

Wisconsin Regional Training Program

A “sectoral” (i.e., industry-specific) job training program for unemployed, disadvantaged workers. Well-conducted randomized controlled trial shows a \$6,300 (or 24%) increase in total earnings during the two years after random assignment.

I. Description of the Intervention:

The Wisconsin Regional Training Program (WRTP) is a nonprofit, “sectoral” employment training program in Milwaukee that provides industry-specific job training to unemployed, disadvantaged workers in the fields of construction, health care, and, to a lesser extent, manufacturing. WRTP has strong ties to local employers and unions, and works collaboratively with them to develop brief (two to eight week) training programs that meet their specific workforce needs. The training is frequently provided by external training providers. Program applicants are carefully screened to identify those most likely to benefit from training and succeed in WRTP’s targeted occupations, and the program generally targets those with skill levels between sixth and tenth grade. Accepted applicants receive individualized, pre-employment training focused on teaching them industry-specific skills as well as general job readiness (e.g., importance of punctuality, strategies for dealing with child care). Once they have completed training, WRTP helps them find a job. The cost of the program was not reported in the study summarized below.

II. Evidence of Effectiveness:

A. **Evaluation method: A single-site randomized controlled trial of WRTP with follow-up two years after random assignment.**

The study randomly assigned 393 adults (average age of 33 years), who had applied to participate in WRTP and met its eligibility requirements, to either (i) a group that could receive job training from WRTP, or (ii) a control group that could not receive WRTP services for two years, but could attend any other employment training programs in the community.

52% of sample members were male; 78% were African American; 50% were unemployed at the start of the study; 80% had received a high school diploma or GED, and 37% had ever been incarcerated. On average, they had earned \$11,600 in the prior year.

73% of the intervention group completed the training, and for those that did, the average time in training was 1.6 months.

B. **Effects of WRTP at the 2-year, post-random assignment follow-up:**

These are the effects on all main outcomes that the study measured at the two-year follow-up, compared to the control group (including any such outcomes for which no or adverse effects were found). All effects shown are statistically significant at the 0.05 level unless otherwise stated.

- 24% increase in average earnings over the full two years (i.e. \$32,544 in average two-year earnings for the WRTP group versus \$26,289 for the control group).
- 27% increase in average earnings in the second (and final) year of the study, showing that the effects do not immediately dissipate (i.e., \$17,349 versus \$13,614).

- 46% increase in likelihood of having worked a job that pays at least \$11/hour in the previous two years (i.e. 57% of the WRTP group had done so vs. 39% of controls).
- 18% increase in likelihood of having worked a job offering benefits in the previous two years (79% vs. 67%).
- There were no significant effects on rates of being employed, months employed, or hours worked during the follow-up period (although there was a modest, non-significant increase in months employed and hours worked in year two).

These results suggest that the earnings increase was driven primarily by an increase in pay rather than an increase in hours worked.

C. **Discussion of Study Quality:**

- WRTP was evaluated as it typically operates in Milwaukee, thus providing evidence that the program is effective in real-world community settings.
- The study had low attrition: Outcome data were obtained for 87% of the original sample, and follow-up rates were virtually the same for the WRTP and control groups.
- At the two-year follow-up, members of the WRTP and control group were highly similar in their observable pre-program characteristics (e.g., demographics and employment history).
- The study measured outcomes for all WRTP group members regardless of whether or how long they actually participated in the program (i.e. the study used an “intention-to-treat” analysis).
- Study Limitations:
 - The study was conducted in a single site (Milwaukee), prior to the 2008-2009 recession. Confirmation of the above findings in a second trial, conducted in another setting and time period (e.g., the current weaker economy), would be desirable to strengthen evidence of the program’s effectiveness across the range of conditions where it might normally be implemented.
 - Outcomes were measured through self-reports, obtained through researcher-administered phone surveys, and were not corroborated by official records (e.g. state unemployment insurance data on earnings and employment).
 - The follow-up period was only two years. Longer-term follow-up is needed to determine if the sizable earnings effects at two years persist.

D. **Thoughts on what more is needed to build strong evidence:** A second well-conducted randomized controlled trial, carried out in another setting, to show that the effects generalize to other settings where the program might normally be implemented.

III. References:

[Maguire, Sheila](#), Joshua Freely, Carol Clymer, Maureen Conway, and Deena Schwartz. *Tuning into Local Labor Markets: Findings from the Sectoral Employment Impact Study*. Public/Private Ventures: 2010. [Click here for the full study report](#).