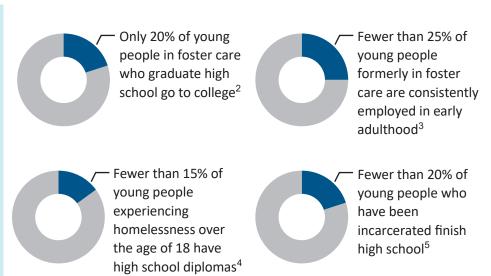
Lessons from the Implementation of Learn and Earn to Achieve Potential



In 2015, the Annie E. Casey Foundation partnered with the Corporation for National and Community Service's Social Innovation Fund to launch Learn and Earn to Achieve Potential (LEAP), a multimillion-dollar initiative to increase employment and educational opportunities for young people ages 15-25 who have been involved in the child welfare and justice systems, or who are homeless. The initiative offers a unique opportunity to address the specific needs and challenges of these young people, including trauma they may have experienced in their lives, and get them on pathways to school and work. MDRC is conducting an evaluation of the initiative's implementation, outcomes, and costs.

4.6 million young people in the United States are not in school or working.¹
Young people who have a history of involvement in the foster care or justice systems, or who are experiencing homelessness, are disproportionately represented in this group.



How LEAP Supports Young People

Educational credentials and early work experience predict future employment and future income, and lack of success in these areas at an early age can have lifelong consequences. LEAP connects young people with education, skills, and experiences to help them realize their full potential. LEAP's design is informed by past research about what works to promote young people's success. Important aspects of the model include:

connections to supportive adults

who can provide help with the transition to adulthood typically provided by parents Opportunities
to develop
academic
skills

to progress in school

jobreadiness skills

they can use to get jobs and keep them

Help connecting with

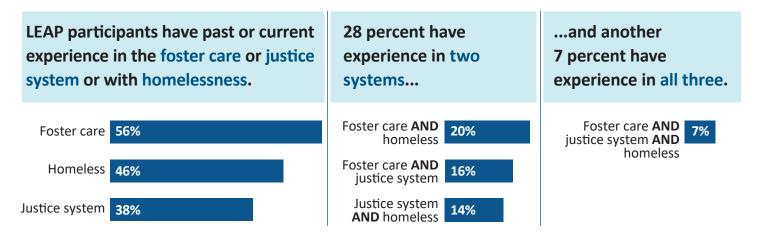
resources in their communities

to address their health, housing, child care or other needs

Continuity of services

so they can keep getting support after they start school or work

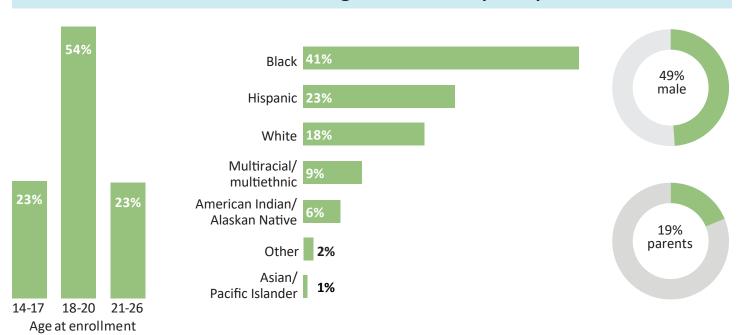
About LEAP Participants



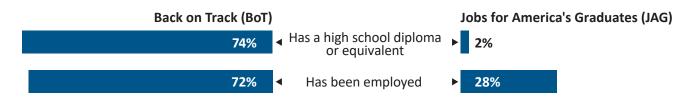


59% were in foster care, in the justice system, or homeless at the time of enrollment.

More about the backgrounds of LEAP participants



Two LEAP program models serve populations with different needs.



NOTE: Individual-level demographics were provided by LEAP programs on 1,349 participants who enrolled from April 2016 to December 2017.

About the LEAP Program Models

TWO ESTABLISHED NATIONAL PROGRAMS SERVING DISADVANTAGED YOUNG PEOPLE

Jobs for America's Graduates (JAG)

Targets young people who have not yet completed high school

2 JFF's Back on Track (BoT)

Targets young people making the transition to college or postsecondary training

ADAPTED TO A SPECIAL POPULATION: YOUNG PEOPLE AGES 15-25 WITH INVOLVEMENT IN THE CHILD WELFARE SYSTEM, JUVENILE OR CRIMINAL JUSTICE, OR HOMELESSNESS

Programs' Core Components





LEAP Enhancements

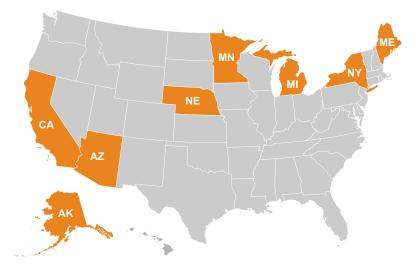


JAG

- Curriculum on career and personal development, basic skills, and job skills
- Simultaneous enrollment in high schools or high school equivalency programs
- Personalized goal setting and support from a JAG specialist
- Connections to employers and job placements
- Student-led career association
- 12 months of follow-up support services
- BoT
- Bridging curriculum and experiences to build college and career success skills
- Academic skill development to prepare for postsecondary study
- Personalized guidance and exploration of college and career training programs
- Help navigating enrollment and financial aid
- Connection to postsecondary resources, student organizations, and activities
- Continued support during the first year of college

- Staff members trained to work with young people who have experienced trauma
- Case management to connect participants to supportive services to meet their housing, child care, and basic needs
- Opportunities for participants to develop leadership skills and take on leadership roles in the program
- Cross-system
 partnerships to
 harness local
 resources and address
 gaps in services

LEAP is implemented by 10 local partnerships in 8 states.





"Especially for people coming out of foster home — I didn't know how to even go about going to college. My family didn't go to college, so having this resource to figure out what to do with my life, I definitely appreciate it."

—LEAP BoT Participant

The LEAP Evaluation

MDRC'S EVALUATION OF LEAP WILL PROVIDE

INFORMATION

Valuable information for practitioners and policymakers seeking to improve academic and employment outcomes for these young people

LESSONS

Lessons about expanding established interventions and adapting them to new populations

STRATEGIES

Strategies to promote young people's engagement in services

COSTS

Information on the costs of providing LEAP services

MDRC'S EVALUATION AND EARLY FINDINGS

MDRC's evaluation will include a thorough look at the two models' implementation and adaptation, an examination of the role of local systems in LEAP implementation and LEAP enhancements, an analysis of individual-level participation and outcome data, and in-depth interviews with participants. A final report will be released in 2019.

MDRC conducted a round of site visits to each program in 2017 to learn about implementation. Though each LEAP location has structured its local program differently, there were common ways that each is adapting the two LEAP models to promote and sustain the engagement of participants. Examples from selected sites highlight how these adaptations work in practice.



Tailoring service delivery to individuals

LEAP services are tailored to meet young people's needs and promote their engagement in the program.

LEAP programs also try to reengage and offer support to participants who have stopped active involvement in the program, recognizing that young people's employment and school trajectories are not always linear.

Some programs provide one-on-one opportunities for participants to learn the curriculum if their work or child care schedules make regular attendance in classes difficult.

NEBRASKA

NEBRASKA CHILDREN AND FAMILIES OMAHA AND LINCOLN, NEBRASKA

Back on Track was originally designed to be delivered to groups of young people who joined at the same time, but like many LEAP programs, Nebraska Children and Families has found that offering a combination of group-based and one-on-one forms of support can promote engagement in program activities. At one of the colleges where LEAP students are enrolled, the LEAP specialist meets one-on-one with each participant once a week to provide individual support, but also brings together the LEAP students as a group once a month to provide information and resources. This meeting allows LEAP participants to build community.



Cross-sector connections to supportive services

LEAP programs help participants succeed by connecting them to needed support, often through cross-sector partnerships that harness local resources. Some programs partner with another organization or school to provide LEAP services alongside other critical forms of support, like housing or child care. At the system level, some programs are working across sectors to streamline data sharing, improve access to existing resources, and address service gaps.

MINNESOTA

PROJECT FOR PRIDE IN LIVING (PPL)
MINNEAPOLIS, MINNESOTA

PPL's LEAP program has layered partnerships with agencies and organizations to provide a robust set of services to LEAP participants. LEAP students, who attend JAG classes at alternative schools and earn credit toward their high school diplomas at the same time, also receive dedicated, personalized support from an on-site case manager who builds relationships with the young people and connects them to additional help they may need. PPL also has partnerships that provide opportunities for LEAP participants to enroll in community college, attend housing and financial literacy classes, and get work experience through internships.

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The LEAP evaluation is funded by the Annie E. Casey Foundation. For more information, visit www.mdrc.org/project/learn-and-earn-achieve-potential-leap.