staff to implement a two-year capacity building project that would utilize best practices and technical assistance from STEP-UP in Minneapolis to create a Youth Employment Program, to be managed and funded by the Alliance for Youth in 2015, 2016 and be transferred to City partners to manage and fund in 2017.

Project Goals

1. Capacity Building Project
 - a. Determine the degree of support from the private sector and Alliance partners who will contribute key resources towards implementation.
 - b. Determine exact costs of this program as implemented in the Brooklyns to determine feasibility for the Cities absorbing the program.
 - c. Understand the results, benefits, and value-add to the Community and if this is direction policymakers should support.
 - d. Align local municipalities and county resources, both policy and practice, to support this work.
2. Customize the STEP-UP model to the Brooklyns
 - a. Create a clear pathway to career and college and ensure the connection between early employment experiences and education.
 - b. Build internships with local businesses.
 - c. Develop pre-employment training and coordinate already existing trainings.

Research Framework for Building Pathways to College & Career

One of the goals of the Alliance is to increase young people's pathways to college and career. Using research about college and career readiness frameworks, including those from the Educational Policy Improvement Center (EPIC) and MHA Labs (Means and Measures of Human Achievement), the Alliance developed a Pathway to College and Career Framework.

In addition to the traditional academic benchmarks (high school graduation, ACT/SAT, college prerequisite courses) our framework includes 3 additional components:

- 21st Century Skills
 - Personal Mindset
 - Planning for Success
 - Social Awareness
 - Verbal Communication
 - Collaboration
 - Problem Solving
- College Transitional Skills
 - College-Career Awareness
 - Procedural Issues
 - Financial Issues
 - College Cultural Norms
 - Academic Skills
- Career Specific Transition Skills
 - Career-College Awareness
 - Procedural Issues
 - Work Navigation Skills
 - Workplace Cultural Norms

These concepts are learned best by young people using both classroom and experiential learning opportunities (e.g. Postsecondary Enrollment Options, internships). This framework was used to inform the design and development of BrookLynk.

EVALUATION PURPOSE

The purpose of this document is to report on the evaluation and measurement of various components of the BrookLynk Youth Employment Program. The results of this evaluation will be disseminated to Alliance members and funders to report participation and outcome information, and success of modeling our program after STEP-UP Minneapolis. The evaluation will also be used to improve the program experience for students, employers, the community, and staff. Since this is the first year, we will create and pilot evaluation tools and refine our evaluation methodology. And finally, the evaluation will inform the Alliance's efforts to help the two cities build capacity to take ownership of the program in 2017.

The goals of the evaluation are to:

- Track number, participation, and demographics of youth served
- Document program activities and processes
- Establish tools and methods, and collect data for program continuous quality improvement
- Measure program, youth, and community outcomes and impacts

CORE EVALUATION QUESTIONS

The core evaluation questions were developed with guidance from Alliance Executive Leadership Team's *Recommendations for Youth Employment Program Implementation* and from stakeholder reporting requirements.

- **Youth Participation:** Did targeted youth (underserved, with employment barriers, Opportunity Youth) participate in the program?
- **Community Participation:** Did education, business, and other community partners participate in the program?
- **Quality Assessment:** What was the level of quality for our program services?
- **Youth Outcomes:** In what ways did the participating youth gain the necessary work readiness and social-emotional learning skills, financial benefits, and social connections as an outcome of the program to prepare them for jobs? Were they satisfied with their internship experiences?
- **Business Outcomes:** Were employers satisfied with their experiences with the program and the interns?
- **Capacity Building:** What are the degree of supports, program costs, and political will necessary to operate this customized model effectively and efficiently for the Brooklyns?
- **Process Evaluation:** What did we do to customize the Minneapolis STEP-UP model for the Brooklyns? How well did the customized process work?

EVALUATION METHODS

The following data collection methods and assessments were used during evaluation of each phase of the program.

- *Google Forms:* Applications from participants were accepted online via Google Forms and in paper form at the beginning of the program to collect participation and demographic data.
- *YPQA Self-Assessment:* A YPQA self-assessment was conducted to assess quality during the one of the work readiness training days and one of the weekly intern check-ins.
- *Work Readiness Training Survey*
 - Youth Survey: Program evaluations were completed by students on the trainings to collect participation and outcome data and program experience data for quality and process evaluation.
 - Trainer Survey: Program evaluations were completed by trainers to collect program experience data for quality and process evaluation.
- *Mock Interview Survey*
 - Youth Survey: Students were asked to complete evaluations on the mock interviews to collect participation data and program experience data for quality and process evaluation.
 - Interviewer Survey: Interviewers were asked to complete evaluations on the mock interviews to collect program experience data for quality and process evaluation.

- *Check-in Attendance:* Check-in participation data was collected by the program coordinator.
- *Business Participation:* Internship participation data was collected by the program coordinator.
- *Intern Performance Reviews:* At the end of the program, supervisors rated interns on the MHA Labs Competencies and the results were collected for use in outcome evaluation.
- *Internship Survey:*
 - Interns were asked to complete surveys at the end of the program on their internships to track output and outcome data, and program experience data for quality and process evaluation.
 - Supervisors were asked to complete surveys at the end of the program on their internships to track output and outcome data, and program experience data for quality and process evaluation.
- *Process Evaluation Questionnaire:* The program coordinator was asked to complete a process evaluation questionnaire on the entire Brooklynk Program.
- *Capacity Building Questionnaire:* The program coordinator and executive director were asked to complete a capacity building evaluation questionnaire on the degree of support, program costs, and political will necessary to operate BrookLynk.

RESULTS

The following section details the results for each core evaluation question.

Youth Participation

Did targeted youth (underserved, with employment barriers, Opportunity Youth) participate in the program?

In the inaugural year of the BrookLynk program, 234 youth applied to participate in the Get Ready! Work Readiness Training. Eighty-seven percent (87%) were students of color and twenty-six (26%) were from immigrant families. Eighty (80) youth completed both days of training. All of the students had a least one barrier to employment and/or were recruited through our Pohlard grant-funded partners at Avenues for Homeless Youth, Brooklyn Center Academy, and Hennepin Technical College's Gateway to College Program. Twenty-nine (29) of those students were matched with paid internships for the summer and eighty-six (86%) completed the entire program.

Youth Outreach

By the end of April, 234 youth applied to participate in the BrookLynk Get Ready! Work Readiness Training. The youth who applied represented a total of 38 middle, junior high, and high schools in the Northwest Metro Area, mostly in Brooklyn Center and Brooklyn Park. Participants are required to either live in, or go to school in, Brooklyn Center and Brooklyn Park, and have one barrier to employment. Other output data is summarized below:

Grade

8 th	10%
9 th	20%
10 th	28%
11 th	22%
12 th	16%
Graduated, no college	2%
Not currently enrolled in school	2%

Race/Ethnicity

Hmong	7%
Hispanic or Latino	6%
Black or African American	56%
African	7%
American Indian or Alaskan Native	4%
White or European American	13%
Other	2%

Barriers to Employment

Qualify for Free/Reduced Lunch	74%
Immigrant (Family or Youth)	26%
First in Family to Graduate from High School	12%
First in Family to Attend College	22%
Have an IEP or Disability	9%
Dropped Out of High School	7%
Homeless	6%

Partnering with schools and college and career resource centers proved to be the most beneficial youth outreach strategy. This is especially true if there is a key adult with relationships to the target population of youth, who could provide personal recruitment. Out of the 234 youth who applied for the program, 112 were referred by 40 different individuals and organizations.

We also learned that schools and organizations without strong relationships with students had poorer outreach outcomes. Even with similar marketing materials or number of contacts, there were fewer students referred from those places who applied for the program.

However, most of our outreach efforts targeted students in the educational system (both conventional and alternative). In short recruiting timeframes it was difficult to reach young people in need of work readiness training who were disconnected from high school or college.

Suggestions for Improvement

- Develop an engagement strategy to strengthen relationships with schools and organizations we had difficulty recruiting students from.
- Research ways and develop partnerships to find and reach youth disconnected from educational and career pathways.

Work Readiness Training

Number of youth who attended both days of training	80
Discover level (14-15)	33
Achieve/Explore levels (16-19)	47
Number of youth who attended mock interviews	55
Number of youth who applied for internships	39
Number of internship opportunities available	32
Number of youth who were matched with internships	29

Demographics

- 80% qualify for free or reduced lunch
- 37% come from immigrant families
- 10% will be the first in their families to graduate high school
- 30% will be the first in their families to attend college
- 13% have experienced homelessness in the last 6 months
- 10% have dropped out of high school

More than half of the youth who were invited to the trainings did not attend. They were contacted after each weekend of training to understand what had occurred to cause them to miss the event. The majority of students responded that a conflict with some other event had occurred, transportation to the event was unavailable last minute, or that they had forgotten. Some students missed the second day of training held on May 16th because it coincided with Park Center High School's prom. Some of the students who had missed the first weekend and were contacted afterwards were able to reschedule to attend the second weekend. When we discussed the topic of attrition (from application to training) with our Alliance partners and with STEP-UP Minneapolis, they confirmed that the rates we experienced were typical for youth and the type of program.

Suggestions for Improvement

- Be more pro-active to contact young people right before the event occurs to remind them to attend, or see if last minute transportation needs to be provided.
- Use multiple communication methods (email, text, phone call, social media, etc.).
- Schedule more sessions or trainings to give students more options to attend.

Internships and Check-Ins

Number of youth who completed internships	25
Number of youth with no prior work experience	19
Number of bus passes handed out	6

Average number of weekly check-ins attended per student 5

Average number of youth who attended each college visit 9

Twenty-five (25) interns successfully completed their internship. Four interns did not complete their internship due to medical issues, moving out of state, or not being able to complete the hiring process due to incomplete work documents.

The weekly check-ins were attended by fifty-nine (59%) of the interns on average. Since the check-ins were designed to be an important part of the internship experience, we should explore ways to increase participation.

Suggestions for Improvement

- Help interns to ensure they have the proper identification and documents necessary for work.
- Consider ways to encourage more participation of interns at the weekly check-ins and other enrichment opportunities.

Community Participation

Did education, business, and other community partners participate in the program?

Three (3) education partners, 2 business partners, and 7 community partners offered BrookLynk internship opportunities. Our Alliance partners and funders provided in-kind donations for all of our facility needs, van transportation, printing costs, and subsidies for some of the internships.

Education Partners

- Brooklyn Center Community Schools
- Hennepin Technical College
- North Hennepin Community College

Business Partners

- Boston Scientific
- TNA Carpet

Community Partners

- City of Brooklyn Center Building and Community Standards
- City of Brooklyn Center Fire Department
- City of Brooklyn Park Community Engagement Initiative
- City of Brooklyn Park Recreation and Parks
- Hennepin County Service Center
- Hennepin County Public Works
- Hennepin County Brookdale Library

Quality Assessment

What was the level of quality for our program services?

The Youth Program Quality Assessment (PQA)® self-assessment was completed during one of the Work Readiness Trainings and one of the weekly intern check-ins. In both assessments, the program scored highest in Safe Environment and Supportive Environment domains. The program scored slightly lower in the Interaction and Engagement domains.

The Youth Program Quality Assessment is a validated instrument (grades 4-12) designed to measure the quality of youth programs and identify staff training needs. The Youth PQA evaluates the quality of youth experiences as youth attend workshops and classes, complete group projects, and participate in meetings and regular program activities. Domain categories are broken down into individual scales, which are rated 1, 3, or 5 (with 1 being the lowest and 5 being the highest).

The Youth PQA Self-Assessment was completed twice during the BrookLynk program. The first one was completed during one of the Get Ready! Work Readiness Training sessions. The second assessment was completed during one of the weekly check-ins during the internships. A summary of the results is presented below.

YOUTH PQA SCORES	Get Ready! Training	Intern Check-in
Safe Environment	4.7	4.8
Emotional Safety	5.0	5.0
Healthy Environment	5.0	5.0
Emergency Preparedness	4.0	4.5
Accommodating Environment	5.0	4.5
Nourishment	4.3	5.0
Supportive Environment	3.4	4.6
Warm Welcome	4.3	5.0
Session Flow	4.6	5.0
Active Engagement	3.0	4.5
Skill-Building	2.0	4.2
Encouragement	3.7	4.3
Reframing Conflict	2.5	X
Interaction	2.7	3.2
Belonging	4.0	4.0
Collaboration	2.3	2.3
Leadership	2.3	2.3
Adult Partners	2.0	4.0
Engagement	1.8	2.2
Planning	1.0	2.0
Choice	1.0	1.0
Reflection	3.5	3.5

“X” indicates that this was not observed

The Interaction and Engagement domains scored lowest for both assessments. The scales that corresponded to the lowest scores in those two domains were:

- Skill-Building: Staff supports youth in building skills.
- Reframing Conflict: Staff uses youth-centered approaches to reframing conflict.
- Collaboration: Youth have opportunities to collaborate and work cooperatively with others.
- Leadership: Youth have opportunities to act as group facilitators and mentors.
- Adult Partners: Youth have opportunities to partner with adults.
- Planning: Youth have opportunities to make plans.
- Choice: Youth have opportunities to make choices based on their interests.
- Reflection: Youth have opportunities to reflect.

Having low scores on these scales is not surprising considering the lecture-style classes that our instructors taught for the Work Readiness Training, and the relatively short dosage (<10 hours total) for both the Work Readiness Training and the Check-ins. The Youth PQA was not used to assess the internships, which were main component of the BrookLynk program, due to capacity limitations. The low scores on the assessment were in areas that would have been more represented in the internship experiences.

The Work Readiness Training instructors specifically noted the lack of opportunities for youth to reflect on their learning as well as an active component in the class. They requested for future classes that BrookLynk provide some options for how they could incorporate more reflection questions and activities into the program. The inclusion of more reflection and skill-building activities would help bolster some of the areas of the Youth PQA that were low scoring.

For future programs, BrookLynk is also considering including previous year's alumni youth as assistant trainers and mentors for those entering into the program for the first time. This would provide more opportunities for youth be involved with the planning, make choices, and to lead activities, all areas which would also address some of the remaining low-scoring quality scales.

Suggestion for Improvement

- Provide options for how to incorporate more reflection questions and skill-building activities into the training.
- Provide more opportunities for youth to be involved in planning and leading some of the training.
- Consider assessing quality in the internship experiences at employer locations.

Youth Outcomes

In what ways did the participating youth gain the necessary work readiness and social-emotional learning skills, financial benefits, and social connections as an outcome of the program? Were they satisfied with their internship experiences?

At the end of the internship, the majority of interns were rated by their supervisors as having gained at least 30 out of the 40 career skills we assessed them on. Seventy-six percent (76%) of supervisors said that their interns were prepared to enter the workforce. The median amount of net salary earned during the summer was \$1000, with a median amount of \$600 saved at the end of the program. Ninety-six percent (96%) of interns thought that the internships helped them increase the number of professionals in their social network. On average, the interns rated the BrookLynk program and their supervisors a 4.4 out of 5. All of the interns agreed that they received enough training and support to successfully complete their internships. And 100% responded that they would recommend BrookLynk to a friend.

"I've learned a lot of things, but one thing that I can truly say I can take away is that one opportunity can open doors to other opportunities, especially this program, so I'm really thankful for this program. Overall, basically this helped me open my eyes to my future and what I want to do. "

- BrookLynk Intern

Career Skills

BrookLynk is using the MHA Labs Skill Building Blocks (<http://mhalabs.org/skill-building-blocks/>) as a tool to gauge work readiness. The MHA framework gives both adults and youth shared language about 21st century work readiness skills. To make MHA work for the Brooklyns, we invested significant time to learn, research, and integrate MHA tools into our program design. This would ensure that internships would be development focused, thereby increasing the likelihood of supervisors using strengths approach to developing skills.

Furthermore, using MHA meant educating our school, community, and business partners on how to implement this tool to help students make connections between the goals in their lives to building these skills. We have learned that while the MHA tools are open source, "train the trainer" resources are scarce. This has stymied our ability to integrate these comprehensively into our design.

The MHA Labs' Skills Assessment asked the supervisors at the end of the internships to rate their interns' competency in 40 skills broken down into 7 separate skill sets listed below. (For a complete list of the 7 skill sets broken down into the 40 skills, see the Youth Employment Program wiki site.)

- Work Ethic
- Time Management
- Collaboration

- Positive Attitude
- Social Awareness
- Communication
- Problem Solving

Interns who scored Agree or Strongly Agree in a skill area were deemed competent.

Number of MHA Labs Career Skills Interns Rated Competent In	Number of Interns Rated Competent With Those Number of Skills
0-10 Career Skills	1
11-20 Career Skills	2
21-30 Career Skills	3
31-40 Career Skills	15

Overall, the average number of skills interns rated competent in 32 out of 40 career skills by their supervisors. In addition, seventy-six percent (76%) of the supervisors considered that their intern was work read and seventy-one percent (71%) would recommend their interns to a colleague for a similar position.

The interns seemed to agree with those assessments as one-hundred percent (100%) answered “Mostly True” or “Completely True” to the statement “My internship experience taught me valuable career skills.”

Social and Emotional Learning Skills

Social and emotional learning (SEL) are often understood as non-academic skills that youth need in order to succeed in life. BrookLynk chose to measure a specific subset of SEL skills of our interns to begin our understanding of how these skills are related to college and career readiness.

We selected the Revised Life Orientation Test (LOT-R) to measure optimism, the Children’s Hope Survey to measure hope, the Short Grit Scale (GRIT-S) to measure grit, and 3 of the Gallup Student Poll questions to assess specific outcomes related to life success.

Twenty-two interns participated and the average scores are reported below. The average scores were all normalized to a 5-point scale to allow at least a cursory comparison.

Attribute (Scale)	Maximum Score	Avg. Intern Score	Normalized to 1-5 Scale
Optimism (LOT-R)	24	16.7	3.5
Hope (Children’s Hope Scale)	36	27.0	3.8
GRIT-S (Grit)	40	24.1	3.0
I will graduate from high school. (Gallup Student Poll)	5	5.0	5.0
There is an adult in my life who cares about my future. (Gallup Student Poll)	5	4.6	4.6
I know I will find a good job after I graduate. (Gallup Student Poll)	5	4.3	4.3

The authors of the some of the scales caution their use to measure any subtle within-individual changes in behavior over time. Instead, they were mostly designed to assess individual differences. From such a small and non-randomized sample size, it is difficult to make any inferences from this data set. When the student's individual scores were compared to completion of the internship, gaining career skills, or any other outcome measure, there was no correlation seen. It is noteworthy that all of the interns stated that they would graduate from high school and a high percentage of them felt strongly that they both had a caring adult in their lives and would be able to find a good job after they graduate.

Finances

Students reported their net earnings after their paid internships this summer:

Net Earnings	% of Interns
Not Sure	9%
\$0-\$499	23%
\$500-\$999	18%
\$1000-\$1500	50%

The median net earning amount was \$1000. These numbers do not include any taxes or other deductions, or benefits offered.

Sixty percent (60%) of students had saved all the money they earned this summer at the end of the internship. The median amount of their salaries that students still had at the end of summer was \$600. We also surveyed the students about their financial practices and found out that eighty-two percent (82%) of the interns put their savings into a bank or credit union account, and sixty-four (64%) had their paychecks submitted directly to their accounts via direct deposit.

Social Networks

Having access to professional social networks increases the chances of landing a job. Many of our interns are not from family backgrounds that gave them access to that type of networking. One of BrookLynk's goals through the internships was to increase the number of professionals in the young person's network.

Ninety-six percent (96%) of interns reported that the internships helped them increase the number of professionals in their social network.

Intern Customer Satisfaction

When asked about how they would rate their BrookLynk internships, the intern surveyed rated experience an average of 4.4 out of 5.0 (with 1 being poor and 5 being excellent).

Eighty-six percent (86%) of interns reported that they would participate in the BrookLynk program again if possible. One-hundred percent (100%) of interns said that they would recommend BrookLynk to a friend.

When asked about the support they received from BrookLynk and the Youth Employment Coordinator, one-hundred percent (100%) of interns who responded stated that they received enough support during the internship. Interns mentioned that the program coordinator was always there for them in person or by phone, was involved in every aspect of their internships, provided rides and other supports, advocated for them, offered guidance, was encouraging and full of energy.

Interns rated their supervisors an average of 4.4 out of 5.0 (with 1 being poor and 5 being excellent). They rated their supervisors in these specific areas below.

My supervisor:	% of Interns Answering “Mostly True” or “Completely True”
Took me seriously and treated me fairly.	100%
Made me feel the work I did was important to the organization.	96%
Genuinely cared about me as a person.	91%
Introduced me to people who can help me grow.	91%
Is someone I can trust...	87%
Helped me see future possibilities for myself.	87%
Helped me set and achieve goals.	86%
Took the time to meet with me when I needed.	86%
Asked for and listened to my opinions.	86%
Gave me feedback on my work that helped me do better.	82%
Introduced me to new ideas, experiences, and/or places.	82%

The aspect of the internships that interns liked the best were the new relationships they developed with co-workers, mentors, supervisors, and other interns, in whom they found a lot of support. Many interns liked attending the weekly check-ins. Work was another part of the internship that interns mentioned as the best part. Interns liked having an opportunity to do more than just menial work, but to be a part of professional organization, this helped interns to learn new skills and to explore career options. Some interns stated they also enjoyed the opportunity to feel like they were helping others.

The aspects of the internships that interns liked the least fell into two general categories. Many interns complained about issues “related to work” such as: annoying co-workers, not having enough work to do, wages, having to remember multiple usernames and passwords, having to do hard work, waking up in the morning, dealing with rude customers, working by themselves, public speaking, and specific job responsibilities they didn’t enjoy. The other category was “program related” issues such as: the time and day of the check-ins, not being connected to an internship in a career field they liked, the amount of work readiness training required, and the short length of the internships.

Long-Term Outcomes

Evaluating participant long-term outcomes, including high school graduation, college enrollment, and workforce entry rates, will require tracking students years into the future. The proposal in the BrookLynk evaluation plan to track these long-term outcomes involves first collecting the unique student IDs numbers from participants. To collect high school graduation data, we will work with the data coordinators at our school district partners. For college enrollment data, we will request information from the Minnesota Statewide Longitudinal Education Data System (SLEDS). Finally, to gather workforce entry data, we will access information from the Minnesota Department of Employment and Economic Development (DEEDS). Pending evaluation resources in the future, it is recommended to supplement and confirm those figures with yearly phone interviews with participants.

Suggestions for Improvement

- More research should be done into social and emotional learning skills and the connections to BrookLynk. Students should continue to be assessed to provide more data to help understand how we should use SEL skills in evaluating the program.
- Work with MHA Labs to develop more effective training materials for our internship supervisors and mentors.
- Develop better evaluation methods to measure both financial and professional social network benefits.

Business Outcomes

Were employers satisfied with their experiences with the program and the interns?

One hundred percent (100%) of supervisors responded that their interns were the best parts of their internship experiences and that they would like to participate in the BrookLynk program again next year with another student. Over ninety percent (90%) of supervisors reported that they were satisfied with the support they received from BrookLynk to be effective supervisors for the interns. Almost eighty-five percent (85%) believed that their interns were good matches for their organizations. Supervisors did request that we inform them of their intern matches earlier so that there would be enough time for the hiring and onboarding processes.

"(Our intern) helped us to create a welcoming and inclusive environment for students. She helped us to plan our student programming for the next year and was able to complete many administrative tasks for us. We are so grateful for her time here, and we could never quantify how much value she brought to our organization."

– BrookLynk Employer

Seventy percent (70%) of the supervisors thought the Supervisor Handbook and Training were helpful, although a couple mentioned that they profited more from the training than the handbook, which they did not use at all. The benefits of the handbook and training included learning how to work with and relate to high school interns, about the experience

of others who had worked with high school interns, how to be a good supervisor, about ideas for setting goals and expectations for the interns. A few supervisors wanted to learn more about MHA Labs Skill Building Blocks and there were some concerns about specific information in the handbook.

Over ninety percent (90%) of the supervisors said that they felt they received the right support and resources to be effective supervisors from BrookLynk. A few of the supervisors specifically singled out our Program Coordinator's role as being especially helpful. Supervisors did want more information on quality internships, information about the program and expectations, MHA Labs Building Blocks, and the check-ins.

Almost eighty-five percent (85%) of the supervisors answered that at least one of their interns was a good match for their organizations and positions. One answered no because her intern had no connection or interest in the specific population that her organization worked with. Some supervisors wanted more of a choice in selecting their interns (instead of only being assigned one option).

The overwhelming majority of answers when asked about the best parts of the internship for the supervisors were about the interns in our program. Supervisors said that they were: prepared and willing to work, engaged, eager to learn, able to execute their projects successfully, good matches and great helps to their organizations, skilled and hard workers, and able to take advantage of the experiencing a new career field. The other theme was that the BrookLynk program was well organized, problem-free, had effective work-readiness training, and everything about it went well. Finally, employers were able to also learn through the internship experience and along with the intern, feeling a sense of accomplishment.

Most supervisors mentioned that they would like more time for the hiring and onboarding process. Specifically they needed more time to prepare for the interns. Some supervisors found out that their internal onboarding process (background and drug tests) took longer than they realized. A few supervisors mentioned that communication didn't go as well as expected, both receiving communications from BrookLynk and their interns. Others said that they did not understand the MHA Labs Skill Building Block tool.

One hundred percent (100%) of the supervisors responded that they would like to participate in the BrookLynk program next year with another student.

Suggestions for Improvement

- Provide more time between the matching process and the start of internships for employers' hiring and onboarding processes.
- Provide more training to supervisors on the MHA Labs Skill Building Block tool.

Capacity Building

The evaluation of capacity building is separated into the following three sections: degree of supports, program costs and political will.

Degree of Supports

What is the degree of supports necessary to operate this customized model effectively and efficiently for the Brooklyns?

We define supports to include our internship business (including educational and community) partners, our Alliance partners who provided in-kind donations, and organizations partnered with to implement various components of the BrookLynk program.

The degree of support from our internship business partners was high. There was incredible interest from our business community; so much that we were able to secure 32 internships in a compressed recruitment period and in fact had to turn away other opportunities to add more.

Alliance partners also showed a high degree of support. They provided use of their facilities, transportation, and marketing and printing resources when requested. For the organizations we partnered with to implement components of the BrookLynk program, the degree of support was medium. This was mostly due to our lack of capacity to coordinate, and which will be a priority next year in order to be more efficient.

Having the program coordinator and executive director cooperate on the outreach worked well. They provided enthusiasm, clarity, and superb customer follow-up, brokering solid relationships with businesses and Alliance members, which led to great partnerships. Continued engagement with employers has been important in maintaining positive relationships.

Employers are people who care, are engaged and desire to support youth and add value to their business. They seem to see this as both corporate responsibility AND corporate opportunity to get new ideas/fresh perspectives.

Businesses were provided support at every step: the process for engaging employers from beginning to end seemed to work really well. We heard positive things from employers from their experiences. One example of the support provided was the MHA Labs Building Block framework for understanding which skills should be developed in the interns. This worked well with employers, who liked the framework and believe it is a good tool for learning the SEL/Employability skills.

Employers who participated expressed the benefits that interns provided for their organization or business; increased diversity, increased productivity, fresh perspectives, and opportunities for staff to develop professionally through their experience as an intern supervisor.

BrookLynk coordinator and executive director agreed that the employer recruitment strategy should be informed by City and Schools existing business relationships. Co-outreach strategies will prepare all of us to work collaboratively and will contribute to a smooth transition of BrookLynk to City partners in 2017. City staff in the community development departments will play an important role in engaging businesses for next summer internships.

Alliance members also provided in-kind donations which were essential to the operation of BrookLynk, including the use of Hennepin Technical College, North Hennepin Community College, and Brookdale Library's facilities, Brooklyn Park Recreation and Parks van, and printing and marketing support from the City of Brooklyn Park.

BrookLynk is not connected in a meaningful way to other workforce development opportunities. We should understand which pre-teen programs recruit from and which adults programs we would refer our graduates to. We can also explore options see if other programs could provide the work readiness training for us.

We were able to partner with other organizations to implement various components of BrookLynk. The most important partner was Minneapolis STEP-UP, who provided the technical assistance, which allowed us to customize their youth employment model for BrookLynk. We were given access to all of their training material and instructors. A Youth Career and Job Fair on June 26th at North Hennepin Community College was planned and implemented by BrookLynk in partnership with Hennepin County and the Northwest Chamber of Commerce.

A key partnership was with Brooklyn Center Schools, Brooklyns Avenues for Homeless Youth and Hennepin Technical – Gateway to College program. This partnership led to successfully engaging opportunity youth.

Next Steps

- Focus and target our business outreach to private sector employers to offer high quality internships. Develop an effective, engaging, and personal employer recruitment strategy to engage new employers.
- Developing meaningful and effective employer marketing materials.
- Working from our communications plan and with Launch Lab will be important.
- Engage the BrookLynk Steering Committee in outreach efforts.
- Further develop a partnership with Hennepin Technical College to have a full-time staff commit .50 of their time to developing partnerships with local employers that will create internship opportunities for both HTC and BrookLynk.
- Map workforce development opportunities on a continuum from age 10 to age 25 to understand the connections and “feeder-sender” opportunities BrookLynk should be connected to.

- Explore E-business mentoring between supervisors and interns throughout the school year – to build caring adult relationships and career networks for youth.
- Leverage in-kind resources to do the Get Ready! Work Readiness Training. For example, BrookLynk could use internships to train youth to work with adults on delivering the Get Ready! Training or to facilitate summer debrief sessions with BrookLynk participants, similar to a leadership ladder model that is found in high quality youth programs.

Program Cost

What are the program costs necessary to operate this customized model effectively and efficiently for the Brooklyns?

Our ability to control BrookLynk's program costs is related to three factors.

1. BrookLynk's ability to partner well and leverage in-kind contributions.
2. The number of youth served by one coordinator (scalability)
3. Costs associated with start-up. (e.g. Branding).

A separate BrookLynk fund was created from the general Alliance budget, which allowed staff to better track expenses and revenues connected to the BrookLynk program. This was a significant amount of accounting work required to accurately manage the program.

Oversight for the BrookLynk budget has been clarified: the BrookLynk Steering Committee will be responsible for the overall budget, and the BrookLynk Coordinator and Alliance Executive Director will do the work of putting the budget together, tracking expenses, and presenting the budget to the Steering Committee.

The budget for 2016 and 2017 is currently being created based on the 2015 actual and costs and conservative estimates for revenue generation in 2016. A fundraising and leveraging plan will then be created based on that budget.

Initial conversations with Cities regarding the feasibility of taking this program into their organizations in 2017 have been initiated. By understanding the budget situations and staffing compliment for each City the Alliance can learn what capacity or challenges they will have to operate the BrookLynk program.

BrookLynk's initial budgeting based on STEP-UP's estimated cost per youth requires revision. STEP-UP estimated cost per youth to be \$1500 internship stipend and \$500 coordination cost. These initial estimates provided by STEP-UP may not accurately reflect the cost of coordination at the BrookLynk scale.

BrookLynk's estimates for 2016 and 2017 are closer to \$1500 for youth stipend and \$900 for coordination. For 2018, we estimate \$1500 for youth and \$800 for coordination due to expected partnerships that add value, and transition expenses that may increase costs.

BrookLynk has been customized for the Brooklyns, and in our first 5 years we expect that the cost of coordination will be higher, including costs associated with marketing, evaluation, ensuring high levels of customer service, and building partnerships.

It has become apparent that STEP-UP's projected operating costs are lower than BrookLynk's because of the scale of programming that STEP-UP has. We need to determine what our figures will be when meeting with funders and employers who may want to underwrite or provide internship opportunities.

Next Steps

- Continue to track the costs for coordination to better understand how far we can scale the Program Coordinator FTE (scaling the Coordinator to Intern ratio to 1:70).
- Explore ways to maximize revenue and minimize costs.
- Gather further inform and educate Alliance partners on the costs of this program.
- Identify the key components for high quality, and discuss the costs and benefits.
- Determine what level of service is desired by the Cities, schools, youth, and their families.
- Complete the 2016 and 2017 budgets for Steering Committee approval.

Political Will

What is the political will necessary to operate this customized model effectively and efficiently for the Brooklyns?

Political will is defined as building the desire and interest in operating the BrookLynk program. It includes a broad base of stakeholders who support the program and desire to see it successful. One important aspect of political will is capturing and communicating to others the "customer satisfaction" from programming efforts. The alignment of resources will also be necessary. At this time, staff better understand the landscape of state and local resources and can take steps forward to help align those resources.

The following information was collected from process reports and interviews with the BrookLynk program coordinator and the Alliance Executive Director / BrookLynk manager regarding the intersection between political will and the current funding landscape for youth workforce development.

Aside from resources and cost, capacity building involves developing political will from our funders, partners, businesses, and community. First, the program was developed with a combination of community vision, best practices, and lessons learned from practitioners (e.g. STEP UP Minneapolis) along the way. Diverse youth, employers, community members, leaders, policy makers, and department directors have been engaged each step of the way, which has drawn them into the process and has created a program that resonates with community need.

Staff recognize the value in sharing the results, benefits, and value-add of BrookLynk to the community to build political will. The evaluation is a critical component to documenting this and we are exploring all existing opportunities to measure results at the youth and community level.

Staff report that policy makers believe that this is going in the right direction, but are not clear about their role in sustaining this effort and that there is a lot of work to do to change policies to fully support this initiative. This is to be expected given the unaligned and fragmented state of workforce development for youth statewide.

Staff report that the conversation from leaders has shifted from “let’s see how this goes...” to “where does BrookLynk best fit into our organizational structure” and “how do we operate this in way that continues to get great results given that we haven’t done this before?” This shift in questions is a positive step in the transition process. It does not mean that there is total affirmation for transition. Staff suggest that this means “we are in the next phase of feasibility.”

This evaluator believes that articulating the overarching benefit derived from BrookLynk may not be possible until after several years of operation. There is a gestalt process needed over the next several years to capture the synergistic effect of mobilizing so many caring adults, youth, families, city councils, business owners, public sector partners, school leaders, school counselors, county commissioners, social workers, and so many others who benefit from the existence of this program.

Staff have been working to identify and leverage available resources from multiple funding streams. They have identified state funding streams and have learned that there is little continuity or coordination between state agencies that fund youth employment. Also, state and federal funding is often very difficult to use. There is wide sentiment that this is a challenge and needs to be remedied.

Staff have identified that there are numerous funding streams and opportunities through the county. However the federal Workforce Investment Board (WIB) funds are currently administered by the county, and are not accessible to fund services at the City level. Local Collaborative Time Study (LCTS) funds may also be used, but are also allocated regionally.

Staff have identified city funding streams that could be aligned to support BrookLynk, and provide a public sector ‘base’ from which additional resources can be pulled in or leveraged, including Economic Development Administration (EDA) and Community Development Block Grant (CDBG) monies.

Funds through education sources (K-12) have also been identified and could be leveraged, including Perkins, and Desegregation dollars, as well as foundation/private grants funding from Pohlman Foundation, United Way, Bush Foundation and Youthprise.

Staff have also identified city, county and state policies such as “World’s Best Workforce” that are stimulating new alignment for workforce development but are still in initial stages of impact. In addition to this, at the programmatic level, staff are learning the policies and practices of employers that either help or hinder internship development for youth 14-19.

As per the Brooklyn Bridge Alliance for Youth Joint powers agreement, this organization was designed to build resources, not necessarily operate programs. The Alliance is learning how to build community assets for youth in their role as an intermediary. At this time, staff suggest that “what’s working” is the Alliance role in mapping and aligning resources, and coordinating the initial fundraising on behalf of partners. This creates an “intermediary to funder” conversation that is different than “recipient to funder.” This has positively contributed to fundraising efforts.

Overall, staff have learned that Minnesota does not appear to have an aligned and adequately funded strategy for youth employment or youth workforce development across the continuum. There appears to be a lack of basic coordination across agencies, with clear entry points for local communities. Furthermore, staff will continue to advocate for intentional ‘braided’ funding schemes, and the change in policy regarding geographic requirements for allocation (e.g. allow for a ‘City focus’ as opposed to Northwest Region, or Suburban Hennepin’ focus). This would allow BrookLynk to leverage these resources with City investments.

Next Steps

- Continue to learn how the Alliance can effectively build, transfer and sustain gap-filling programs to support youth.
- Document and share what we hear from our direct and indirect customers.
- Ensure that BrookLynk’s results are aligned with our city councils’ long-term goals.
- Understand the readiness of our city partners to take on operations in 2017.
- Explore the next phase of feasibility by developing with leaders various scenarios for where and how Cities will operate BrookLynk – beginning with organizational chart scenarios.
- Create a campaign for meeting one-on-one with all of our stakeholders (including funders, Alliance partners, employers, CRC’s, and schools) to share results and listen to their reactions. Create a message to parents about our results and encourage them to access this opportunity for their youth.
- Clarify the goals and jurisdictional resources/responsibilities of the City, County and State for Youth workforce development.
- The Cities’ Economic Development Authorities (EDAs) need to be engaged so that BBA partners can understand their role in workforce development at the City level and support City goals in this arena.
- The County and State workforce development centers/resources need to tie into city efforts. These resources need to be known, leveraged and developed to align with the needs identified by the EDA.
- Develop various funding scenarios for how Cities will fund BrookLynk operations – weaving together Private, City, County, State funds that will leverage dollars invested by employers.

Process Evaluation

What did we do to customize the Minneapolis STEP-UP model for the Brooklyns? How well did the customized program work?

Program Development

Minneapolis STEP-UP provided their logic model and evaluations of their program, which helped BrookLynk to refine our own logic model and process map. A comprehensive evaluation plan was created to collect and measure program outputs, processes, quality, and outcomes. As mentioned in the results section, initial data suggest the program worked well.

The Brooklyn Bridge Alliance for Youth customized the STEP-UP Summer Jobs Program model from Minneapolis for the communities of Brooklyn Center and Brooklyn Park. Even with the generous technical assistance of STEP-UP, launching the youth employment program felt like a pioneer process. There was extensive foundational work done during the development phase and a lot of groundwork had to be laid for our business engagement and youth outreach strategies to be successful. Unfortunately, STEP-UP did not have a formal playbook for us to begin with, so we had to spend considerable time interviewing their staff, researching materials they provided, and reading capstone evaluations to understand their processes. This information is archived on our Youth Employment Program wiki site (<https://sites.google.com/site/bbayouthemploymentprogram/>).

Once that process was complete, the Evaluator, BrookLynk Coordinator and Alliance Executive Director / BrookLynk Manager were able to refine and create the program logic model (see Appendix) and process map (see Appendix). A comprehensive evaluation plan was created to collect and measure program outputs, processes, quality, and outcomes. With a skeleton in place, detailed planning and resource allocation could proceed. As the implementation of the program began, those documents were referred to often to ensure that we were staying on track towards our originally stated goals and deadlines.

Suggestions for Improvement

- Formalize the development material into a formal playbook so that we have foundational documents we can refer to as we improve the BrookLynk product.
- Consider strategies for providing technical assistance to other suburban communities that wish to customize STEP-UP to their community.

Outreach

Minneapolis STEP-UP looks for employers who can provide teen-appropriate internships at least 6 weeks long for 15 hours per week, with supervisors. Their program is sufficiently established in the schools and community that they need to do minimal youth outreach. BrookLynk had to pilot a new Business Engagement Strategy to let organizations know that

the employment program existed, what it was about, and how they could participate. There was a big emphasis on the supervisor's role as a mentor and caring adult to the intern. Similarly, we had to develop a new Youth Outreach Strategy to market the program to young people. Also, we went through a Branding Process to develop a program name, logo, and tagline.

Our Business Engagement Strategy was successful in communicating BrookLynk to our local business, educational, and community organizations. Partnering with schools and college and career resource centers proved to be the most beneficial youth outreach strategy and in the second year, we will need to strengthen our relationships with schools that were underrepresented this year. The branding exercise led by Launch Lab Creative provided a program identity and was instrumental in sharpening our focus.

Our Business Engagement Strategy included working with the Economic Development Directors at both Brooklyn Center and Brooklyn Park. The BrookLynk Coordinator joined and regularly participates in the Brooklyn Center Business Association and the North Hennepin Area Chamber of Commerce. Through these efforts we contacted and met with owners, managers, and directors of over 60 local businesses to promote our program. An informational brochure specifically for businesses was created and a copy can be found on the Youth Employment Program wiki site.

Individual conversations with businesses have been effective. Staff learned that many businesses have a need to increase the racial, age and creativity diversity of their workforce and need help tapping into new talent. Employers were also passionate about developing young people and were willing to underwrite some of those positions. Aside from the salaries, more essential to the BrookLynk model are the supervisors/mentors who provide the experiential opportunities and attention that youth with barriers to employment need.

Our Youth Outreach Strategy targeted adults and young people who are seen as trusted sources. We met with staff at local schools (including high school college and career resource centers), local youth-serving organizations (e.g. Brooklyns Avenues for Homeless Youth etc.), community colleges, police departments, and churches. These key recruiters were powerful partners who were able to personally invite and successfully register youth for pre-employment training.

A major capacity building effort was accomplished with the development of the program brand. Launch Lab Creative guided a branding process that included the Alliance Board of Directors Youth Employment Steering committee, staff and the Brooklyns Youth Council. This process resulted in an exciting brand story, program name (BrookLynk), an extensive logo library, and tagline. These were used immediately on promotional material (e.g. brochures, pens, frisbees, etc.), on the Alliance website page dedicated to the youth employment program, and in social media outreach via our Twitter and Facebook accounts. This was a critical investment that has resulted in local ownership and understanding of what this program will be. The branding exercise led by Launch Lab Creative not only provided a program brand, but the process itself was instrumental in sharpening our programmatic focus.

Suggestions for Improvement

- Continue to engage with the two city community development departments to learn which businesses in the community are ideal partners.
- Reach out to employers in career fields not currently represented and understand their business needs.
- Further engage the local business community to help them understand how they can provide a meaningful opportunity.
- Develop a better youth engagement strategy and strengthen our relationships with trusted adults in schools and college and career resource centers in schools that were underrepresented this year in the BrookLynk program.
- Develop better methods to find and serve county involved youth, 'opportunity youth'; youth that may be homeless, involved with juvenile corrections, teen parents, and/or students in alternative learning centers.
- Develop a social media campaign to establish the BrookLynk brand in the community.

Work Readiness Training

BrookLynk adopted Minneapolis STEP-UP's Work Readiness Training and mock interviews, including hiring some of the same trainers, and using their training handbook, with the addition of the MHA Labs Building Blocks.

Feedback from both students and trainers indicated that they valued the overall training experience, especially the addition of the MHA Labs Skills Building Blocks. They did request more interactive activities to help break up the long stretches of lecture-style instruction. Surveys from the mock interviews (from both interviews and interviewees) showed that they were extremely beneficial for the students.

Get Ready! Work Readiness Training consisted of 8 hours of instruction on communication, networking, professionalism, email and phone etiquette, resumes, applications, and interviews. The training was split into two days (Friday evening and Saturday morning) and students were given the option of attending one of two weekends (May 8th-9th and May 15th-16th). Hennepin Technical College provided their facilities for the training. Transportation was offered to students via shuttles from local high schools and Zanewood Recreation Center, and provided Metro Transit bus passes if needed.

Since this was the inaugural year of BrookLynk, there was very little credibility or reputation with the students or families. We expect this will change next year, leading to better attendance.

The trainings were mostly based on the material provided by STEP-UP, since the trainers were already familiar with it. Afterward, feedback from both students and trainers indicated that although they very much valued the overall training experience, having more interactive activities would have helped to break up the long stretches of lecture-style instruction. Both students and trainers also appreciated the use of the MHA Labs skills assessment to help students begin to understand what career skills they already were

proficient in, and which ones they need to target for improvement. Feedback from the Explore (14-15 year old) students revealed a need to provide them with further opportunities after training; only older students could apply for internships.

Following the work readiness training, Mock Interviews were scheduled on May 23rd at North Hennepin Community College. Volunteer interviewers were recruited from Alliance partners and the community. Each student was asked to bring a current resume, and sat through a short interview followed by feedback provided by the interviewer.

Feedback from the mock interviews (from both interviews and interviewees) showed that they were extremely beneficial for the students. One minor criticism was that the space the even was held in was too cramped. Also, many students would have liked to have been given more information on what the mock interview would be about.

Suggestions for Improvement

- Plan BrookLynk trainings earlier in the school year to develop relationships and credibility with students who might not otherwise attend a two-day training.
- Complete a detailed redesign of the training materials to update it with more interactive learning activities, consider separate age-appropriate materials for middle-school versus high school students, and weave the MHA skills throughout the entire training.
- Create experiential options for 14-15 year olds, including career exploration, volunteer opportunities, and age-appropriate employment opportunities.
- Consider using a larger facility for the mock interviews.
- Better prepare the students for what to expect at the mock interviews.

Matching

The matching process was similar to Minneapolis STEP-UP's, although with far fewer applicants and internship opportunities. BrookLynk did rank the students based on instructor and interviewer feedback from the work readiness training. Additionally, while we had youth in Achieve and Discover ages and competencies we matched them as an entire group, compared to the three that STEP-UP uses three separate levels of internships (Achieve, Discover, and Explore).

Almost eighty-five percent (85%) of the supervisors answered that at least one of their interns was a good match for their organizations and positions. About half of the interns expressed that their internships did not match their career interests. The entire matching process took 6 hours. With the goal of scaling up the program in subsequent years, it will be important to document an efficient and effective matching process that we can use.

In early June, Alliance staff met together to match students to internships. A scorecard for each intern was created with training and mock interview attendance, trainer evaluations, and personal interests. These were all considered, along with job requirements and descriptions submitted by employers. To match 29 interns, the total time required was approximately 6 hours.

The scorecard created for each student was the most helpful component of the matching process. It gauged a student's level of professionalism and commitment to completing necessary steps in the program. For the most part, supervisors believe that their intern was a great match to their organization and that they exceeded their expectations. Almost eighty-five percent (85%) of the supervisors answered that at least one of their interns was a good match for their organizations and positions.

Difficulties with the matching process arose mainly because there was no documented process. Especially in future years as the number of applicants and internships go up, a well-thought-out process would be helpful and save time. In this first year of operation, there was not enough background information on employers to predict the level of difficulty of the given internship position. And even with the scorecard, staff did not have enough data to understand how to match a student's skills and interests to a given internship.

At least half of interns believe that they were not matched to an internship in a career field that they expressed as an area of interest for them. This was especially true for some of our grant-funded interns who demonstrated skills and interests that better matched other positions. However, this did not seem to impact how many career skills the interns learned this year or their satisfaction with the program. We may need to explain more clearly the goals of this program are not necessary to match interns with the career fields of their choice, but to provide experiential opportunities that help increase general career skills. This program element may need to be re-designed to better serve older youth who may be more ready for a career pathway.

Suggestions for Improvement

- Develop a step-by step process for matching students, which will be beneficial for reference as BrookLynk works with more students and internships.
- Help employers to complete job description forms to ensure that they are actually representative of the work an intern so we will have a better understanding of an employer's needs and expectations.
- Consider adopting the multi-tier internship model that Minneapolis STEP-UP uses to better connect interns to the internship that matches their needs and abilities, especially for grant-funded opportunities.

Interviews and Onboarding

The interviewing and onboarding process was adopted from the Minneapolis STEP-UP model. The biggest difference we experienced was that because of the late start in program development, we did not inform the employers of their matches until a few weeks before the expected start date of the internships. We also provided a more comprehensive supervisor's training to include MHA Labs Skill Building Blocks and parents were invited to the intern orientation.

Seventy percent (70%) of the supervisors thought the Supervisor Handbook and Training were helpful, especially in helping them understand how to work with and relate to high school students. The students who attended the orientation felt that it helped set the stage for the internship experience. However, sixty-percent (69%) of supervisors surveyed indicated they did not have adequate time to prepare the June 15th start date. Also, a handful of interns did not have the proper working documents needed to begin the hiring process with their respective employer. Consequently, only a quarter of the internships were able to start on the designated start week.

Employers and students were notified of the staff's matches and interviews were conducted by the employers and final adjustments were made. Employers were given a few weeks for their internal hiring processes to onboard their interns. On May 29th, staff of employers providing internship opportunities gathered at Brookdale Library to receive Supervisor Training on what to expect with the students they would be working with, the Measures of Human Achievement (MHA) tool they would be using to provide career skill feedback with, and other logistical issues related to the summer internships. An Intern Orientation was held at Brookdale Library on June 12th as a final preparation for students and parents. For those interns who needed help with transportation Metro Transit Go-Cards were provided.

Although some employers and supervisors were able to accommodate such a tight timeline for interviewing and hiring their intern, sixty-nine percent (69%) of supervisors surveyed indicated they did not have adequate time to prepare for the June 15th start date. Only a quarter of the internships were able to start on the designated start week. This was exacerbated by some of the interns who did not answer or return phone calls, or respond to emails, to schedule an interview with their supervisor or did not provide a resume in a timely manner. Many Pohlman grant-funded partners especially were not prepared or did not fully understand what their role was meant to be. In some cases, supervisors were given a week notice, if not less, about their intern.

A handful of interns did not have the proper working documents needed to begin the hiring process with their respective employer, which caused delays in interns being able to begin their placement. One intern, who was a documented immigrant, could not accept a position due to not having the legal documents to work in the United States. An intern at Hennepin Technical College did not get paid during the duration of her tenure due to an incomplete hiring process.

Interns did report feeling better prepared for their interviews because of the experiences their mock interviews provided, which was confirmed by feedback provided by supervisors. The students who attended the student orientation felt that it helped set the stage for the internship experience.

Seventy percent (70%) of the supervisors thought the Supervisor Handbook and Training were helpful, especially in helping them understand how to work with and relate to high school students. There was very clear communication between the BrookLynk Coordinator and employers regarding their interns. Supervisors indicated that they had "no hesitation"

in contacting the Coordinator to ask questions or for help, or to express any concerns or struggles they experienced.

Suggestions for Improvement

- Notify employers of an intern match at least 6-8 weeks before the scheduled start date in order to allow enough time for the interview and hiring process.
- Work with employers to better understand their individual hiring processes to help us educate the interns about what to expect.
- Specify to the interns which documents are necessary to work and help them procure the documents ahead of time.
- Work with our grant-funded partners so they clearly understand what their role is in the hiring of interns and why completing a hiring process is important.
- Consider allowing some supervisors a choice in selecting their interns, instead of only being assigned one option.
- Provide more in-depth training into the MHA Labs Building Blocks.
- Review and improve both the supervisors training and handbook to ensure that they are meeting the needs of the supervisors.

Internships

As mentioned previously, BrookLynk differs from Minneapolis STEP-UP in that in our 1st summer our internships were not separated into three tiers (Achieve, Discover, and Explore). Otherwise, the internships are modeled off of the STEP-UP program: they are paid, supervisors from the employers mentor the interns, there are two site visits, and employers and interns receive weekly updates.

Twenty-five (25) out of the original 29 interns successfully completed their internships. One-hundred percent (100%) of supervisors expressed that their intern provided great benefits to their organization, department, and work. Ninety percent (90%) of supervisors reported that their interns met or exceeded their expectations of job responsibilities and workload. This summer we learned that many interns requested that we add different types of internships from a diverse range of career fields. In addition we learned that there could have been more media coverage of BrookLynk during the summer and that it was difficult for the coordinator to know exactly what barriers youth were facing outside of their work and these barriers were impacting interns in ways that although we were prepared to help with, were challenging and time intensive.

Internships began mid-June and were completed 6-8 weeks later, depending on the employer. Supervisors, or someone they delegated to, were responsible for mentoring the students and helping them learn about career paths and work skills. The internships were the core experiential learning opportunity of the BrookLynk program.

Twenty-five (25) interns successfully completed their internship. Four interns did not complete their internship due to medical issues, moving out of state, or not being able to complete the hiring process.

Many interns and supervisors developed strong professional relationships where they felt comfortable being open with one another. However, some interns expressed that they did not see their actual supervisor often and did not build a strong relationship with them. Some supervisors were too busy to provide sufficient mentoring to their intern and were unable to or simply did not designate a separate mentor. Over half (54%) of the supervisors responded that they spent over 7 hours a week supervising their interns. About forty percent (40%) spent 1-2 hours in supervision.

Every supervisor expressed that their intern provided great benefits to their organization, department, and work. Almost forty percent (40%) of supervisors said that their expectations of intern job responsibilities and workload matched what actually happened. Over fifty percent (50%) reported that their expectations didn't match what actually happened, but that it was due to their interns exceeding their expectations. This caused a problem with not having enough work for the intern to do for some of the supervisors. Some interns expressed that they didn't feel challenged at their internship or that there was not enough to do on a daily basis. Although initially excited about the MHA tool, many supervisors also expressed that they did not know how to effectively incorporate MHA Labs into their daily work and had many questions.

Many interns requested that we add different types of internships that reflected more opportunities in diverse career fields since they did not get an internship in the field they wanted. Interns and supervisors were very willing and eager to participate in various media projects, such as the Channel 12 spotlight and the employer recruitment video. However, in general, there was not enough media coverage of BrookLynk during the summer to adequately promote BrookLynk for future summers.

BrookLynk's capacity was tested in times where students expressed needs outside of our program. We did not know exactly what barriers youth were facing and these barriers were impacting interns in a way that we were unprepared for. An example is an intern who was homeless during the course of her internship, and could not find permanent housing. The BrookLynk Coordinator did what he could to reach out to the available resources, but could not make any significant progress for the student. BrookLynk will expand partnerships with other youth serving organizations to support youth.

Suggestions for Improvement

- Learn from supervisors what it means to be a 'quality mentor' in order to set the expectations for next year's supervisors.
- During the development of job descriptions with employers stress the importance of identifying both a supervisor and mentor for each intern.
- Develop an additional two-hour training on MHA Labs Skill Building Blocks to ensure that supervisors have a better understanding of the tool.
- Before internships begin, ask interns if they will need help with a list of services, such as finding shelter, food, clothing, therapy, counseling, etc. Partner with, or at least be aware of, organizations that can help youth with such services.
- Reach out to media outlets before and during the summer to establish opportunities to highlight different employers and partners.
- Expand connections with other youth serving organizations to support youth.

Check-ins and Enrichment Opportunities

Minneapolis STEP-UP offers some additional training opportunities (e.g. financial literacy). BrookLynk Staff wanted to add a more involved component which allowed the interns to meet together regularly, develop a sense of belonging, allow for reflection on the internship experience, and work on career development and skills, and postsecondary awareness. A weekly check-in during the internship period was added to the BrookLynk program, along with enrichment opportunities (financial literacy workshop, college visits, career fair). This customization was first piloted by Right Track – Saint Paul’s pipeline for youth career development and building a diverse future workforce using a similar model to STEP-UP.

A core group of 16 (out of 29) interns showed up for the weekly check-ins. Interns who attended reported that they developed a sense of belonging and mutual support, were able to share and reflect on their experiences, discuss solutions to problems they were facing, and work on improving career skills. The interns who participated in enrichment opportunities they walked away with a greater sense of understanding of financial literacy, and postsecondary and career options. Towards the end of the program, as interns discussed their personal pathways to college and career, it became evident that students were unclear about who, where and how to get support for helping them move towards their new found career interests.

The BrookLynk Coordinator conducted hour-long weekly intern check-ins to provide additional support for interns. Interns had time to reflect on their experiences, discuss problems they faced and possible solutions, and learned more about MHA Labs Building Block skills. Additional education on topics such as financial literacy and career development were included, and optional college campus visits were scheduled. Hennepin County and the Northwest Chamber of Commerce hosted a career and job fair for youth ages 16-23 at North Hennepin Community College on Friday, June 26. BrookLynk was contracted to recruit young job-seekers to attend so they can meet with roughly 30 employers and organizations who were in attendance, get resume and interview advice, and a free professional headshot.

There was a core group of about 16 interns that showed up for the check-ins on nearly weekly basis. During these check-ins, interns developed camaraderie throughout the summer as they became more comfortable with one another. This allowed interns to feel comfortable sharing and reflecting on their experiences and asking questions to their peers, which developed into an essential support system they belonged to that interns expressed as very helpful to them when they had doubts, concerns, or questions. Interns also expressed that they were able to build new skills and work on improving skills during the check-ins. However, the rest of the interns were only able to attend less than two times, because they either did not see this as important/necessary or did not fit with their personal schedule. Because the feedback from students who regularly attended the check-ins was so positive, we should consider how to encourage more interns to attend.

Check-ins location was central for most interns and this allowed for several to be able to walk or catch a bus to attend. The Brookdale library was an important partner as they accommodated all requests for facility use. Interns who needed help with transportation

were able to receive a ride from the BrookLynk Coordinator using vans from Brooklyn Park Recreation and Parks.

Interns were more responsive to text messages than emails (if this was an available communication option) and used this form of communication to ask for a ride, let the Coordinator know if they would attend, or had questions. One hour of check-in was not enough time to cover all necessary topics. Supervisors expressed that they did not know enough about check-ins, such as dates, times, and topics being discussed.

There were generally low participation rates in enrichment opportunities as they were not mandatory. When interns participated in enrichment opportunities they walked away with a greater sense of understanding. For example, interns reported that the financial literacy course helped them better understand the importance of saving money and where to go for financial assistance. When attending college visits, interns asked informative questions that truly enhanced their experience, especially when there were academic areas of interest for interns. There were only a handful of enrichment opportunities for interns to attend. Interns expressed an interest in having more college visits and guest speakers.

When the interns were completing their vision boards for their pathways to college and career, the majority of youth had sense of direction to the career sector they were interested in but not necessarily the specific job title. For a few youth, it became evident that due to lack of exposure to career fields, they could not identify their individual career field interests. Staff observed that as youth were preparing to transition back to school, it was not clear to students where they could get support at school for moving them forward on their career sector interests.

Although the Career and Job Fair was marketed towards youth, it was more similar to those designed for college students and adults. The employers there were mostly looking for applicants 18 years and older. There were few booths that helped young people to explore careers and understand what they were supposed to do at the tables with employers.

Suggestions for Improvement

- Partner with k-12 college and career resource centers to develop a training session to further discuss interns' performance review results and how they can continue their career skill development as they return to school.
- Work and communicate with supervisors to make check-ins a work requirement since having employer support might increase attendance of interns.
- Incentivizing check-ins for interns may lead to greater attendance.
- Moving check-in times to a weekday in the evening would allow for more interns to attend as it won't conflict with school or work schedules.
- Partner with the Northwest Integration School District to provide additional college visits and guest speakers to provide a greater range of opportunities.
- Develop opportunities that help students make the link between educational and career pathways. For example, students who are interested in nursing may attend a duo of college visits to NHCC and MSU Mankato to tour their nursing departments and hear from a panel of current students, professionals, professors, and counselors.
- Plan a career and job fair in partnership with young people.

Celebration

The Minneapolis STEP-UP program wraps up their summer with a party for interns and employers. BrookLynk ended the summer program with a similar celebration.

Many interns, families, and supervisors attended the celebration. Interns shared amazing stories about how their experiences impacted their lives. Some shared about the essential work skills they learned. Other interns spoke about the bonds they created at their internship with supervisors, mentors, and colleagues. However, few Alliance partners, funders, and members of the media were present.

At the end of August, the interns gathered for one final meeting along with their supervisors and families to celebrate the end of the program and reflect on next steps as they transition back to high school or onward to college or more employment. The evening started with introductions and dinner. One supervisor and all of the interns in attendance then shared their experiences. The attendees separated into three groups (interns, supervisors, and families) to have a focused discussion on the internship experiences from their context.

This evaluator experienced a tremendous positive energy in the room, a lot of excitement and happiness. Many families were in attendance, and this was meaningful for many interns who had to overcome many life obstacles and wanted to share their accomplishments at an event where they were being honored. There was also a positive turnout from supervisors, which allowed many of them to meet the interns' families. However, due to late communications, there was a lack of representation from Alliance members, funders, interns who were starting college, and there no media presence (Channel 12, Sun Post, or Star Tribune).

Interns shared amazing stories about their experiences and it became evident that they were each impacted in positive ways. Some shared the fact that this was their first job and that they learned essential work skills that they will carry with them into their next jobs. Other interns spoke about the bonds they created at their internship with supervisors, mentors and colleagues and how they were able to develop a network of professionals that they could always access.

Suggestions for Improvement

- Send personal invitations in the mail to funders, Alliance members, BrookLynk Steering Committee Members, employers, and families to result in a greater attendance.
- Send out a press release to the media, as it will be important for next year to increase our media coverage and exposure.
- Have planning sessions for the celebration throughout the course of the summer. Having a committee comprised of interns and supervisors would lead to greater youth voice and participation from partners that we want included.
- Have fewer speakers (3-4; 2 interns, a supervisor, a funder/alliance member) to make the time much more interactive.

Evaluations

We learned that having a staff person dedicated to documenting the program design, creating and implementing the evaluation plan, and producing reports to share essential data, was essential to our ability to develop and begin the program in a shortened time frame. We also learned that an outcome focused evaluation, using principles from developmental and process evaluation, yielded a variety of useful evaluation results needed in the first year of implementation, leading to in a shift towards a developmental approach.

At the individual outcome level - Minneapolis STEP-UP uses MHA Labs Skill Building Blocks to assess their interns' skill development, but the framework is not as embedded in the programming as with BrookLynk. STEP-UP measures some long-term outcomes (e.g. high school attendance, graduation rate, behavior and grades and test scores, and college enrollment/persistence), but not any social-emotional learning skills. Surveys are given out to students before and after work readiness training, and there is an informal program evaluation process. BrookLynk created a robust evaluation plan (as evidenced by this report).

Developing an evaluation plan for any new program can be difficult. There are many unknown variables and changes to the program that are made as new information is received. We have learned that our evaluation needs to accommodate those changes, but robust enough to collect, allow for processing of, and timely delivery of information. In addition, a program with multiple funders increases the complexity of the evaluation plan. Tracking the requirements and deliverables for each funder requires planning to ensure that deliverables are on time and accurate.

There were three staffing components to support BrookLynk: 1 FTE Program Coordinator and a .3 FTE Data and Quality Coordinator. It was obvious that the Program Coordinator position would be necessary, but we have learned that a staff person dedicated to documenting the program design, creating and implementing the evaluation plan, and producing reports to share essential data, was essential to our ability to develop and begin the program in a shortened time frame. In addition to these resources, the Alliance Executive Director has provided both program management and development services ranging from .3 to .5 FTE. The development work related to BrookLynk includes planning for start-up and transition. Without these duties the management and oversight would be reduced.

We learned that an outcome focused evaluation, using principles from developmental and process evaluation, yield a variety of useful evaluation results needed in the first year of implementation. This will allow data to be used for concurrent reflection to ensure that we won't miss emerging issues or questions as we implement the program, instead of only reflecting at the end of the program.

Towards the end of the internships, supervisors were asked to evaluate and provide feedback to the interns on career skills via an MHA Labs assessment tool. There was a disconnect between what was being measured on the performance review provided by

MHA Labs and the building blocks that were being taught to interns and supervisors throughout the course of the summer.

When interns and supervisors were asked to provide insight on their experiences, they appeared to be very honest and open. This allowed for staff to have a better understanding about everyone's experience. However, surveys completion rate was higher when collected during the events. When surveys were sent out afterwards, more effort was required to collect the results, and the completion rate decreased.

Suggestions for Improvement

- Be explicit to the supervisors about our expectations of them including completing performance reviews and end of the summer surveys.
- Increase completion rate by having interns complete their survey during the last check-in or at their work site.
- Work with MHA Labs to better understand and select one form of the MHA tools for implementation for year two, as we do not want to teach one thing and then measure another.
- Consider what different tools we will need to manage the evaluation work as the program doubles in size for Year 2.

DISCUSSION

Next evaluation questions and recommendations for improving the BrookLynk program are discussed below.

Next Evaluation Questions

This evaluation of the initial year of BrookLynk uncovered additional questions for further study.

- **Youth Participation.** What program changes improve youth participation (application to the program, and attending and completing work readiness training, internships, and check-ins), especially among targeted youth not well represented in this year's program?
- **Social and Emotional Learning (SEL) Skills.** Does understanding the level of SEL skills individual youth help inform the development of BrookLynk program activities to positively affect youth outcomes?
- **Financial Outcomes.** What are the financial benefits that young people experience as a result of the BrookLynk work readiness training and/or internship experience? Are they more likely to be employed based on their connection to BrookLynk?
- **Professional Social Network Outcomes.** Does a young person's professional social network increase quantitatively and qualitatively as a result of the BrookLynk internship experience?
- **Quality Assessment.** What is the level of quality of the internship experiences at the employer locations?
- **Employer Customer Satisfaction.** What are the employers' expectations and perceptions prior to the start of their internship experiences?

- **Supervisor/Mentor Attributes.** What attributes determine whether a supervisor and/or mentor are good at their roles?
- **Capacity Building (Resources).** What resources are available from our Alliance and community partners to make BrookLynk more successful? In what ways did the partnerships with colleges and CRC's strengthen the program?
- **Capacity Building (Costs).** What is the best method to budget costs for internship stipends and coordination costs per intern?
- **Capacity Building (Political Will).** How ready are our City partners (Brooklyn Center and Brooklyn Park) to assume ownership and operation of the BrookLynk program in 2017?

Recommendations for Improving BrookLynk

The evaluation report generated nearly 80 suggestions to improve the BrookLynk Program. These recommendations are summarized below.

Expand business outreach to engage more employers, and in more types of career fields and opportunities for Year 2. The growth of the BrookLynk program in Year 2 will depend on recruiting more employers to offer quality internship experiences. Recommendations to expand our outreach include using marketing material revamped based on Year 1 results and lessons learned, engaging the BrookLynk Steering Committee and our city and community college partners to help broker relationships with local businesses, mapping workforce development opportunities for youth ages 10-25 to understand connections for BrookLynk, and specifically developing follow-up opportunities for 14-15 year olds who attend our work readiness training.

Expand youth outreach to reach more schools and organizations, especially young people on non-traditional pathways. Similarly vital to business outreach is connecting to more young people to participate in BrookLynk. We should consider how to improve on this year's youth engagement strategy and strengthen our relationships with trusted adults in schools, college and career resource centers, and other youth-serving organizations (e.g. YMCA, Alternative Learning Centers, etc.), especially those that were underrepresented this year in the BrookLynk program.

Improve the MHA Labs Skills Building Blocks training and assessment materials for youth and supervisors. The feedback we received showed that youth, instructors, and supervisors liked the MHA Labs Skills Building Blocks framework as it provided an objective tool to discuss career skills. However, youth, instructors, and supervisors also wanted more instruction on how to use the framework and assessment tools.

Customize the work readiness training materials to make it more age-appropriate for both middle school versus high school students, and include more reflection, activities, and youth involvement. As we learned from our quality assessment and surveys of the work readiness training, BrookLynk will need to further customize the STEP-UP training material to include changes in quality domains that where we scored low or that students and instructors requested.

Develop step-by-step process for matching interns to internship opportunities. The BrookLynk program expects to double in size in Year 2 and a systematic way should be

developed to perform the matching effectively and efficiently. Suggestions also include adopting a tiered system for levels of internships offered, and allowing some employers to have a choice of interns to desire a specific opportunity.

Ensure that both employers and interns are prepared for the hiring and onboarding phase between internship matching and the start of summer internships. There were a few complications this year during the hiring and onboarding process that delayed the beginning of 75% of the internships. Recommendations for improvement include increasing the time employers have for the hiring and onboarding process to 6-8 weeks, helping employers to adapt their hiring processes for high school interns, working with employers to improve their job descriptions, making sure that all employers have assigned mentors for their interns, preparing interns better for their interviews, and ensuring interns have the proper documents in order to work.

Increase the amount of enrichment opportunities offered. Many students responded that the enrichment opportunities were valuable in helping them explore options for post-secondary education as it connected to different career paths, as well as learn life skills, such as financial literacy. BrookLynk should partner with more colleges to offer visits linked to specific careers, and include more guest speakers on life and career skills during the check-ins. Designing a Career and Job Fair specifically for young people will also help with career exploration and provide more opportunities for work.

Connect participants who completed the BrookLynk program to ways they can continue their Pathways to College and Career during the school year. After the work readiness training and internships, students who did not graduate and return to school should be connected to opportunities to continue exploring postsecondary and career options, and developing career skills. BrookLynk can work with school College and Career Resource Centers to develop year-round partnerships.

Create a media campaign targeting our stakeholders and community to better communicate the purpose and successes of BrookLynk. Communicating to our stakeholders and community about BrookLynk is an essential step in creating the political will that will sustain and grow the program. The recommendations included using a social media to establish the BrookLynk brand in the community, increasing media involvement for all BrookLynk events, and improving communications with our Alliance members and funders to increase attendance at important BrookLynk events.

Identify key components for a high quality program, and discuss cost and benefits with Alliance partners. The cost of operating BrookLynk is an important consideration in the City partners' ability to take ownership of the program in 2017. Being able to identify component costs as associated with specific outcomes will increase our partners' ability to understand and make important choices.

Work to align local and state resources to fund BrookLynk operations and implement BrookLynk activities. This year, we began to understand the landscape of resources available, which will place us in position to coordinate those resources in Year 2. BrookLynk should develop various funding scenarios for how the Cities will fund BrookLynk operations, weaving together private, city, county, and state funds that will leverage dollars

invested by employers. Similarly, in-kind resources can be leveraged to help with operating components of the program, such as the work readiness training.

Continue to improve our evaluation process and tools. Especially as the BrookLynk program scales up after this inaugural year, staff must improve our processes for collecting accurate and useful data from our youth and employer participants in a timely manner.

FURTHER INFORMATION

For further information on topics and data discussed in this report, please refer to the Youth Employment Program wiki site at the following address:

<https://sites.google.com/site/bbayouthemploymentprogram/>

APPENDIX

- BrookLynk Youth Employment Program Logic Model
- BrookLynk Youth Employment Program Process Chart
- Measures of Human Achievement Performance Review

BBA YOUTH EMPLOYMENT LOGIC MODEL

RESOURCES	ACTIVITIES	OUTPUTS	SHORT-TERM OUTCOMES	LONG-TERM OUTCOMES	IMPACT
<i>In order to accomplish our set of activities we will need the following:</i>	<i>In order to address our problem or asset we will accomplish the following activities:</i>	<i>Evidence of service delivery:</i>	<i>Activities will lead to the following changes in 1-2 years:</i>	<i>Activities will lead to the following changes in 3-6 years:</i>	<i>Activities will lead to the following changes in 7-10 years:</i>
<p>Youth 14-19 (8,713) who live or go to school in the Brooklyn</p> <p>Youth with barriers to employment</p> <p>Businesses to provide experiential employment opportunities</p> <p>Partners to provide trainings and/or curriculum and materials for trainings and workshops</p> <p>Program funding (see budget for details)</p> <p>Subsidized Explore internships</p> <p>Program space for trainings and events (NHCC/HTC)</p>	<p style="text-align: center;"><u>Pre-Employment Training</u></p> <p>21st Century Workforce Skills: MHA Lab framework, money management, computer skills, resume building, interviewing, networking, professional communication, attitude, decision making (Partnerships, e.g. NHCC/HTC, College Readiness, PSEO Personal Finance class, HC Workforce Centers, libraries, banks)</p> <p>Career Planning for Long-Term Success: Personal development plans, 360 feedback, mock interviews, educational courses to support career and next step career guidance from older youth mentors</p> <p style="text-align: center;"><u>Experiential Employment Opportunities</u></p> <p>Match Youth and Employers to Establish a Variety of Employment Experiences: Job shadowing, internships, seasonal, PT, or FT work, educational seminars</p> <p>Provide Support and Coaching: Training for supervisors, coaching for supervisors and youth, track results</p> <p style="text-align: center;"><u>Local Coordination:</u></p> <p>Coordinate Partners and Community Calendar for Training: Develop partnerships, sequenced timing for components of program, set goals and measure success (BBA)</p> <p>Marketing Campaign: Promote trainings and workshops, recruit employers, inform community/parents to support (BBA)</p> <p>Fundraising and Development: Develop regional partnerships, on-going local fundraising, recruit 20-30 employers, initial MOU with businesses (Youthprise, Cities Community Development, and BBA)</p> <p>Ensure Program Quality and Track Results: Publicly report program results and lead continuous improvement of overall program. (BBA)</p>	<p># of youth completing work readiness trainings</p> <p># of youth completing career planning workshop</p> <p># of youth completing internships</p> <p># of youth completing job shadowing</p> <p># of participating partners: financial sponsors, employers offering job shadowing, internship, and educational seminar opportunities</p> <p># of new social connections to employers and learning institutions</p>	<p>Increased income (wealth creation) for targeted youth</p> <p>Increase in targeted youth with work readiness training and early internship experiences (STEM, IT, government, education, manufacturing, service, etc.)</p> <p>Increase in a more skilled and diverse workforce</p> <p>Increase of new jobs in the community (job creation)</p> <p><i>State Longitudinal Education Data System and school districts may have this information</i></p>	<p>Increased opportunities for employment for youth</p> <p>Increase in youth graduating high school</p> <p>Increase in youth pursuing post-secondary education to support career development</p>	<p>Increase in economic health for all in the Brooklyn</p>

6/22/2015

Problem: Middle and High school aged youth don't have the skills or connections to college pathways to prepare them for a career. Alliance members recognize this need and have efforts in place, yet these efforts are not coordinated, marketed or sustained/funded.

Context:

- There are 8,713 youth 14-19
- 13% of families live in poverty (<\$25k)
- 33% of families live at below 185% of poverty (<\$45)
- The Brooklyns are a racially concentrated area of poverty
- The Brooklyns are 50% persons of color
- The BBA is designed to coordinate, improve the quality of youth programs, build resources and improve access to opportunities for middle and high school youth. We are not funded with the intention of funding ongoing programs. As participants said in our planning meeting – we are “connective tissue”.

Solution: Develop a youth employment program for Middle and High school aged youth who live in or go to school the Brooklyns that prepares youth with skills, ignites their motivations and creates social connections to employment and college. This program has three components: 21st century skill building, experiential employment opportunities and local coordination.

Options for operating the program:

- **VENDOR COMPETITIVE RFP:** Contract with vendor for “match services” (outside BBA scope). BBA would manage contract. Must be customized to the Brooklyns.
 - o E.g. Hired, TC Rise, Tree Trust etc.
- **CONTRACT with EXISTING:** Step-Up has offered to create pre-paid ‘spots’ for Brooklyns youth. We would ‘try-on’ the step-up model that is similar to this model.
- Cities expand staff to operate program.

- **BBA EXPANSION:** deliver “match” and coordination services. Utilize partnerships to deliver pre-employment. Make this program ‘local’ and collaborative.

Ongoing Sources to Sustain the Program (BEYOND this first year):

- Commitment of Local Businesses to participate
 - o Small businesses to provide jobs/mentoring
 - o Large businesses to provide jobs/mentoring and financial support.
- Commitment of partners to provide trainings
 - o Perkins Funds
 - o Statewide initiatives like P-20.
- Youthprise (Use this fund, plus the Systems grant to fund another project coordinator for 2 years)
- Workforce Investment Act \$'s, a percentage of the county dollars reflecting the population of youth in the Brooklyns
- Leveraging workforce development resources that are not yet focused on youth
- Increase in BBA base budget to fund coordinator
- CDBG – Community Development – Federal Source/HUD, City Resources
- Foundations underwrite positions, fund coordination

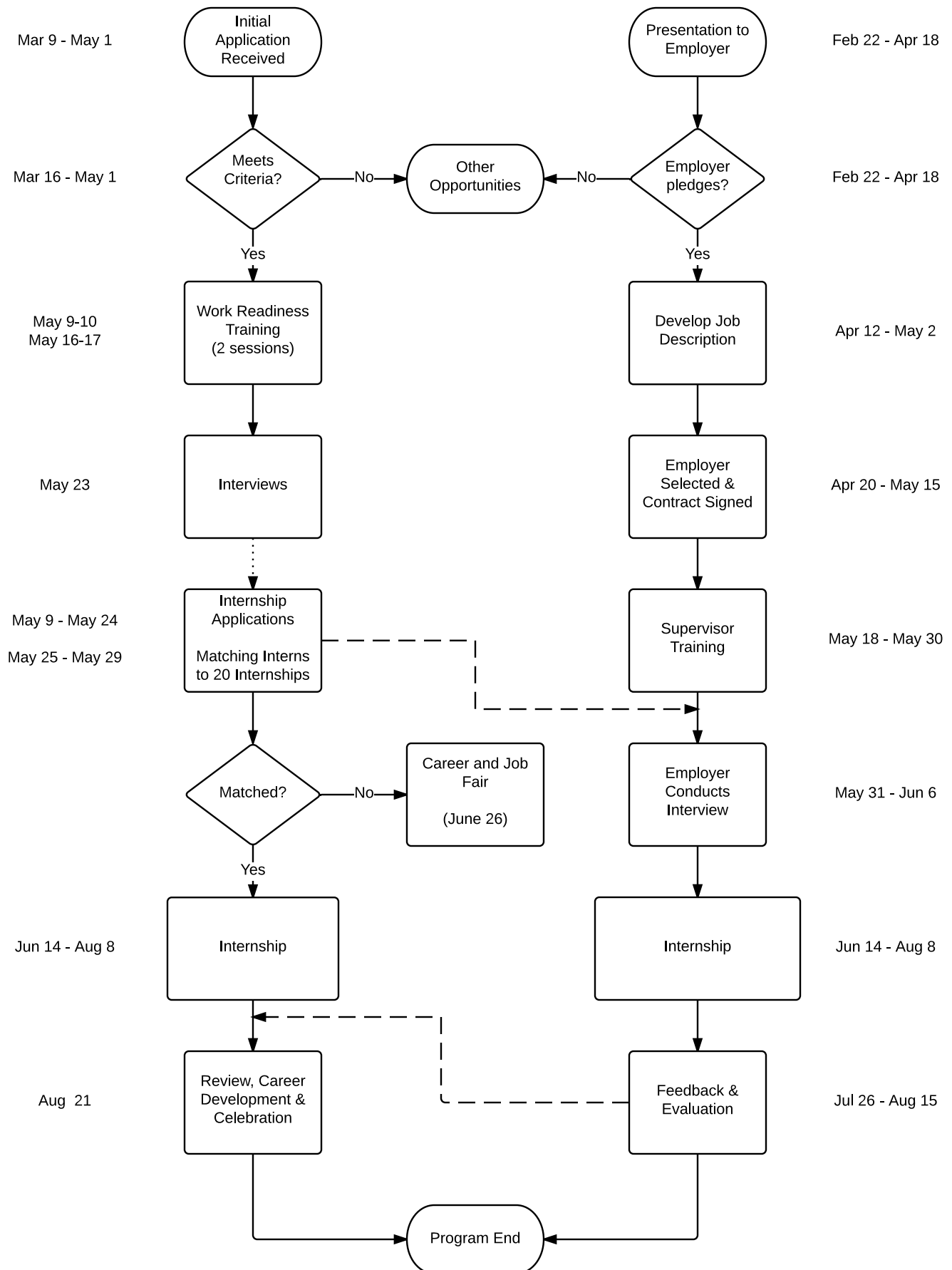
Ongoing partnerships that will bring their services to this program:

- HC workforce development center – job fairs
- HC library – youth employment fair – extend to the Brooklyns
- NHCC, HTC, K-12 have developed curriculum and trainings for pre-employment skills
- Wings Financial has a financial literacy course
- Career resource centers have staff and tools, and could serve as HUBS throughout our community

Youth Employment Program


Process Map


Employer Process Map





Building Block Skills Development Checklist


Check the box corresponding to current level of skill performance »


	You've just begun	You're getting there	You've got it	You're good at it	You're really good at it	We haven't done it yet
 Personal Mindset	NOVICE	EMERGING	CAPABLE	SKILLED	EXPERT	NOT OBSERVED
» Needs minimal supervision to complete tasks.						
» Attempts to complete tasks independently before asking for help.						
» Follows rules/directions as required by the task/situation.						
» Maintains focus on tasks despite internal (e.g., emotional) and/or external distractions.						
» Avoids actions that have produced undesirable consequences or results in the past.						
» Strives to overcome barriers/set-backs, seeking assistance when needed.						
» Adapts approach in response to new conditions or others' actions.						

 Planning for Success	NOVICE	EMERGING	CAPABLE	SKILLED	EXPERT	NOT OBSERVED
» Sets and prioritizes goals that reflect a self-awareness of one's capabilities, interests, emotions, and/or needs.						
» Breaks goals into actionable steps.						
» Accurately estimates level of effort and establishes realistic timelines.						
» Manages time to complete tasks on schedule.						
» Applies existing/newly acquired knowledge, skills, and/or strategies that one determines to be useful for achieving goals.						
» Monitors progress and own performance, adjusting approach as necessary.						
» Demonstrates a belief that one's own actions are associated with goal attainment.						

 Social Awareness	NOVICE	EMERGING	CAPABLE	SKILLED	EXPERT	NOT OBSERVED
» Recognizes the consequences of one's actions.						
» Balances own needs with the needs of others.						
» Takes into consideration others' situations/feelings.						
» Develops and implements strategies for navigating in different contexts (i.e., manages different patterns of behavior, rules, and norms).						

 Verbal Communication	NOVICE	EMERGING	CAPABLE	SKILLED	EXPERT	NOT OBSERVED
» Organizes information that serves the purpose of the message, context, and audience.						
» Uses and adjusts communication strategies as needed based on the purpose of the message, context, and audience.						
» Signals listening according to the rules/norms of the context and audience.						
» Seeks input to gauge others' understanding of the message.						
» Asks questions to deepen and/or clarify one's understanding when listening to others.						

 Collaboration	NOVICE	EMERGING	CAPABLE	SKILLED	EXPERT	NOT OBSERVED
» Completes tasks as they have been assigned or agreed upon by the group.						
» Helps team members complete tasks, as needed.						
» Encourages the ideas, opinions, and contributions of others, leveraging individual strengths.						
» Provides feedback in a manner that is sensitive to others' situation/feelings.						
» Clarifies areas of disagreement/conflict that need to be addressed to achieve a common goal.						
» Seeks to obtain resolution of disagreements/conflicts to achieve a common goal.						

 Problem Solving	NOVICE	EMERGING	CAPABLE	SKILLED	EXPERT	NOT OBSERVED
» Defines problems by considering all potential parts and related causes.						
» Gathers and organizes relevant information about a problem from multiple sources.						
» Generates potential solutions to a problem, seeking and leveraging diverse perspectives.						
» Identifies alternative ideas/processes that are more effective than the ones previously used/suggested.						
» Evaluates the advantages and disadvantages associated with each potential solution identified for a problem.						
» Selects and implements best solution based on evaluation of advantages and disadvantages of each potential solution.						