



Erie Summer JAM – Final Report

The Venango Training and Development Center

John Flanagan – Chief Operations Officer

History:

The Erie Summer Jobs and More (JAM) Program is a collaborative effort of likeminded individuals and agencies that came together to address a long standing issue in the Erie County community. The issue centered on job readiness and employment for our youth age 16-21 population in Erie County. Career exploration and summer employment are cornerstones in the eradication of a larger, systemic issue that faces a growing, at-risk population: poverty. With nearly 50% of people under the age of 18 living in poverty, the public, private, and nonprofit sectors joined resources in an effort to address the issue.

The partners assembled included: The County of Erie led by County Executive Kathy Dahlkemper and the Erie County Council; The Erie County Gaming and Revenue Authority directed by Perry Wood, the Erie Community Foundation led by Mike Batchelor, CareerStreet[®], and The Venango Training and Development Center. In addition, many of the local service agencies who dedicated their time and efforts to assist youth in moving from poverty to self-sufficiency were all focused on this common goal. The Erie Community Foundation was instrumental in gathering the team together. The foundation coordinated agencies to come to the table and hosted the initial meeting in their facility. Without the Foundation and their unique and impressive reputation in the Erie Community, this project may not have come to fruition.

The planning and implementation of Summer JAM began in early February 2014. The initial goals and objectives were to create a pilot program that would serve as many as 100 youth in career readiness and exploration that would lead to direct, subsidized employment. Moreover, the creation of an informational web page would give Erie County residents access to family friendly activities within the community. The team agreed that vehicles already existed that could sufficiently facilitate these tasks. The Venango Training and Development Center, the Title I provider for Youth, Adult and Dislocated Worker services within the six

county northwest region, would provide the Career Readiness and Employment Program while the Erie Community Foundation would host the JAM web page through CareerStreet®.

In May 2014, the Erie County Council voted to fund the JAM program at \$100,000.00. Once county funding was secured, the Erie County Gaming and Revenue Authority funded the program at \$110,000, matching dollar for dollar the funding secured through the County of Erie as well as a \$10,000 award through The Erie Community Foundation and CareerStreet® for the Career Readiness and Employment Program. The Erie Community Foundation awarded funding to Epic Web Studios to host the JAM website through the CareerStreet® platform. With funding and partners in place, the program was ready to move forward.

Career Readiness and Employment Program:

In the beginning of June 2014, the Venango Training and Development Center hosted a series of information sessions to serve as orientation to the JAM program for participants and parents. The response was overwhelming. Nearly 200 potential youth participants attended the sessions located at the Erie PA CareerLink® facility, Union City High School, and Northwestern High School. Each potential participant was given a tutorial on jobs available, locations, placement potential, and given detailed instructions on documentation needed for enrollment. All Title I and PA CareerLink® staff worked collaboratively to ensure that the needs of the community were met and all eligible people within the county limits were given sufficient access to the orientation sessions.

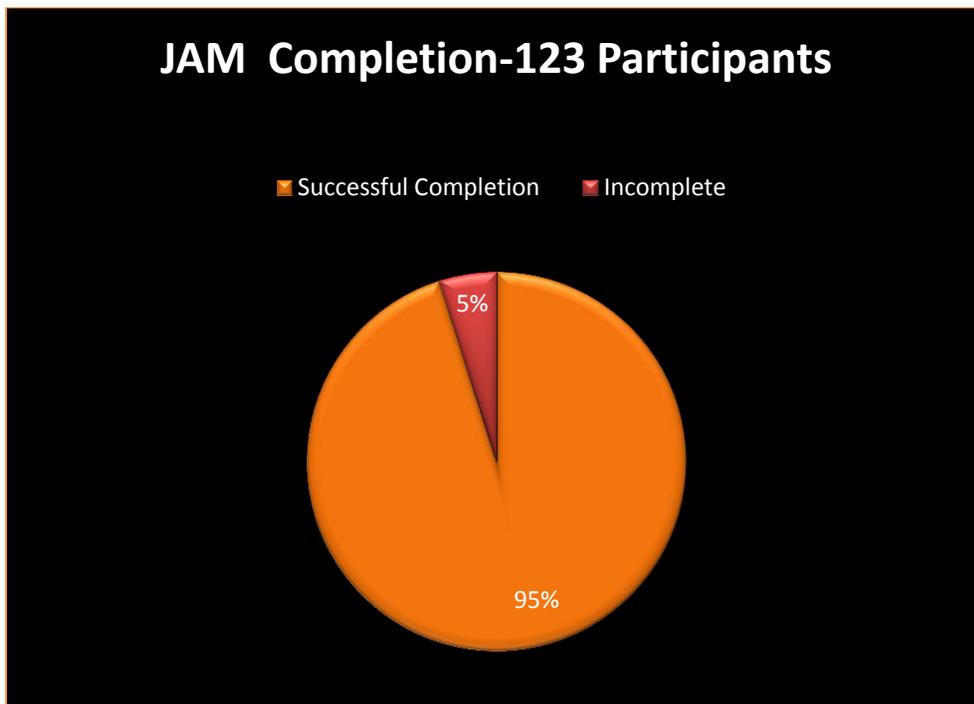
After orientation sessions were complete, the Venango Training and Development Center received documentation from 123 eligible youth participants wishing to participate in the JAM program. As program provider, with approval from funders, we felt it necessary to include all participants who showed interest and completed the necessary documentation to participate.

Starting June 30, 2014, youth participants received up to 20 hours of career readiness, exploration, and soft skill training in preparation for placement. All employment opportunities began on July 7, 2014. Each participant was mandated to attend each session for placement leading to employment. All 123 applicants successfully complete their Career Readiness and Exploration training successfully.

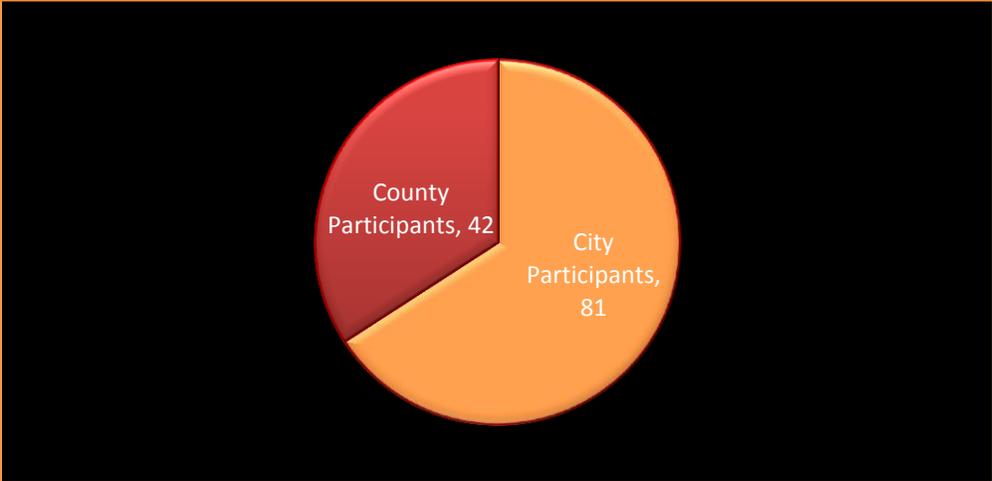
Direct Employment and Placement Program:

All 123 participants were placed in employment beginning July 7, 2014 through August 22, 2014. The Venango Training and Development Center used existing partnerships to secure 32 employers at various locations. Some of those partners included the School District of the City of Erie, the Perseus House Charter School of Excellence, Franco's Café, Erie County Department of Public Safety, the Erie County Public Library System, Union City Family Support Center, Dynasty Construction, Potratz, Camp Halo, and many others. Each student participated in approximately 6 weeks of work with their host employer, worked up to 30 hours per week, and was paid \$7.25 per hour. A total of 117 out 123 eligible participants successfully completed the program and are considered a positive outcome relating to reporting metrics.

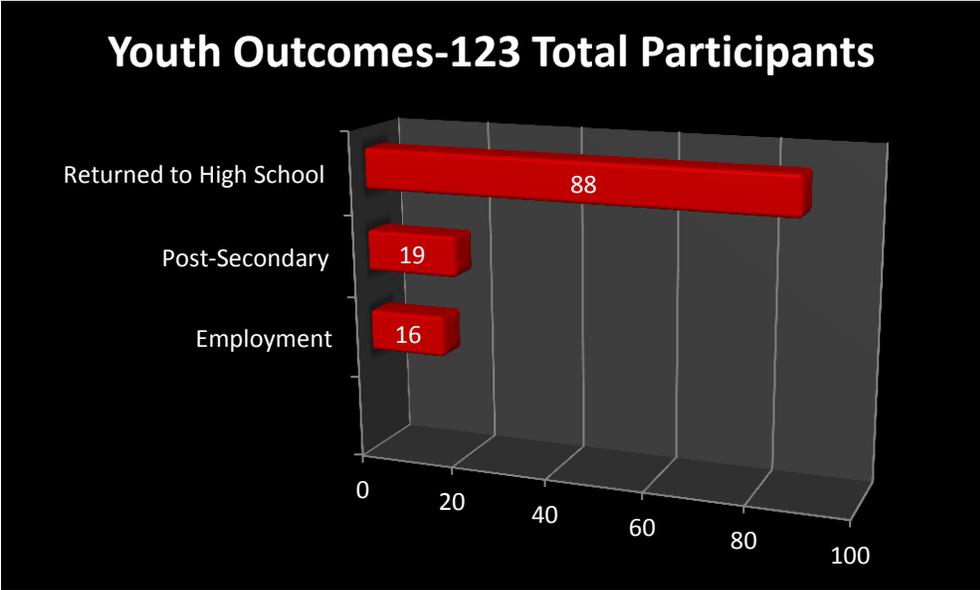
Data points to consider: Total Participants demonstration successful completion:



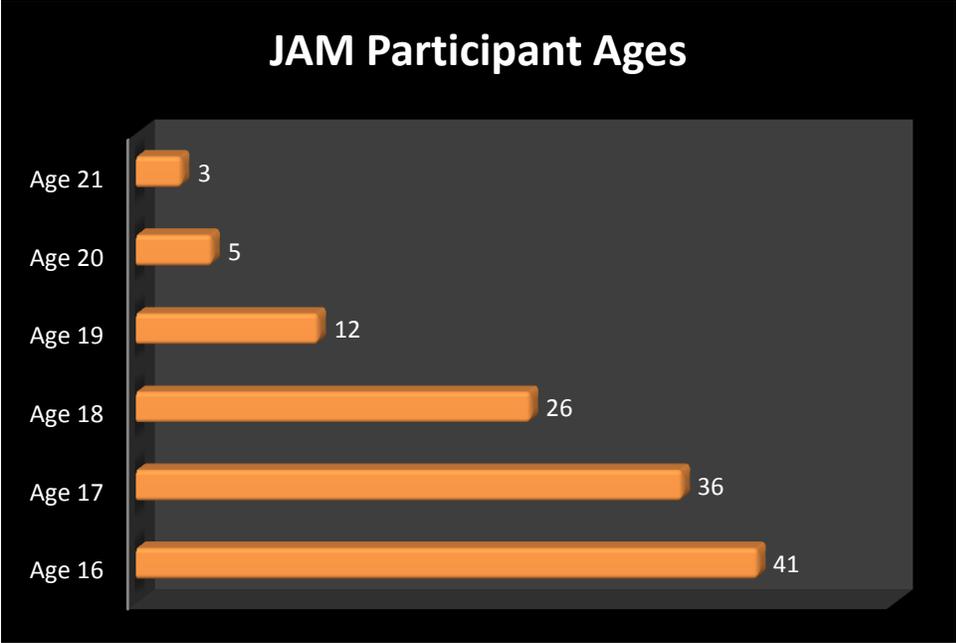
Participant population by City and County location:



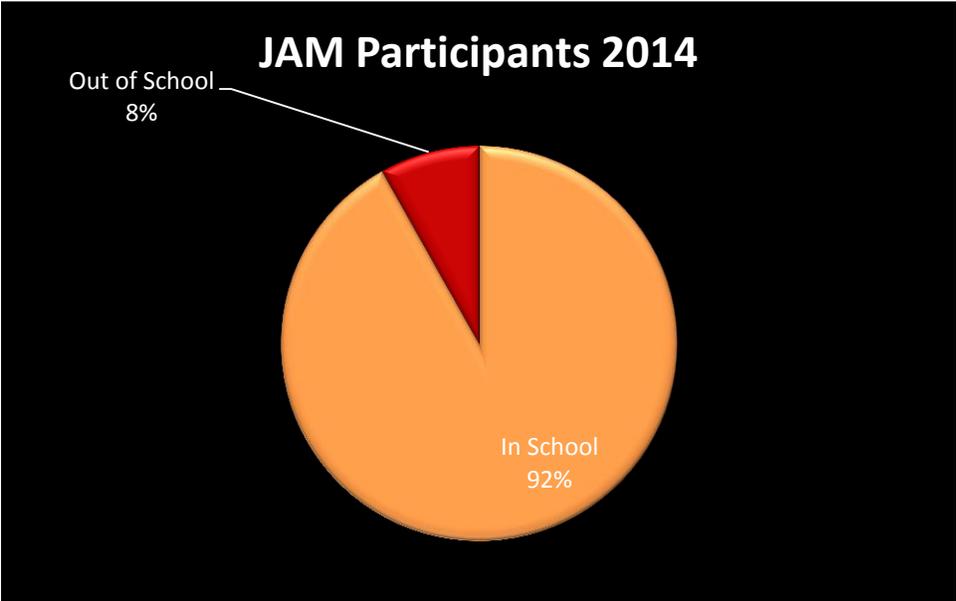
Specified participant outcomes:



Participants by age range (16 – 21):



Participants in school (high School) vs. Out of School (graduated/GED):



Our employer partners were vital participants in the JAM program. Thirty-two (32) employers participated in the program, provided positions such as office and clerical, customer support, retail, construction and trades, maintenance, and food service. The program was created with the intent to not only provide wage-based employment for participants, but an opportunity to explore various high priority occupations and career tracks within Erie County. Most host sites considered this as an integral part of the overall training process when placing participants into positions.

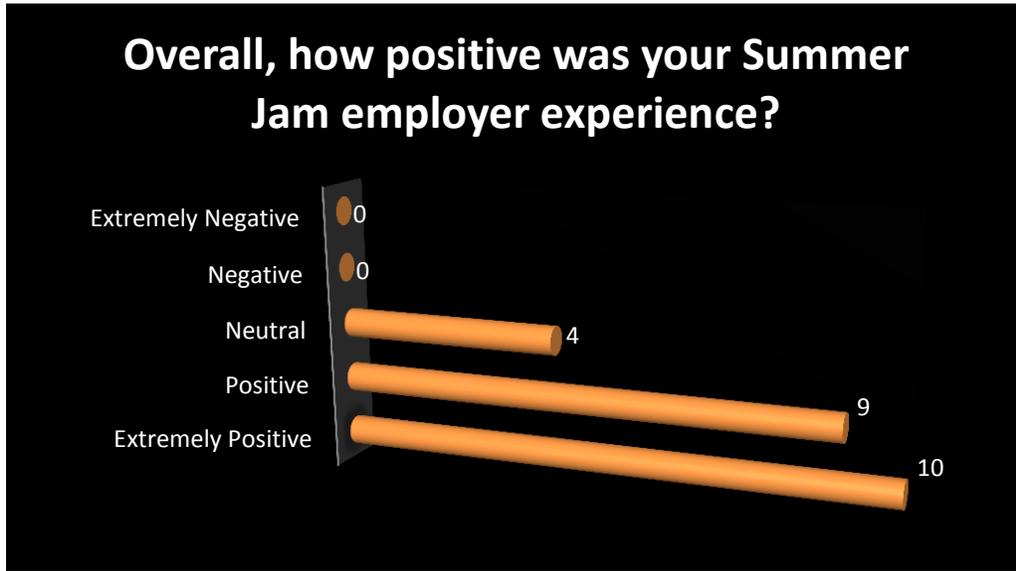
Employer data points to consider: Employer Outcomes from VTDC outcomes survey



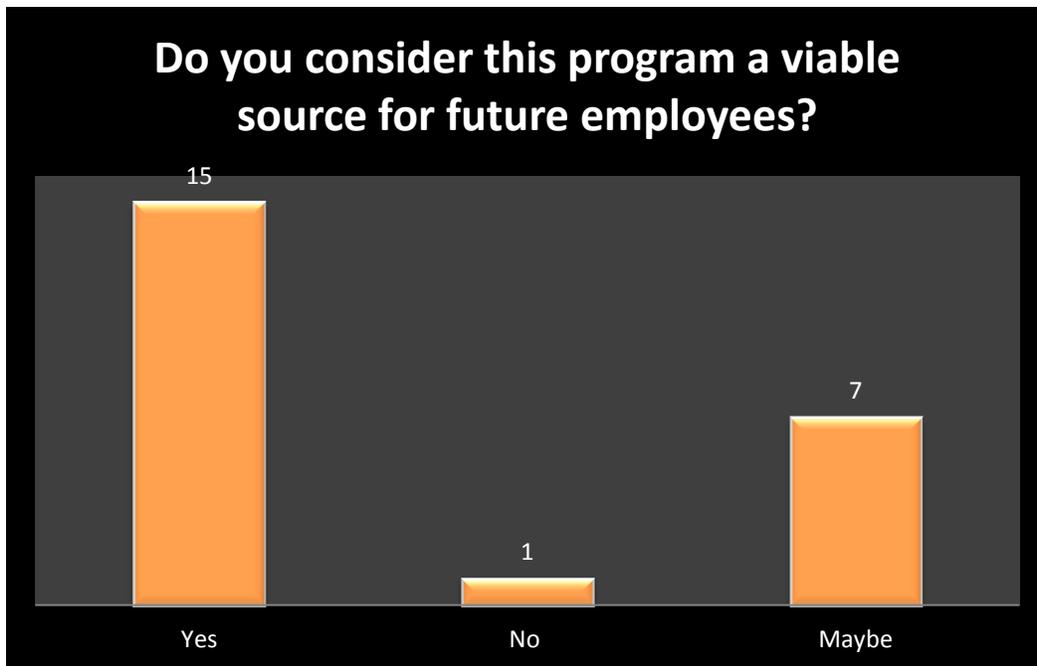
For Profit and Non Profit employers:



Enhanced survey – Employer outcomes (23 of 32 responding employers)



Employers who consider this a pipeline for future employment



Placement employer direct feedback that you may find beneficial or interesting:

"This program provided the youth with the opportunity to learn valuable skill sets, like punctuality and work ethic, which they will need for future employment."

Melissa L. Tomcho/Joan Fink-Union City Area School District

"This was a great experience."

Barbie Pfeil-Camp Halo

"I believe the pre-work activity at Gannon proved to be very beneficial, whereas the youths are trained on how to act and what's expected when employed."

Larry Franco-Franco's Café

"It was a pleasure to be part of this year's Summer JAM 2014 Program, and play a positive role in changing the lives and/or career path with the two young women that chose to make a difference in their lives through their participation."

John Grappy-Erie County Department of Public Safety

"The 2014 Summer JAM Youth workers allowed our small organization to achieve many tasks and greatly improve the appearance of our neighborhood."

Jeremy Bloeser-Bayfront East SideTaskforce

"Our JAM employees were so well screened and oriented that with one week's training, they were performing at an independent level. Their professionalism and independence provided a reliable labor pool during the busiest library season."

Erin McCracken-Erie County Public Library

"The program is great, and I definitely think there are benefits to the program. Perhaps it would be good to evaluate the employee's skills, more initially, before pairing them with a job where certain skills may be necessary."

Gayle Gollmer-Magnolia Run Kennels

"I think more work training needs to be provided for participants."

Anna Tischenko-Multicultural Community Resource Center

Recommendations and Next Steps:

The program faced significant challenges in its inception year, the most significant challenge being time from inception to implementation and roll out. All partners showed tremendous effort and output given the abbreviated timeline. Key implementation points that VTDC would like to consider for following years:

- 1) Increase participation to 200-250 city and county youth;
- 2) Diversify program funding to include the following stakeholders:
 - a. DOL discretionary youth grant opportunities;
 - b. Social Innovation Fund (SIF) Impact Grants;
 - c. Under the Workforce Investment and Opportunity Act, there is a possibility for funding to be set aside for youth program initiatives such as Summer Employment Programs. This is at the sole discretion of the WIB, and the Chief Local Elected Officials, as fiduciary oversight and responsibility to the NW WIB;
 - d. Engage the employer community to contribute to the program, as it is an integral piece of talent and pipeline development for the employer community in the years to come.
- 3) Open program to all interested youth within the county, regardless of income qualification;
- 4) Informational sessions to participants and employers to begin in December 2014;
- 5) Increased employer input into program conception and administration;
- 6) Increase the private, for profit employer community in placement of youth.
- 7) Inventory testing for participants to ensure job matching based on participant interest and employer need;
- 8) Participant interview process with program administrator and employer host sites;
- 9) More focus towards work placements into STEM related and area High Priority Occupation career ladders and lattices.

We look forward to working with the all partners in the coming years to ensure both continued success and program improvement.