

ENOUGH IS KNOWN FOR ACTION

READY TO EMPLOY, EDUCATE, AND SUPPORT YOUTH

THE CENTER FOR YOUTH AND COMMUNITIES—*Making Knowledge Productive for 30+ Years*

Brandeis University

www.cyc.brandeis.edu

The Center for Youth and Communities can help you achieve the results you want through its nationally known evaluation and learning work, the Brandeis Academy, its role as a managing intermediary, and the Segal Citizen Leadership Program. The following information describes the Center's work and approach, as well as how you can contact us to design a customized plan to meet your needs.

Established at the Heller School in 1983, the Center for Youth and Communities works to improve the quality of **education, workforce development, and community systems**, and to foster **leadership and partnership development**, in order to prepare young people for college, work, and life. By combining scholarly research and practical experience with an emphasis on young people whose supports and opportunities have been few, the Center's work is guided by three goals:

- Using science-based research to improve the quality and impact of youth programs and policies.
- Strengthening governance, leadership, and management in philanthropy, the nonprofit sector, education, socially responsible business, and communities.
- Developing and using outcome-based planning and evaluation methods to deepen public understanding, strengthen and prove the efficacy of particular programs, and shape policies.

The Center's work is clustered in four strategic action strands: evaluation and learning, the Brandeis Academy, managing intermediary, and the Segal Citizen Leadership Program.

EVALUATION AND LEARNING

EVALUATION: Proving and Improving

The Center uses evaluation as a management and learning tool for both assessing program effectiveness and improving program practice. In all our work, we consider practitioners and policy makers as *partners* in a knowledge development effort to which we all bring critical strengths, and in which practical solutions to real-world issues are developed through collaboration and with mutual respect.

The Center will work with you to design a customized evaluation and learning plan that includes an array of qualitative and quantitative methods that match the questions to be answered, the program characteristics and cultures, and the resources at hand, and also provides clarity on how you will use the data and results for continuous improvement.

The Center uses logic models as a tool for understanding organizations' theory of change, strategies, and outcomes, and for building focused and realistic plans for data collection and use. Center staff served as senior editors and writers for the globally disseminated W.K. Kellogg Foundation *Evaluation Handbook*, a widely recognized and referenced guide for practitioners interested in improving their organizations' and/or partnerships' evaluation strategies.

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Examples of relevant evaluation and learning work—

WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT: Preparing youth for the 21st Century workforce

Many young people lack opportunities to become prepared for the workforce; high unemployment rates are both a cause and a reflection of this under-preparation. For the past 30 years, the Center has worked on initiatives aimed at enhancing employability with partners that include the US Department of Labor (USDOL), state and city agencies, and national foundations. As an evaluator, the Center has long worked with in-school and out-of-school hands-on learning programs aimed at providing 21st Century content and skills. As one example, for more than a decade the Center has been the evaluation partner for *FIRST* (For the Inspiration and Recognition of Science and Technology), a national organization that promotes involvement in STEM (Science Technology Engineering Math) and development of life and workplace skills through after-school robotics competitions for over 200,000 middle and high school-aged youth each year. Center studies have found that *FIRST* programs increase participants' interest in STEM education and careers while building teamwork, communications, time planning, and project management skills. The Center is now conducting a five-year longitudinal study to assess longer-term program impacts.

In one recent project, the Summer Youth Employability Initiative, the Walmart Foundation invested nearly \$8M in the Center over three years to design, fund, and study youth work and learning programs for thousands of teenagers in ten cities. Building on Center experience gained through work on prior foundation, JTPA, and WIA initiatives, the Walmart grants provided vulnerable youth with competency-based, paid work experiences that gave them important skills for future employment, while earning much needed summer income.

EDUCATION: Transitioning to and persisting in postsecondary education

Access to postsecondary education is limited for many young people; successful completion of postsecondary programs is rare. For over two decades, the Center has worked with higher education institutions, schools, and community-based organizations to evaluate and strengthen postsecondary access and success. For example, with grants totaling \$1.5M+ from the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation, the Social Innovation Fund, New Profit, Inc., and YouthBuild USA, the Center is working as the evaluation partner with more than 30 national and local organizations who are creating pathways to and through college for former dropouts (including young parents) by establishing partnerships between community-based education programs and community colleges. With funding from Campus Compact, the Nellie Mae Education Foundation, and the Jack Kent Cooke Foundation, the Center has also been working with initiatives aimed at improving persistence at 2- and 4-year colleges and expanding transfers between community colleges and selective 4-year institutions.

COMMUNITY SYSTEMS: Putting comprehensive youth development into practice

The Center has worked with several comprehensive initiatives that show promising results in helping youth gain critical life, education, and workplace skills. For example, the Center is the evaluation and learning partner with the Hyams Foundation and eight grantees in the five-year Teen Futures Initiative, which aims to increase the number of young people ages 16-22, who re-engage teens who are not in school and not working, gain a high school credential and transition to post-secondary education and employment. Improving the grantees' evaluation capacity and helping them improve their programs have been critical factors in the partnership.

The Center has worked closely with the Skillman Foundation and nearly 300 programs in the Good Neighborhoods, Good Schools Initiative, which concentrates Foundation resources in six Detroit neighborhoods with the ten-year goal of ensuring that 50,000 young neighborhood residents graduate from high school ready for college and a career. The Center has helped the partners to evaluate the initiative and engaged them in continuous learning and improvement, including refining the theory of change based on evaluation results. The Center has co-designed a web-based performance dashboard for the initiative and staffed and co-chaired the 2016 Task Force (key stakeholders who invest in and monitor progress of the \$100M investment in the initiative).

THE BRANDEIS ACADEMY

Leadership for Action, Innovation and Excellence in Youth Employability

The Brandeis Academy is customized capacity-building training and technical assistance (TTA) delivered on-site to leaders, managers, and investors (business, philanthropy, nonprofits, and government) in order to:

- elevate a shared cross-sector commitment to and investment in youth employability
- effect changes in the way people at all levels think about, plan, and implement youth employability programs
- build or enhance quality summer youth employability programs as part of a year-round youth employability development system
- integrate effective practices from youth development, workforce development, and education
- create sustainable youth employability systems by leveraging high impact partnerships, funding, and other resources

The Academy utilizes a combination of highly interactive methods to catalyze and support:

- results-oriented, place-based organizations and partnerships designed to employ, educate, and support youth, especially those who are the most vulnerable
- knowledge and skill-building, with a focus on the technical, vision, and political skills necessary to implement quality youth employability programs, and be successful change agents and cross-sector system-builders
- knowledge and resource development and dissemination

Why is the Brandeis approach so successful?

- We assess your organization's and/or partnership's effectiveness and, using this information along with your specific goals, design a customized plan for TTA.
- We integrate the Baldrige Quality Criteria into our assessment and TTA as benchmarks for improvement.
- We use sophisticated facilitation and learning methods that greatly increase participants' odds of walking away with usable knowledge and skills and/or feasible strategic plans that have high stakeholder buy-in.
- We have high congruence in messaging throughout our sessions so that all participants (employers, investors, managers and front-line staff) get the same core information upon which they can build common ground.

EXAMPLES OF ACADEMY SESSIONS

- **Investor Engagement.** These sessions focus on such topics as strengthening employer and investor knowledge regarding the status of youth, making the case for year-round employability systems, and discussing the role of employers in a youth employability system. We also often secure information from employers about the competencies they seek in new hires that can be communicated to those working in youth employability programs.
- **Facilitating Results-Oriented Partnerships for Impact.** These sessions engage leaders and managers from the public, nonprofit, philanthropy, and private sectors in structured conversations and decision-making processes to help partnerships attain the results they desire and develop sustainable plans for effective youth employability systems. This process builds high trust and ownership among participants, which establishes a solid foundation for partnership operations.
- **Enhancing and Sustaining Summer Youth Employability Programs and Strengthening Year-Round Connections.** Designed for leaders and managers, sessions include: enhancing and sustaining youth employability programs; creating or fine-tuning a vision of a competency-based summer program with year-round connections; and overcoming obstacles faced when connecting to year-round activities in more deliberate and sustainable ways.
- **The Nuts and Bolts of Implementing a Quality Youth Employability Program.** Designed for front-line workers, topics include how to: create quality learning-rich work experiences, structure work-based learning projects, assess youths' competency levels, incorporate reflection opportunities for youth, weave in youth development principles and trauma-informed practices, and understand the role of case management and research on youth motivation.

BRANDEIS AS A MANAGING INTERMEDIARY

Since its beginnings, the Center has served as the managing intermediary for demonstration projects and funded initiatives with a special focus on collaborative strategies for youth employability and education. In the late 1990s and early 2000s, funded by USDOL, Wallace Foundation, and others, the Center managed demonstration initiatives – the Summer Beginnings and Career Transitions networks – that developed and implemented learning rich summer work experiences for low income youth (linking community organizations, employers, and local colleges) and modeled multi-year sequences of services linking summer and year-round learning. More recently, under its grant from the Walmart Foundation, the Center served as the national program office with more than a dozen cities to design and implement partnerships to employ, educate, and support youth. Other efforts over the years have included managing multi-city comprehensive youth initiatives and community-wide strategies for improving the education and employment outcomes for teenage parents.

SEGAL INTERNSHIPS AND CITIZEN LEADERSHIP PROGRAM

The Center directs the endowed Eli J. Segal Citizen Leadership Program, which was launched by President Clinton at Brandeis University in 2007 to inspire and support new generations of citizen leaders. The program provides summer internships for Segal Fellows and serves as a platform to promote service and citizen leadership while commemorating and honoring the late Eli J. Segal, founder of the national AmeriCorps program. The program has selected and placed nearly 100 Fellows to date, and adds several each year to the nationwide lifelong network. Coaching and mentors are part of the professional development design. If you are interested in sponsoring a Segal intern in the summer ahead, please contact us!

BRANDEIS CENTER INVESTORS

Aetna Foundation
Alan B. Slifka Foundation
Annie E. Casey Foundation
Baltimore Community Foundation
Bank of New England
Berkshire Taconic Community Foundation
Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation
The Boston Foundation
The California Wellness Foundation
Capitol One
Charles Stewart Mott Foundation
Chicago Community Trust
Commonwealth of Massachusetts Corporation for National and Community Service
The Commonwealth Fund
Edna McConnell Clark Foundation
Education Commission of the States
Ewing Marion Kauffman Foundation
Fireman Family Fund
FIRST
Ford Foundation

Fry Foundation
Fund for the City of New York
Gannett Foundation
GE Foundation
GreenLight Fund
Jack Kent Cooke Foundation
The Hitachi Foundation
The Hyams Foundation
IBM Foundation
James Irvine Foundation
John D. & Catherine T. MacArthur Foundation
Johnson Family Fund
The Kresge Foundation
The Lilly Endowment
McKnight Foundation
Maine Department of Education
Massachusetts Department of Education
Melville Charitable Trust
Michael Reese Health Trust
National Science Foundation
Nellie Mae Education Foundation

New York Community Trust
Partners for New Communities
The Pew Charitable Trusts
Pillsbury Company Foundation
Purity Supermarkets
Raytheon Charitable Foundation
The Rockefeller Foundation
The Skillman Foundation
Social Innovation Fund
SURDNA Foundation
The Taconic Foundation
United Way of Rhode Island
US Department of Education
US Department of Health and Human Services
US Department of Labor
W.K. Kellogg Foundation
Walmart Foundation
The Wallace Foundation
Woods Fund of Chicago
W.T. Grant Foundation
YouthBuild USA

HOW TO ENGAGE BRANDEIS IN WORKING WITH YOU

Staff at the Center for Youth and Communities will design a custom plan for your organization and/or partnership. We will propose options for the levels of evaluation and learning, capacity building, and/or training and technical assistance desired, along with a plan for conducting this assistance over time. Fees for this service will be based on the final plan. For more information, contact Della M. Hughes, Center for Youth and Communities, at 781.736.3609 or dhughes@brandeis.edu. References available on request.

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