

**THE RIPPLE EFFECT:
STRATEGIES FOR ENGAGING YOUNG ADULTS WITH
LIMITED EMPLOYMENT OPPORTUNITIES**

Introductions

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In this Session, we will:

- ▣ Discuss what “engagement” is and how it impacts program design, content, and priorities
- ▣ Provide practical examples and strategies for successfully engaging young adults
- ▣ Deliver the perspective of a trainee on her experience and the “must-haves” for engaging young adults with limited employment opportunities
- ▣ Describe EmployIndy’s Youth Employment Services program, a Lilly Endowment-funded support initiative that has revolutionized engagement, retention and outcomes for EmployIndy’s vulnerable youth programs

Who am I ?

My Story

What does it Mean to “Engage”?

- ▣ The Dictionary says:
 - (1) To *attract* and hold fast, or
 - (2) To *bind or make liable*, as by pledge, promise, contract or oath.
- ▣ For those Serving Young Adults with Barriers to Employment, “Engagement” =
 - How do you get young adults to come?
 - How do you keep them coming back?
 - How do you help lead them to – and keep them in--success?
- ▣ “3 P’s”: *PATH---PROCESS---PIPELINE*

THE PATH: Program Design

- ▣ Structure your program as a track (or several tracks) that make it more likely than not that participants will reach the end goal
 - *Understand and account for* the needs and priorities of your population and “next step” stakeholders (employers/colleges, etc.)
- ▣ Design with the end in mind
 - Make sure that every part of the program (recruitment/screening, content, activities, incentives, follow-up, support resources, program metrics etc.) *and the way that you use them* connect directly to the “end” (goals) that you are seeking
 - Understand the relationship between behaviors and outcomes
 - Don’t “chase numbers”: seek to influence behavior changes that naturally lead to the outcomes you are seeking
 - Current culture → Culture of Asset-Building/Professionalism

THE PROCESS: Execution

▣ Focus on *process*

- Create as many opportunities for participants to practice the skills, behaviors and values you are seeking to deliver
- Provide meaningful and detailed feedback presented within the context of agreed-upon goals and the needs/wants of the “next-step” stakeholders
- Perform comprehensive measures of interim progress
 - Go beyond objective skills and measure behaviors associated with complete (whole person) success

THE PIPELINE

- ▣ View your program as a training pipeline that runs to “next step” stakeholders
 - Customize the program to ensure that participants naturally fit the needs/conditions of the next step

- ▣ Bolster your pipeline with truly effective supports (during and after the program)
 - Personal supports
 - Supportive services
 - Key partners
 - Follow-up contacts

A Young Adult's Perspective



Before the process began.....



For me, the buy-in was.....



The New Vision

The Rules of Engagement

The Foundation

“ People can and will change their lives for the better if given respect, opportunity, skills, a supportive peer group, caring teachers and mentors, and a vision of what their life could be.”

--Unknown



The Rules of Engagement

- Respect
- Opportunity
- Skills
- Supportive Peer Group
- Caring Teachers and Mentors
- Vision

The Rules of Engagement (cont'd)

■ Respect

- It's a two way street – What makes it owed to you?
- It's the first principal of the philosophy
- When you don't listen, it is being disrespectful.
 - Mr. / Ms.
 - Yes sir/mam
 - Empowerment

The Rules of Engagement (cont'd)

- *Opportunity*

- Lead (Team Leaders)

- Program Positions, e.g.,
Administrative Assistant

- Committee Chairs

The Rules of Engagement (cont'd)

■ Skills

- Soft Skills
- Social Skills - e.g., Parenting
- High Demand Training
 - HVAC
 - CNA
 - Welding
 - Apartment Maintenance

The Rules of Engagement (cont'd)

- *Supportive Peer Group*

- Students = 1

- Jr. Counseling

- Create team building activities

The Rules of Engagement (cont'd)

➤ *Caring Teachers and Mentors*

- Do more listening than talking (sometimes!)
 - We don't know everything.
- Allow dialogue for self-solutions
 - The solution has always been found in the problem
- Capture the teachable moment
 - Must see as your own child
 - Don't care how much you know
 - Words are weapons (LD)

The Rules of Engagement

■ Vision

- Speak with directions. Not I think, but I know you can!
- Using words like; disappointed vs. do better/
You fail vs. you didn't pass/ sit down vs. have a seat.
- You
- Cap and Gown
- Create a recipe for success

Courage † o Encourage

A self-sticky note to self!

- Be Afraid not to correct!
 - If its wrong, it can't be right
- Remind self
 - Why you do this job



Rules of Engagement (cont'd): “How do we find our clients?”

▣ Strategies for:

- Recruitment
- Intake and Screening Processes
- Identifying and Cultivating True Commitment

One Key Strategy

- ▣ Imagine...an ideal initiative to help Community-Based Organizations address outreach, placement and retention for out-of-school young adults with a number of significant barriers to employment.
- ▣ **What would you like to see in it?**

How About...

- ▣ Access to social services
- ▣ But include help to social service agencies to enhance their focus to **workforce development**
- ▣ Provide high quality/high standards employment/ training and GED options
- ▣ Use of case management and integrated MIS systems
- ▣ Extensive professional development
- ▣ Reliable ongoing help for just about anything that comes up (i.e., technical assistance & capacity building)
- ▣ Real and useful ties to employers
- ▣ Flexibility in contracting (including performance-based contracts)

But what is missing from this list?

“Barrier-Busting” Vouchers (i.e., cash assistance) to cover the cost of *qualifying* emergency expenses!

Youth Employment Services (YES) Voucher Initiative

*Promoting Outreach, Placement and Retention
Through Barrier Busting Vouchers Administered
by Community-Based Organizations in Partnership
with EmployIndy, the Lilly Endowment*

Characteristics of Indianapolis' YES Voucher Initiative

- ▣ Assists out-of-school 17 to 25 year olds with limited employment opportunities as they work to find employment and upgrade their work and academic credentials
- ▣ YES network is comprised of 10-17 contracted CBOs who offer workforce development training & case management for qualifying young adults
- ▣ The Indianapolis definition of “vouchers”
 - Short-term, emergency assistance to address qualifying barrier(s) that may derail progress towards training/employment goals if left unaddressed
 - **Assistance goes to 3rd parties; not to participants**
- ▣ Includes “Conditional Cash Transfers” --bonuses based on accomplishment of work-readiness and life goals set forth in participants' Achievement Agreement

What are some typical financial barriers among YES clients that impact outreach, placement and retention in training and work initiatives?

- Transportation
- Legal assistance
 - Probation fees
 - Driving fines
 - Court costs
- Clothing – work, interview, uniforms, etc.
- Individual and family counseling
- Drug and alcohol abuse counseling and referrals
- Education & training assistance
- Mentoring
- Child care
- Temporary housing/shelter
- Materials for individuals with disabilities
- Financial counseling
- Dependent care
- Limited health and dental care
- Emergency assistance

▣ Questions...

- Fears of gaming and abuse
- Fear of participant dependency
- Fear of having weak sustainability plans
- Fear about systems needed for monitoring

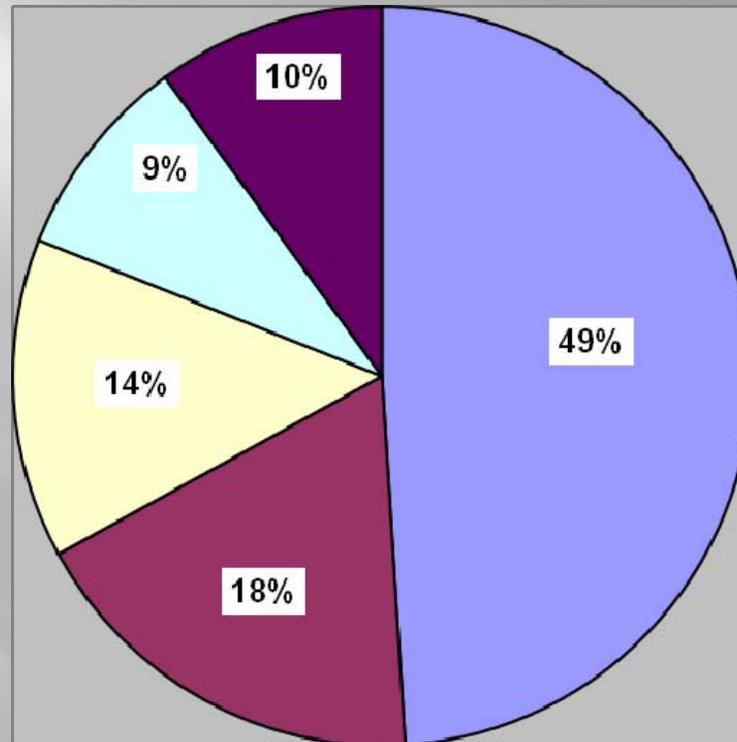
▣ ...and Answers

- Ceilings on the amounts of single vouchers and maximum available to a single participant
- Restrictions on approved uses
- Require pre-requisites (e.g., participant co-pay, accomplishment of certain amounts of program time and/or goals) before issuing vouchers
- Data management system in place

Outcomes

- ▣ Since 2003, 14,700 vouchers issued to over 3,500 individuals (over \$2.8 million)
- ▣ Over 1,800 youths have secured jobs
- ▣ 1,247 have retained jobs at least 60 days
- ▣ Almost 766 have retained jobs for 180 days
- ▣ Evaluation by Brandeis University shows the critical role of an intermediary and leadership

Numbers of Vouchers Received



■ 1-2 vouchers

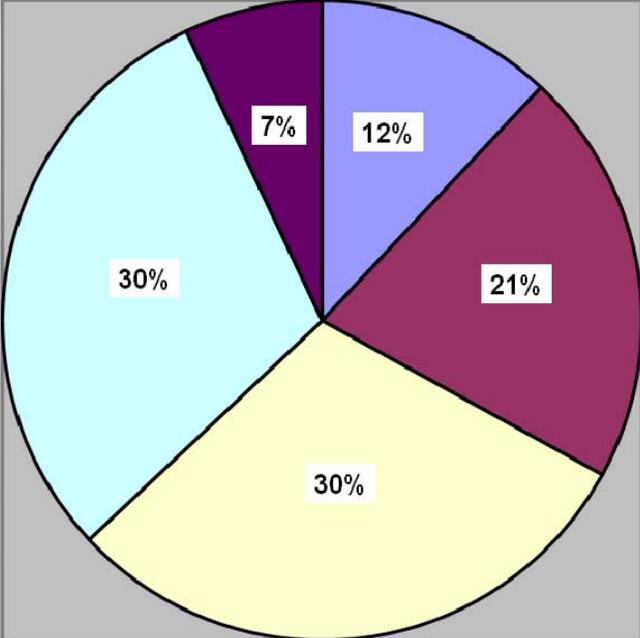
■ 3-4 vouchers

■ 5-6 vouchers

■ 7-8 vouchers

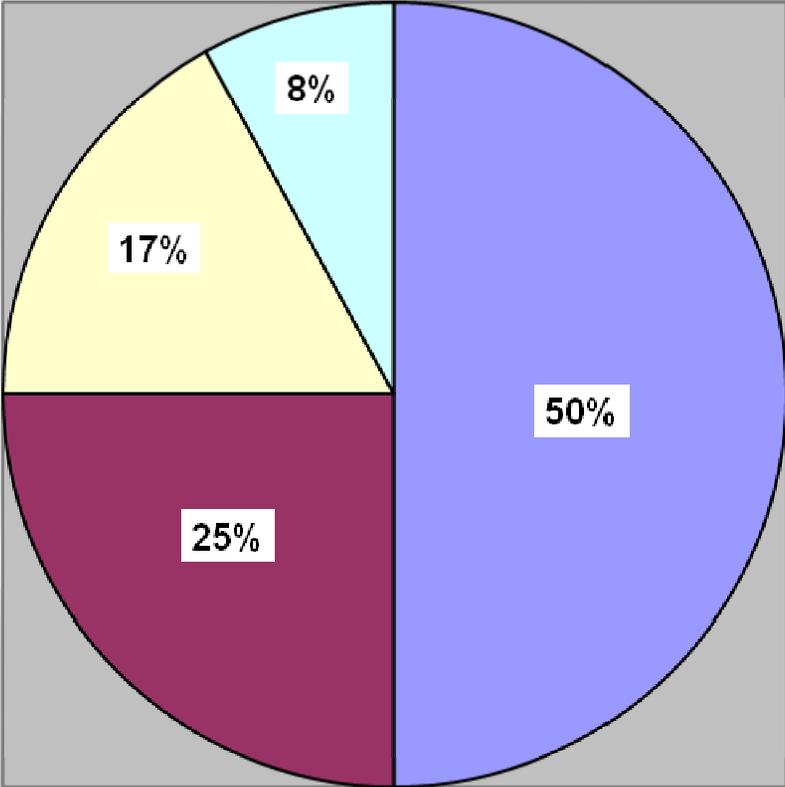
■ 9+ vouchers

Sum of Vouchers Received



- Less than \$200
- \$200-\$499
- \$500-\$999
- \$1,000-\$1,999
- \$2,000+

Could You Have Continued Your Education, Training, or Jobs Without a Voucher?



Can the Vouchers Model Work in Your Community? YES!

- ❑ Local United Way could set aside a pool for 'cash assistance'.
- ❑ CBOs could run a fundraising campaign together to raise voucher dollars.
- ❑ Local foundations may find this idea appealing, especially small and family foundations seeking an upfront and personal kind of philanthropy.
- ❑ Federal and state policies could help promote public/private partnerships involving vouchers
- ❑ Emphasis on support leading to self-sufficiency builds on traditions of self-help and self-reliance in Faith-Based Organizations

Implementation Assistance

EmployIndy, Lilly Endowment & Brandeis University are available to assist communities who are interested in replicating the YES voucher model. We can provide:

- ▣ Manuals and implementation guides
- ▣ Research reports
- ▣ Forms and procedures
- ▣ Training protocols
- ▣ Monitoring of client files
- ▣ Spot check lessons
- ▣ Templates from MIS system

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