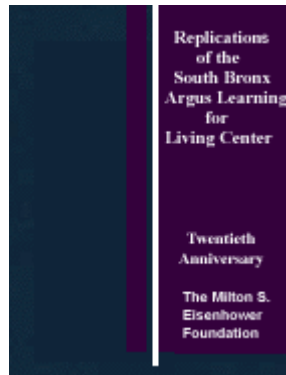


EXECUTIVE SUMMARY



This is the final report on the evaluation of a two site replication of a model job training placement and retention program for out-of-school inner city youth—the South Bronx Argus Community Learning for Living Program. The evaluation and replication ran over thirty-six months and represented a collaboration among the Milton S. Eisenhower Foundation, the Argus Community, Inc., Capital Commitment, Inc., and the John R. Grubb YMCA. Funding was provided by the U.S. Department of Labor, private foundation matching partners, and local matching partners.

The Department of Labor granted \$1.5M over the thirty-six months. In its Solicitation for Grant Application (SGA) for the original competition in which the Eisenhower Foundation ultimately received funding, the Department of Labor (Federal Register, 1994), did not call for an evaluation. Rather it stated:

Ideally, the development of new approaches to serving youth occurs in several stages—

- (1) An idea or model is developed;
- (2) The idea is put into practice at one site, and then perhaps at a second site with some modifications;
- (3) The model program is then pilot-tested at several sites.
- (4) The model program then enters a demonstration stage in which it is formally evaluated using random assignment of program applicants to treatment and non-treatment groups at several sites; and
- (5) If the random assignment evaluation results come out positive, the model program is replicated widely across the country. This grant announcement covers stages (2) and (3) of this process—the pilot-testing of a new approach at a first or second site or at multiple sites.

Hence, the Labor Department did not ask for a formal evaluation

However, the Eisenhower Foundation secured modest private foundation funds for evaluation and suggested that modest Labor funds from the \$1.5M be matched for the evaluation. Because funding would be minimal, the evaluation design called for the use of comparison groups, rather than control groups with random assignment. The Department of Labor approved this plan.

As a result, process and outcome evaluations were undertaken. The Eisenhower Foundation and the Department of Labor agreed that the end results would provide more information than requested in the SGA (see above), but less information than a more expensive and formal evaluation based on process findings combined with randomized, control group outcome findings.

Specifically, the agreed-upon Eisenhower Foundation evaluation had two basic hypotheses based on the program framework illustrated in Figure 1 and operationalized for the evaluation according to the measures and data sources identified in Table 1:

1. Hypothesis 1 (to be tested by the process evaluation): The pilot tests show that it is possible to implement and replicate Argus Learning for Living in two other locations.
2. Hypothesis 2 (to be tested by the comparison group outcome evaluation): Youth who participate in Argus replication activities are better integrated, socially and economically, than comparison youth who do not participate in Argus—as measured by employment levels, wages, reliance on public assistance, drug use, and arrests.

After a presentation of some background information, this final report turns to the process evaluation and documents the validation of Hypothesis 1. We then turn to the comparison group outcome evaluation and document that Hypothesis 2 has also been validated. The discussion and conclusions sections provide a framework for a more formal future replication and evaluation.

Process evaluation

The process evaluation demonstrated that the Argus Learning for Living program was successfully replicated in two locations (see Hypothesis 1). To the considerable extent that Argus has proven to be replicatable, we attribute success to the model's no nonsense socialization in a drug and violence-free environment, education, remedial education, corporate etiquette training, job training for work that is not dead-ended but upwardly mobile, and follow up to ensure retention or transition to other jobs at enhanced levels of responsibility and remuneration.

Comparison Group Outcome Evaluation :

The results for the comparison group outcome evaluation are summarized separately for cohort 1, see below, followed by a combined presentation of the results for cohorts 2 and

3. This organizational scheme reflects a change in the comparison group outcome evaluation design, which took place after data collection had been completed for the first cohort of program participants (previously reported in Milton S. Eisenhower Foundation, 1997), and coincided with a change in the evaluation team in March 1997. The evaluation team found it inadvisable to continue with the original design for reasons related to both logistics and resource limitations. In addition to these pragmatic concerns, however, the change in design also permitted improvements, particularly regarding the sampling, which was improved through matching. The new design also created an opportunity to confirm the earlier findings (cohort 1) by identifying the program outcomes for cohorts 2 and 3, thereby lending further credibility to the results of the Argus model demonstrated by Cohort 1.

Figure 1. Argus-Replication-Framework

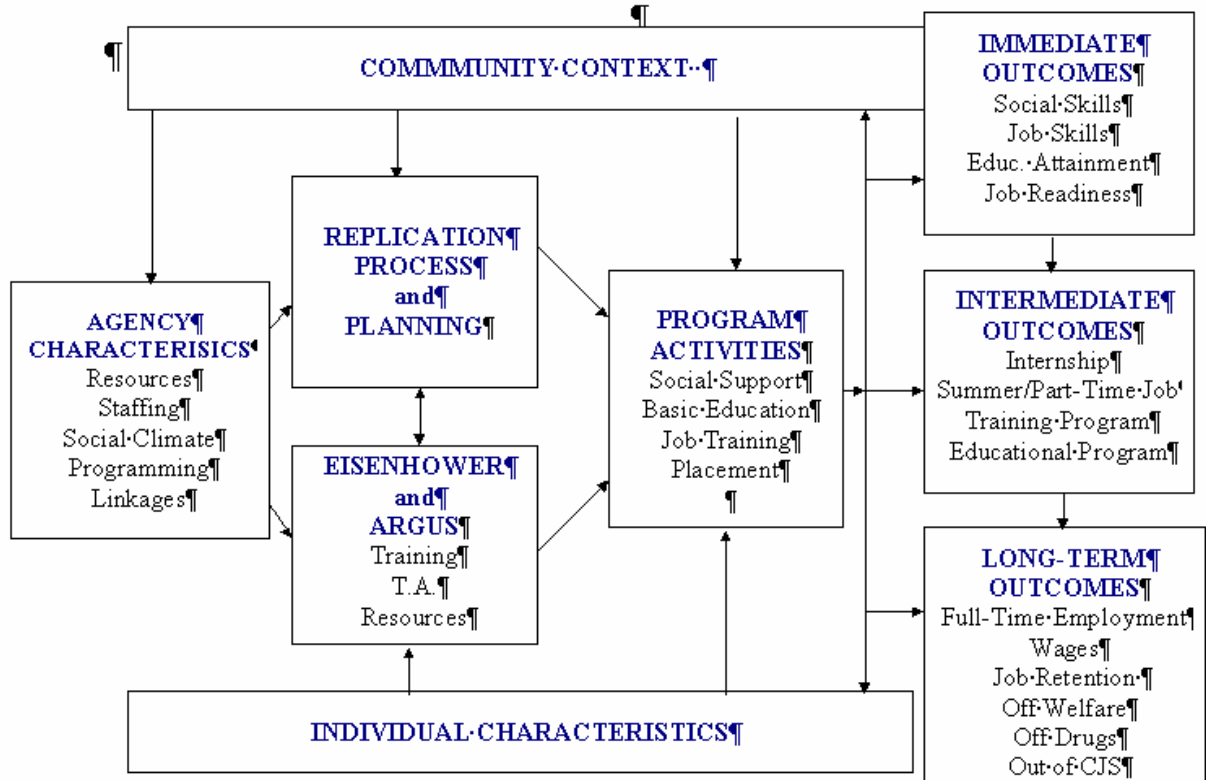


TABLE 1: KEY CONSTRUCTS OF THE EVALUATION FRAMEWORK

CONSTRUCTS/VARIABLES	POTENTIAL MEASURES	DATA SOURCE(S)
1. AGENCY CHARACTERISTICS		
Resources	Finances	Key informant interviews Administrative records
Staffing	Number/type of positions	Key informant interviews Administrative records
Social Climate	Safety/friendliness	Observation Key informant interviews
Programming	Number/type of programs	Administrative records Key informant interviews
Linkages	Number/type of partnerships	Key informant interviews
2. COMMUNITY CONTEXT		
	Unemployment Rate	Key informant interviews
	Crime Rate	Key informant interviews
	Drop-Out-Rate	Key informant interviews
3. REPLICATION PROCESS AND PLANNING		
	Number of meetings	Program and evaluation reports
	Assessment by stakeholders	Key informant interviews
4. TRAINING, TECHNICAL ASSISTANCE, AND RESOURCE DEVELOPMENT		
	Number of trainings	Program and evaluation reports
	Training and assistance materials	Program and evaluation reports
	Assessment by stakeholders	Key informant interviews
5. PROGRAM ACTIVITIES		
	Number/type of programs	Program and evaluation reports Key informant interviews
6. INDIVIDUAL CHARACTERISTICS		
	Demographic profile of participants	Administrative records Follow-Up survey
7. IMMEDIATE OUTCOMES		
	Social skills	Program and evaluation reports
	Job skills	Program and evaluation reports
	Educational attainment	Program and evaluation reports
	Job readiness	Program and evaluation reports
8. INTERMEDIATE OUTCOMES		
	Internships	Follow-Up Survey
	Summer/pait-time employment	Follow-Up Survey
	Training programs	Follow-Up Survey
	Educational programs	Follow-Up Survey
9. LONG-TERM OUTCOMES		
	Full-time employment	Follow-Up Survey
	Wages	Follow-Up Survey
	Job retention	Follow-Up Survey
	Welfare status	Follow-Up Survey
	Drug use	Follow-Up Survey
	Criminal activity	Follow-Up Survey

Cohort 1 :

The cohort 1 sample consisted of 19 Capital Commitment participants, 36 Washington, DC comparison group members, 32 John R. Grubb YMCA program participants, and 27 Des Moines comparison group members. Data were collected from the youth at the beginning of the program (Time 1) and then again approximately 17 months after the program began (Time 3). The survey employed (see Appendix 11) was designed to tap a variety of functional outcomes (e.g., employment status, educational attainment). Using Analysis of Variance (ANOVA) with repeated measures, significant differences emerged for both employment status and average weekly earnings. Specifically, the percentage of employed program participants increased, while the percentage of employed comparison group members dropped in both Washington, DC and Des Moines. With respect to wages, the earnings of the Capital Commitment participants increased while the average weekly pay of the comparison youth declined. In Des

Moines, both the John R. Grubb program participants and the comparison youth showed an increase in weekly earnings from Time 1 to Time 3, but the increase was greater for the program youth.

Cohorts 2 and 3 :

The sample for the evaluation of cohorts 2 and 3 consisted of 31 Capital Commitment participants, 50 Washington, DC comparison group members, 42 John R. Grubb YMCA program participants, and 46 Des Moines comparison group members. The data were collected by means of interview protocols designed to gather data retrospectively (before and during the program) as well as current information (after the program) on a variety of outcomes including educational attainment, employment experiences, criminal justice involvement, drug use, and welfare status (see Appendices 12 and 13 for copies of the instruments).

Due to significant differences in terms of program participant demographics, program characteristics, and community context, analyses for each site were conducted independently. Within each site, cohorts 2 and 3 were aggregated to compensate for small sample sizes. This approach limited information concerning the timing of program effects since the interval between the beginning of program participation and data collection necessarily differed for cohorts 2 (time interval for Washington=27 months, Des Moines=18.27 months) and 3 (time interval for Washington=16 months, Des Moines=11.6 months). The relative increase in statistical power gained by combining the cohort 2 and 3 samples was judged to be a higher priority. For each site, Analysis of Variance (ANOVA) was used to test for the significance of the program in accounting for change in participants' drug use, criminal justice involvement, reliance on public assistance, employment status, and wage changes over time.

However, even with the aggregation of cohorts 2 and 3, the sample size did not result in adequate power to find significant differences for all outcomes. Specifically, the statistical analysis revealed that where significant differences were not found for outcome measures, there was a 40-50% probability that such differences would be missed even if they existed. The effect of the program was determined using a change score (rate after the program - rate before the program). Differences between program participants and the comparison group were tested using Analysis of Covariance (ANCOVA) where age and education levels were controlled for in the analysis. In spite of limitations related to power, statistically significant changes were found on some variables and important changes were found in some cases where statistical significance could not be determined.

For the Washington, DC site, the program proved to have a significant effect on reported drug use from before the program to during the program and this effect continued after the program. In both cases, these effects reflected a greater decline in reported drug use by the program participants compared to the comparison group. Promising trends also emerged with regards to criminal justice involvement and reliance on public assistance, although they were not statistically significant. Specifically, the percentage of program

youth reporting arrests both during and after the program was lower than the corresponding rates reported by the comparison youth, and in fact was at zero during the program and only slightly higher after. The program participants also reported a low rate of reliance on public assistance before and after the program, both in absolute terms and relative to the comparison group youth.

For the Des Moines site, analysis of the outcome change variables revealed many aspects of the positive impact of the program. Specifically, the program had a significant impact on changes in drug use, number of arrests, and reliance on public assistance. In each of these instances, the program participants showed a decline in reported drug use, arrests, and reliance on public assistance compared to the comparison group youth.

Summary of the Comparison Group Outcome Evaluation Results:

In summary, for cohort 1, the program participants in both sites were more likely to be employed and earned higher wages than the comparison youth. For cohorts 2 and 3, the program youth in Washington, DC were less likely to use drugs over time than their counterparts. In Des Moines, the program youth from cohorts 2 and 3 were less likely to use drugs, get arrested, or to rely on public assistance over time. Taken together, these findings strongly support the Argus program model.

Discussion

The evaluation confirmed both hypotheses. The Argus program model was successfully replicated and youth participating in the Argus program were better integrated, socially and economically, than their comparison group counterparts. Participants in the first year of the program at both sites showed significant improvements in employment and wages over their comparison groups. The findings for cohorts 2 and 3 were also significant because employment stability and advancement over time require a foundation of behaviors that contributes to the ability to obtain and hold a job and do well. The program in both cities was able to demonstrate improvement in key prosocial behaviors-- less drug use and almost no criminal justice problems during the program. More importantly for future employment, these effects remained strong after the program as well. The significant decrease in public assistance found in Des Moines, and the low levels of public assistance of program participants relative to the comparison group in Washington, D.C. can be expected to be a precursor of increased employment.

Future replications and evaluation need to take into account employment rates and types of employment before entry into a program, and the short-term as well as long-term effects of the program on employment rates. It can be expected that program participation means temporarily decreased rates of employment, but that prosocial effects, combined with the time to find and advance in employment will lead to measurable employment outcomes.

Since replication has proven possible and successful, the next step is to implement the model at more sites with a thorough evaluation research design in place, including a

larger sample size, more control of pre-test employment rates compared to a control group, and collection of post-test data for at least two years beyond a participant's leaving the program. Furthermore, following the same cohort at several points in time is also recommended to increase the power of the test to find significant outcomes.

Finally, the connection between prosocial behaviors, decreased reliance on public assistance, and increased and better employment needs to be tested. A cohort of program participants and a control cohort should be followed for an increased number of prosocial measures that have been linked to employment stability. In addition to pre, during, and post test outcome measures, a case study follow-up is suggested for a small sample of program participants to examine the ways in which the program, along with changes in attitude and behavior, lead to various employment outcomes over time.

II. BACKGROUND

In this section, we provide a policy framework for employment training and placement reform; review the Department of Labor (DOL) Solicitation to which the Eisenhower Foundation originally responded; summarize the missions of the Foundation, the Argus model and the two replication sites; and set out the evaluation hypotheses to be tested in the report.

Policy Framework

Despite an official national unemployment rate under five percent, experts like former Secretary of Labor Ray Marshall estimate that the real unemployment rate is about fifteen percent. The Center for Community Change conservatively estimates the “jobs gap” at 4,400,000 jobs needed as of late 1997. In addition to the 2,100,000 people unemployed for more than fifteen weeks (the official Bureau of Labor Statistics cut off point for defining unemployment), the Center for Community Change estimate also takes into account “discouraged workers” (328,000 chronically jobless) and the “economically underemployed” (3,900,000 part time employees considered the equivalent of 1,950,000 full time unemployed persons) (Milton S. Eisenhower Foundation, 1998.).

While no precise figures are available concerning the extent of the “jobs gap” specific to the inner cities, the Eisenhower Foundation (1998) estimates that the number is in the range of 2,000,000 to 2,500,000. A number of barriers account for the “jobs gap” in the inner city. They include the poor match between the skill levels of many inner city jobless people and the types of jobs being created by the economy, the suburban location of many newly created jobs which are virtually inaccessible to many inner city jobless, continuing racial discrimination in hiring practices, and the insufficient supply of entry-level job opportunities (Milton S. Eisenhower Foundation, 1998).

Evaluations of the primary federal job training program, the Job Training Partnership Act (JTPA), suggested that it had been only marginally successful for disadvantaged adults, while out-of-school youth served by the program actually did worse than comparable youth who were not in the program. JTPA programs have been criticized for enrolling only five percent of those eligible for assistance and for placing “trainees” in low skill work rather than investing in improving skills. In 1994, DOL concluded that “JTPA programs in general appear to have no positive impact on the earnings, employment, criminal involvement or welfare dependency of male and female out-of-school youth” (Federal Register, 1994).

In response, the Eisenhower Foundation has suggested reform of JTPA for out-of-school youth. The recommendation is for multifaceted job training programs. Considerable research has shown that programs that “work” are successful because they offer “multiple solutions to multiple problems.” For instance, in order to qualify for jobs in expanding industries, out-of-school inner city youth

are likely to benefit from programs with components encompassing education, remedial education, life skills training, job training, and job retention (Milton S. Eisenhower Foundation, 1998).

The Eisenhower Foundation has suggested that model job programs for out-of-school youth that are consistent with this multiple solutions framework might be replicated, evaluated, and refined in a recursive manner leading, ultimately, to the replication of “what works to scale.” In other words, in order to address the “jobs gap” for out-of-school youth in the inner city, the Eisenhower Foundation suggests a strategy whereby promising models are identified through positive evaluation results and then replicated. In this approach, replications emphasize the principles underlying the model, rather than exact duplication, allowing for variations on the theme in order to adapt to local circumstances. In turn, the replications are scientifically evaluated and refined. The Foundation suggests that rounds of replication and evaluation continue “until the public and decision makers better accept, and carry out, the notion that we ought to replicate what works to scale,” and the “jobs gap” is adequately addressed (Milton S. Eisenhower Foundation, 1998).

The Labor Solicitation

In 1994, the DOL issued a Solicitation for Grant Application (SGA) for a competition to replicate such promising multiple solution models for out-of-school youth. The Solicitation stated (Federal Register, 1994):

Ideally, the development of new approaches to serving youth occurs in several stages --

- (1) An idea or model is developed;
- (2) The idea is put into practice at one site, and then perhaps at a second site with some modifications;
- (3) The model program is then pilot-tested at several sites.
- (4) The model program then enters a demonstration stage in which it is formally evaluated using random assignment of program applications to treatment and non-treatment group at several sites; and
- (5) If the random-assignment evaluation results come out positive, the model program is replicated widely across the country. This grant announcement covers stages (2) and (3) of this process -- the pilot-testing of a new approach at a first or second site or at multiple sites.

Hence, the Labor Department did not ask for a formal evaluation .

The Eisenhower Foundation competed for and received a one year grant, with the possibility of renewal for years two and three, based on good performance. The Foundation also raised match money from private foundations and local funders. A modest amount of this match was available for evaluation. The Foundation proposed to DOL that these evaluation funds be matched against a very small amount of DOL funds, in order to fund an evaluation. Because funding would be minimal, the evaluation would use comparison groups and not control groups with random assignment. The Department of Labor approved.

As a result, a process and outcome evaluation was planned. The Foundation and the Department agreed that the end result would be more information than requested in the SGA (above) but less information than in an expensive and more extensive evaluation based on process findings combined with randomized, control group outcome findings.

The Partners

The partners in the DOL grant were the Foundation, the Argus Community, the John R. Grubb YMCA and Capital Commitment, Inc. Consider each:

The Milton S. Eisenhower Foundation

The Foundation is a non-endowed, non-profit, national intermediary organization founded in 1981. The Foundation is the private sector continuation of the National Commission on the Causes and Prevention of Violence of 1968-1969 and the National Advisory Commission on Civil Disorders of 1967-1968. The Foundation replicates scientifically evaluated, multiple-solution successes for children, youth, families and the inner city. It builds the institutional and management capacity of nonprofit organizations and communicates what works to citizens, the media and decision-makers.

The Foundation and its Corporation for What Works have fostered the development of innovative employment and prevention programs and have built knowledge about how successful programs work. This has been achieved by identifying sound practices through reviewing the evaluation results of others, finding programs that work, replicating these programs, and fostering an iterative refinement of program design and operations through careful Eisenhower evaluation of program operations and outcomes.

The Eisenhower Foundation plays several roles in promoting replication of successful programs. It secures funding. It provides technical assistance to new programs to ensure that the integrity of the original model is preserved and that identified principles of successful program development are followed. Constant questioning about how the new program operationalizes key concepts of the previously successful program is essential to keep new efforts from simply drifting into status quo practice. The Foundation evaluates the replications and

communicates outcomes to other practitioners and policy makers. It played all of these roles in the DOL replications.

The Argus Community, Inc.

The Argus Community is the model that was chosen to be replicated. Argus is located in a former junior high school on East 160th Street in the South Bronx section of New York City, as well as in other buildings nearby. It has operated for over twenty-five years. Argus has many programs. One is the Argus Learning for Living Center, a day-time program for high school drop-outs. In a comprehensive and interdependent way, Argus Learning for Living offers on-site remedial education, high school and GED education, life management training, conflict resolution training, economic self sufficiency skills, job training and work placement. Almost one hundred percent of the Argus high school dropouts who complete socialization, education and training are placed in jobs.

The Argus Learning for Living Center has **three major components** :

- 1) Socialization, youth development and value change in a drug-free and violence-free treatment environment.
- 2) On-site education and remedial education.
- 3) Job training, placement and retention.

The following is a description of each component:

Component 1: Socialization, Youth Development and Value Change in a Drug and Violence Free, Extended Family Environment

Counseling and program activities focus as much on the emotions, attitudes and behaviors that are behind participant drug and alcohol use as they do on drug counseling per se. By helping participants refocus their lives in positive ways, Argus works to instill a new value system in young people that has had a real impact on their lives and has led to a drug-free lifestyle for many of them. Every activity and interaction is geared toward fostering bonds between staff and enrollees and among enrollees; developing positive attitudes and socialization skills; developing self-esteem based on the achievement of goals and competencies; learning appropriate ways of handling anger, fear, pain, and success; and beginning to set goals for their lives and to work towards achieving them.

Component 2: On-Site Education and Remedial Education

Mornings are spent in classroom preparation staffed by New York City (NYC) Board of Education teachers. Classes are small (fourteen to eighteen students)

with highly individualized instruction. This allows teachers to give students the personal attention they need -- an important consideration for young people whose previous school experience has been marked by failure. The six teachers, one-day-a-week resource room instructor, and two paraprofessionals are able to concentrate on teaching, and the enrollees on learning, in a drug-free and safe environment with counselors handling disciplinary problems.

It is of major importance to Argus that schooling be provided on-site as part of a comprehensively interdependent program in which staff and teachers are part of the same team, speak as much as possible with a single voice, and support each other. The Argus Learning for Living program director and the teachers participate in Argus case conferences. Argus raises monies from foundations to provide state of the art computer equipment rarely found in NYC schools. The Board of Education provides an excellent computer teacher who teaches computer literacy, word processing and other programs to those enrolled in the training program.

Component 3: Job Training, Placement and Retention .

In Argus' job training program, Job Horizons, trainees receive:

- Skills training in building maintenance and in basic office typing and word processing. The fully-equipped computer lab provided by Argus allows trainees to learn the rudiments of desk-top publishing and other computer skills to prepare trainees for entry-level data entry, clerical, and secretarial positions. Typing and computer skills are taught by Board of Education teachers.
- Building maintenance, taught by Argus's facility director, includes hands-on instruction and on-going work on real projects within Argus. Training includes cleaning, basic electricity, plumbing, locksmithing, painting, and drywall construction. Trainees are encouraged to apply for licenses in the different work competencies. They also are encouraged to enroll in driver education and earn their drivers' licenses.
- Job Readiness: Job Horizons participants receive Adkins Life Skills training. This is a multi-media course on all aspects of finding, getting, and keeping a job. Resume writing, appropriate dress and behavior, and mock interviews are part of the course.
- Job Placement: Upon completion of training, the job developer and other staff help trainees find jobs. Staff provide follow-up services for at least ninety days, helping the new employees with job-related problems as needed. Program graduates may return to seek advice or help at any time, even after the ninety day follow-up period.
- Other Services: Job Horizon trainees also participate in other Learning for Living services, including counseling seminars.

Argus staff believe that a period of actual work experience before employment is extremely helpful in preparing job-unready and high-risk out-of-school youth for the world of work.

Argus Philosophy :

Each of these program components operates from a consistently applied philosophy. The core Argus philosophy holds that:

- There are no short-cuts or simple solutions. Turning at-risk youth around requires sufficient time and resources.
- No program will work unless it addresses drugs and violence. These foster a sense of insecurity in adolescents and must not be tolerated in program activity.
- There must be development of structure and a value system. Inner-city youth must be deliberately guided into the mainstream, including areas such as dress codes and corporate etiquette.
- Distrust and alienation are normal for young people in this environment and program efforts must assume this as a factor in planning.
- Community and bonding are at the heart of program operations. Establishment of an extended family atmosphere is necessary to counter an extremely stressful and threatening external environment.
- Staff should ideally come from the same background as the participants so that they have a personal understanding of the lives of the participants.
- Every activity within the Argus Learning for Living program attempts to enforce these basic principles.

In addition to having an impressive history and mission, Argus also reflects sound intervention programming. The model that Argus has developed is one that most experts now urge as a goal. Argus provides comprehensive programming for adolescents using a variety of multiple-solution, individual and group strategies, an approach shown to have the most promise for successful outcomes with high-risk adolescents (Dryfoos, 1998; Schorr, 1997). Rather than providing specifically focused interventions for one aspect of an adolescent's problems, Argus provides a range of services (both skill-oriented and psychosocial), all congruent with a coherent and consistent philosophy.

Unlike the vast majority of intervention efforts with adolescents (National Research Council, 1993), Argus Learning for Living has been positively evaluated. The Eisenhower Foundation (Allen, 1990) evaluated a cycle of participants in the Learning for Living Center. Youth were assessed throughout twenty weeks of training and a follow-up period. Preprogram and postprogram measures were taken nine months apart on one hundred high-risk Argus youth and one hundred comparable youth who did not receive training. Among other outcomes, Argus youth received higher salaries and more job benefits than did comparison youth. The results were statistically significant. In 1992, Argus also

was one of eighteen New York City programs funded by U.S. Department of Labor job-training grants to exceed all evaluation, training, and placement goals. Audits of Argus job-training programs found that no students were involved in criminal activities during these training periods and that eighty-seven percent were placed successfully in training-related jobs (Arella, 1995). A study funded by the U.S. Department of Justice found that Argus had the best outcomes among fifty New York State programs surveyed in terms of criminal-justice involvement and drug involvement among program youth (Mecs, 1993). Reviews of the literature have pointed to this program as one that embodies sound practices for dealing with high-risk inner city adolescents (Dryfoos, 1990). Argus provides a documented template of best practices for the provision of community-based prevention, education, and employment services for this population.

With Argus as the model, the Eisenhower Foundation chose replication sites to propose to DOL. How were replication sites chosen? The Foundation networked around the country, looking for 501(c)(3) entities that might be able and willing hosts to an Argus Learning for Living replication. A small number of these prescreened programs were asked to submit proposals to the Eisenhower Foundation. The programs were chosen to submit proposals because they had a reputation for being well managed, shared Argus' goals and objectives, and were willing to enrich their programs to include all of the Argus program elements or to create a new program replication of Argus. The Eisenhower Foundation originally proposed four sites, and then narrowed its best and final offer to two sites after receiving feedback from the Department of Labor.

The two sites selected were the John R. Grubb YMCA in the Model City neighborhood of Des Moines, Iowa and Capital Commitment, Inc. in the Anacostia neighborhood of Washington, DC. What follows are summaries of each organization and how the program developed over the three years of replication.

The John R. Grubb YMCA

The Iowa replication of the Argus Learning for Living program is located in the Model City area of Des Moines in a facility purchased by the larger central YMCA in downtown Des Moines. The Model City neighborhood has the greatest concentration of gang members in the city. It has been estimated that, of roughly 450 gang members, one additional youth per day is influenced to join a gang. The influx of gangs to Des Moines is attributed to its proximity to cities like Chicago and Kansas City, where gang activity and drug trafficking are more prevalent.

The Model City area is depressed economically. Yet a short distance away, one can see more upscale homes in communities that clearly reflect a higher standard of living. Compared to Washington, DC, Des Moines is like a small town. Everyone knows one another and news spreads rapidly.

This area of Des Moines has a population of 10,012 living in 2.5 square miles. Forty-nine percent of the residents of the community are minorities. Thirty-seven percent of the population are youth aged nineteen and under. Twenty-eight percent of the sixteen-nineteen year olds are high school drop-outs. Twenty-six percent of the households are headed by females. Twenty-one percent of the households receive public assistance. Teen unemployment in this area is forty percent, compared to twenty percent in other low and moderate-income neighborhoods in Des Moines.

The Learning for Living replication is housed in a neighborhood YMCA, named after a local benefactor, John R. Grubb. Formerly a gang-ridden community center, the YMCA has been newly renovated. The facility has new classrooms and office space for Learning for Living, a teen center that doubles as a meeting room, an indoor track, weight and exercise rooms, and an indoor swimming pool.

All of the Argus Learning for Living components are new to this YMCA. During the first year of replication, most components were housed in the facility. Many capital improvements were made during the second year, which displaced a number of components to other locations. By the third year, most of the components were re-centralized in the renovated facility.

Capital Commitment, Inc .

Capital Commitment, Inc. is a private, non-profit organization, established in the Anacostia section of Washington, DC in June of 1991. It was started by a husband-wife team who have strong backgrounds in the telecommunications field. The team has over twenty years experience in telecommunications, having worked with Pacific Bell, AT&T, North American Communications, SPRINT, and MCI. The focus of the program is on disadvantaged inner city residents, homeless individuals, single mothers, at-risk youth, and individuals in need of re-training. Capital Commitment provides classroom and lab instruction in telephone installation, maintenance, and repair. Graduates of the program have expertise in all areas of residential, commercial, and central office installation. Historically, graduates have secured jobs earning more than the minimum wage, generally ten to fifteen dollars per hour or more. Capital Commitment graduates often move on to positions where they can develop careers in the industry.

The long term mission of Capital Commitment is to increase minority employment in the telecommunications industry. According to statistics published in Communications Week and Telephone Magazine in 1995, although telecommunications is a \$700B industry, less than one percent of employees are minorities and women. Providing more well-trained minority job applicants is a necessary first step to changing this situation.

Before Argus, Capital Commitment also had a mentoring program in which middle class mentors worked one-on-one with trainees. However, Capital

Commitment was initially relatively weak in the socialization, counseling, youth development, remedial education, and pre-employment training components of Argus. Accordingly, the replication sought to merge these Argus components with Capital Commitment's placement in a high tech industry.

During the first two years of the replication, Capital Commitment utilized space on three floors in the Old Congress Heights School. At the end of the second year, Capital Commitment was evicted from the school due to the exorbitant cost of repairing the deteriorated facility. Capital Commitment searched for a new facility and settled on the current facility at 1350 Potomac Avenue, SE. Capital Commitment now is housed in its own three story building which provides space for the Learning for Living and adult populations to train in telecommunications.

Capital Commitment primarily serves Ward 8, identified as having the highest concentration of African American (almost 100 percent) and low income residents of any ward in the District of Columbia. This ward is known for its open air drug markets and many youth are being recruited as drug runners. Twenty-nine percent of the population is fifteen years old or younger. Twenty-two percent of the households are at or below the poverty level. Median income for Ward 8 is the lowest in the city. Twenty-two percent of the housing is subsidized. The unemployment rate of twelve percent is the highest in the city according to the D.C. Department of Employment Services. Infant mortality is the highest in the city.

Evaluation Hypotheses

With the two replication sites identified, the evaluation set out to test two basic hypotheses:

1. Hypothesis 1 (to be tested by the process evaluation): The pilot tests show that it is possible to implement and replicate Argus Learning for Living in two other locations.
2. Hypothesis 2 (to be tested by the comparison group outcome evaluation): Youth who participate in Argus replication activities are better integrated, socially and economically, than comparison youth who do not participate in Argus -- as measured by employment levels, wages, reliance on public assistance, drug use, and arrests.

In the next section, we present the process evaluation and document that Hypothesis 1 has been validated. The comparison group outcome evaluation follows, and documents that Hypothesis 2 has been validated. The discussion and concluding sections provides a framework for a more formal future replication and evaluation.

III. PROCESS EVALUATION

Hypothesis 1 states: The pilot tests show that it is possible to implement and replicate the Argus Learning for Living Program in two other locations.

The process evaluation, summarized in this section, validates Hypothesis 1. In what follows, we:

- Discuss initial site activity.
- Set out initial Eisenhower Foundation activity.
- Describe how the replications developed.
- Review training and technical assistance workshops.
- Document site visits.
- Return to later observations on the replication process.
- Remind the reader of the importance of individual treatment plans for participants.
- Outline what was implemented at each site.
- Summarize the degree of program continuity after DOL funding ended.
- Articulate lessons learned by the Eisenhower Foundation.
- Provide feedback on what the sites learned.

Initial Site Activity

The Eisenhower director of program replication came on board in September of 1994 and was charged with implementing an exact replication of the Argus Learning for Living Center at the John R. Grubb Community YMCA and at Capital Commitment, Inc. In addition to providing overall management and coordination, staff from the Eisenhower Foundation worked closely and extensively with each replication site to ensure the quality of the replication and to implement the evaluation. With the exception of the management staff of the Eisenhower Foundation, none of the participating program staff had any formal experience with program replication. Therefore, the first year of the replication process involved extensive guidance and technical support.

Each of the replication sites had basic knowledge about the Argus Community from literature that had been provided prior to the submission of its proposal to the Eisenhower Foundation. For the proposal, each replication site submitted information outlining its capacity to implement the replication of the Argus Learning for Living Center.

With the assistance of Argus and Eisenhower Foundation staff, each replication site developed program plans consistent with the understood design of the model. Each site, with Eisenhower Foundation and Argus assistance, conducted the following tasks:

- Reviewed the DOL grant terms and conditions.
- Reviewed written information about the Argus Learning for Living and Job Horizons programs:
 - - Program philosophy
 - - Characteristics of physical environment
 - - Identification of program components
 - - Staffing qualifications - Reporting and record keeping requirements
 - - Staff development and training
- Undertook needs assessments to determine how local program elements and staffing compared to that of Argus:
 - - Available versus missing components
 - - Comparative staffing qualifications and needs
 - - Budgetary implications and planned solutions
 - - Assessment of physical plant
- Developed a workplan and budget.
- Participated in a week long training workshop at Argus.
- Received a \$5K planning grant.
- Began implementation:
 - - Staff hiring - Equipment acquisition
 - - Schedule development
 - - Enrollee recruitment

Initial Foundation Activity

The Eisenhower Foundation program director immediately began to initiate program activities. The first steps involved a thorough review of the original and “best and final offer” proposals, followed by discussions with Eisenhower staff and evaluators to receive their perspective on the project.

The next steps involved setting up site visits, the first one with Argus, followed by visits to each of the replication sites. Fortunately, there were enough similarities between the program at which the Eisenhower program director previously worked and Argus so that it did not require more than several days to understand the basic components of Learning for Living. The Eisenhower Foundation program director, then an employee of the Washington DC-based Center for Youth Services, attended an Eisenhower Foundation National Cluster Workshop in Los Angeles in June of 1994 and gave a presentation that compared the Argus Learning for Living program with the Center for Youth Services program. Four months later, as an Eisenhower staff member, the program director visited Argus. The purpose of the Argus visit was to meet the Learning for Living and Job Horizons staff and to gain firsthand knowledge about the program in order to be able to respond to questions that the sites might raise and to better enable the Eisenhower program director to oversee implementation. The Eisenhower program director assembled questions about the essential components of Argus

and the process needed to implement the program. A critical part of the site visit was to assess the total Argus environment and to learn Argus case management.

The Argus site visit also was used to develop preliminary plans for the training of replication site staff. The agendas for the training sessions at Argus are contained in Appendix 1. The Eisenhower Foundation program director worked closely with Argus over the course of the three years to design training located at Argus that would meet the specific needs of the sites each year. In Year I, it was clear that more than one training session at Argus was required in order to get a sense of the program components and the environmental nuances that contributed to the success of the program. Two training sessions therefore were held. However, in subsequent years the need was greater for more on-site work in Des Moines and Washington, DC. Therefore, in Years II and III, there was only one training at Argus and more site visits -- with on-site training in staff development, case management, counseling and general record keeping at both sites. Initial workplan format and reporting forms were developed by Eisenhower staff. The workplan format was later amended to include statements of expected outcomes for each task, which made it easier to track progress. See the sample workplan in Appendix 2. Site visits to monitor progress and provide on-site training generally resulted in adjustments to program activities. For example, in the Spring of Year I, in Des Moines, the job training component was determined to be deficient. A meeting was held with staff to clarify the standard of training that was needed. Recommendations were made to the staff and conveyed to the CEO of the parent organization for program modifications. Instead of continuing to wait for placements with the public school training facility, the YMCA developed other job training sources that allowed the training to move on-site, from an outside facility. One of the principles of Argus is that all services are at a single, one-stop shopping site.

Eisenhower Foundation staff also spent a great deal of time nurturing matching partners -- like the W.K. Kellogg Foundation and the W. T. Grant Foundation -- and preparing proposals for continuation matches for subsequent years.

In terms of tasks, during Year I Eisenhower Foundation staff:

- Visited Argus and the replication sites.
- Coordinated travel plans for Eisenhower and Argus technical assistants.
- Conducted needs assessments with both replication sites.
- Developed draft workplans and budgets based on information submitted by sites.
- Finalized site budgets and developed sub-contract agreements with Argus and the two replication sites.
- Submitted the Eisenhower workplan and budget to DOL.
- Contributed to workshop development.
- Reviewed resumes for local staff and provided feedback on hiring.
- Served as liaison with DOL on progress with implementation.

- Reviewed the evaluation design with Eisenhower evaluators and determined the role of the program director in the evaluation.
- Completed quarterly and annual reports to funders in cooperation with the program evaluators.
- Raised match funds for the project.
- Provided end-of-year feedback to sites, citing improvements needed for the following year.

During Year II, Eisenhower staff:

- Conducted needs assessments.
- Drafted workplans, budgets and contracts -- with local site staff now assuming more responsibility for workplan and budget development.
- Submitted workplans to DOL for approval and for release of funds.
- Assisted sites with staff selection.
- Monitored case management practices and coordinated training opportunities at Argus and on-site.
- Sent Argus replication manuals and videos to funding sources as part of work toward site self-sufficiency.
- Began preliminary work on the next phase of the Argus replications.
- Worked with sites to strengthen replication components.

During Year III, Eisenhower staff:

- Monitored replication activities and efforts toward achievement of “steady-state” operation.
- Reviewed all case management files and reviewed record keeping practices.
- Worked with sites on developing a new Argus high tech proposal for consideration by DOL.
- Provided sites with information on national and local grant opportunities.
- Informed local and state officials about the program and its promising outcomes.
- Assisted sites with program marketing and work toward self-sufficiency. Development of the Replications Argus staff were particularly concerned about the ability of the replication sites to maintain the integrity of the Argus program. They expressed concern that the program might be diluted if the sites did not fully understand the program components. During the first site visit to Argus by the Eisenhower program director, Argus staff were assured that the Foundation was invested in maintaining the integrity of their program and that they would be actively involved throughout the replication process.

Capital Commitment had similar concerns. Capital Commitment felt it had put a good program in place that was lacking only a few components -- components possessed by the Argus model. But the thought of fully replicating the Learning

for Living Center made Capital Commitment apprehensive about maintaining the integrity of its program. Capital Commitment was assured by the Eisenhower Foundation that the implementation design would address these concerns.

During the first year, there was no training manual or training video to guide the replication sites through the process. Instead, there were numerous phone calls, letters and faxes exchanged by the partners and replication sites. Argus first year tasks were to develop a training manual, provide “how to” training for the staff of the replication sites at Argus and make follow-up site visits with the Eisenhower program director -- for on-site training and to assess the implementation of the program components. The first draft of the training manual was released in August of 1995. Eisenhower Foundation and replication site staff were asked to critique the draft for content, clarity and other improvements and corrections. The review resulted in the addition of sections on fundraising, hiring, job descriptions and evaluation. By the summer of Year II, a training video had been developed to complement the manual. Both were packaged in a professional looking case and distributed to the replication sites. Appendix 3 contains the Argus manual. Appendix 4 provides a transcript of the Argus training video.

The initial Year I site visits concentrated on completing needs assessments and clarifying the expectations of the Department of Labor and the Eisenhower Foundation on implementation of the Learning for Living model. Each site was informed that DOL expected an exact replication of the Learning for Living Center.

The needs assessments were the basis for determining the technical assistance requirements of the sites. The needs assessments helped the Eisenhower Foundation to decide whether each site truly understood what the replication entailed. Preliminary workplans and budgets then were requested from the sites. There were several iterations of the budgets and workplans. After compiling all of the information from the sites, the Eisenhower Foundation developed a final workplan and budget which the sites agreed to. Sub-contract agreements were sent to Argus and the replication sites after finalization of the budgets and workplans. The Argus sub-contract agreement outlined the training and the technical assistance it was expected to provide. This process was followed for each successive year of the program.

The Eisenhower Foundation’s own workplan included the specific tasks that would be performed during the year as part of the implementation process. Examples of tasks include: 1) coordinating training workshops and technical assistance, 2) making site visits and monitoring program implementation, 3) managing the budget and distribution of funds in accordance with sub-contract agreements, 4) assisting with the development of site workplans and budgets, 5) resolving problems as they arose and 6) assisting with program evaluation.

In Year II, the workplans were drafted by the Eisenhower program director with more input from the replication site directors. In the final year, a letter was sent to the sites requesting that they submit the first draft of the Year III workplan. It was recommended that they rely on previous workplans to assist with the Year III plans. This approach was part of the plan to move program staff toward developing workplans independent of the Eisenhower Foundation -- as a part of self-sufficiency planning.

The Eisenhower program director made additional site visits to evaluate case management improvements, after intensive training was provided during an Argus training workshop in Year II and during on-site technical assistance by Argus and Eisenhower staff. Also, in Year II, new monthly reporting forms were given to the sites. These forms were formatted to reflect activity in each of the Learning for Living program components (Appendix 5 contains a sample form).

In addition to submitting reports, the Foundation requested several meetings with the DOL program officer to discuss replication issues. One key early issue was on the definition of replication. DOL wanted an exact replication. However, Capital Commitment pointed out that, when it came to job placement, Capital Commitment would place participants in the telecommunications industry -- not in building maintenance or data processing work, as was the case with Argus. DOL agreed that each program could design its training component to meet the need and demand of the community in which the program was located. However, in all other respects, the Department of Labor was looking for the components of Argus to be in place at the replication sites.

Another issue was the length of training during the first twelve months of DOL funding. DOL wanted to shorten the length of training during the first year in order for enrollment for the second year start in September. But recruitment of the first cohort did not officially start until the end of November. Therefore, if we had worked with that cohort for one year, we would not have been able to start the next year of training a new cohort until December. It was agreed that Year I would be truncated to allow Year II to start in September of 1995.

The Eisenhower Foundation's role as an intermediary was to work in concert with Argus to assure that the replication sites understood and fully implemented the Learning for Living program. The Foundation also was accountable to DOL and other funders for program management, fiscal management and evaluation.

Major Training and Technical Assistance Workshops

In Year I, Argus hosted two one-week training workshops for the staff of the two replication sites, the Eisenhower Foundation, and the evaluation team -- to ensure that everyone had a working understanding of the nature of the Argus Learning for Living program. For example, there was an orientation to the Argus model; a staff development session; observation, taping and discussion of "mock intake"

and “staff development” sessions; participation in morning meetings; participation in round table discussions with substance abuse counselor trainees; participation in a “sharing and caring” growth and development group with Argus youth; and feedback sessions at the end of each workshop.

Argus also hosted training sessions in Year II and Year III. Appendix 1 has the agendas for all Argus sessions.

In addition, Argus and both replication sites sent representatives to an Eisenhower Foundation National Cluster Workshop in Little Rock, Arkansas from September 12-15, 1996 for training in:

- Youth development -- a curriculum for youth workers;
- Adolescent development; ? Volunteer recruitment;
- Developing programs for adolescent girls;
- Staff development and burnout prevention;
- How to train mentors;
- Evaluation
- Teaching at risk youth to become entrepreneurs;
- Board development.

Visits to Replication Sites

For Year I, program recruitment started in November of 1994 after the initial training at Argus. Program implementation started after that -- in December, 1994 and January of 1995. Site visits by Argus and Eisenhower Foundation staff were scheduled for a date by which the sites expected to have the three major components in place. Each site was monitored to determine the extent to which it had implemented the Argus Learning for Living components and, subsequently, the extent to which it responded to recommendations for improvements and elimination of deficiencies.

Year I site visits

For the YMCA, a Year I site visit was held on April 19-23, 1995. The Eisenhower program director and Argus technical assistants made the site visit to review all aspects of program implementation and to provide training in staff development, bonding and working effectively. There also were reviews of case management, record keeping and staff development training. Technical assistance was provided on conducting orientation of incoming youth. Assistance also was provided on how to set up a building maintenance training component.

For Capital Commitment, the Year I site visits were as follows:

- September, 1994 -- Argus staff facilitated a group counseling session, reviewed record keeping procedures, and reviewed the enrollment and intake process.
- January 5, 1995 -- The Eisenhower program director observed orientation and telecommunications training. The director raised questions about implementation and requested copies of staff and participant schedules.
- March 8, 1995 -- The Eisenhower program director observed the career development program and followed up on questions raised during the January site visit.

Year II site visits

For Year II, the YMCA site visits were as follows:

- April 8-10 1996 -- The site visit was made by the Eisenhower program director, Argus technical assistants, and the DOL program officer. They observed the level of implementation of the replication components under the leadership of the second YMCA director to be hired. The visit resulted in the replacement of the second director.
- April 23, 1996 -- The Eisenhower program director interviewed program director candidates and helped choose the best one. This third local program director then began work.
- June 27-28, 1996 -- The Eisenhower program director observed improvement under the leadership of the third local director and attended a graduation ceremony.

For the same year, the Capital Commitment site visits were as follows:

- October 31, 1995 -- The Eisenhower program director worked with the local director on budget development and clarified details for workplan finalization.
- February 22, 1996 -- The Eisenhower program director and the Eisenhower support staff member conducted a review of all case files and made notations regarding deficiencies.
- June 13-14, 1996 -- The Eisenhower Foundation program director reviewed case management. Documentation was found to be deficient. The Eisenhower director reviewed sample cases with staff and made recommendations for improvement.
- July 1, 1996 -- The DOL program officer visited the program with the Eisenhower program director to determine the level of progress that had been made with program implementation.

Year III Site Visits

For Year III, the YMCA site visits were as follows:

- December 11, 1997 -- The Eisenhower program director made a presentation to Des Moines Workforce Development members on possible funding for a new Argus High Tech replication program.
- July 9-11, 1997 -- The Eisenhower program director assessed the overall program and visited organizations with which the YMCA is collaborating.

For the same year, the Capital Commitment sites visits were as follows:

- January 15, 1997 -- The Eisenhower program director made an all-day review of participant files. A meeting was held with the Board Chair and staff on expansion of the replication program to include high tech training, with Capital Commitment in the role of telecommunications technical assistor.
- April 10, 1997 -- A site visit was made by the Eisenhower program director with a DOL Deputy Assistant Secretary. Capital Commitment presented its telecommunications program and discussed new potential funding opportunities.

Later Observations on Replication

There were several basic differences between the two replication sites. The YMCA was a program starting from scratch. Capital Commitment, Inc. was a host site with an existing program. The YMCA and Capital Commitment, Inc. initially planned to implement different training components. The YMCA planned to train youth in building maintenance, data entry and, later, building trades, consistent with the Argus model. But Capital Commitment already had an established program training low and underemployed adults in telecommunications. Its interest in the replication project was to add those components of Argus that were lacking in its program. The training at Capital Commitment varied from that of Argus and the YMCA -- making its program inherently different from the outset. The nature of the Capital Commitment training program demanded modification to parts of the model, in order to accommodate the technical skill training component. For example, unlike Argus and the YMCA, Capital Commitment had to limit the enrollment and orientation phase of the program in order to provide trainees with a full six months to train in telecommunications.

During the first year of the replications, the sites essentially were expected to implement the basic components of Argus. The second year was designed to improve the replication by attending to details like improved record keeping. In that year, Argus and Eisenhower technical assistors monitored the files more carefully and evaluated progress in case management and treatment planning. Special attention also was given to how well the organization addressed the socialization of the youth in the program. The second year should have brought both sites closer to a steady-state level of operation. In the case of Capital Commitment, this was true. For the YMCA, this was not the case, largely because

the program director during the first year departed after delays in funding for the second year.

Treatment Plans

For every year of the replications, participants were given pre-test surveys within a few weeks of starting the program. The intake form, which was completed by the primary counselor, provided demographic information (background forms) for each enrollee. After intake, the counselor and enrollee agreed on an initial treatment plan, which identified the short and long term goals the enrollee tried to achieve. This plan was developed based on the assessment of staff members and the needs expressed by the enrollee. A comprehensive treatment plan was developed for each enrollee within forty-five days after admission to the program. The treatment plans were reviewed regularly and revised as needed. Progress notes were kept to record enrollee progress within the program. At each replication site, the entire staff met to discuss enrollee progress and to recommend new treatments. Samples of intake forms are in Appendix 6.

Summary of What Was Implemented by Each Site

During Year I, both the YMCA and Capital Commitment conducted the following tasks:

- Hired staff.
- Implemented formal enrollment and intake procedures and established an orientation process for participants.
- Developed forms and established case management files.
- Initiated socialization and cultural enhancement activities within the community.
- Began group counseling and established life skills, health education, and growth and development groups.
- Created education and remedial education components to meet the needs of participants. Worked toward securing certified teachers.

In addition, the YMCA had a gym and integrated recreation into the socialization component. The YMCA also began job training and placement components (whereas Capital Commitment already had a solid job training and placement component).

Hence, in Year I, the focus was on implementing the basic components of Argus - intake, orientation, socialization in a drug-and violence-free environment, on-site education and remedial education, job training and job placement.

During Year II, the YMCA conducted the following activities:

- Restructured its program components to comply with the Argus model after the second director was hired (Resignations reduced the staff to one person at the end of the first year).
- Hired a second director, who hired counselors and other staff. Hired a third director in April after the site visit by technical assistants and the DOL program officer.
- Relocated the computer training and building maintenance components. Collaborated with other community organizations to provide training in building trades -- leading to apprenticeships and licensing. Reinvigorated its job training and placement.
- Renovated the YMCA facility to include classrooms and redesigned the recreational facilities to include a swimming pool.

During Year II, Capital Commitment conducted the following activities:

- Established benchmarks for when a participant could move from the education component to the job training component.
- Secured a certified teacher for the education program.
- Engaged the services of counselors to conduct the psychological evaluations of program participants and to facilitate counseling groups.
- Provided training to improve staff counseling skills.
- Improved on case management and recordkeeping.

Overall, in Year II, the focus was on the details of the basic components. There needed to be clear evidence that all of the components were in place and that case management files were being maintained for each participant. Sites were assisted in developing workplans and budgets. When DOL approved the second year Eisenhower budget, the site budgets were modified and approved. In Year II, DOL recommended that the sites receive more money than was originally allocated.

During Year III, the YMCA conducted the following activities:

- Worked within the community to secure additional local funding. Succeeded in securing funding to hire additional staff.
- Secured vehicles to transport participants.
- Explored new space for training in high tech as a variation on the Learning for Living model.

During Year III, Capital Commitment:

- Increased community outreach and presentations to funding groups.
- Extended an invitation to DOL staff to visit the program and explored the possibility of direct funding from DOL.
- Followed-up on Eisenhower referrals to funding sources

In Year III, the replication sites were given responsibility for developing workplans themselves, in preparation for taking on full responsibility after Eisenhower Foundation funding ended. By this time, all of the Argus components were in place at both sites and were running quite well. Hypothesis I had been validated by this point in time, even though fine tuning continued. At a meeting among DOL officials and Eisenhower staff in July, 1997, DOL confirmed publicly that Hypothesis 1 was proven -- that Argus had, indeed, been implemented in two new locations.

In Des Moines, an example of how the components had come together was published in the Des Moines Register (see Appendix 7):

Three months ago, 17-year-old Heather Makinson thought it would take her years to get her high school diploma.

The single mother from Fort Dodge was less than hopeful she could earn her diploma and get on with her life any time soon.

"I had decided it was going to take way too long to graduate," she said. So two years ago she dropped out of school and has been working as a nurse's aide in a nursing home to support her son, who turns 2 in September. Her second child is due in October.

Makinson was referred this spring by the juvenile court system to the House of Mercy in Des Moines after a brush with the law -- charged with interfering with official acts, she said -- in Fort Dodge. The House of Mercy is a residential facility for homeless women, including pregnant and parenting teens.

After arriving here, she found out about the Learning for Living program and enrolled.

The program, which makes its home at the John R. Grubb YMCA at 1611 11th St., allowed Makinson to get her general equivalency diploma in two weeks. She completed all the testing in near-record time, said Jim Hayes, a case worker with the program.

It usually takes people three months to finish the required testing and classes, but some people, depending on their skill level, can finish sooner.

About 5,000 people get their GEDs in Iowa each year, said John Hartwig, Iowa's administrator.

It is vitally important, he said that there are programs like Learning for Living to help dropouts get their diplomas. "It is extremely important and

extremely beneficial in getting people off welfare and contributing to society,” he said...

“The biggest part of the program is the counseling component,” [said the program director]. Participants are given intensive counseling in decision-making, responsibility and issues of respect, all ingredients in finding and keeping a job, she said....

In Washington, DC, a Capital Commitment brochure suggested how it had incorporated Argus elements by Year III (Appendix 8):

Capital Commitment is a non-profit training school headquartered in the District of Columbia, since June 1991.

Capital Commitment was founded by Ernest and LaVerne Boykin to provide job skills training in telecommunications to the unemployed. The program focuses its efforts on inner-city students; single mothers, homeless individuals and at-risk youth.

After completion of the program, graduates work as “Telephone Technicians” specializing in the areas of commercial, central office and residential installation.

Program services include:

- Educational Remediation
- Life Skills
- Conflict Resolution
- Self-Esteem Building
- Public Speaking
- Job Placement Assistance
- Social Services Support
- Individual Counseling
- Group Counseling
- Workshops / Seminars
- 24 Weeks of training

The current demand for workers with Capital Commitment/Argus-type training was suggested in a 1997 Washington Post article (Appendix 9):

The Commerce Department, joining a chorus of technology industry leaders, yesterday issued its first warning that a growing shortage of workers with cutting-edge computer skills could hinder the nation’s economic growth.

In delivering that message, officials said the Commerce and Education departments would take the unusual step of working with the technology industry to jointly propose solutions to the labor shortage through a series of task forces and a nationwide summit to be held early next year.

Program Continuity After DOL Funding Ended

The YMCA of Greater Des Moines, the parent organization of the John R. Grubb YMCA, has raised \$600K to continue the Learning for Living Program over three more years. The funds have been granted by Mr. Grubb himself (\$300K) and by the United Way Variety Club of Des Moines (\$300K). Beyond the \$600K, the YMCA of Greater Des Moines is committed to ongoing fundraising to maintain the principles of Learning for Living, with possible variations to fit local needs.

Now in the first year of the three new years of funding, the John R. Grubb YMCA has a staff of four and one half people -- who undertake counseling, case management, socialization, education, remedial education, and job training in computer skills and building trades. There is a priority on teaching social and academic skills. Some services have been contracted out to other groups.

Capital Commitment also has maintained Argus-like counseling, case management, and socialization components. Before Argus, Capital Commitment usually trained young people aged twenty-two and older. Because of the Argus experience, Capital Commitment now also includes persons aged twenty and twenty-one. A new initiative, to be funded by Bell Atlantic, will allow training to begin at age eighteen.

However, for the most part, funding by corporations to cover Argus-like components has been difficult to secure. Telecommunications corporations prefer to provide equipment, underwrite capital improvements, or fund very specific technical job training. At the same time, Capital Commitment has been unsuccessful in securing public funds. Locally, part of the problem appears to be the continuing management inefficiency of the District of Columbia government. Federally, part of the problem appears to be that the necessary upfront training disqualifies Capital Commitment from a great deal of funding based on "work first" regulations.

Lessons Learned By the Eisenhower Foundation

Over the three years of replication, the Eisenhower Foundation learned the following lessons:

1. For original models, and replications of them, sufficient and sustained funding is critical. Concepts like self-sufficiency, empowerment, and volunteerism can have a role but should not be oversold. The Foundation has observed that present American policy for the truly disadvantaged relies on certain political catch

phrases. The phrases include words like self-sufficiency, empowerment, and volunteerism. With appropriate recognition of their strengths, weaknesses, and limitations, we have found that these concepts can play a role in street level replications. However, used to excess and without an understanding of what happens on the street, these concepts can sometimes become smokescreens. They can cover up budget decisions against investing to scale in replications for disadvantaged children, disadvantaged youth, poor families, and the inner city. In the Argus replications, this lesson was borne out by the continuing view from both sites that, while the DOL funding was a god-send, it was not sufficient to replicate the Argus concept in an optimal way. In addition, although both sites worked hard at fundraising, they are skeptical of “self-sufficiency” rhetoric -- because they see growing need at the same time that federal job resources for the truly disadvantaged are diminishing -- even though the overall economy is called “robust” by pundits.

Each of the Learning for Living replications concluded that, ideally, it needed a minimum of \$350,000 a year from all sources to adequately implement the replication. DOL funding, combined with W. K. Kellogg Foundation supplements, was far below this level. Capital Commitment was successful with securing in-kind donations of equipment from telecommunications companies to make up some of the gap.

Given the underfunding, we believe that the positive findings in the outcome evaluation section of this report underscore the cost-effectiveness of the implementation and technical assistance process

2. An intermediary organization can help facilitate replication -- if there is trust between the model and the intermediary. The model organization, Argus was much too busy maintaining and expanding its own work to undertake technical assistance at the replication sites. Nor did Argus possess evaluation expertise. The Eisenhower Foundation had the capacity to undertake both technical assistance and evaluation. But the Foundation succeeded in large part because Argus trusted the Foundation to faithfully replicate the model. This trust was based on long years of previous collaboration between Argus and the Foundation.

3. Replication is facilitated by capacity building at replication sites. The Foundation’s experience is that a model must demonstrate substantial institutional capacity before it is replicated. Similarly, we need to assure that a replication has sound institutional capacity. This means an outcome-driven mission associated with strong leadership by the Board and Chief Executive Officer; an ability to undertake strategic planning; quality, flexible, and tenacious staff members who are given the opportunity for development; competent time, personnel, and organizational management; clearcut accountability; financial management skill; an ability to generate multiple income streams; receptivity to evaluation; understanding of the distinction between staff inputs and client outcomes; and skill with communications and the media.

As it begins operations, the replication needs these components of capacity in place -- or needs to develop them in the course of replication with technical assistants and trainers. The latter need to work especially one-on-one, but also in group sharing sessions with replication staff, over an extended period of time. No replication host site will be strong in all the areas of needed capacity, and, in our experience, there often will be institutional resistance to change. Quality technical assistance and training must strengthen the weak points. Consistent with this lesson, we found that the replication process was improved as the Eisenhower Foundation supplied additional capacity building technical assistance funded by the DeWitt Wallace-Reader's Digest Fund.

4. Charismatic founders are not unique. Contrary to the ideology of some, who assert that replication is difficult or impossible, the often charismatic founders of model programs and promising replications are not unique. Capable leaders can be identified for replications, we have found, as long as they are given adequate time, funding, coaching, training, and technical assistance. For example, in Des Moines, the excellent initial director of the replication had to resign for a more secure job when Year II funding was uncertain and delayed, but, after trial-and-error, we eventually found a first rate successor.

5. It is possible for the public and private sectors to achieve "win-win" solutions on the definition of "replication." DOL and other public sector agencies tend to want exact copy replications of models. This is reasonable, because such replications assure taxpayers that they are getting precisely what they paid for. However, with a view to what actually happens on the street, the Foundation has found that outcomes often are enhanced if we replicate underlying principles -- so that local sites can vary some details according to local culture and practices, and so that local operators can be empowered through ownership in the program and process. Over the three years of the replication, the Foundation has been impressed by how, while requiring exact replication as much as possible, DOL has also been flexible in recognizing where to replicate based on principles. For example, DOL recognized how important it was for Capital Commitment to place participants in the telecommunications industry, which is a different sector than the one used by Argus. We believe that this flexible DOL model should be replicated by all federal agencies.

6. It is at least as cost-beneficial to replicate programs run by unaffiliated grassroots nonprofit organizations as programs run by the affiliates of large national nonprofit organizations. In some policy circles, presently there is a bias toward undertaking replications with the affiliates of large national organizations. For example, this appears to be the case with the currently fashionable notion of mentoring (which we have found is poorly defined). However, the Foundation has found that unaffiliated groups are just as effective and can be more creative. This lesson was borne out in the Argus replications, where, for example, Capital Commitment had many dynamic, cutting edge ideas.

7. Either an entire program or parts of it can be replicated in another location. A model program can be replicated entirely at another location. It also can be replicated at a host organization that already is working in the field and has some of the model's components in place. The YMCA illustrated the former context, and Capital Commitment illustrated the latter context.

When a model is replicated in its entirety at a new location, sometimes there can be a rather slow replication start-up period and considerable staff turnover, as new ideas are put into practice and some personnel do not meet expectations. The advantage to replicating the entire model can be local enthusiasm for those exciting new ideas and little resistance to implementing them.

When the host organization already has some of the components of the model in place and is integrating additional components that it does not have, there can be institutional resistance. In some cases, the host organization can act like it "just wants the money" for replication operations, knows better and really is not interested in the model. When all goes well, the advantage to integrating just a few components can be the creation of a new hybrid that is a synthesis of the best of the model and the best of the host. What we now are calling "Argus High Tech" -- Argus components combined with Capital Commitment-like placement in telecommunications -- illustrates such a promising hybrid.

8. Both models and replications need multiple solutions and quality staff to be successful. In other replications, the Foundation has found that successful models and replications offer multiple solutions to multiple problems; have flexible, caring and tenacious staff; create solid organizational and financial management; and demonstrate the ability to sustain themselves financially year after year. Program managers need to be able to make the hard decisions, like replacing unsuitable staff promptly. Poorly motivated staff can undermine the entire program. Managers must be able to tell the difference between a staff member who needs training and one who does not belong -- and must be able to respond accordingly. Technical assistants can assist in identifying staff who are unsuitable. The Foundation's experience with Argus and the two replication sites reinforced these lessons.

9. Training before replication is cost-effective. Before replication begins, we have found that local staff should be hired and thoroughly trained. Up-front training of all replication staff should take place at the model site. Training needs to be provided in advance of actual recruitment of youth program participants. Early training of staff helps to reduce some of the confusion that arises from trying to implement a program while simultaneously learning about it. Key staff members of the institution undertaking the replication (like the executive director, project director, counselors and education staff) should be brought on board early in order to take advantage of the initial training. The length and substance of training at the model site should be the same for all youth development staff. For the most part, these lessons were followed in the Argus replications, with good results.

10. Tenacious quality control is essential. We have found that implementation should not begin, and funds to replication sites should not be released, until a strategic workplan and budget are completed. Strategic workplans need to include itemization of tasks to be accomplished, identification of who is responsible for each, and specification of timelines for completing the tasks. Proposed budgets need to be reviewed for feasibility and to assure that staffing patterns meet program requirements. The extent to which the strategic workplan and the budget are clear and concise determine the ease with which conflicts during implementation can be resolved. In the Argus replications, sites sometimes departed from workplans and budgets. Usually, this resulted in problems and Foundation intervention was necessary to get the replication back on track.

Our experience has been that replications will fail unless there is close and detailed monitoring and careful quality control. Perhaps the best way to ensure quality control is by employing a full time national replication director who is assisted by consultants; creating a workplan upfront; making frequent hands-on, in-person site visits; anticipating midcourse corrections as inevitable problems arise when workplans are compared to actual implementation; and requiring quarterly program and financial reports in writing. When problems do arise, it is imperative that a face-to-face meeting be held to address the concerns and work toward mutual resolution of the problem. This occurred on several occasions during the Argus replications.

Flexibility -- but also attention to detail and tenacity -- are important qualities in a replication director. To illustrate, staff at Capital Commitment were concerned over insistence by the Eisenhower replication director that key parts of the workplan be implemented. The result was weeks of hard bargaining and considerable tension. But eventually solutions were found that resulted in adherence to the workplan at the same time that the integrity of the original Capital Commitment concept was maintained.

11. Replication sites must make a serious commitment to technical assistance. We have found that some organizations agree to technical assistance relationships in the hope that these new connections will somehow lead to additional funding sources (and this does, in fact, sometimes occur). Others do not realize the amount of effort that will be required from them and their staff members. Over time, technical assistance providers may find that enthusiasm and cooperation are waning. Unreturned phone calls, low or no attendance at group meetings, and uncompleted assignments all provide evidence that scarce technical assistance resources are being wasted on a particular agency. When this happens, we have found that a heart-to-heart meeting is essential.

Organizations that were founded by charismatic leaders and mom-and-pop teams, and that still are being led by such persons, can also be difficult technical assistance recipients, as well. Sometimes the heads of such agencies have managed to establish themselves with little to no outside assistance and few

resources. These inventive and resourceful visionaries have had to perform numerous roles in their fledgling organizations. It can be difficult for them to take advice from “outsiders” or implement changes with which they do not agree. Progress also can be stymied when founders fail to confer authority to other staff members within the organization to implement technical assistance recommendations.

The Foundation experienced some of these problems during the replication, but was able to resolve them. For example, during the initial needs assessment, the Foundation realized that Capital Commitment did not consider the life skills training of Argus to be necessary. However, after discussion of how such training can improve job retention, Capital Commitment added the life skills component.

We have found that the most cost-effective technical assistance begins with such a needs assessment, and then combines group training with one-on-one training. The initial training for all staff was at the model site and was a week in duration. This provided an opportunity to become thoroughly familiar with the methods used by Argus to interface with the enrollees.

Shortly after implementation has begun, we found that staff from the model need to make a site visit to provide technical assistance and to assure that the components are being introduced and implemented in accordance with the workplan. Site visits should cover two to three days, we concluded. Ideally site visits should occur at least once per quarter. These visits should include staff from the model agency as well as the intermediary agency. When possible, in our experience, these visits should include the federal, state, or local jurisdiction funding agency officer.

12. Quality technical assistance materials are necessary. We have found that a clearly written replication program manual and a brief, focused replication video are desirable for teaching and reinforcing the model. The Argus manual is in Appendix 3. The transcript of the Argus video is in Appendix 4. The manual and video were invaluable for teaching staff, and now are available for future replications.

Lessons Learned By the Replication Sites

Each of the sites reported having learned lessons about contracting, collaborating with other organizations for funds or services and replicating models.

The YMCA provided the following feedback:

- The YMCA of Greater Des Moines is the parent organization for the John R. Grubb Community YMCA. When seeking funding for a new program, the parent organization needs to be clear about its reasons for applying for funding. Learning for Living staff often were pulled from the program to

fill needs in the general YMCA program. Learning for Living staff were frequently hired by the YMCA for its general program. This had the effect of undermining the Learning for Living program.

- The parent organization raised money on the basis of serving high risk individuals at J. R. Grubb. However, the resources acquired were distributed among the five YMCAs in Des Moines instead of being allocated solely to J. R. Grubb.
- Fundraising needed to be more of an ongoing process.
- The evaluation provided insight into how to improve the program.
- The availability of Eisenhower Foundation staff assisted the project director and direct service staff in gaining support from the CEO of the parent organization, as long as funding was available.

For additional information on the YMCA, please see Appendix 10, which contains a site visit report.

Capital Commitment provided the following feedback:

- Capital Commitment needed higher levels of funding and it was not easy to raise local match funding.
- Capital Commitment needed a development staffer to write proposals.
- The Capital Commitment Board needed a better understanding of Learning for Living and more hands-on experience with the program.
- Unsuitable staff members needed to be replaced earlier in the program. Trying to be sensitive to the personal situation of an unsuitable staff member had a negative impact on the program and on the morale of other staff.
- Formal agreements should have been made with volunteers -- specifying the service to be provided and the length of their commitment to the program.

Each organization became aware of the importance of continuity and commitment of staff. Capital Commitment had greater retention of its staff because staff members were required to possess dual skills -- telecommunications and general skills to implement Learning for Living components. Therefore, the selection process for Capital Commitment focused on technical telecommunications skill levels as well as on potential skills in case management and general counseling. Des Moines learned that lack of staff continuity has a detrimental affect on service delivery.

IV. COMPARISON GROUP OUTCOME EVALUATION

Introduction

This section presents the comparison group evaluation that was conducted over a thirty-six month period and includes data on three cohorts of program participants from both the Washington, DC and Des Moines, IA sites. The purpose of the comparison group evaluation was to test the second hypothesis which states that youth who participate in Argus replication activities are better integrated, socially and economically, than comparison youth who do not participate—as measured by employment levels, wages, reliance on public assistance, drug use, and arrests.

The methodology and results for this outcome evaluation are summarized separately for cohort 1, see below, followed by a combined presentation of the methodology and results for cohorts 2 and 3. This organizational scheme reflects a change in the comparison group outcome evaluation design, which took place after data collection had been completed for the first cohort of program participants (previously reported in Milton S. Eisenhower Foundation, 1997), and coincided with a change in the evaluation team in April 1997. The evaluation team found it inadvisable to continue with the original design for reasons related to both logistics and resource limitations. In addition to these pragmatic concerns, however, the change in design also permitted improvements, particularly regarding the sampling, which was improved by using matching methods. The new design also created an opportunity to confirm the earlier findings (cohort 1) by identifying the program outcomes for cohorts 2 and 3, thereby lending further credibility to the results of the Argus model demonstrated by Cohort 1.

While the details of the methodologies employed to evaluate cohort 1 and, subsequently, to evaluate cohorts 2 and 3 are provided below, the main differences pertain to the research design and choice of measures. Specifically, the design changed from a longitudinal study with multiple data collection points to a retrospective design with a single data collection point, probing three distinct time periods (i.e., before, during, and after the program). This change reflected the pragmatic issues faced by the new evaluation team, who began the evaluation just as the cohort 3 participants were completing their training in April of 1997. The interview protocol developed for cohorts 2 and 3 was based on the survey used to collect data from the cohort 1 participants to ensure adequate continuity. However, the new evaluation team determined that the original survey was lengthier than was required or was financially feasible to administer. As a result, the interview protocol for cohorts 2 and 3 is more succinct than the original survey and focuses on the social and employment outcomes deemed central to the program.

Cohort 1

Method

Research Participants

The cohort 1 evaluation began with 32 research participants drawn from Capital Commitment, Inc., the Argus replication site in Washington, D.C., and 36 participants from the John R. Grubb YMCA replication site in Des Moines, Iowa. Data were collected from these participants at the beginning of the program (Time 1) and then again approximately 17 months after they had begun the program (Time 3). By the time follow up data were collected, however, attrition had reduced the sample size of program participants to 19 from Capital Commitment, Inc. and 32 from the John R. Grubb YMCA. Thus, the response rate for Capital Commitment at follow up was 59.4%, while the response rate for the John R. Grubb YMCA was 88.8%.

As illustrated in Table 2, of the 19 youth comprising the Capital Commitment program group, 14 were male (73.7%) and 5 were female (26.3%). The average age of the Capital Commitment program participants at the time of follow up was 22.38 (SD=1.86). Of the 32 youth comprising the John R. Grubb YMCA program group, 20 were male (62.5%) and 12 were female (37.5%). The average age of the Des Moines program participants was 19.68 (SD=1.59) at the time of follow up. Likewise, data were collected from comparison groups for each replication site. The comparison group for Capital Commitment, Inc. was recruited from a list of 22 youth who chose not to enroll in the program after a delay in program implementation and was supplemented by a convenience/snowball sample consisting of 27 young people recruited at various neighborhood hangouts. Similarly, for the John R. Grubb YMCA comparison group, youth were recruited from the same or similar neighborhoods from which program participants were drawn. In order to ensure comparability, the recruitment protocols included guidelines on key variables such as age, race, gender, and income.

Table 2. Demographic Characteristics of the Cohort 1 Sample (N = 114).

Variable	Program Youth (n=51)				Comparison Youth (n=63)				Total Sample	Significance	
	Washington, DC (n=19)		Des Moines (n=32)		Washington, DC (n=36)		Des Moines (n=27)				
Nominal Variables											
	n	%	n	%	n	%	n	%	n	%	
Gender											
Male	14	73.7	20	62.5	21	58.3	12	44.4	67	58.8%	
Female	5	26.3	12	37.5	15	41.8	15	55.6	47	41.2	
Completion of High School/GED Prior to Program	10	59	5	16	28	78	4	15	47	41	
Continuous Variables											
	M	SD	M	SD	M	SD	M	SD	M	SD	
Age	22.38	1.86	19.68	1.59	28.76	8.90	17.52	1.88	22.49	6.93	F (3, 108)= 28.09***

***p < .00

Differences are statistically significant according to Milton S. Eisenhower and The Corporation for What Works (1997).

At the first data collection point, the Capital Commitment comparison group consisted of 49 youth, while the John R. Grubb YMCA comparison group consisted of 40 youth. By the time follow up data were collected over a year later, attrition had reduced the size of the comparison groups to 36 and 27 for Capital Commitment and the John R. Grubb YMCA sites, respectively. Thus the response rate for the Capital Commitment comparison group was 73.5%, while the response rate for the John R. Grubb YMCA comparison group was 67.5%. Given the high rate of geographic mobility among inner city dwellers, follow up samples above 50% are generally considered satisfactory among studies of at-risk populations. As illustrated in Table 2, the comparison group for Capital Commitment consisted of 21 males (58.3%) and 15 females (41.75). The average age of the comparison youth was 28.76 (SD=8.90). For the John R. Grubb YMCA comparison group, 12 were male (44.4%) and 15 were female (55.6%). The average age of the Des Moines comparison group youth was 17.52 (SD=1.88). Despite some attempts to match the program and comparison cohorts, some demographic differences were identified. For instance, the Capital Commitment comparison group was, on average, six years older than the program participants, while the John R. Grubb YMCA participant and comparison groups were more closely matched in age. The comparison group members for Des Moines were two years younger and enrolled in an alternative high school. With respect to gender, the distribution of men and women was more heavily male in the program participant groups and more balanced in the two comparison groups. To the extent that the treatment and comparison groups turned out to be dissimilar, statistical techniques for controlling for differences were employed in the data analysis.

Measures

A youth survey questionnaire was developed for the purposes of this evaluation (see Appendix 11). It consisted of 235 items intended to tap a variety of constructs falling within the following domains: background characteristics, psychological mediators, and functional outcomes. Since the functional outcomes are the most directly relevant to public policy, this report will highlight results with regard to outcomes such as employment status and wages.

Procedure

The results summarized below are based on data collected from the first cohort of program participants at two replication sites, Capital Commitment and the John R. Grubb YMCA, and their respective comparison groups. While the overall design of this evaluation effort called for data collection at four points in time, the results summarized below are based on changes from the beginning of the program (Time 1) to follow up approximately 17 months later (Time 3).

Results

Analysis of Variance (ANOVA) with repeated measures was used to determine program effectiveness on a variety of outcomes. Each ANOVA tested for three effects: group, time, and the interaction of group by time (group x time). A significant positive F for the group x time interaction would indicate program effects between Time 1 and Time 3

Table 3 shows changes in employment status from Time 1 (before the program) to Time 3 (approximately 17 months after the program began). As of Time 3, 42 percent of the Capital Commitment participants reported currently holding a job, compared to 28 percent (a drop from 39 percent at Time 1) in the Washington, DC comparison group (see Figure 2). Similarly, 41 percent of the John R. Grubb YMCA participants reported being currently employed, compared to 19 percent of its comparison group (a drop from 44 percent, see Figure 3). The John R. Grubb YMCA program did not attempt to find jobs for its program “graduates.” However, the increase in the employment rate (19 to 41 percent) reflect enhanced employability as a result of finishing high school and the word processing training provided by the program (Milton S. Eisenhower and The Corporation for What Works, 1997).

Table 4 illustrates average weekly earnings based on information provided by respondents. By Time 3, the Capital Commitment and John R. Grubb YMCA program participants were making between \$75 and \$13 more per week, respectively. These statistically significant results suggest that the program participants were doing better than their respective comparison counterparts. In Washington, the change was particularly noteworthy as the Capital Commitment program participants began at a lower pay rate than the comparison group (\$211 vs. \$265 per week) at Time 1. Despite this uneven beginning, by Time 3 the program participants showed a significant \$96 increase (from \$211 to \$307/week), while the comparison group showed a decrease (from \$265/week to \$234/week, see Figure 4). The John R. Grubb YMCA program and

comparison cohort groups began at the same level (~\$195/week), but the program participants reported a greater increase (\$223 vs. \$210) at Time 3 (see Figure 5). The magnitude of the increases reported by the Capital Commitment and John R. Grubb YMCA participants, respectively, was consistent with the greater investment in job training and placement made by Capital Commitment (Milton S. Eisenhower and The Corporation for What Works, 1997). No significant group x time interactions emerged with respect to educational attainment, consumption of alcoholic beverages, or incipient substance use.

Table 3. Employment Status for Cohort 1 at Time 1 and Time 3.*

Variable	Washington, DC				Des Moines			
	Program Participants		Comparison Group		Program Participants		Comparison Group	
	n	%	n	%	n	%	n	%
Employment at T1	2	11	14	39	6	19	12	44
Employment at T3	8	42	10	28	13	41	5	19

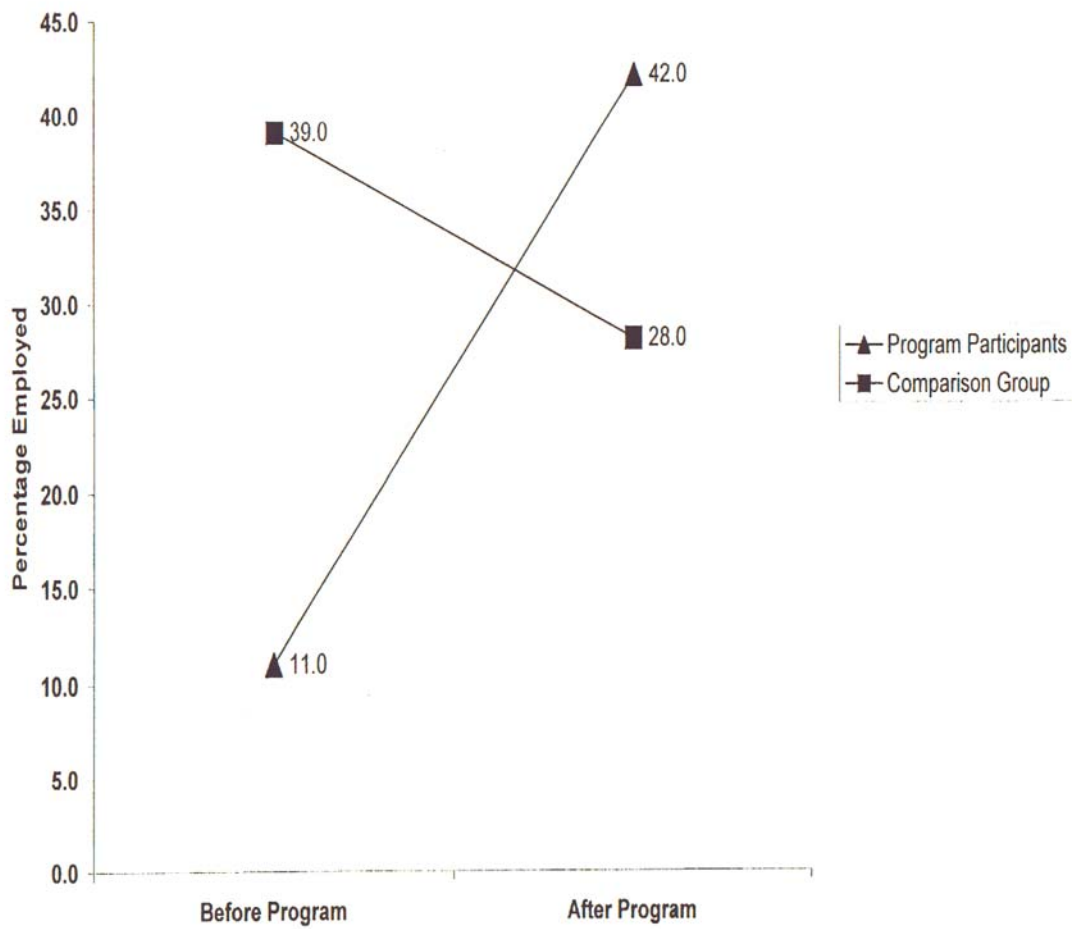
Table 4. Weekly Earnings at Time 1 and Time 3 Based on Current or Most Recent Job.*

Variable	Washington, DC				Des Moines			
	Program Participants		Comparison Group		Program Participants		Comparison Group	
	M	SD	M	SD	M	SD	M	SD
Weekly Earnings T1	211.44	83.51	264.89	136.24	195.11	43.42	194.33	63.86
Weekly Earnings T3	307.17	87.33	234.07	50.19	222.89	49.42	209.67	13.84

* Differences are statistically significant according to Milton S. Eisenhower and The Corporation for What Works (1997).

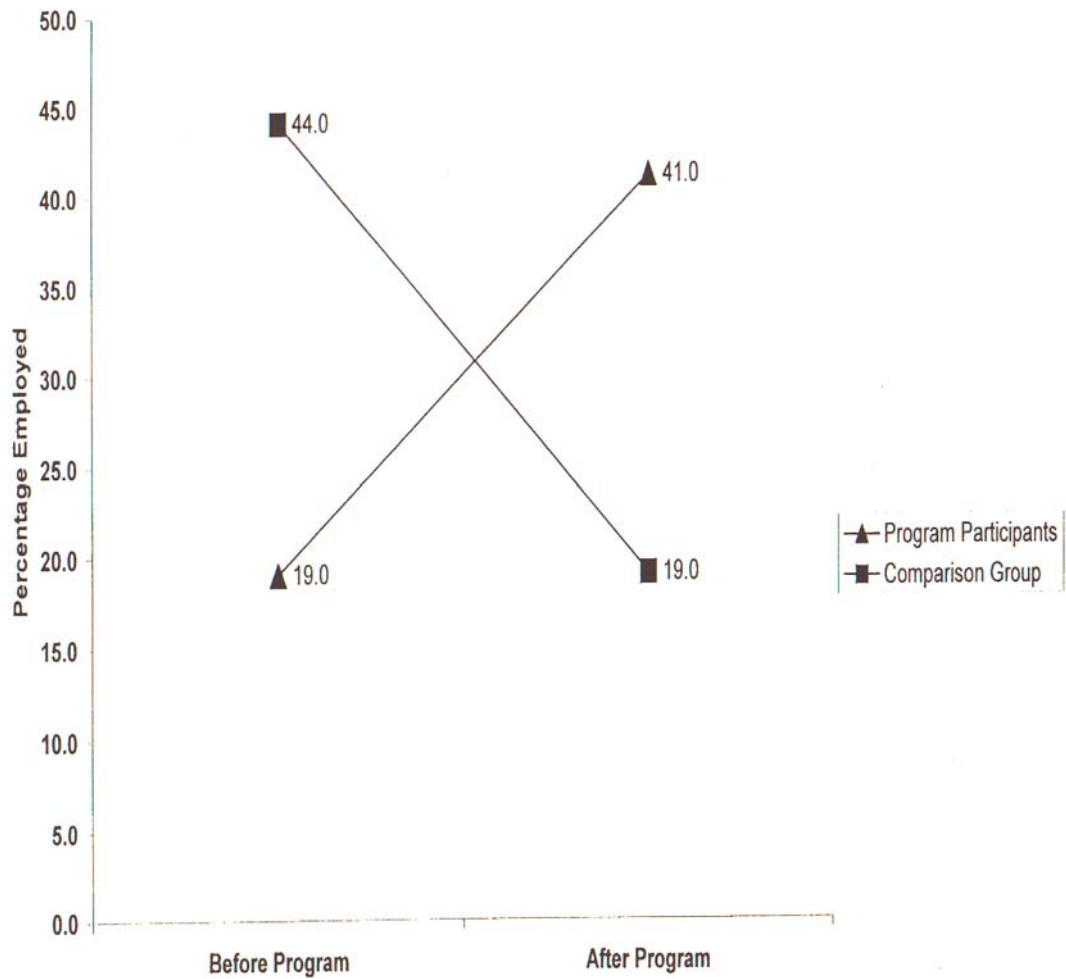
Cohorts 2 and 3

Figure 2. Employment Levels of Capital Commitment... Participants and Comparison Group Members (Cohort 1)*



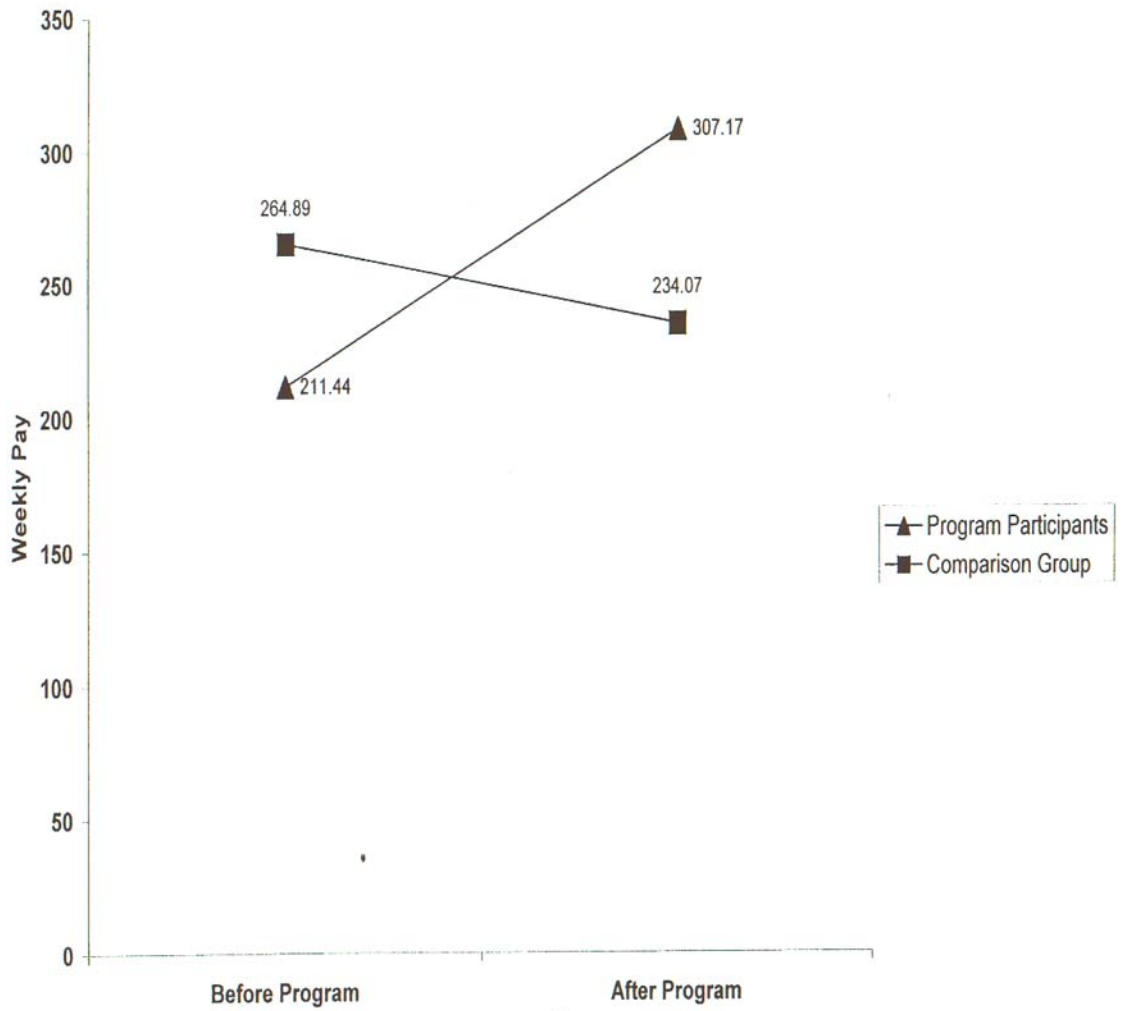
* Differences are statically significant, n=19 for program participants and n=36 for the comparison group (Milton S. Eisenhower and The Corporation for What Works, 1997, page 29).

Figure 3. Employment Levels of John R. Grubb YMC . . Participants and Comparison Group Members (Cohort 1)*



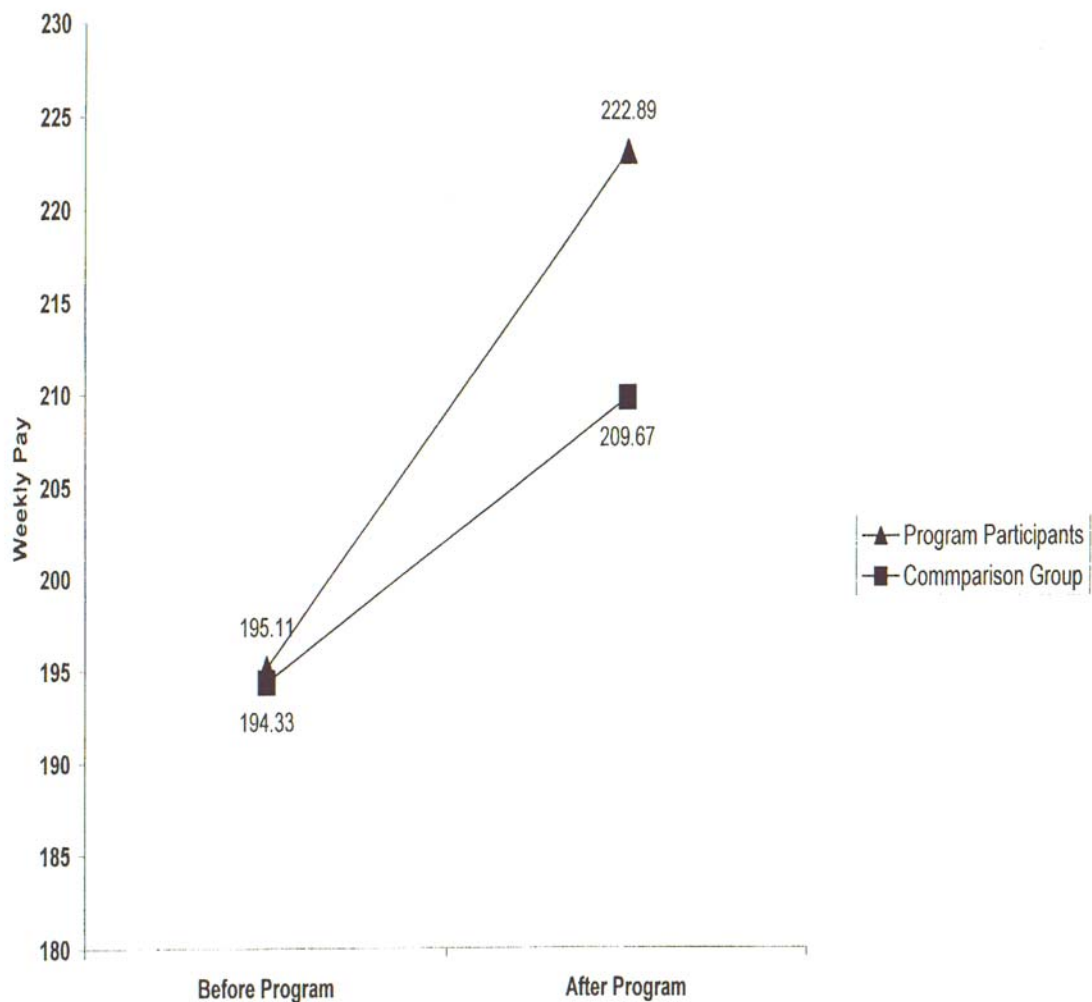
* Differences are significantly different, n=32 for program participants and n=27 for the comparison group (Milton S. Eisenhower and The Corporation for What Works, 1997, page 28).

Figure 4. Weekly Earnings of Capital Commitment Participants and Comparison Group Members (Cohort 1)*



* Differences are significantly different, n=19 for program participants and n=36 for the comparison group (Milton S. Eisenhower and The Corporation for What Works, 1997, page 29).

Figure 5. Earnings of John R. Grubb YMCA Participants and Comparison Group Members (Cohort 1)*



* Differences are significantly different, n=32 for program participants and n=27 for the comparison group (Milton S. Eisenhower and The Corporation for What Works, 1997, page 28).

Method

Research Participants

For cohorts 2 and 3, research participants were drawn from both Argus replication sites, Capital Commitment, Inc. in Washington, D.C. and the John R. Grubb YMCA in Des Moines, Iowa. Based on a review of the replication sites' administrative files for the years 1995 to 1997, 61 youth that had participated in the Capital Commitment program and 112 youth that had participated in the John R. Grubb YMCA program were identified. From this pool of possible research participants, 40 youth were successfully contacted and agreed to participate in the evaluation of the Capital Commitment replication, representing a response rate of

65.6%, while 59 youth were successfully recruited from the John R. Grubb YMCA, representing a response rate of 52.6%.

However, 26 of these cases were excluded from the analyses because, upon closer examination, they represented participants from cohort 1 (n=20), they had not completed the program (n=2), or they were still enrolled (n=4). Thus, the final number of Argus replication program participants for cohorts 2 and 3 consisted of 73 youth, 31 of whom had completed the Capital Commitment program and 42 of whom had completed the program at the John R. Grubb YMCA.

Table 5 illustrates the demographic characteristics of the Capital Commitment participants from cohorts 2 and 3 that were interviewed. Specifically, of the 31 program participants, 21 were male (67.7%) and 10 were female (32.3%). All of the Washington, D.C. program participants were African American (100%) and their average age was 21.52 years (SD=1.31). Similar information concerning the John R. Grubb YMCA participants is presented in Table 6. Of the 42 youth that completed the program in Des Moines, 21 were male (50.0%) and 21 were female (50.0%). In terms of ethnicity, 21 (50.0%) of the Des Moines program participants were white, with the remaining 21 consisting of other races (50.0%), though primarily African American. The average age of the program participants was 19.48 (SD= 2.50).

This evaluation design called for the comparison of the Argus replication program participants from two cohorts (1996-1997) to a single matched comparison group for each site. This group was composed of youth who were matched in terms of key demographic dimensions, but had not participated in the program. In order to match the Capital Commitment sample, data were collected from 50 youth. As illustrated in Table 5, this comparison group consisted of 33 males (66.0%) and 17 females (34.0%). All of the comparison group youth were African American (100.0%) and they ranged in age from 20 to 26 years, with an average of 22.89 years (SD=1.17). Likewise, in order to match the John R. Grubb YMCA sample, data were collected from 47 comparison group youth (see Table 6). However, one of these cases was excluded from the analyses because the participant did not meet the target age requirement. The final comparison group in Des Moines consisted of 28 males (60.9%) and 18 females (39.1%). In terms of ethnicity, 23 of the comparison group youth were white (50.0%) and 23 were African American (50.0%). These participants ranged in age from 19 to 22 years, with the average being 20.96 years (SD= 1.11).

In order to determine the comparability of the program and comparison groups before the program participants received the Argus program intervention, Chi-Square and t-tests were performed to test for significant group differences on a variety of demographic variables. These tests for comparability were performed separately for the Des Moines and Washington, D.C. programs since the sites proved to be too different in terms of program participant demographics for the program groups to be pooled in a meaningful way. For instance, the racial

composition of the program groups was very different, since the Des Moines program participants were evenly split between whites (50%) and non-whites (50%), while the Washington, DC program participants were all non-white (100%, see Tables 5 and 6). The groups also differed in terms of the age and education of participants. Compared to the Des Moines program participants, the Washington program participants were older ($M=21.52$ versus $M=19.48$ years) and better educated ($M=4.71$ versus $M=2.38$ on a scale where two indicated completion of 9th grade, three indicated completion of 10th grade, four signified completion of 11th grade, and five indicated completion of high school or GED).

Table 5. Demographic Characteristics of the Washington, DC Sample for Cohorts 2 and 3 ($N = 81$).

Variable	Program Participants ($n = 31$)		Comparison Group ($n = 50$)		Total Sample			
Nominal Variables								
	N	%	n	%	n	%	Chi-Square	p-value
Gender								
Male	21	67.7	33	66.0	54	66.7	0.26	0.87
Female	10	32.3	17	34.0	27	33.3		
Race								
White	0	0.0	0	0.0	0	0.0	N/A	N/A
Other	31	100.0	50	100.0	81	100.0		
Continuous Variables								
	M	SD	M	SD	M	SD	t-test	p-value
Number of Children Prior to Program	0.26	0.51	0.46	0.79	0.38	0.70	-1.27	0.21
Age	21.52	1.31	22.89	1.17	22.37	1.39	-4.90	0.00***
Prior Education	4.71	1.10	5.80	1.21	5.38	1.28	-4.07	0.00***

*** $p < .001$.

Table 6. Demographic Characteristics of the Des Moines Sample for Cohorts 2 and 3 (N = 88).

Variable	Program Participants (n = 42)		Comparison Group (n = 46)		Total Sample			
Nominal Variables								
	n	%	n	%	n	%	Chi-Square	p-value
Gender								
Male	21	50.0	28	60.9	49	55.7		
Female	21	50.0	18	39.1	39	44.3	1.05	0.31
Race								
White	21	50.0	23	50.0	44	50.0		
Other	21	50.0	23	50.0	44	50.0	0.00	1.00
Continuous Variables								
	M	SD	M	SD	M	SD	t-test	p-value
Number of Children Prior to Program	0.45	0.92	0.43	0.69	0.44	0.80	0.10	0.92
Age	19.48	2.50	20.96	1.11	20.25	2.04	-3.66	0.00***
Prior Education	2.38	0.99	4.28	1.70	3.38	1.69	-6.35	0.00***

***p < .001

With respect to the Washington, D.C. program and comparison groups, no significant differences were found for the following variables: sex, race, and number of children born prior to the program. Significant differences did emerge with respect to age and level of education attained prior to the program. As illustrated in Table 5, these differences reflect that, on average, the comparison group youth (M = 22.89) were older than the program group youth (M = 21.52), $t(79) = -4.90$, $p < .001$. Perhaps in part because they were significantly older, the comparison group youth had also attained more education prior to the program year than had the program youth, $t(79) = -4.07$. Specifically, based on a scale where one indicated completion of eighth grade, two indicated completion of 9th grade, three indicated completion of 10th grade, four signified completion of 11th grade, five indicated completion of high school or GED, and six indicated completion of one year of college, the comparison group mean was 5.80, while the program group mean was 4.71.

Likewise, with respect to the Des Moines program and comparison groups, no significant differences were found for the following variables: sex, race, and number of children born prior to the program. However, as illustrated in Table 6, significant differences did emerge with respect to age indicating that, on average, the comparison group youth (M = 20.96) were older than the program group youth (M = 19.48), $t(86) = -3.66$, $p < .001$. Significant differences also emerged with respect to education prior to the program indicating that the comparison group youth had attained higher levels of education than had the program group youth, $t(86) = -6.35$, $p < .001$ (see Table 6). Specifically, based on a scale where one indicated completion of eighth grade, two indicated completion of 9th grade, three indicated completion of 10th grade, four signified completion of 11th grade, five indicated completion of high school or GED, and six indicated completion of

one year of college, the comparison group mean was 4.28, while the program group mean was 2.38.

Overall, these results indicate that, for each replication site, the program and comparison groups were comparable with respect to a number of demographic variables, with the exceptions of age and education. In order to address these exceptions, age and prior education level were controlled statistically in all subsequent analyses.

Measures

Participant Group Interviews: An interview protocol with 23 items was developed for the program groups (see Appendix 12). Specifically, the protocol was designed to gather information regarding the program participants' demographic characteristics, educational attainment, program participation, employment experiences, criminal justice involvement, drug use, and welfare status. In order to assess the impact of the program, the protocol questions elicited information retrospectively (before and during the program) as well as gathering current information (after the program). The protocol was also designed in such a way that the data collectors were able to reference information previously gathered from administrative files, while asking the interviewees for missing data as well as new information.

Comparison Group Interviews: A 12 item interview protocol was designed to collect data from the comparison group participants (see Appendix 13). Data were collected regarding the youths' demographic characteristics, educational attainment, employment experiences, criminal justice involvement, drug use, and welfare status. In order to correspond roughly to the different time periods probed for the program group participants, the comparison group protocol collected data for time periods designated "before 1996" (the year prior to "program participation"), "in 1996" (corresponding to the "program year"), and "in 1997" (corresponding to the year following the program).

To summarize, in order to compare program youth from two cohorts (1996-1997) to a single matched group of comparison youth for each site, three comparable time periods were devised. Although the program youth actually participated in the program during different years depending on their cohort, for the sake of comparison the year 1996 was chosen to correspond to the program year for the comparison youth. Extending this logic, the time period corresponding to "before the program" was measured for the comparison youth using the designation "before 1996." Likewise, the time period "after the program" was represented for the comparison youth by the designation "in 1997."

Procedure

Program Participant Groups: Program group interviews were conducted by a local data collector in Washington, D.C., while two staff members of the John R. Grubb YMCA conducted the interviews in Des Moines, IA. Prior to the interviews, letters of passive consent were sent to the homes of potential participants under the age of 18 years. For those over 18, verbal consent was obtained at the time of the interview. At the outset of the interview, the purpose of the evaluation was explained and all participants were assured that participation was voluntary and that their responses would be kept confidential. Participants were also offered a small incentive for their participation in the form of a gift certificate worth \$5.00 for a “fast food” restaurant, which was mailed to their homes upon completion of the interviews.

The interviews followed the protocol described above and, in cases where discrepancies arose between the youths’ self-report and data gathered from administrative files, responses were verified with program staff. In most cases, these discrepancies were readily resolved. In the few instances in which general agreement was not achieved, corrections were made based on the youths’ self-report. In Washington, all of the interviews with program participants were conducted over the phone. In an attempt to reach as many potential participants as possible, calls were made at different times of day, messages were left when possible, and follow up calls were made at times that family members indicated would be convenient. Those who were ultimately reached were contacted 3.2 times on average (range 1-9 phone calls), while those who were not successfully reached were contacted an average of 6 times (range 3-10 calls). In Des Moines, approximately half of the interviews were conducted by phone, while the remainder were conducted in person at the John R. Grubb YMCA. The local data collectors in Des Moines made up to three attempts to contact potential evaluation participants. At the conclusion of all the interviews, participants were thanked for their participation and provided with a contact person and phone number, in the event they had questions about the evaluation in the future.

Comparison Groups: The comparison group interviews were conducted by an independent local data collector in Washington, D.C., while the same YMCA staff members continued to serve as data collectors in Des Moines, IA. Based on the demographic characteristics of the program groups, the local data collectors were instructed to target their recruitment efforts at individuals meeting certain profiles matching the characteristics of the program group. For instance, the Washington local data collector was instructed to recruit participants who did not have college or vocational school degrees by 1994, were between the ages of 20 and 23, lived in neighborhoods comparable to the program group participants, had not participated in job training programs in 1995-1997, and had been unemployed for at least three months during 1995 or 1996. In addition to these general guidelines, the local data collector in Washington was given specific targets regarding the gender, ethnicity, and educational attainment of participants. Specifically, the local data collector was asked to collect data on a total of 50 youth matching the following descriptions: 25 African American males with high

school degrees by the end of 1994, eight African American males without high school degrees by the end of 1994, 13 African American females with high school degrees by the end of 1994, and 4 African American females without high school degrees by the end of 1994. Using these criteria, the local data collector in Washington, D.C. recruited participants from local hangouts, including bus stops and street festivals.

The local data collectors in Des Moines were instructed to recruit participants who dropped out of high school for a period of time, did not have college or vocational school degrees by 1994, were between the ages of 19 and 22, lived in neighborhoods comparable to the program group participants, had not participated in job training programs in 1995-1997, and had been unemployed for at least three months during 1995 or 1996. They were also given a target breakdown by gender and ethnicity. Specifically, the Des Moines local data collectors were instructed to recruit 15 African American males, 10 African American females, 15 white males, and 10 white females. Using these criteria, the local data collectors in Des Moines recruited participants through the John R. Grubb YMCA and through other social service agencies.

After potential comparison group participants were screened for eligibility, written consent was obtained from youth who qualified for the study. At this juncture, the purpose of the evaluation was explained and all participants were assured that participation was voluntary and that their responses would be kept confidential. Participants were also offered a small incentive for their participation in the form of a McDonald's gift certificate worth \$5.00, which they received upon completion of the survey. The comparison group interviews followed the protocol described above and were completed in person. At the conclusion of the interview, participants were thanked for their participation and provided with a written description of the study which included a contact person and phone number, in the event they had questions about the evaluation in the future.

Results

The original evaluation plan called for three distinct comparisons on a variety of outcomes. The planned comparisons included: (a) pooled program groups and pooled comparison groups, (b) site specific program groups and site specific comparison groups, and (c) cohort and site/specific program groups and comparison groups. However, the Washington, D.C. and Des Moines, IA program sites proved to be too different in terms of program participant demographics, program characteristics, and community context for the program groups to be pooled in a meaningful way. Furthermore, the number of research participants (n) in both program groups was too low to allow for analyses examining cohort differences within these groups.

Thus, of the three planned comparisons, only (b) proved to be appropriate and, within each site, cohorts 2 and 3 were aggregated to compensate for small program sample size. While this approach limited information concerning the timing of program effects, since the interval between program participation and data collection necessarily differed for cohorts 2 (time interval for Washington=27 months, Des Moines=18.27 months) and 3 (time interval for Washington=16 months, Des Moines=11.6 months), the relative increase in statistical power was judged to be a higher priority. Following a discussion of the imputation process applied to missing data, the results for each site will be presented separately since the analyses for each site were handled independently.

Missing Data

In order to maximize statistical power, imputations were performed to replace data that were not provided by participants. While the imputations were computed separately for each site, in keeping with the larger analytic strategy, there was a common rationale for the selection of techniques. For continuous variables, missing data were replaced with the mean (e.g. age) (SPSS Base 7.5 for Windows User's Guide, 1997). Interval and ratio variables were imputed using either the mean or, in cases where a whole number was preferable, with the median function (e.g. for number of children) (SPSS Base 7.5 for Windows User's Guide, 1997). Finally, the linear trend at point function was used to impute the majority of the nominal variables (e.g. gender) (SPSS Base 7.5 for Windows User's Guide, 1997). One exception to this rule was the use of the median function to impute birth year.

Washington, D.C. (Capital Commitment)

Prior to testing the second hypothesis, which states that youth who participate in Argus replication activities are better integrated, socially and economically, than comparison youth who do not participate in Argus, a power analysis was conducted to establish the likelihood of detecting existing effects given restrictions related to sample size. The results of this power analysis suggest that, given the small sample size of the treatment group ($n=31$), there was only a 46% chance that a medium effect ($f=0.25$) would be detected and only a 12% chance of detecting a small effect ($f=0.10$) if, in fact, an effect were present. Thus, the chances of committing a Type II error, failing to reject the null hypothesis when it is in fact false and the alternative hypothesis is true, were much higher than the 80% level that is usually recommended (Cohen & Cohen, 1983). This limitation of the study design should be kept in mind when interpreting outcome data where trends are in the predicted direction, yet fail to reach statistical significance.

Next, Chi-square and t-tests were performed to examine the comparability of the participant and comparison groups with respect to a number of key pre-program variables. A significant difference emerged with respect to employment status prior to the program indicating that a greater number of the program youth

worked (93.5%) compared to the comparison group youth (56%), $\chi^2(1, N = 81) = 12.94, p < .001$. (See Table 7). No significant differences emerged for the following variables: hourly wage prior to the program (program $M = \$7.08/\text{hr.}$, comparison $M = \$6.44/\text{hr.}$), number of hours worked prior to the program (program $M = 33.41 \text{ hrs/wk}$, comparison $M = 31.47 \text{ hrs/wk}$), how often drugs were used prior to the program (program $M = 1.42$, comparison $M = 1.40$, on a scale where 1 indicated never, 2 indicated sometimes, and three indicated frequently), arrests prior to the program (16.1% of program youth, 22.0% of comparison youth), and public assistance prior to the program (9.7% of program youth, 16.0% of comparison youth).

Finally, in order to assess the significance of changes in participants' drug use, criminal justice involvement, reliance on public assistance, employment status, and weekly wages over time, several change variables were created by subtracting the value of past involvement from either the current value and/or the value at the time of the program. For instance, change in drug use from "before the program" to "after the program" was calculated by subtracting the participant's response for 1995 (before the program) from the response in 1997 (after the program). ANOVAs were then used to test for the significance of the program in accounting for change while controlling for age and education. Since the calculation of the change scores also takes into account the pre-program scores for each outcome, any significant differences between the groups on these key variables were also controlled in effect.

Table 7. Comparability of the Washington, DC Program and Comparison Samples for Cohorts 2 and 3 ($N = 81$).

Variable	Program Participants ($n = 31$)		Comparison Group ($n = 50$)		Total Sample			
Nominal Variables								
	n	%	n	%	n	%	Chi-Square	p-value
Employed Prior to Program	29	93.5	28	56.0	57	70.4	12.94	0.00***
Public Assistance Reliance Prior to Program	3	9.7	8	16.0	11	13.6	0.65	0.42
Arrests Prior to Program	5	16.1	11	22.0	16	19.8	0.42	0.52
Continuous Variables								
	M	SD	M	SD	M	SD	t-test	p-value
Hourly Wage Prior to Program	7.08	3.71	6.44	1.78	6.77	2.92	0.82	.42
Number of Hours/Week Worked Prior to Program	33.41	7.58	31.47	8.21	32.45	7.89	0.93	0.36
Drug Use Prior to Program	1.42	0.72	1.40	0.73	1.41	0.72	0.12	0.91

*** $p < .001$.

Analysis of these change variables highlighted the positive impact of the program on drug use (see Table 8). Specifically, the program had a significant impact on changes in drug use from before the program to after the program, $F(1, 80) = 4.50, p < .05$. There was also a significant difference in the change in reported drug use from before the program to the program year, $F(1, 80) = 8.42, p < .01$ (see Table 9). In both cases, these differences reflected a greater decline in reported drug use by the program group youth compared to the comparison group, a decline which seems to have begun during the program and whose effects continued in the year after the program. No significant differences in change scores emerged for arrests, reliance on public assistance, or weekly wages. With respect to employment status, there was no significant difference in change score from before the program to after the program. However, there was a significant change in employment status from before the program to during the program, ($F(1, 80) = 7.04, p < .01$ (see Table 10). This difference reflected a decline in the employment of the program youth compared to the comparison youth during the program year. This decline likely reflected the competing demands of work and program participation.

Figures 6-10 illustrate these trends based on the youths' self-report. As illustrated in Figure 6, before the program a greater percentage of program youth reported using drugs (29.0%) than did comparison youth (26.0%). However, during the program, the percentage of program youth reporting drug use (12.9%) dropped below the percentage of comparison youth reporting drug use (38.0%). This pattern continued after the program with only 3.2% of the program youth reporting drug use, compared to 34.0% of the comparison group youth. These findings likely reflect the effectiveness of the Argus program component dealing with substance abuse.

Table 8. Results of Analysis of Variance, Washington, DC Participants' Changes in *Drug Use* for Cohorts 2 and 3 (year prior to year after the program).

Source	df	SS	MS	F
Covariates (Combined)	2	0.35	0.17	0.37
Age	1	0.26	0.26	0.57
Education	1	0.02	0.02	0.04
Treatment	1	2.11	2.11	4.50*
Residual	77	36.03	0.47	
Total	80	40.69	0.51	

*p < .05.

Table 9. Results of Analysis of Variance, Des Moines Participants' Changes in *Drug Use* for Cohorts 2 and 3 (year prior to program year).

Source	df	SS	MS	F
Covariates (Combined)	2	0.08	0.04	0.11
Age	1	0.00	0.00	0.00
Education	1	0.07	0.07	0.20
Treatment	1	3.17	3.17	8.42***
Residual	77	29.02	0.38	
Total	80	32.99	0.41	

***p < .01.

Table 10. Results of Analysis of Variance, Washington, DC Participants' Changes in *Employment* (year prior to program year).

Source	df	SS	MS	F
Covariates (Combined)	2	0.17	8.52	0.26
Age	1	0.13	0.13	0.39
Education	1	9.19	9.19	0.29
Treatment	1	2.27	2.27	7.04**
Residual	77	24.85	0.32	
Total	80	28.00	0.35	

**p < .01"

In terms of criminal justice involvement, a smaller percentage of the program youth reported arrests before the program (16.1%) compared to comparison group youth (22.0%, see Figure 7). Although not statistically significant, this percentage dropped to 0.0% for participants during the program and increased only slightly after the program (4.0%), remaining well below the percentage of comparison group youth reporting arrests both during (22.0%) and after the program (24.0%). The dramatic absence of arrests during the program may reflect the structure and safety provided by the Argus program model.

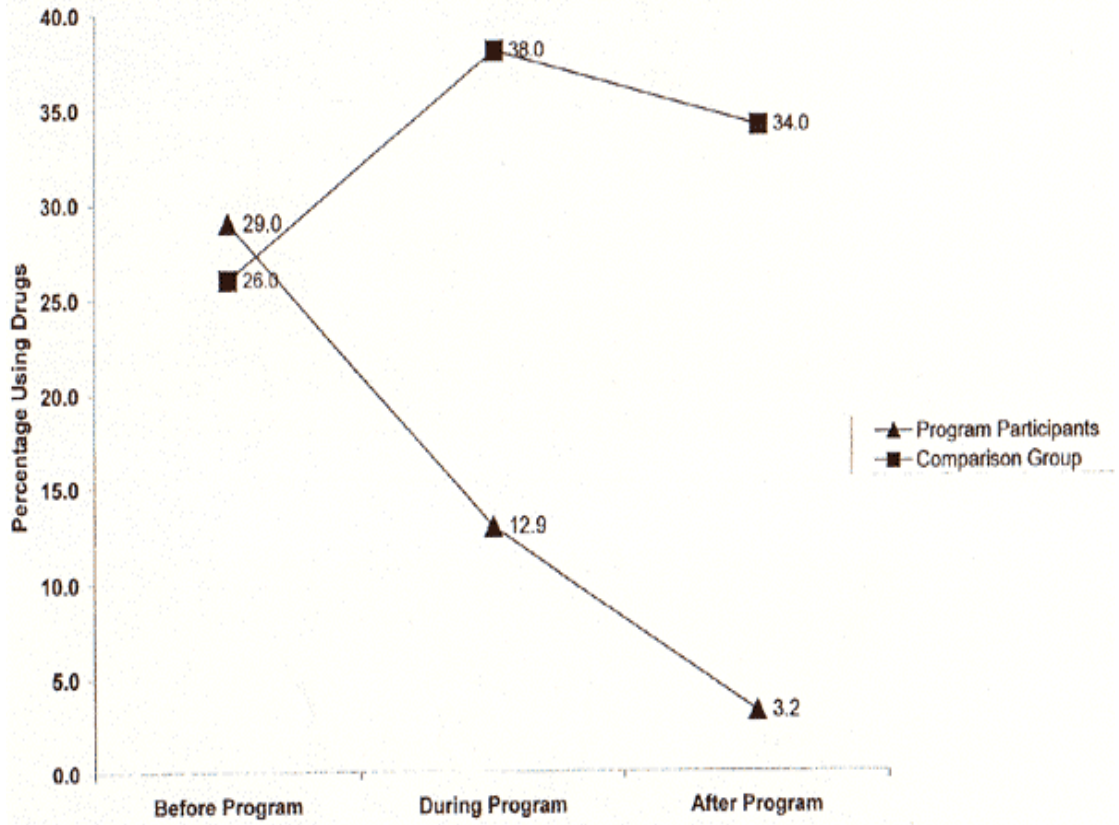
Figure 8 shows the low rate of reliance on public assistance among program participants before (9.7%) and after the program (6.5%), both in absolute terms and relative to the comparison group youth (16.0% before the program, 20.0% after the program), despite the failure to reach a level of statistical significance.

Figure 9 illustrates the findings regarding the percentage of program and comparison group youth reporting employment. Before the program, a greater percentage of the program youth reported that they were employed (93.5%) than the comparison group youth (56.0%). The significant drop in employment of program youth during the program (from 93.5% to 58.1%) likely reflects the impact of competing program demands such as educational attainment and/or schedule requirements and is similar to the level of employment reported by the comparison youth (60.0%). After the program, 67.7% of the program youth reported that they were employed compared to 70.0% of the comparison group youth.

Finally, Figure 10 illustrates the findings regarding the mean weekly pay of working program and comparison group youth. Before the program, the program youth were earning more ($M=\$242.57$) per week than their counterparts ($M=\$202.65$). During the program both groups of youth reported earning more per week, with the program youth continuing to earn more (program $M=\$333.36$, comparison $M=\$261.47$). However, after the program, the weekly earnings of the program youth ($M=\$351.95$) dropped just below the comparison group youth ($M=\$362.89$).

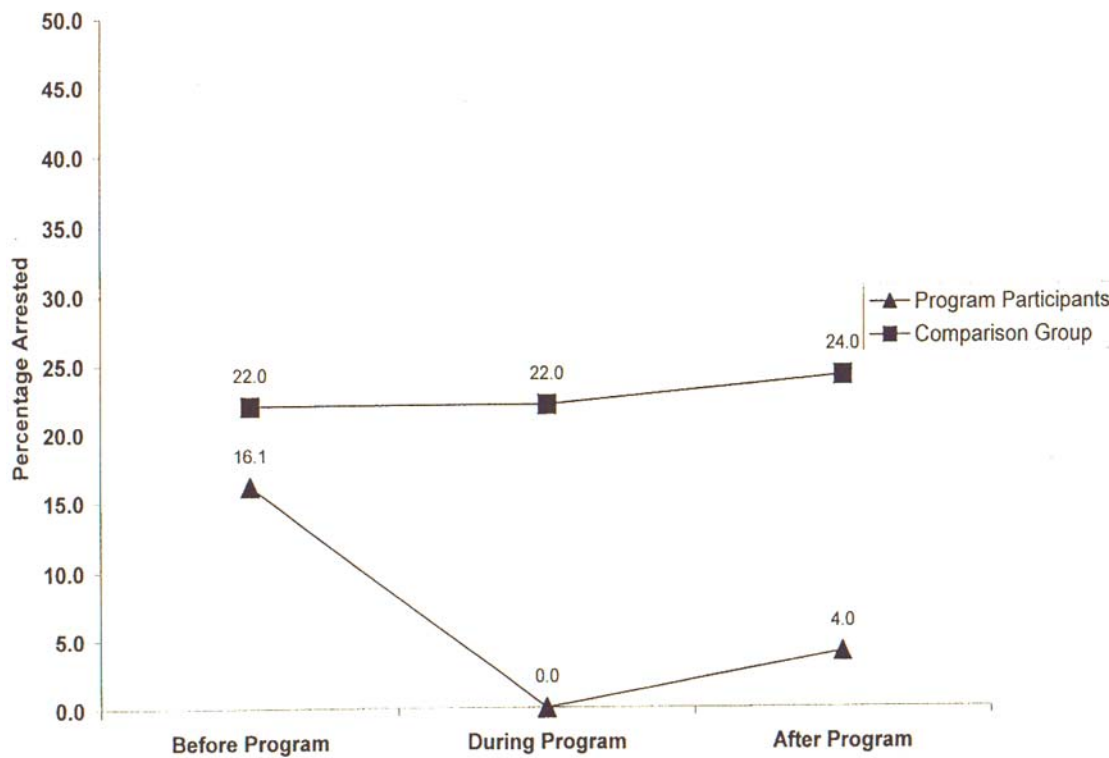
In summary, despite the fact that they were significantly younger and had less education than the comparison group youth, the program youth were less likely to use drugs over time. This finding provides partial support for the Argus program model upon which the second hypothesis is based and the principles of the Argus program. Furthermore, while not statistically significant, the trends regarding arrests, as depicted in Figure 7, and reliance on public assistance, as depicted in Figure 8, are in the predicted direction and may have failed to reach significance due, at least in part, to low statistical power.

Figure 6. Percentage Using Drugs by Program a. Comparison Groups Over Three Time Periods (Washington DC)*



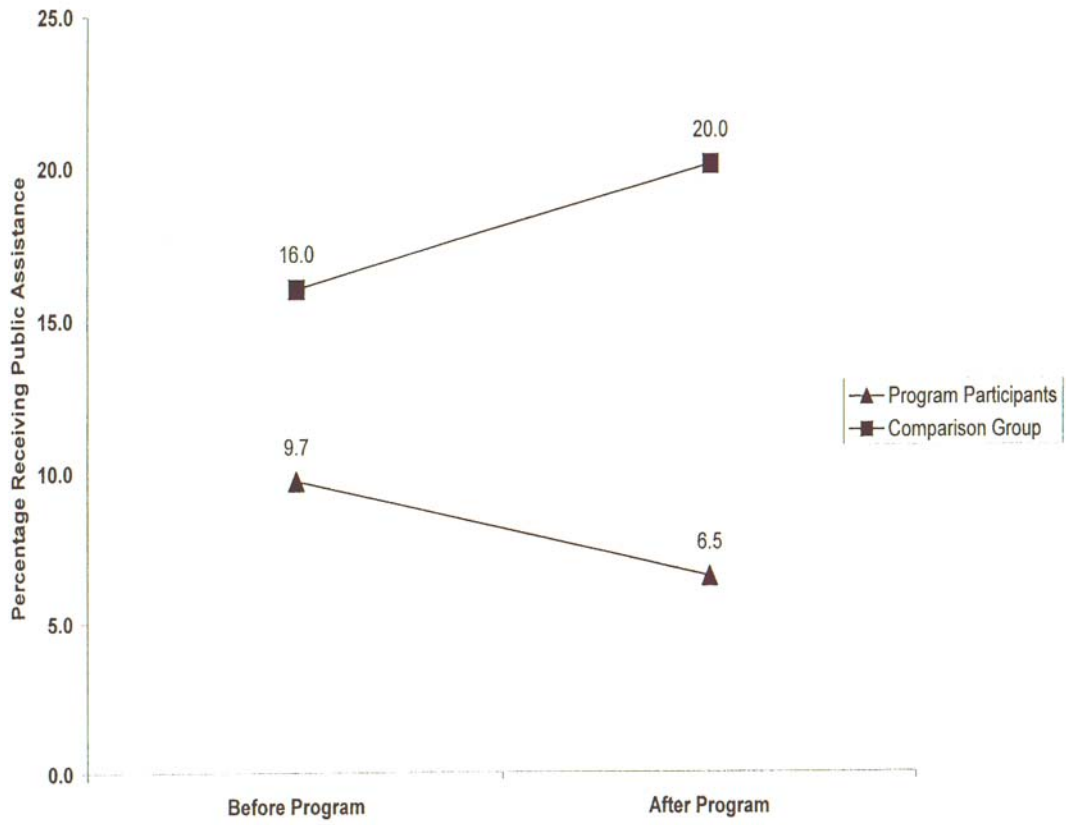
* Significant difference in change scores ($p < .05$), $n=31$ for program participants and $n=50$ for the comparison group.

Figure 7. Percentage Arrested by Program and Comparison Groups Over Three Time Periods (Washington DC)



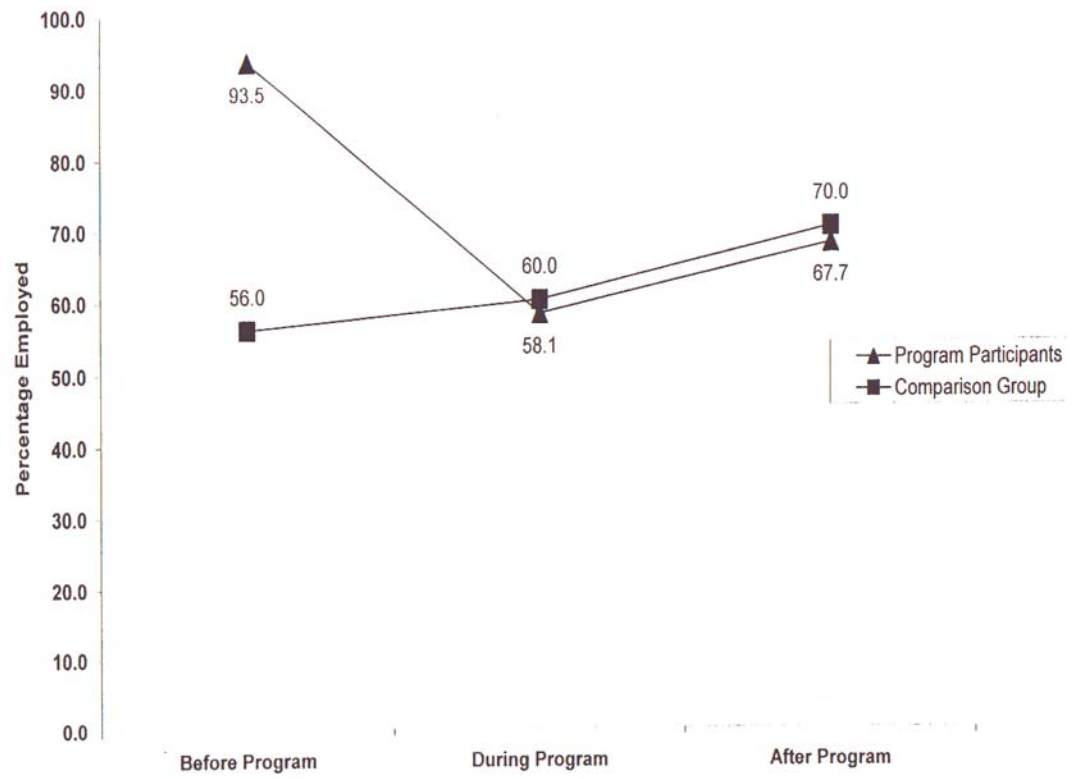
N=31 for program participants and n=50 for the comparison group.

Figure 8. Percentage Receiving Public Assistance by Program and Comparison Groups Over Three Time Periods (Washington DC)



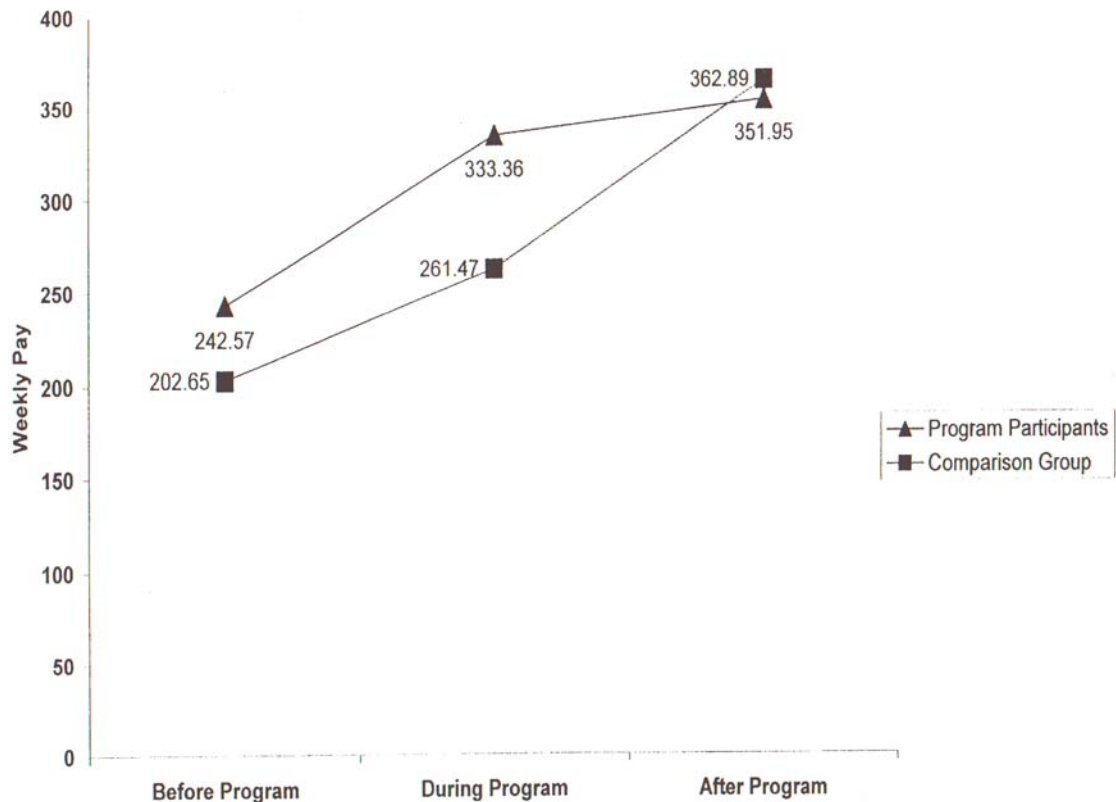
N=31 for program participants and n=50 for the comparison group.

Figure 9. Percentage Employed by Program and Comparison Groups Over Three Time Periods (Washington DC)



N=31 for program participants and n=50 for the comparison group.

Figure 10. Weekly Earnings by Program and Comparison Groups Over Three Time Periods (Washington DC)



N=18-29 for program participants and n= 28-35 for the comparison group.

Des Moines (John R. Grubb YMCA)

Prior to testing the second hypothesis by examining the impact of the Argus program on a variety of outcomes related to employment, wages, drug use, criminal justice involvement, and reliance on public assistance over time at the Des Moines site, a second power analysis was conducted. The results of this power analysis suggest that, given the sample size of the treatment group (n=42), there was a 61% chance that a medium effect ($f=0.25$) would be detected and only a 15% chance of detecting a small effect ($f=0.10$) if, in fact, an effect were present. Thus, the chances of committing a Type II error, failing to reject the null hypothesis when it is in fact false and the alternative hypothesis is true, were much higher than the 80% level that is usually recommended (Cohen & Cohen, 1983). This limitation of the study design should be kept in mind when interpreting outcome data where trends are in the predicted direction, yet fail to reach statistical significance. It is also worth noting that the somewhat larger sample size at the Des Moines site provides a more statistically powerful test of the Argus model than the Washington, DC site.

Next, Chi-square and t-tests were performed to examine the comparability of the Des Moines program participant and comparison groups with respect to a number of key pre-program variables. Prior to the program, the comparison group youth earned significantly more in hourly wages ($M = \$6.83/\text{hr}$) than the program youth ($M = \$5.35/\text{hr}$), $t(39) = -2.13$, $p < .05$ (see Table 11). No significant differences emerged for the following variables: employment status prior to the program (54.8% of program youth, 39.1% of comparison youth), number of hours worked prior to the program (program $M=35.62$ hrs/wk, comparison $M=33.34$ hrs/wk), how often drugs were used prior to the program (program $M=1.74$, comparison $M=1.93$ on a scale where 1 indicates never, 2 indicates sometimes, and 3 indicates frequently), arrests prior to the program (47.6% of program youth, 41.3% of comparison youth), and reliance on public assistance prior to the program (45.2% of program youth, 32.6% of comparison youth).

Finally, in order to assess the significance of changes in participants' drug use, criminal justice involvement, reliance on public assistance, and employment status, and weekly wages over time, several change variables were created by subtracting the value of past involvement from either the current value and/or the value at the time of the program. For instance, change in drug use from "before the program" to "after the program" was calculated by subtracting the participant's response for 1995 (before the program) from the response in 1997 (after the program). ANOVAs were then used to test for the significance of the program in accounting for change while continuing to control for age and education. . Since the calculation of the change scores also takes into account the pre-program scores for each outcome, any significant differences between the groups on these key variables were also controlled in effect.

Analysis of these change variables revealed many aspects of the positive impact of the program. For instance, the program had a significant impact on changes in drug use from before the program to after the program, $F(1, 87) = 6.69$, $p < .05$ (see Table 12). Likewise, there was a significant effect of the program on changes in drug use from before the program to during the program, ($F(1, 87) = 9.94$, $p < .01$ (see Table 13). For both time periods, these differences reflected a greater decline in reported drug use by the program group youth compared to the comparison group. Similarly, changes in arrests from before the program to after the program were significant with respect to program status, $F(1, 87) = 12.92$, $p < .001$ (see Table 14), as were changes from before the program to during the program, $F(1, 87) = 16.16$, $p < .001$ (see Table 15). In both of these cases, the program group showed a greater decline in arrests than did the comparison group. Lastly, there was a significant main effect for the program, indicating a significant change in reliance on public assistance from before the program to after the program, $F(1, 87) = 11.53$, $p < .001$ (see Table 16). Specifically, this difference reflects a greater decline in the reliance of program group youth on public assistance compared to comparison group youth. No significant differences emerged with respect to changes in employment status or weekly wages from before the program to either during the program or the year after the program.

Table 11. Comparability of the Des Moines Program and Comparison Samples for Cohorts 2 and 3 (N = 88).

Variable	Program Participants (n = 42)		Comparison Group (n = 46)		Total Sample			
Nominal Variables								
	n	%	n	%	n	%	Chi-Square	p-value
Employed Prior to Program	23	54.8	18	39.1	41	46.6	2.16	0.14
Public Assistance Reliance Prior to Program	19	45.2	15	32.6	34	38.6	1.48	0.22
Arrests Prior to Program	20	47.6	19	41.3	39	44.3	0.36	0.55
Continuous Variables								
	M	SD	M	SD	M	SD	t-test	p-value
Hourly Wage Prior to Program	5.35	0.74	6.83	3.24	6.00	2.31	-2.13	.04*
Number of Hours/Week Worked Prior to Program	35.62	5.56	33.34	13.17	34.62	9.60	0.75	0.46
Drug Use Prior to Program	1.74	0.86	1.93	0.68	1.41	1.94	-1.20	0.23

*p < .05.

Table 12. Results of Analysis of Variance, Des Moines Participants' Changes in Drug Use (year prior to year after the program).

Source	Df	SS	MS	F
Covariates	2	0.50	0.25	0.31
(Combined)	1	0.39	0.39	0.48
Age	1	0.21	0.21	0.26
Education				
Treatment	1	5.42	5.42	6.69*
Residual	84	68.08	0.81	
Total	87	77.27	0.89	

*p < .05.

Table 13. Results of Analysis of Variance, Des Moines Participants' Changes in Drug Use (year prior to program year).

Source	Df	SS	MS	F
Covariates	2	0.77	0.39	0.69
(Combined)	1	0.63	0.63	1.11
Age	1	0.31	0.31	0.55
Education				
Treatment	1	5.59	5.59	9.94**
Residual	84	47.26	0.56	
Total	87	56.99	0.66	

**p < .01.

Table 14. Results of Analysis of Variance, Des Moines Participants' Changes in Arrests (year prior to year after the program).

Source	Df	SS	MS	F
Covariates	2	2.69	1.34	3.11*
(Combined)	1	1.87	1.87	4.32*
Age	1	0.32	0.32	0.74
Education				
Treatment	1	5.58	5.58	12.92***
Residual	84	36.30	0.43	
Total	87	42.86	0.49	

*** $p \leq .001$. * $p \leq .05$.

Table 15. Results of Analysis of Variance, Des Moines Participants' Changes in Arrests (year prior to program year).

Source	Df	SS	MS	F
Covariates	2	1.69	0.84	2.56
(Combined)	1	0.91	0.91	2.76
Age	1	0.41	0.41	1.23
Education				
Treatment	1	5.33	5.33	16.16***
Residual	84	27.70	0.33	
Total	87	33.46	0.39	

*** $p < .001$.

Figures 11-15 illustrate these promising trends based on the youths' self-report. As illustrated in Figure 11, before the program a greater percentage of program youth reported using drugs (71.0%) than did comparison youth (32.4%). However, both during and after the program, the percentage of program youth reporting drug use (30.0% during, 20.0% after) dropped significantly below the percentage of comparison youth reporting drug use (32.3 during, 21.9% after). This finding likely reflects the Argus program component dealing with substance abuse.

In terms of criminal justice involvement, a similar percentage of program (47.6%) and comparison group youth (41.35) reported being arrested before the program (see Figure 12). During the program, the percentage of program group youth reporting arrests plummeted (2.4%) compared to the comparison youth (39.1%), perhaps reflecting the structure and safety provided by the program. After the program, this percentage rose again among program youth (14.3%), but continued to reflect a decline compared the pre-program level and was much lower than the percentage of comparison youth reporting arrests during this time period (50.0%).

Table 16. Results of Analysis of Variance, Des Moines Participants Changes in Public Assistance (year prior to year after the program).

Source	df	SS	MS	F
Covariates	2	1.58	0.79	3.20*
(Combined)	1	0.74	0.74	2.98
Age	1	1.19	1.19	4.84*
Education				
Treatment	1	2.85	2.85	11.53***
Residual	84	20.73	0.25	
Total	87	25.08	0.29	

*** $p < .001$. * $p < .05$.

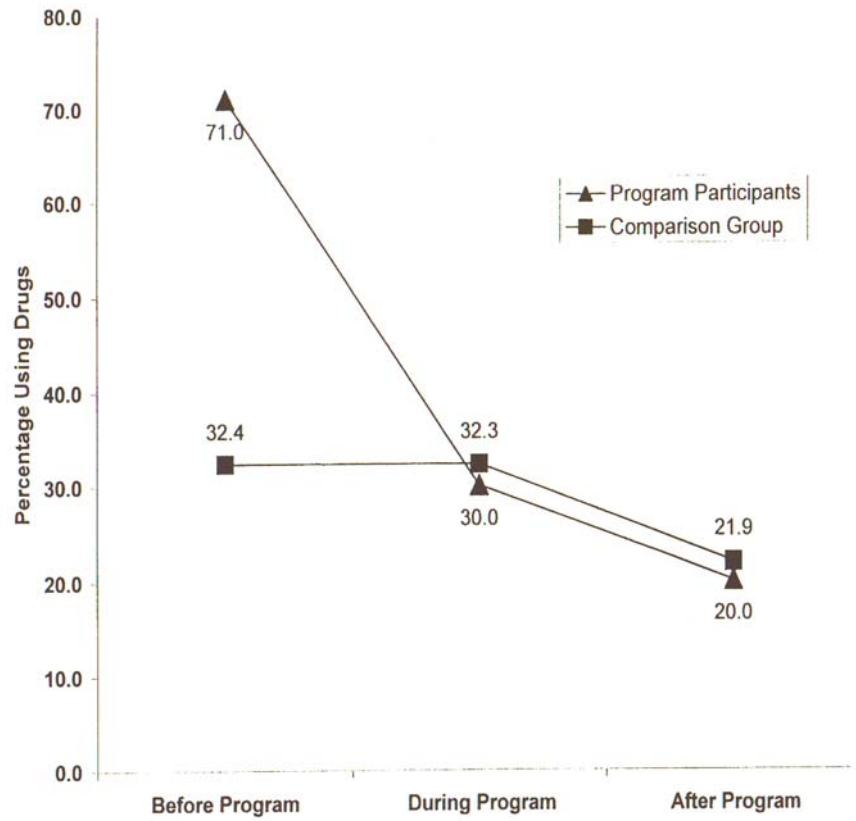
Figure 13 illustrates the significant decline in reliance on public assistance among program youth (45.2% before, 11.9% after) in contrast to comparison group youth for whom reliance on public assistance increased slightly (32.6% before, 34.8% after).

Figure 14 illustrates the nonsignificant findings regarding the percentage of program (54.8% before, 35.7% during, and 45.2% after) and comparison group youth (39.1% before, 32.6% during, and 39.1% after) reporting employment. For the program youth, the decline in employment during the program may reflect competing program demands such as educational attainment and/or schedule requirements.

Finally, Figure 15 illustrates the findings regarding the mean weekly pay of working program and comparison group youth. Before the program, the program youth were earning less (M=\$190.58) per week than their counterparts (M=\$252.81). During the program this pattern continued with the program youth reporting weekly incomes of \$204.52, while the comparison group reported earning slightly more (M=\$215.21). After the program, both groups reported higher weekly wages, although the program youth (M=\$224.52) continued to lag behind the comparison group youth (M= \$274.55).

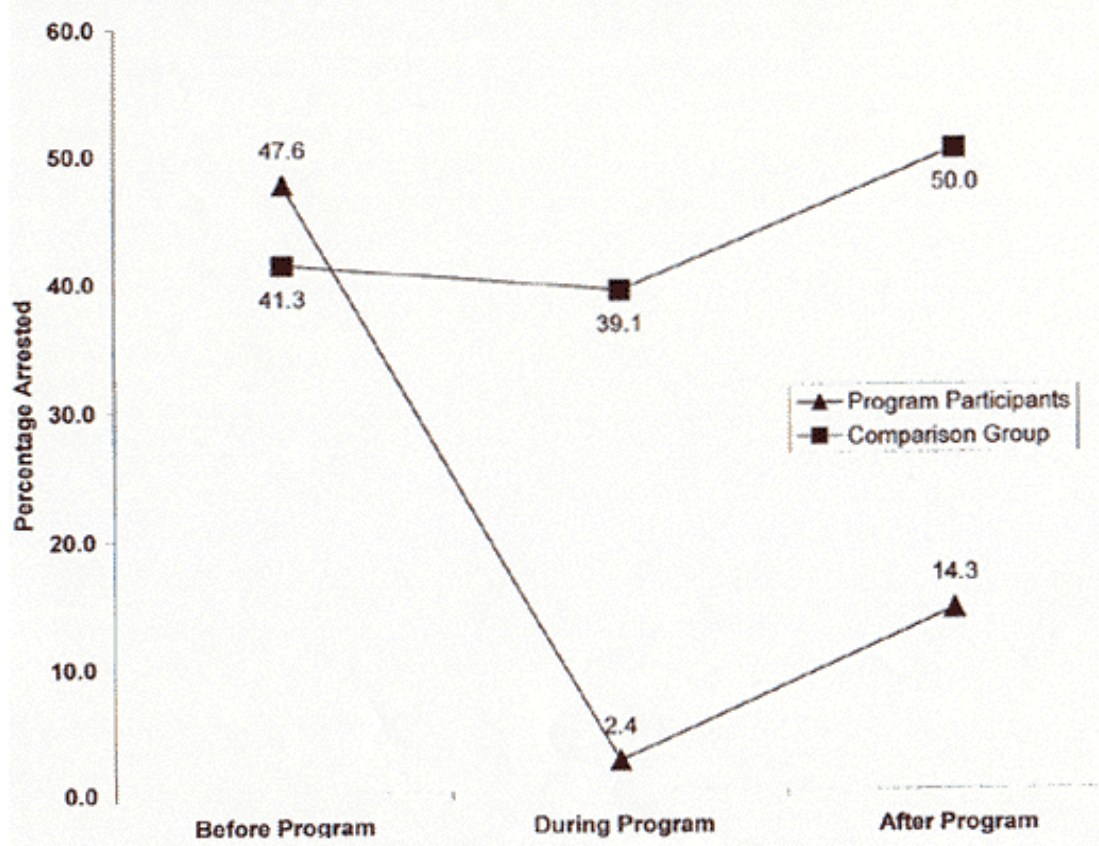
In summary, despite the fact that they were significantly younger and had less education than the comparison group youth, the program youth were less likely to use drugs, to get arrested, or to rely on public assistance over time. These findings strongly support the Argus program model upon which the second hypothesis is based.

Figure 11. Percentage Using Drugs by Program and Comparison Groups Over Three Time Periods (Des Moines)*



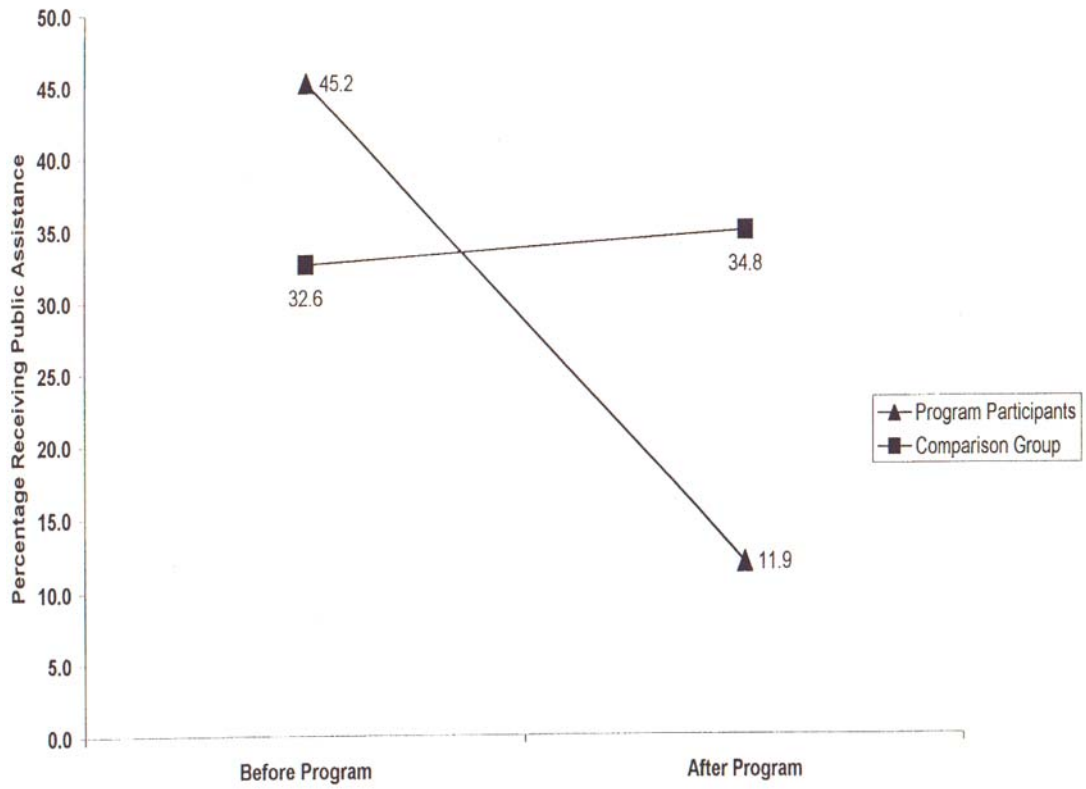
* Significant difference in change scores ($p \leq .001$), $n=30-31$ for program participants and $n=31-37$ for the comparison group.

Figure 12 Percentage Arrested by Program and Comparison Groups Over Three Time Periods (Des Moines)



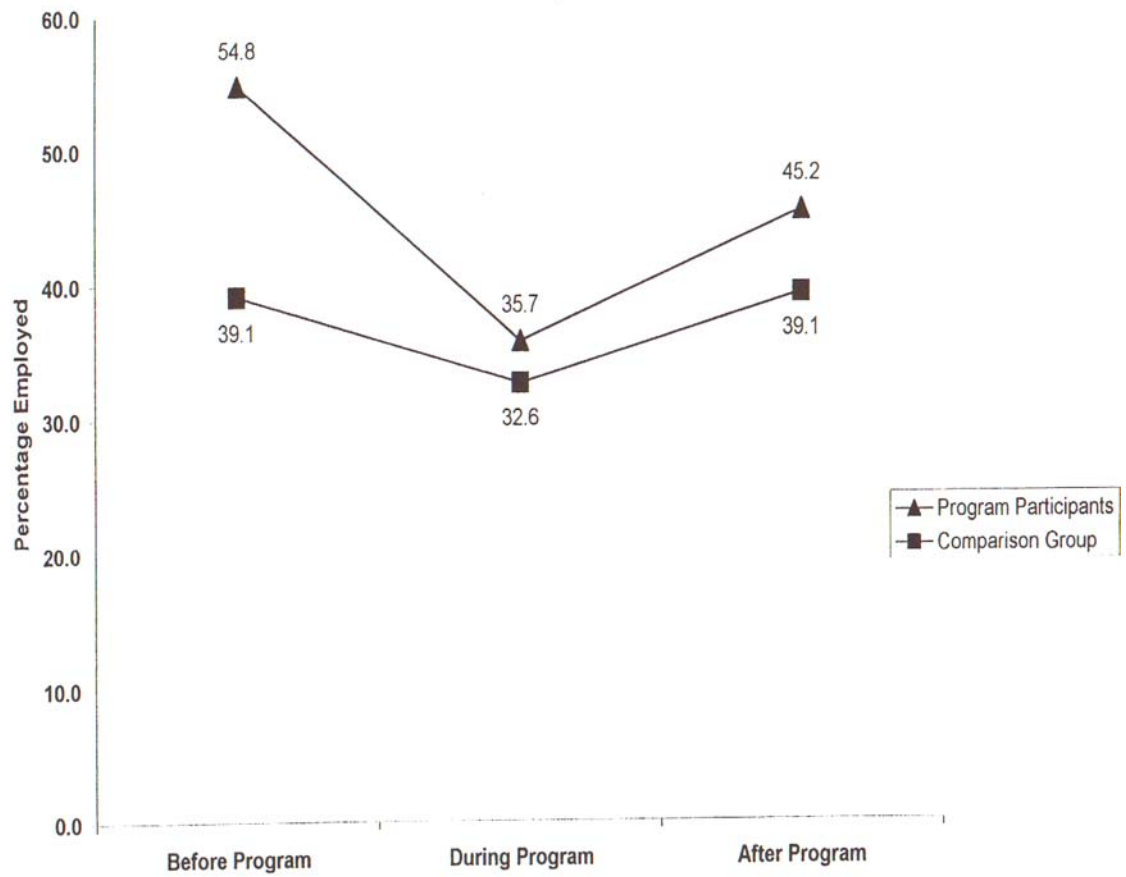
Significant difference in change scores ($p \leq .01$), $n=42$ for program participants and $n=46$ for the comparison group.

Figure 13. Percentage Receiving Public Assistance by Program and Comparison Groups Over Three Time Periods (Des Moines)*



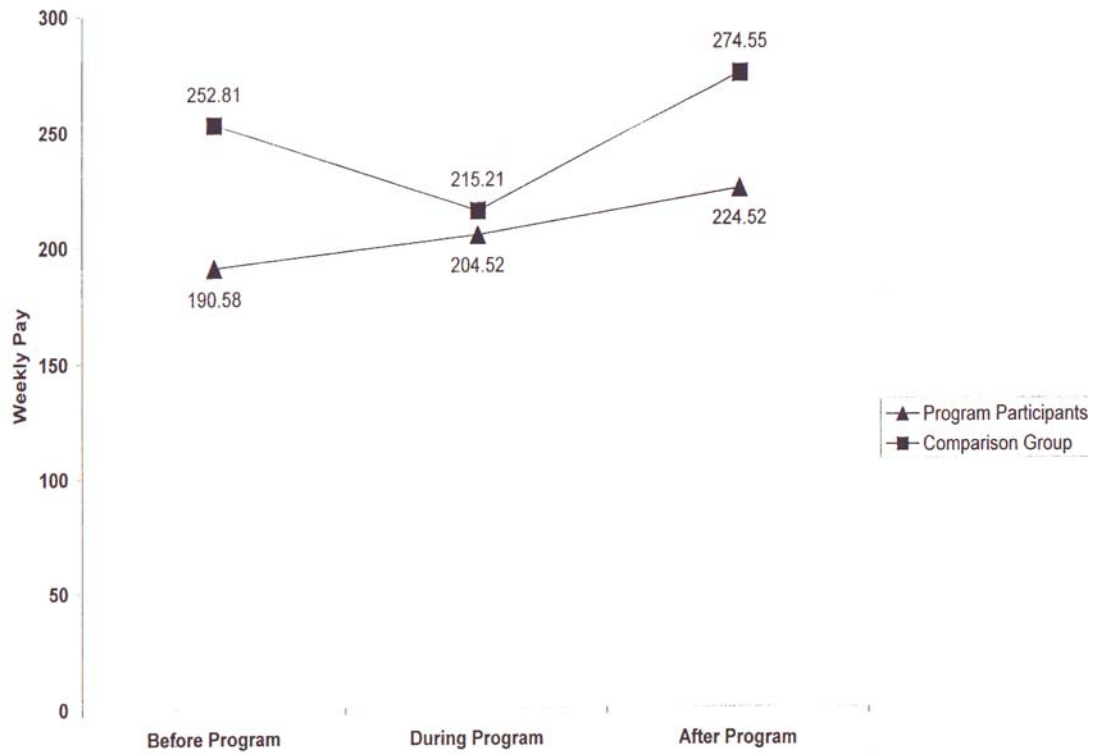
* Significant difference in change scores ($p \leq .01$), $n=42$ for program participants and $n= 46$ for the comparison group.

Figure 14. Percentage Employed by Program and Comparison Groups Over Three Time Periods (Des Moines)



N=42 for program participants and n= 46 for the comparison group.

Figure 15. Weekly Earnings by Program and Comparison Groups Over Three Time Periods (Des Moines)



N= 15-23 for program participants and n=15-18 for the comparison group.

V. DISCUSSION

This final report presented both a process and an outcome evaluation of a two site replication of a model job training placement and retention program for out-of-school inner city youth—the Argus Community Learning for Living Program. The process evaluation followed program implementation at both sites and concluded that replication is possible in other pilot locations (Hypothesis 1). The outcome evaluation design for this study followed participants for three program years and a matched comparison group of youth, who did not participate in the program. Analysis of variance tests were performed to look for significant differences. Within the confines of an inexpensive design that used comparison groups rather than a randomized control group design, the outcome evaluation found significant positive effects in terms of key outcomes like employment and wages for cohort 1 and prosocial behaviors (e.g., drug use, arrests, and reliance on public assistance) for cohorts 2 and 3. Additional positive differences were not statistically significant but generally support the hypothesis in their trends, especially given the low sample size. Based on these results, we conclude that Argus Learning for Living shows promise and should now be replicated in a randomized control group design with more sites and a larger sample size. Finally, implications for the widespread distribution of this report to users at the local and grassroots levels are discussed.

To the considerable extent that Argus has proven to be replicable, we attribute success to the model's no nonsense socialization in a drug and violence-free environment, education, remedial education, corporate etiquette training, job training for work that is not dead-ended but upwardly mobile, and follow up to ensure retention or transition to other jobs at enhanced levels of responsibility and remuneration.

The outcome evaluation found significant positive effects in terms of key outcomes such as employment and wages for cohort 1 and prosocial behaviors for cohorts 2 and 3. For cohort 1, employment levels and weekly earnings were found to be significantly higher for program participants than for the comparison youth in both Washington, D.C. and in Des Moines. For cohorts 2 and 3, drug use was found to decline significantly more among program participants than among the comparison group in Washington, D.C. and in Des Moines, and arrests and reliance on public assistance declined significantly for program participants in Des Moines compared to the comparison group. Arrests and reliance on public assistance were very low compared to the comparison group in Washington, D.C., however the sample size did not provide great enough power to determine a statistical difference in most cases where one exists.

These findings are nevertheless important because employment stability and advancement over time require a foundation of behaviors that contribute to the ability to obtain and hold a job and do well. The program in both cities was able to demonstrate improvement in key prosocial behavior—less drug use and almost

no criminal justice problems during the program. More importantly for future employment, these effects remained strong after the program as well. The significant decrease in public assistance found in Des Moines, and the low levels of public assistance of program participants relative to the comparison group in Washington, D.C. can be expected to be a precursor of increased employment.

The current evaluation and program design contain constraints that precluded reliable testing for significant increases in employment for the program participants:

1. In Washington, D.C. almost all participants (93%) were employed before entering the program, and stopped working to be in the program. When interviewed shortly after the program, many had yet to be in a new employment.
2. The program in both cities was both a short-term disruption to current employment, and a long-term investment through changed behaviors and increased skills to better employment. The current evaluation design did not go beyond the final year of the program and does not reflect the more long-term gain in employment status.
3. The sample size does not provide enough precision to detect a significant difference, even if it does exist. Power analysis revealed a better than 40-50% chance of not being able to find a significant employment difference for this sample for a difference of 25% between the groups. Only 10% of significant differences could be detected if the differences between treatment and comparison groups was 10%.

Future replications and evaluation need to take into account employment rates and types of employment before entry into a program, and the short-term as well as long-term effects of the program on employment rates. It can be expected that program participation means temporarily decreased rates of employment, but that prosocial effects, combined with the time to find and advance in employment will lead to measurable employment outcomes. The program may prove to be appropriate for aiding in the transition from public assistance to work.

Since replication has proven possible and successful, and some short-term outcomes are significantly positive at both sites, the next step is to test the model with more sites, a larger sample size, more control of pre-test employment rates compared to a control group, and collection of post-test data for at least two years beyond a participant's leaving the program.

Future evaluation should include repeated measures for the same cohort before, during, and for two years after the program. While sample size should be larger in future studies, following the same cohort at several points in time also increases the power of the test to find significant outcomes.

The connection between prosocial behaviors, decreased reliance on public assistance, and increased and better employment also needs to be more thoroughly tested. A cohort of program participants and a control group should be followed for an increased number of prosocial measures that have been linked to employment stability. A case study follow-up is also suggested for a small sample of program participants to examine the ways in which the program, along with changes in attitude and behavior, lead to various employment outcomes over time.

The Eisenhower Foundation has surveyed Private Industry Councils across the nation and met with many of them. There was considerable interest in Argus methods and in high tech placements. We also heard concern that more evaluations were needed to help guide local policy. Accordingly, even though we cannot disseminate randomized control group findings, the Eisenhower Foundation recommends widespread distribution of this report, in an attractive and summary format, by the Department of Labor to potential users at the local and grassroots levels, as part of the Eisenhower Foundation's Communicating What Works initiative.

VI. Conclusions

We believe that the Eisenhower Foundation has delivered more than the original SGA requested. The Eisenhower Foundation has matched funds from major foundations -- like the W. K. Kellogg Foundation, W. T. Grant Foundation and DeWitt Wallace-Reader's Digest Fund -- to make the extra work possible. The President of the Foundation has contributed, pro bono, hundreds of hours of work on the replications and evaluations. Substantial good media has been generated, as the Des Moines Register article in Appendix 7 illustrates. When Capital Commitment stated in Congressional hearings that DOL had not funded it, DOL asked the Foundation to write a letter to the Washington Post to make clear that the Foundation was subgranting DOL funds to Capital Commitment. The Foundation wrote the letter.

We conclude that Argus Learning for Living has passed conditions set forth by DOL in the original SGA and now should be replicated in a randomized control group design with more sites and a larger sample size. Especially given the shortage of high tech workers in the nation (see Appendix 9), we are impressed with the potential of placements in high tech jobs, as Capital Commitment has replicated.

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