Bringing Together Social Enterprise and Workforce Development System Agencies to Deliver Transitional Employment

Interim Report for the Evaluation of the Los Angeles Regional Initiative for Social Enterprise (LA:RISE)

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Table of Contents

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Executive Summary

In July 2014, the U.S. Department of Labor (US DOL) awarded the Los Angeles Economic and Workforce Development Department (EWDD) a second-round Workforce Innovation Fund (WIF) grant to create a transitional employment program called the Los Angeles Regional Initiative for Social Enterprise (LA:RISE). EWDD designed and created this program in partnership with the California-based non-profit REDF with the goal of helping three priority populations within the Los Angeles area: the formerly incarcerated, those at risk of homelessness, and youth (ages 18 to 24 years old), who are not involved in school or work (known as opportunity youth). By bringing together numerous partner organizations, creating mechanisms to coordinate service delivery across these partners, and providing standards for completion, the LA:RISE program is designed to help the hard-to-employ find and retain permanent employment.

As part of the grant, EWDD hired Social Policy Research Associates (SPR) to conduct an evaluation of the LA:RISE program that includes an implementation study, a random assignment impact study, and a cost effectiveness study. The interim report presents early implementation study findings and describes the results of program and study enrollment. It draws upon information gathered during site visits that the study team conducted in the latter half of 2016, baseline data collected on study participants, and additional information study team members learned about the program in working with program partners in overseeing and monitoring random assignment. The lessons shared in the report have implications for further programming decisions by EWDD and REDF, who continue to expand and improve the program (with later iterations),[1] additional implementation study research, the impact and cost effectiveness studies, and other organizations wishing to implement transitional employment programs. Key findings are summarized in this executive summary.

LA:RISE Implementation Successes

The study team observed three broad types of implementation successes in the early stages of implementation. The LA:RISE program: (1) brought together a wide array of program partners, (2) created and implemented a service delivery framework that governs the coordination and unification of program services across partners, and (3) designed and implemented a program that was responsive to policy changes and research findings.

Program Partners

The LA:RISE program has brought together the following partners and partner types, giving it the capacity to provide participants with a greater range of services than any one type of partner organization would be able to provide on its own:

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[1]   This evaluation is examining what is referred to as the LA:RISE 1.0 program. EWDD and REDF have subsequently launched and operated versions 2.0, 3.0, and 4.0 of the program.

- **Leadership** partners include EWDD and REDF. They manage the grant, oversee the program partners, and create ways for partners to coordinate and integrate their services through uniform program standards, standardized outcomes, a case management reporting system, and forums for partners to share and work together.

- **Social enterprise** (SE) partners enroll individuals into the LA:RISE program and provide the transitional employment experience, which includes paid work experience, work readiness training, supportive services, and placement support. The six SEs are Chrysalis, the Coalition for Responsible Community Development (CRCD), Downtown Women's Center, Goodwill Southern California, Homeboy Industries, and Los Angeles Conservation Corps.

- **Workforce development system** (WDS) partners are American Job Centers, known locally as WorkSource and YouthSource centers. They provide a variety of adult and youth services, including operating the adult and youth Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA) programs funded through US DOL. All LA:RISE participants are co-enrolled in WIOA and through these programs they receive case management, supportive services, additional training and education services, and placement services. The LA:RISE program's WDS partners include Goodwill WorkSource, CRCD WorkSource, UCLA YouthSource, and the Archdiocesan Youth Employment Services of Catholic Charities of Los Angeles (a YouthSource).

- **Personal support provider** (PSP) partners work with participants primarily at the point when they are placed into employment or longer-term education and training, with the goal of providing supportive services that help them stay engaged in their education or employment. The LA:RISE program's three PSP partners are Anti-Recidivism Coalition, Friends Outside, and LIFT.

- **Employer** partners hire participants into permanent employment positions. These partners include competitive employers—which participants find through SE or WDS partner networks—and "bridge" employers that work especially with the program's priority populations, coordinated through REDF's employer network. At the time of data collection for the interim report, there were nine bridge employers. This wide array of employment opportunities leverages the resources of the different partners and increases the likelihood that each participant can find an employer that is well suited to his or her interests and skills.

Service Delivery

Through its unique service delivery approach, the LA:RISE program has the capacity to serve participants over a considerable period of time, from the start of the program with transitional employment services until well into permanent employment. The study team found that leadership partners developed—and other program partners implemented—the LA:RISE program's service delivery framework successfully, as follows:

- **Leadership partners have created multiple mechanisms to facilitate partner coordination.** Leadership partners continue to facilitate this coordination through staff member co-location, quarterly meetings, monthly calls, program guidance, and online tools that help partners communicate participant services to one another. Staff members report that these mechanisms have helped them learn how to coordinate services across their respective organizations, even if implementing this new way of working took more time than initially planned.

- **The service delivery framework governs the timing of and responsibility for the program's key services.** Following enrollment, participants begin receiving services from SE partners who then take the lead on delivering transitional employment and work readiness services. Participants are then co-enrolled into WIOA-funded programs at WDS partners and, as they progress, are connected with PSPs. Throughout this process, SEs coordinate with WDS and PSP partners around the delivery of other services including education and occupational skills training, case management, supportive services, and placement services.

- **The LA:RISE program unifies service delivery across partner organizations by establishing minimum standards for advancement.** One challenge in working with so many partners was standardizing the program experience, and doing so in a way that delivers sufficient, high quality programming that helps participants find and retain employment. The LA:RISE program's service delivery framework establishes that participants must work a minimum of 300 hours in transitional employment and pass a job readiness assessment twice prior to employment placement through the program.

Program Adaptability

Partners designed and implemented the LA:RISE program to be flexible and responsive in two key ways.

- **The LA:RISE program responds to a changing policy agenda.** WIOA emphasizes that workforce system agencies should engage in two practices that are highlighted in the LA:RISE program: serving the hard-to-employ (including the program's priority populations) and doing so through transitional employment programs. Furthermore, the program's priority populations align with local political priorities—in particular, the emphasis in Los Angeles on addressing the homelessness crisis—that have emerged more definitively since the program began.

- **The LA:RISE program responds to many of the limitations of transitional employment programs that have been observed in prior research.** Program leadership partners have created mechanisms to support and grow timely, well-coordinated service delivery across partners. They have unified program services across multiple partners; implemented mechanisms to increase retention through stronger preparation of participants and retention incentives; and overcome concerns about capacity to recruit and enroll participants.

Recruitment and Enrollment

The focal point of the overall evaluation is the random assignment (RA) impact study, which is designed to isolate the impact the program has on individuals as compared to what would have happened to them if they had not enrolled. To do this, over the course of 20 months, starting in September 2015 and ending in April 2017, each of the six SEs assigned, at random, all eligible and consenting individuals to either the program or the control group. Program group members could access the full array of LA:RISE program services while control group members became ineligible for LA:RISE program services for up to two years. Partners experienced the following successes related to enrolling participants into the program and the evaluation:

- **Through the SE's recruitment and enrollment efforts, the LA:RISE program met its program enrollment goal.** SE partners largely relied on existing approaches for recruiting participants, which led to initial challenges for some that were not easily able to achieve their enrollment targets. The recruitment period had to be extended by two months and individual SE enrollment targets had to be adjusted. Those adjustments, however, allowed the LA:RISE program to enroll 508 individuals which exceeded the goal of 500 individuals.

- **The SE partners successfully implemented RA.** As part of the enrollment process, SEs randomly assigned 964 study participants: 481 were placed into the program group members and 483 were placed into the control group. The study sample is slightly below the goal of 1,000 individuals, largely because veterans were exempt from RA and were placed directly into the LA:RISE program without being randomly assigned.

- **The LA:RISE program successfully enrolled members of the three priority populations**: the formerly incarcerated, individuals at risk of homelessness, and opportunity youth. At the point of enrollment, about half the program group participants had a history of involvement in the criminal justice system, approximately one-quarter indicated they were either homeless or in transitional housing, and more than half were 18 to 24 years old with various barriers to employment.

Implementation Challenges

Given the LA:RISE program's many early implementation successes, it is well-positioned to develop and grow. During this early period, however, partners encountered three broad types of implementation challenges that have implications for how they manage and operate the LA:RISE program going forward: initial challenges, ongoing challenges, and challenges around placement services.

Initial Implementation Challenges

The process of implementing the service delivery framework and getting partners to work together often took longer than anticipated, thus slowing the initial implementation of the program, for the following reasons:

- **SE partners had to recruit and enroll participants differently than in the past**. SE partners had to over-recruit participants due to the impact study, which proved more challenging than they anticipated. SE partners also had to consider how to recruit participants who needed to meet somewhat different eligibility criteria than they had previously (e.g., WIOA eligibility criteria) and how to work with WDS partners around those requirements.

- **Partners had to learn to coordinate service delivery.** The concept of working together according to the program's service delivery framework required new approaches and communication mechanisms to ensure that participants were provided with services from each type of partner at the right point in the program timeline. However, incorporating these new practices required dedication to the program, time to adapt and learn, and the ability to overcome organizational differences in service delivery approaches and organizational cultures.

- **Implementation of the program's management information system (MIS) took longer than planned.** The MIS is an important tool in helping partners share participant information and coordinate services. It also helps leadership partners track (and share) participant outcomes. However, the MIS was not fully operational until after partners started serving participants. Once it was in place, partners had to learn to use it quickly.

Ongoing Implementation Challenges

The LA:RISE program faced challenges well after the program began that required leadership partners to adapt program elements and make program changes. In particular:

- **Enrolling sufficient numbers of participants required modifying SE enrollment goals.** Four of the six SE partners fell short of their individual enrollment goals according to the original timeline. The LA:RISE program was able to make its overall goal by shifting enrollment numbers between SE partners and extending the enrollment period by two months. Nevertheless, these challenges provide a lesson for program planners as to what it takes to engage in recruitment for a new program, especially one involving an RA impact study.

- **Finding the most effective SE and WDS partner pairings was initially challenging and took some attention to creating effective working relationships.** SEs were paired with specific WorkSource and YouthSource partners, but a few of these partnerships ended earlier than anticipated or started partway through the program. These changes required partners to develop new referral procedures and adjust enrollment numbers and also demanded considerable attention from leadership partners. These types of mid-program changes are not unexpected in a pilot program, but they illustrate the need for sufficient planning time and ongoing technical assistance.

- **Staff turnover presented ongoing challenges**. Several staff members left their organizations or changed positions and no longer worked with LA:RISE. With few staff members at any one partner, turnover could substantially limit the ability of partners to

coordinate service delivery. These changes hindered the leadership team's ability to rapidly build and grow a uniform program and required all partners to develop more redundancy in staffing and better systems for retraining staff, including the leadership team's development of a shared, online directory of training (and other) materials.

Continued Development Around Placement Services

Many LA:RISE employment-related services were well established and already integrated into partner operations at the time of the implementation site visits. However, several aspects of placement services, especially those involving the coordination of services, were still evolving:

- **Many program partners were still learning to work with bridge employers.** Program leadership overcame many initial challenges in defining and integrating bridge employers. They ultimately settled on a group of small employers that were friendly to the LA:RISE program's priority populations and would work through REDF to provide placement opportunities. SE and WDS partners were still learning to integrate them into established referral procedures, and the opportunities these employers offered were sometimes too few, too infrequent, or permanent rather than part time.

- **At the time of the site visits, partners had placed few individuals in employment.** Only a small number of individuals had progressed to the point of needing placement services, and partners were still learning about the best ways to do so. They were also still discovering the best ways to follow up with participants and track retention in employment, including how to deal with incentives for retention (delivered through PSP partners) and how to communicate and coordinate job placement progress across partners. While employment placement numbers have increased since the site visits, the LA:RISE program will need to continue to develop these services.

- **Partners were still refining other aspects of placement.** While partners were working to refer participants to both competitive and bridge employers, the program was working to refine or adapt other aspects of placement. These include: connecting with new employers; helping improve cross-partner communication around employment availability; further defining which partners should be making referrals to employers and which should engage in follow-up services; determining what additional funding streams are available to support employment (such as on-the-job training funds through WIOA); and determining whether other types of opportunities such as vocational training might count as suitable placement. The study team will continue to learn about how these program elements grow and change in future rounds of data collection.

Additional Areas to Consider for the Final Report

The interim report findings suggest four areas of examination for the final report:

- **Program outcomes.** The impact study will look at administrative data to determine the LA:RISE program's impact on various participant outcomes. However, the extent to which participants achieve interim outcomes may suggest the extent to which the

program was implemented as planned and the extent to which one might expect to see impacts. The final report will examine program MIS data as well as other administrative data to determine the extent to which the program has achieved these particular goals. The extent to which they have not been met could be one explanatory factor in interpreting program impacts (or lack thereof).

- **Service contrast issues between program and control group members.** Due to the ways in which the SEs recruited and enrolled individuals into the evaluation, control group members at two SEs were able to receive transitional employment services as delivered to program group members. Also, at three SEs, all study participants received services prior to enrollment that were somewhat similar to LA:RISE program services. Both situations provide the possibility of creating subgroups that could be used to study the impacts of different levels of program services. However, due to the study sample size, these subgroups will likely be too small to allow for the detection of all but very large program impacts. The final report will address more fully how and to what extent these subgroups are ultimately explored and the implications of any service differential between program and control group members.

- **Evaluation of a new program**. The LA:RISE program is a startup effort that seeks to develop an entirely new way of having partners deliver program services. While the program has accomplished much, it is still growing and developing. Two features of the program have important implications for the impact and cost studies: (1) testing the impact of a program before it is fully developed could limit the likelihood of observing program impacts, and (2) costs to develop a new program such as this one will be high, and thus the marginal costs of any positive impacts will also be high. The final report will explore the extent to which the program was implemented as planned and the overall startup costs for the program.

- **Future growth and sustainability.** The final report will consider the sustainability and scalability of the LA:RISE program, including how to fund and plan for such efforts. In fact, the program has continued to develop and grow, resulting in subsequent generations (known locally as LA:RISE 2.0, 3.0, and 4.0) and rounds of intake and enrollment supported through funding other than WIF. The final report will more closely examine how this growth occurred, what changes have occurred in program implementation, and what successes and challenges the partners encountered in the process.

Conclusions and Next Steps

Through this US DOL-funded WIF grant, EWDD and REDF have built a new and innovative transitional employment program. The LA:RISE program, thus far, has brought together a new set of partners and set up ways to help these partners coordinate service delivery, unify their program services, create a responsive and innovative program, and enroll the number and type of priority population participants the program sought to engage. As such, the LA:RISE program has great potential to help participants find obtain and retain employment as well as become

more productive members of society. For the remainder of the evaluation, the study team will continue to gather: (1) information about program implementation, to learn about how the program develops and grows; (2) administrative data, to determine the extent to which the program meets its own outcome goals, as an indicator of program dosage, and to determine the impact the program has on participant outcomes; and (3) program costs, to describe the expense of operating this pilot program and conduct a cost-effectiveness analysis. The results of these lines of inquiry will be reported in the evaluation's final report in 2019.

I. Introduction

Unemployment rates in the City of Los Angeles and Los Angeles County have reached historic low levels (State of California Employment Development Department, 2017).[1] Nevertheless, the ability to find and retain work remains persistently out of reach for many people due to their limited job skills and education as well as other barriers that include housing instability and involvement in the criminal justice system. To help these individuals, in 2015, the Los Angeles Economic and Workforce Development Department (EWDD) partnered with the California-based non-profit REDF to create a transitional employment program utilizing a $6 million Workforce Innovation Fund (WIF) grant from the U.S. Department of Labor (US DOL).[2] As part of the WIF grant, EWDD hired Social Policy Research Associates (SPR) to evaluate the Los Angeles Regional Initiative for Social Enterprise (LA:RISE) program. The evaluation consists of an implementation study, a random assignment impact study, and a cost effectiveness study. This interim report presents early findings from the implementation study and describes the enrollment process for the impact study. The lessons shared in this report have implications for further programming decisions by EWDD and REDF, who continue to expand and grown the program, the impact and cost effectiveness studies, and other organizations wishing to implement transitional employment programs.

LA:RISE Priority Populations

While transitional employment programs can serve different types of high barrier populations, EWDD and REDF designed the LA:RISE program to serve individuals who were formerly incarcerated, individuals who are experiencing homelessness or at risk of it, and youth ages 18 to 24 who are not in school or working. The choice to narrow the program to these three priority populations was rooted in an understanding of the immense challenges they face, both nationally and in the greater Los Angeles area.

Formerly Incarcerated Individuals

An estimated quarter of a million people in the United States are released from prison every year (Raphael, 2014), and the number of individuals with former or current involvement in the justice system in the Los Angeles area is also considerable. As of 2014, Los Angeles County had the highest adult probation rate in the state, with 55,265 individuals on probation (Grattet & Martin, 2015),[3] and these numbers have been growing. Between October 2011, when California

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[1]   The rate of unemployment in the City of Los Angeles and Los Angeles County has been going down steadily since 2012. In 2015, when the LA:RISE program began, the rate of unemployment was 6.6 percent in Los Angeles County and 7.0 percent in the City of Los Angeles. As of November 2017, the rate of unemployment was 4.1 percent in Los Angeles County and 4.4 percent in the City of Los Angeles.

[2]   This grant was part of the second round of WIF grants. There were three rounds of WIF grants, in total.

[3]   The state probation population in 2014 was 285,681 (Grattet & Martin, 2015).

passed the Public Safety Realignment Initiative (AB 109)[4] and January 2014, more than 18,000 former state prisoners were placed under Los Angeles County supervision (Sewell, 2014).

The challenges facing the formerly incarcerated are many, but chief among them are high rates of recidivism and low rates of employment. The California Department of Corrections and Rehabilitation has noted that while trending downward somewhat in recent years, about two-thirds of the state's parolees returned to prison within three years of release (California Department of Corrections and Rehabilitation, 2014), which results in significant additional public costs (Vera Institute of Justice, 2012). Youth recidivism rates are also high, with 33 percent of youth released from Los Angeles County jail having a new arrest within one year following release (Herz et al., 2015). In terms of employment, research has found that a criminal record reduces one's chance of receiving a callback or job offer by 50 percent (National Employment Law Project, 2017). To make matters worse, applicants of color with a criminal background are even less likely to receive callbacks as compared to white applicants with a similar criminal record (Pager, 2003).[5]

Formerly incarcerated individuals often face multiple other challenges that can further reduce their chances of finding and maintaining employment, increase the likelihood of recidivism, or both. For example, studies have highlighted low levels of educational attainment among incarcerated and formerly incarcerated people, with 70 percent reporting that they dropped out of high school (Holzer et al., 2003). Rates of mental illness and substance abuse are also high. Research has found that 80 percent of individuals in state prison populations have a history of substance abuse, and as many as half of state prisoners have mental health issues (James et al., 2006; Torrey et al., 2010; Travis et al., 2001). Finally, the rate of homelessness among the formerly incarcerated is much higher than the corresponding rates among the general population (Metraux et al., 2008); between 25 and 50 percent of homeless individuals report a history of incarceration (United States Interagency Council on Homelessness, 2016), and approximately 15 percent of individuals in all U.S. jail populations report a history of homelessness within the year before incarceration (Metreaux & Culhane, 2006).

Individuals at Risk of Homelessness

California, and especially Los Angeles, faces a high and growing rate of homelessness. California has 12 percent of the country's general population, but 22 percent of the nation's homeless population (Henry et al., 2016; U.S. Census, 2017). In the City of Los Angeles, the 2015 point-in-time homeless count revealed a total of 25,686 homeless individuals (Los Angeles Homeless Services Authority [LAHSA], 2015) with that count increasing by about 11 percent in the 2016 census—a total rate that outpaced the city's own rate of growth (LAHSA, 2016). Some suggestions for why there is such a rapid growth in homelessness include the high cost of

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[4] AB 109 transferred the responsibility of many types of state prisoners and state parolees to county jails and probation officers.

[5] Pager (2003) found that 17 percent of white applicants with a criminal record received job callbacks, compared to five percent of black applicants with a criminal record. As Chapter III describes, rates of justice system involvement for LA:RISE participants are high, and most participants are people of color.

housing (LAHSA, 2017) and insufficient earned income and unemployment (National Alliance to End Homelessness [NAEH], 2017).

Like formerly incarcerated individuals, individuals who experience homelessness or are at risk of homelessness also face significant barriers to employment. Most directly, food and shelter insecurity are often not conducive to a regular work schedule (Snow et al., 1996), and the absence of a mailing address may make it difficult to obtain the identification needed to work legally or to provide a location to employers on applications (National Law Center on Homelessness & Poverty, 2004). People experiencing homelessness are also often stigmatized by potential employers (NAEH, 2013; Rio et al., 2008); employers often carry negative perceptions of homeless job applicants, including motivation and reliability, physical appearance, and overall inability to integrate into the workplace (NAEH, 2013). Finally, homeless and marginally housed individuals struggle with multiple additive challenges: their rates of mental illness, physical disability, and substance abuse are much higher than rates in the general population (NAEH, 2017; National Coalition for the Homeless 2017a, 2017b). Among the Los Angeles homeless population, LAHSA (2015) found that 31 percent are chronically homeless, 32 percent reported having a mental illness, 24 percent reported dealing with substance abuse, and 19 percent reported having a physical disability.

Opportunity Youth

Opportunity youth—young people ages 16 to 24 not involved in work or school—and, in particular, those without a diploma or credential are a sizeable population both in the United States and in the Los Angeles area. The National Center for Education Statistics estimated that, as of 2013, approximately 2.6 million people in the United States between the ages of 16 and 24—6.8 percent of the people in that age group—were not in high school and had not obtained a diploma or alternative credential (U.S. Department of Commerce, Census Bureau, 2015). Within the Los Angeles Unified School District, 17.4 percent of youth were in the same category during the 2013–2014 school year (California Longitudinal Pupil Achievement Data System, 2015). In Los Angeles, black and Latino youth are more likely to be disconnected from work or school (21 percent) than white youth (18 percent; Harrington et al., 2009), which mirrors the national trend where youth of color disproportionately make up the disconnected youth population (Ross & Svajlenka, 2016).

As with individuals who are formerly incarcerated or at risk of homelessness, these youth face significant challenges. Opportunity youth are more likely to rely on public assistance (Harlow, 2003), and dropping out of high school has been identified as a risk factor for both homelessness (Caton et al., 2000) and incarceration (Center for Labor Market Studies, 2009). By definition, these youth are struggling to find and retain both short- and long-term employment, but for youth without a diploma who obtain employment, annual—and, subsequently, lifetime—earnings are significantly lower compared to individuals with a high school diploma (Chapman et al., 2011; Doland, 2001; Kena et al., 2014). Therefore, they need all the additional education and training they can get to be competitive.

Responding to Changing Context

EWDD and REDF designed the LA:RISE program to respond to (1) a changing policy landscape that places increasing importance on serving the priority populations just described, especially through innovative means such as transitional employment programs, and (2) limitations noted in the literature on previously studied transitional employment programs.

A Changing Policy Landscape

The selection of the LA:RISE program's three priority populations and its transitional employment approach is rooted in and consistent with several recent policy changes. At a national level, the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA) was signed into law in July 2014, superseding the previous workforce legislation, the Workforce Investment Act of 1998 (WIA). Under WIOA, the public workforce system adopted a new approach to serving populations with extensive barriers to employment by prioritizing low-income and vulnerable adult populations for services; expanding the definition of who fits into these two categories to include the formerly incarcerated and individuals experiencing or at risk of homelessness;[6] and mandating that local areas spend 75 percent of youth formula funds on out-of-school youth.[7] Furthermore, WIOA allows up to 10 percent of adult and dislocated worker funds to be used towards transitional employment.[8]

Growing attention is also being paid at the national level to transitional employment programs, especially those operated by social enterprise (SE) organizations.[9] REDF, for instance, is leading a national expansion of its portfolio of SEs as funded under a Social Innovation Fund grant after having worked for years with transitional employment programs in California, many of which have been providing transitional employment to the populations described above (and some of which have become LA:RISE partners). Given that they have expertise in providing the services and in working with the target populations, these SEs are natural partners to the public workforce development system in providing transitional employment services.

In and around Los Angeles, in addition to implementing WIOA, EWDD has been working to increase outreach to high barrier populations. For example, EWDD used its first-round WIF grant to create a program to serve dropout youth that was built out of a long history of similar programming (Geckeler et al., 2017). The City of Los Angeles has also begun implementing major shifts in services for its other barriered populations. In 2015, both the city and Los Angeles County prioritized the pervasive challenge of homelessness. In line with other local strategies to combat homelessness, county voters passed Measure H in November 2016. The measure increased the county sales tax to devote funds to homeless services including affordable housing and rental subsidies, emergency shelter, primary health care, mental health

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[6] Definitions for WIOA participants are described in Section 3 of WIOA (U.S. Congress, 2014).

[7] See section 129 for further details on spending requirements for out-of-school youth (U.S. Congress, 2014).

[8] See section 134 for further details on the use of funds for transitional jobs (U.S. Congress, 2014).

[9] See Chapter II for a more expanded definition of Social Enterprise organizations.

care, substance abuse treatment, job training, education, transportation, and other supportive services.[10] The City of Los Angeles also adopted a 2016 Comprehensive Homelessness Strategy, and voters passed Proposition HHH, which devotes funds to permanent supportive housing for individuals experiencing chronic homelessness. Additional economic and workforce-based shifts began with the passage in 2015 (and enactment in 2016) of the Minimum Wage Ordinance, which initiated the process of raising the county and city minimum wage rates to reach $15 per hour by 2020, and signaling that Los Angeles residents felt those at the bottom of the economic scale need more resources to make ends meet in the greater Los Angeles area.[11] While many of these changes were only implemented after the start of LA:RISE, they speak to the changing environment that influenced the creation of the program and its subsequent iterations (that are in various stages of planning and implementation).

Responding to Prior Research

Another important consideration in designing a transitional employment program are findings from earlier research, which are moderately extensive given that transitional employment programs have a history dating back decades (Bloom, 2010) with evaluations of these programs dating back nearly as far (Dutta-Gupta et al., 2016). On the one hand, these evaluations tend to show that transitional employment programs represent a promising practice for serving hard-to-employ individuals (Bloom, 2017). Many studies have shown positive impacts on employment, education and training, and indicators of social well-being across different populations (e.g., youth, ex-offenders, etc.), and many of these same programs have also been shown to be cost effective (Dutta-Gupta et al., 2016). On the other hand, several of these studies suggest that impacts, if they exist, may only be short term and will not last past the end of the transitional employment period (Jacobs, 2012; Redcross et al., 2010; Redcross et al., 2012; Rotz et al., 2015.). Additional modifications to programs to account for these findings as well as further research, especially experimental research, is needed to assess various transitional employment models and especially long-term program impacts.

With the LA:RISE program, EWDD and REDF hope to produce positive, lasting impacts on employment and other participant outcomes such as recidivism. To do so, successful implementation is important, but so is a model that takes into consideration ways to build upon what has been learned from prior programs. Research suggests several limitations in earlier programs that the LA:RISE program needs to improve upon. In particular:

- **Timely and coordinated service delivery.** Programs working with highly barriered populations have often needed to rely on partner organizations to provide critical supportive services (Rotz et al., 2015). Due to logistical delays or complications common

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[10] In fact, EWDD has been able to utilize Measure H funding to help grow the LA:RISE program creating a 2.0, 3.0, and 4.0 versions of the program with expanded services and a different enrollment cycle than the 1.0 version of the program examined in this report.

[11] The passage of this ordinance created some initial concerns for LA:RISE partners since a higher wage may not have been manageable under the contracts they held which they used to pay participants, but partners either adapted over time or were granted exemptions to the ordinance.

in interagency coordination, participants may not always receive services in a timely fashion or, in some cases, receive services that adequately meet their needs.

- **Successful recruitment and enrollment.** Many prior transitional employment programs have faced difficulty meeting their target recruitment numbers (Kushner, 2012; Redcross et al., 2010). Program staff have implemented different recruitment methods along the way, including establishing referral systems with outside agencies. Programs have found that the limited amount of time allotted for outreach and recruitment can be challenging, and reduced enrollment has limited the ability to test program impacts.

- **Transitional job placement.** Matching program participants with subsidized employment positions that fit their needs and skill levels poses its own set of challenges. For programs that implement transitional jobs with mainstream employers, problems have ranged from host employers being unfamiliar with challenges facing participants to participant altercations (EnSearch, Inc., 2004; Redcross et al., 2010). For programs that provide transitional jobs through SEs, challenges have arisen with matching participants who have limited education and skills to supervisors who can appropriately address their unique training needs (Rotz et al., 2015).

- **Variation in services provided to participants across providers.** In a handful of evaluations, employment and supportive services varied greatly across participants and/or sites within a single program (Kushner, 2012; Rotz et al., 2015). In one evaluation, participants at different SEs worked completely dissimilar total hours in their transitional jobs (32 versus 640 hours total) and received variations in supportive services, including case management and housing assistance (Rotz et al., 2015).

- **Retention.** Across programs serving the three target populations, one of the more common issues was retaining participants for the duration of the transitional employment programs (Redcross et al., 2012; Rotz et al., 2015). Although these programs did not cite definitive reasons for participants leaving early, they did note possible reasons including lack of interest, personal challenges such as physical and mental health issues, and gaining outside employment.

The section below and subsequent report chapters discuss how and to what extent the LA:RISE program has been able to address each of these issues at this point in its implementation.

The LA:RISE Program Model

The LA:RISE program originated with leaders at both EWDD and REDF recognizing the need for increased coordination between non-profit SEs and workforce development system providers as a means of delivering better services to job seekers with high barriers to employment. Prior to LA:RISE, EWDD had worked with SEs in only a limited capacity and many of the SEs in REDF's portfolio had little interaction with the public workforce development system. By bringing together partner organizations of many sorts, creating mechanisms to better coordinate service delivery with one another, and providing standards for completion, the LA:RISE program

Exhibit I-1: LA:RISE Program Model

CURRENT SITUATION

Priority Populations
- High numbers of formerly incarcerated, individuals at risk of homelessness, and opportunity youth in Los Angeles
- Many barriers to employment

Changing Policy Landscape
- WIOA places increased emphasis on serving priority populations and transitional employment
- Workforce system interest in but limited capacity to run transitional employment programs
- Private social enterprises (SEs) offer transitional employment, separate from the public workforce system

Need for Additional Research
- Transitional employment seen as promising but often without long-term impacts
- Additional experimental research needed
- Findings from past research suggest ways to improve transitional employment programs and research

INPUTS/PARTNERS

Leadership
- Los Angeles Economic and Workforce Development Department
- REDF

Social Enterprise (SE)
- Chrysalis
- Coalition for Responsible Community Development
- Downtown Women's Center
- Goodwill Southern California
- Homeboy Industries
- Los Angeles Conservation Corps

Workforce Development System (WDS)
- CRCD WorkSource
- Goodwill Southern California WorkSource
- Archdiocesan Youth Employment (AYE) YouthSource
- UCLA YouthSource

Personal Support Providers (PSP)
- Anti-Recidivism Coalition
- Friends Outside
- LIFT Los Angeles

Employers
- Bridge employers
- Competitive employers

ACTIVITIES/SERVICES

System-Level Services
- Standards: pass job readiness assessment (JRA) twice/complete 300 hours transitional employment
- Training and coordination : LA:RISE academy meetings and partner coordination meetings
- Shared data access: record keeping through customized MIS (JobsLA)

Training and Assessment
- On-the-job training through transitional employment
- Work readiness and soft skills training (JRA)
- Additional education and job training opportunities through WIOA at WDS partners

Personal Supports
- Case management delivered by SE, WDS, and PSP partners
- Supportive services through SE, WDS, and PSP case management

Employment
- Paid work experience through transitional employment at SEs
- Permanent employment placement services

OUTPUTS & OUTCOMES

System-Level Outputs
- Partners implement program model
- WDS partners given physical space at SEs to work with participants
- SE and WDS partners coordinate service delivery
- Partners utilize JobsLA to coordinate services and track outcomes
- Partners engage in training activities

Participant-Level Outputs
- 500 participants co-enrolled in transitional employment and WIOA
- 500 participants offered case management and supportive services through partners
- 250 participants meet JRA standards
- 250 participants complete 300 hours of transitional employment
- 250 participants placed in post-transitional employment

Participant Outcomes
- Improved employment rate
- Improved employment retention rate
- Higher wages
- Reduced recidivism rates
- Reduced utilization of public benefits/greater stability

is designed to provide an enhanced version of past transitional employment programs with the goal of helping participants find and retain permanent employment. Exhibit I-1 illustrates the LA:RISE program model and its many components, starting with the current policy situation described above. The other components of the LA:RISE program model are briefly introduced below and described in greater detail in subsequent chapters.

Program Partners

To deliver a wide range of well-coordinated services, EWDD and REDF designed the LA:RISE program to include numerous partner organizations. Each provides a different set of services and works with participants at different points in time, and all work together to ensure that service delivery is a coordinated effort. The program model is designed to provide a more comprehensive and extensive set of services than any one organization might be able to provide on its own, building in long-term support for participants that is hopefully sufficient to get them placed in employment and to keep them employed. The different types of partners are as follows:

- **Leadership** partners include EWDD and REDF. They oversee the program partners and create ways for them to coordinate and integrate their services, including establishing uniform program standards, a standardized outcomes and case management reporting system, and forums for partners to share and work together. EWDD is also responsible for grant management.

- **Social enterprise** (SE) partners enroll individuals into the LA:RISE program and provide the transitional employment experience, which includes paid work experience, work readiness training, supportive services, and placement support.

- **Workforce development system** (WDS) partners are American Job Centers, known locally as WorkSources and YouthSources. They provide a variety of adult and youth services, including operating the adult and youth WIOA programs funded through US DOL into which all LA:RISE participants are co-enrolled and through which they receive case management, supportive services, additional training and education services, and placement services.

- **Personal support provider** (PSP) partners work with participants primarily at the point when they are placed into employment or longer-term education and training, with the goal of providing participants supportive services that help them stay engaged in their education or employment.

- **Employer** partners hire participants into permanent employment after they complete their transitional employment. They include competitive employers—which participants find through SE or WDS partner networks—and bridge employers that work especially with hard-to-employ populations, coordinated through REDF's employer network. This wide array of employment opportunities leverages the resources of the different program partners and increases the likelihood that each participant can find an employer that is well suited to his or her interests and skills.

Program Services

While participants enroll in a transitional employment program at a particular SE, the LA:RISE model emphasizes coordination and integration of service delivery across program partners. Program leadership works to encourage this approach though system-level activities, and partners work to achieve this approach by delivering services at different points in time and working with one another to determine hand-off points or points of overlap. The LA:RISE program model includes the following four types of program services or activities:

- **System-level services** are leadership-driven program elements. They are designed to unify the various disparate pieces of the LA:RISE program through more uniform standards and to increase overall coordination of services. Standards include the development of a Job Readiness Assessment (JRA) and imposition of a minimum time period (300 hours) for the transitional employment component (to count as completed). Other system-level services include those geared towards helping partners improve coordination, such as regular workgroups and LA:RISE academy meetings, and the development of a shared data system for case management and outcome tracking.

- **Training and assessment** services include the on-the-job training that participants receive as part of their transitional employment and any specialized training that accompanies it, as well as work readiness training delivered through classes and on the job. As participants are co-enrolled in WIOA, they also may seek out education and training opportunities with their WDS partner.

- **Personal supports** are provided by SE, WDS, and PSP partners, all of whom work with participants to address their needs through both a case manager and directly provided and referred supportive services. Staff coordinate to determine which services each partner will provide and how best to guide participants through the transitional employment experience and eventual permanent placement, as well as on assessment of participant skills prior to permanent job placement.

- **Employment services** ensure that participants receive paid work experience through their minimum 300 hours of transitional employment work. Some individuals stay longer than others. After that, partners work to place participants in competitive or bridge employment.

Outputs and Outcomes

The LA:RISE program is designed to help participants find and retain employment, increase their earnings, be less likely to recidivate, and be better off in terms of other indicators of well-being (e.g., decreased risk of homelessness) than they would have been without the program. By getting them through the program, these outcomes will ideally be achieved. To get there, the program strives to create two different types of outputs. At the system level, the program is designed to help integrate and coordinate the Los Angeles WDS partner organizations with non-profit SEs; the goal is to provide the strongest possible employment services for the priority populations and to increase the ways these different types of partner organizations may be

able to work together in the future. It is expected that partners will not only implement basic program components but also engage in leadership-driven activities and come to coordinate with one another around participant care and services through the sharing of physical space and the utilization of the same program data systems.

At the participant level, LA:RISE is expected to enroll at least 500 participants and move approximately half through the transitional employment experience and into competitive or bridge employment. One key challenge, as noted earlier in the discussion of past research, could be recruiting and enrolling a sufficient number of participants in the first place. Under the WIF grant, the LA:RISE program had a full year of planning to prepare partners for recruitment and it customized enrollment numbers to different SE partners' capacities. The other challenge is retention. The LA:RISE program model addresses this issue through co-enrollment in WIOA and services provided through multiple partners at various stages of progress to help ensure there are several layers of coverage and interaction to meet participants' needs when they have them. The program also provides incentives for reporting on employment.

The Evaluation Design

The evaluation includes three key components: an implementation study, a random assignment impact study, and a cost study. This report describes early implementation study findings and the findings around enrollment into the impact study. The impact and cost studies will be the subjects of the evaluation's final report.

Implementation Study

The purpose of the implementation study is to learn how the LA:RISE program was designed and about the successes and challenges partners encountered in implementing it. The findings from the implementation study will help organizations and agencies around the country, including EWDD, REDF, and program partners, learn how to more effectively implement transitional employment programs. The findings will also inform the evaluation's impact study, suggesting ways in which the program may or may not expect to see impacts based on how well the program was implemented according to the program model. The primary research question asks whether the program was implemented according to plan. More specifically, the implementation addresses the following questions:

- To what extent were the program designers able to create systemwide changes, increasing connections between private and public programs providing transitional employment opportunities?

- What partnerships and linkages did each SE develop for delivering services?

- What was each SE's experience operating the program during the study period?

    – Was the program able to enroll sufficient numbers of participants into the program and how did it do so?

- What services were provided? How were these services coordinated with various partner organizations? What did the program do to ensure overall quality, intensity, customization of training, and duration?

- How did the services received by program group members compare to those received by control group members, either at the SEs (when this occurs) or from other sources in the community?

- Were there any problems with crossovers (control group members receiving services funded by LA:RISE)?

- What performance outcomes were most meaningful to program operators? How did site-level performance on these measures influence program planning?

- What implementation challenges did SEs and other program partners experience? How did they overcome these challenges? What are the lessons learned that other organizations can implement or scale?

- Did program providers (SEs and other service providers) implement the program as planned?

To answer these research questions, the study team collected qualitative data through several different mechanisms. Most of the data collection occurred during site visits conducted in the latter half of 2016. During the site visits, the study team conducted semi-structured interviews and participant focus groups with individuals in the following settings:

- **Leadership partners**. Interviews with staff members at EWDD and REDF provided insight on the development, administration, and ongoing oversight of the LA:RISE program. Additionally, program administrators provided context for the program's design, intended service delivery model, and implementation differences across partners.

- **SE partners**. Interviews with SE staff members provided insight into the operations of the LA:RISE program, including commonalities and differences in serving participants. The study team asked staff about a range of topics including: recruitment and enrollment; services provided to participants; the ways in which SEs work with or refer control group members to other service providers; coordination of services across LA:RISE partners; participant outcomes; and implementation challenges and successes. At SEs, study team staff also conducted focus groups with LA:RISE participants to learn about their experiences with the program and its many partners.

- **WDS partners**. Interviews with WDS partner line staff members covered participant enrollment; WIOA services delivered as part of LA:RISE, including supportive, training, and employment services; and coordination with the SEs.

- **PSP partners**. Interviews with PSP staff members included questions about the services they deliver to participants and the coordination of these services with LA:RISE program partners.

- **Bridge employers**. These interviews discussed the hiring practices and types of employment offered to participants by these employers, who are known for their socially driven business models that are friendly towards hiring high barrier individuals.

Study team members also engaged in data collection activities other than interviews. These activities included observations and tours of partner facilities, which provided a sense of the dynamics between staff and participants, how program services are delivered, the spaces in which participants receive services (providing insight into the participant experience), and similarities and differences across different program partners. Study team members also collected program documentation that helped differentiate and compare the different approaches of the SEs. Documents collected and reviewed included outreach materials, eligibility checklists, program flow policies and guidelines, staffing and organization charts, application forms, assessment materials, service delivery documentation, and schedules of LA:RISE and non-LA:RISE services offered by program partners.

From these data sources, study team members drafted a summary for each partner. These summaries allowed the study team to compare services across partners of a certain type (e.g., SEs), across groupings of partners (e.g., particular SE/WDS partner pairings), and across the program as a whole. Further, these data allowed the study team to identify effectively implemented program elements as well as implementation challenges.

Finally, as part of implementing the random assignment impact study, study team members served as liaisons to SEs and worked with other program partners. Liaisons helped guide and develop the random assignment impact study procedures (discussed more in the next section) and participated in regular meetings—both by phone and in person—before, during, and after the implementation study visits. These conversations and interactions with partners provided updates on implementation planning and changes that occurred both at the system level and for individual program partners well after the implementation study site visits.

The study team plans to update the implementation study findings in the final report, drawing upon an additional round of site visits and information on participant service levels from the program's management information system.

Impact and Cost Studies

The focal point of the evaluation is the random assignment impact study, which is designed to isolate the impact the program has had on individuals as compared to what would have happened to them if they had not enrolled. To do this, over the course of 20 months, starting in September 2015 and ending in April 2017, each of the six SEs checked individuals for program eligibility and then secured their consent to participate in the study. SE staff members then used an online computer system developed by the study team to assign, at random, all eligible and consenting individuals to one of two groups. Approximately half of these individuals were assigned to the program group. These participants were able to access the full array of LA:RISE program services offered by the SE and other program partners. The other individuals were assigned to the control group. These individuals became ineligible for LA:RISE program services

for up to two years but could still access any other services for which they were eligible.[12] In other words, through random assignment, the study created two equivalent groups: individuals who were enrolled in the program and were eligible to receive program services, and individuals who did not enroll and therefore were ineligible for services. This created an opportunity to obtain an unbiased estimate of the impact of the LA:RISE program.

In total, the study randomly assigned 964 participants: 481 to the program group and 483 to the control group.[13] For the evaluation's impact study, the study team will use an intent-to-treat model and will examine the outcomes of all study participants at up to two years from the point of random assignment, using administrative data from state and local agencies on employment, criminal justice system involvement, and other key outcomes.[14] The impact study, to the extent that there is sufficient power to do so, will also look at impacts for key subgroups of interest such as participants of different demographics and backgrounds (e.g., age, gender, priority population, level of criminal justice system involvement, etc.) or potential variations of interest across participants or providers, based on groups identified through implementation study research (introduced in the conclusion of this report).

Overall, the study will contribute substantially to the evidence base for transitional employment programs. The size of the study population and the random assignment design improves on the approach utilized by a prior evaluation of Los Angeles-based SEs (Rotz et al., 2015), and the increased coordination and enhancements to transitional employment services (e.g., coordination with public workforce system services, introduction of standardized elements, etc.) may yield even stronger results. As a random assignment study, the LA:RISE evaluation also improves on several other evaluations of transitional employment programs that reported solely on outcomes (EnSearch, Inc. 2004; Kushner, 2012). By focusing on SE-provided transitional employment, this evaluation focuses narrowly on one type of transitional employment program. Given its integration with the public workforce development system and recent policy changes to the workforce system, these findings provide important, rigorous evidence about an approach of considerable interest to a much larger community interested in workforce system delivery practices.

Accompanying the findings of the random assignment impact study will be those of a cost study, which will estimate the cost of operating and running the LA:RISE program. The cost study will also analyze the cost effectiveness of LA:RISE services by relating costs to measured

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[12] As discussed in Chapter III, two SEs were granted an exception to the program model such that control group members at these SEs were allowed to enroll in transitional employment services. These control group members were not provided the same level of coordinated enrollment and service delivery as was provided to program group members (e.g., co-enrollment in and coordination with WDS and PSP partner programs and access to bridge employers) but control group members could have accessed these other services on their own.

[13] Further information on the enrollment process, as well as the composition of the program group, is provided in Chapter III. Information comparing the program and control groups will be included in the final report.

[14] Other outcomes of interest may include education and training, especially for youth programs, use of income benefit systems such as Los Angeles' general assistance program, and housing stability. The study team is still exploring the feasibility of obtaining some types of administrative data.

impacts. Costs will include administrative costs, salaries, and materials; the impacts will be calculated from observed differences between the program and control groups in program outcomes. The study team will provide additional description of the methodologies used in the impact and cost studies in the evaluation's final report.

Overview of the Report

The subsequent chapters of this report explore the early implementation study findings. Chapter II describes the LA:RISE program partners, including the organizations, their roles in implementing the program, and the ways in which they have thus far coordinated the delivery of program services to participants. Chapter III examines recruitment and enrollment for the study, including recruitment strategies and challenges, total enrollment numbers and the composition of the program group, and some services likely received by control group members. Chapter IV explores LA:RISE program services including transitional employment, work readiness training, education and occupational skills training, case management, supportive services, and employment placement services. The final chapter, Chapter V, summarizes implementation accomplishments and challenges thus far, and presents conclusions that can be drawn about implications for future implementation study data collection activities and the impact study.

II. LA:RISE Program Partners

This chapter describes the planned LA:RISE service delivery framework, the program partners, and the way the partners coordinate. Additionally, the chapter describes partners' early accomplishments in implementing the service delivery framework and challenges they have encountered in the process.

Key Findings

- **The LA:RISE program created and implemented a service delivery framework that brings together a variety of partners and partner types to deliver employment services to hard-to-employ individuals.** The leadership team, consisting of EWDD and REDF, plans and guides the program. Social enterprise (SE), workforce development system (WDS), and personal support provider (PSP) partners deliver transitional employment, employment-related services, and supportive services to participants. Employer partners, including competitive employers and bridge employers, hire participants.

- **Leadership partners have created multiple mechanisms to facilitate partner coordination.** These include partner co-location, quarterly meetings, monthly calls, program guidance, and online tools that help partners coordinate existing participant services. Staff report that these mechanisms have helped them learn about coordinating services across their respective organizations, even if implementing them took more time than initially planned.

- **Leadership partners have standardized service delivery across partner organizations by establishing minimum standards for advancement.** To progress from transitional employment to job search, participants are required to work a minimum of 300 hours and pass a job readiness assessment.

- **The program encountered some challenges implementing the service delivery framework.** Finding the most effective SE and WDS partner pairings was initially challenging and took some attention to creating strong working relationships. The LA:RISE program was also slow to implement its shared management information system (MIS) and some job referral mechanisms as well as to effectively coordinate the many different partner organizations. Additional implementation research is needed to better understand participant flow and how participants access each of the program's many different partners.

The LA:RISE Service Delivery Framework

The LA:RISE program is unlike many transitional employment programs. It has the capacity to serve participants over a considerable period of time, from the start of the program with transitional employment services until well into permanent employment. The program also has the capacity to provide participants with a much wider array of services than any one type of partner would be able to provide on its own, including both privately and publicly funded employment programs and the combined employer networks of many different organizations. Nevertheless, the LA:RISE program designers recognized that with so many partners not used to working together, a clear framework would be necessary to guide the ways in which different partners should coordinate with one another to provide a unified service experience. This service delivery framework, which underscores the many types of partners, their roles, and their various working relationships, is illustrated in Exhibit II-1.

Exhibit II-1: LA:RISE Service Delivery Framework
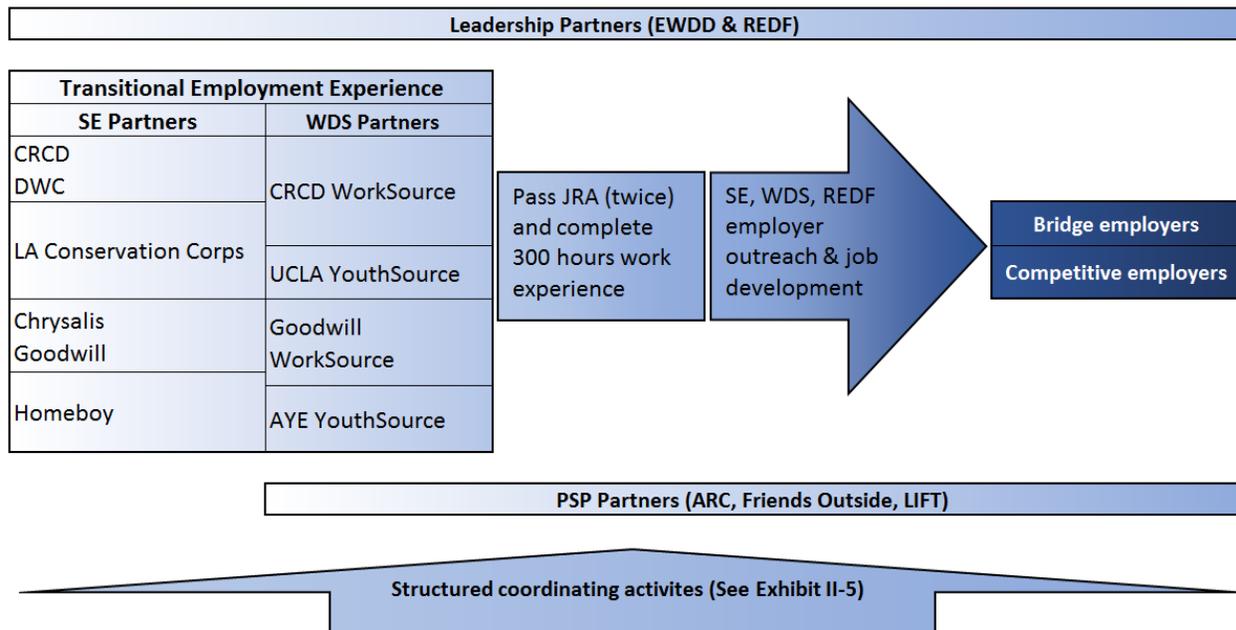
Participants begin the program by co-enrolling with an SE and WDS partner, and are first introduced to PSP partners sometime during their transitional employment experience. When participants begin looking for a job—usually sometime after completing their 300 hours and passing the Job Readiness Assessment (JRA)—they receive job leads from SE and WDS partners (with REDF's help when it comes to bridge employers).

LA:RISE Partner Overview

While the service delivery framework (Exhibit II-1) illustrates how each LA:RISE program partner should work with the others, critical to the framework is the participation of the partners themselves. The following sections describe each type of partner organization, the role of each partner type, and the specific organizations that fill each role.

Leadership Team Partners

The Los Angeles Economic and Workforce Development Department (EWDD) and REDF jointly lead the LA:RISE program. EWDD is the Workforce Innovation Fund (WIF) grantee and is therefore responsible for managing the grant, including contracting, budgeting, and grant reporting to the U.S. Department of Labor (US DOL). EWDD also brings to the table its knowledge and experience in operating the Los Angeles workforce development system, which includes its network of WorkSource and YouthSource centers, the organizations that operate the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA) adult and youth programs into which LA:RISE participants are co-enrolled.[15] Since about two-thirds of their funding comes from WIOA, EWDD and the WorkSource and YouthSource centers are the organizations most affected by the changing policy landscape discussed in Chapter I. It is up to EWDD to ensure that its workforce programs prioritize individuals like those in the LA:RISE priority populations and to do so using approaches like transitional employment programs.

REDF operates as a subcontractor to EWDD, but in close partnership with it. It oversees the implementation of program services, including new program components designed to standardize services across partners and aid partners in coordinating with one other on the delivery of participant services. As described in Chapter I, REDF also brings to the table its considerable expertise in working with transitional employment programs operated by SE organizations.

> ## Leadership Partners
>
> The *Los Angeles Economic and Workforce Development Department* oversees the city's workforce development system, which provides publicly funded job training and employment services across the city through BusinessSource, WorkSouce, YouthSource, and Day Labor centers; management of JobsLA, the city's customized version of the state web-based employment tool (CalJOBS); and programs such as the summer youth employment program. To operate these services, EWDD manages around $40 million in WIOA funds and about $15–20 million in additional city funds annually. (http://ewddlacity.com/)
>
> *REDF* (known previously as the Roberts Enterprise Development Fund) is a non-profit organization that was established in 1997 to invest in social enterprises, businesses with a dual mission of selling a good or service and employing people who are willing and able to work but who face formidable barriers to employment. REDF, which has a budget of about $5 million, currently invests in and provides advisory services to over 100 SEs in California and is expanding its network nationally. (www.redf.org)

Social Enterprise Partners

SEs serve as the entry point into the LA:RISE program. Staff members at each SE recruit and enroll participants and place them into each organization's transitional employment program where participants receive paid work experience at a job for which the SE is the employer of

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[15] Each LA:RISE participant was enrolled into either the WIOA adult or youth program, depending upon which WorkSource or YouthSource is paired with the particular SE (see Exhibit II-1). The WorkSource and YouthSource organizations that served as LA:RISE WDS partners are only a few of the WorkSource and YouthSource organizations that provide WIOA services in Los Angeles.

record. Participants also receive other services and supports such as case management, supportive services, and work readiness and life skills training. The services provided through SEs' transitional employment programs under LA:RISE are not all that different from how they were prior to LA:RISE except that they are now more closely guided by uniform standards (outlined in more detail below). The other major difference under LA:RISE is the way in which SE staff members coordinate services with other partners, such as WDS and PSP partners, to ensure that participants receive a more complex set of services.

Through REDF's network and EWDD's existing partnerships, the leadership partners selected six SEs based on their capacity to meet the overall enrollment numbers for the program (i.e., 500 individuals), the geographic diversity needed to ensure that SEs could be paired with other program partners, and the types of individuals that they typically enrolled (to ensure that they were serving the LA:RISE program's priority populations). They were also selected because of their long history as SEs and their interest in being part of this program, which involves coordinating services with WDS and other program partners. The organizations that house the six SEs are very different in size, serving from a few hundred to many thousands of individuals, typically through many different programs and multiple funding streams. As is displayed in Exhibit II-2, the six SEs have all served fewer than 200 LA:RISE program participants, and each focuses on different types of individuals.

> **SE Partners**
>
> The following SE partners provide transitional employment services to LA:RISE participants:
>
> ➤ Chrysalis
> ➤ Coalition for Responsible Community Development (CRCD)
> ➤ Downtown Women's Center (DWC)
> ➤ Goodwill Southern California (Goodwill)
> ➤ Homeboy Industries (Homeboy)
> ➤ Los Angeles Conservation Corps (LA Conservation Corps)

Exhibit II-2: LA:RISE SE Partner Characteristics

SE Partner	Established	LA:RISE Enrollment	Priority Populations Served
Chrysalis	1984	180	Formerly incarcerated; people at risk of homelessness
CRCD	2005	60	Opportunity youth
DWC	1978	10	Women at risk of homelessness
LA Conservation Corps	1986	150	Opportunity youth
Goodwill	1916	65	Formerly incarcerated; people at risk of homelessness
Homeboy	2001	35	Formerly incarcerated

SOURCES: Implementation study site visits and other qualitative data collection, and Guidestar.org

Workforce Development System Partners

Two WorkSource and two YouthSource centers have served as the four WDS partners in LA:RISE.[16] EWDD selected them out of the 16 WorkSource and 14 YouthSource centers that it oversees for several reasons. Two of them—Goodwill WorkSource and CRCD WorkSource—are part of parent organizations that also operate SEs that are part of the program (i.e., Goodwill and CRCD). Geography, capacity, and participant type were other considerations. EWDD and REDF decided to pair each WorkSource or YouthSource center with a specific SE partner, so each pair had to be physically close enough that staff members and participants could move between them. Finally, WDS partners needed to be aligned in terms of the participants they served. For example, UCLA and AYE were selected, in part, due to their capacity to work with youth participants (i.e., 18- to 24-year-old individuals, and those typically more in need of education and employment services) that their SE partners enrolled either exclusively or in signficant numbers. Additional details on the WDS parters are included in Exhibit II-3.

> ### WDS Partners
>
> The following organizations have provided WIOA adult and youth services to LA:RISE participants:
>
> **WorkSource Center Partners**
>
> ➢ Goodwill Southern California (Goodwill WorkSource)
>
> ➢ Coalition for Responsible Community Development (CRCD WorkSource)
>
> **YouthSource Center Partners**
>
> ➢ The Archdiocesan Youth Employment Services of Catholic Charities of Los Angeles (AYE)
>
> ➢ UCLA YouthSource (UCLA)

The role of WDS partners is to provide WIOA services to LA:RISE participants, including supportive services, additional training and education services, and employment placement services.[17] Participants are supposed to be co-enrolled in WIOA immediately upon enrollment in the LA:RISE program. To make this happen, WDS partner staff members are to begin working with SE staff members during the recruitment and enrollment phase to help determine participant eligibility for WIOA, since these rules can often be complex and require access to portions of the JobsLA workforce data system to which SE staff members do not have access. Upon enrollment, WDS case managers begin to work with participants to help them connect with supportive services that they may need while in their transitional employment programs, including clothing, transportation, and child care. These same case managers then help participants find permanent employment, additional training, and/or educational opportunities after the transitional work experience is over. Each WDS partner has between one and two case managers who work with LA:RISE participants and coordinate services with an equivalent SE partner staff member.

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[16]   As discussed below in the section on coordination, UCLA stopped enrolling LA:RISE participants part way through the program and AYE began. As a result, in total there were always about three active WDS partners.

[17]   See Chapter IV for a more detailed description of WDS partner services.

Exhibit II-3: LA:RISE WDS Partner Characteristics

WDS Partner	Established	LA:RISE Enrollment Goal	SE Enrollment Partner
WorkSource			
CRCD WorkSource	2005	60 10 70	CRCD DWC LA Conservation Corps[1]
Goodwill WorkSource	1916	180 65 20	Chrysalis Goodwill Homeboy
YouthSource			
AYE	1965	15	Homeboy[2]
UCLA	1998	100	LA Conservation Corps[1]

SOURCES: Guidestar.org; EWDD enrollment numbers; implementation study site visits and other qualitative data collection

NOTES:[1]LA Conservation Corps worked with the UCLA YouthSource from the start of enrollment in September 2015 until June 2016. It also continues to work with CRCD WorkSource, as it has since the start of the program.

[2]Homeboy began working with AYE in August 2016, partway through the program.

Personal Support Provider Partners

The LA:RISE program includes three PSPs that assist participants with personal and professional issues as they near the end of their time in the transitional employment phase at the SEs and start to move into their search for employment or begin training and education delivered through WDS partners. The goal of PSP services is to address participant needs that would otherwise prevent them from searching for a job or staying employed, thus helping to boost employment and retention rates. Exhibit II-4 provides information on the three PSP organizations.

Exhibit II-4: LA:RISE PSP Partner Characteristics

PSP Partner	Organization Established	LA:RISE Enrollment Goal
ARC	2013	100
Friends Outside	1950s	200
LIFT	1998	200

SOURCES: Guidestar.org; implementation study site visits and other qualitative data collection

While each of the PSPs offers a slightly different mix of services and works with slightly different target populations, the services offered to LA:RISE participants fall into six broad categories. Most PSPs provide some version of each of the following:

- **Social and community services** such as support groups, motivational activities, and social outings and retreats.

- **Personal development services** such as financial literacy and coaching, stress management classes, parenting classes, policy trainings, and storytelling workshops.

- **Employment services** such as job search assistance, guard card training, soft skills and work readiness trainings, resume development, and workshops for people with criminal backgrounds.

- **Employer support** such as worksite troubleshooting.

- **Case management and referrals** to other providers of housing, health, education, legal, and childcare services, sometimes on site.

- **Recognition and reward activities** including bus tokens, gift cards, and recognition ceremonies, as well as cash incentives for showing pay stubs from (permanent or non-transitional) employment ($75 for the first paycheck, $75 for the first month of (non-transitional) employment, and $100 for the second month employed).

While some of these services overlap with services provided by SE and WDS partners, some are unique, such as the support groups, social activities, and rewards and incentives. The employment incentive, in particular, is unique to LA:RISE (i.e., it is not offered to other individuals who may seek out the PSP programs). It was implemented specifically to engage LA:RISE participants in PSP services, thereby, in theory, helping them stay employed. Furthermore, while PSP services may overlap with some SE and WDS services, the PSP versions may offer a better opportunity to connect with participants due to factors such as different staff members who work better with a given individual, a physical location that is more compatible with a participant's place of work, etc.

PSP partners are contractually obligated to serve a set number of participants as part of the LA:RISE program, but they are not assigned to a particular SE partner as the WDS partners are. Instead, participants connect with PSP partners through one or more of three mechanisms. First, PSP staff visit SEs and run information sessions about their programs. Some partners, like LIFT, were very proactive about this effort and began outreach to SEs early on. The other two organizations were beginning such outreach efforts around the time of the implementation study site visits. Second, participants found out about the PSP partners through flyers that were developed by REDF for each of the SE partners and through

> **PSP Partners**
>
> The following organizations provide personal and professional support to LA:RISE participants:
>
> ➢ **The Anti-Recidivism Coalition** (ARC) provides a support network for the formerly incarcerated.
>
> ➢ **Friends Outside** advocates for and assists incarcerated or formerly incarcerated individuals and their families.
>
> ➢ **LIFT** focuses on helping working parents in low-income neighborhoods by providing a center in which people can access multiple services.

case manager referrals. And third, due to different participant backgrounds, housing, and potential employment locations, case managers would also often recommend a particular PSP to a participant.

Employment Partners

The LA:RISE program works with two broad categories of employment partners: competitive employers and bridge employers, into which the program hopes to place at least 250 participants (combined). Competitive employers include the organizations that are part of the SE and WDS networks that existed prior to the LA:RISE program. In the case of WDS partners, this list includes any of the thousands of employers within the California Employment Development Department's CalJOBS system, known locally as JobsLA. Of course, many of the jobs in these traditional networks are not a good fit for LA:RISE participants even after they have completed the program. For example, health care providers often have prohibitions against hiring individuals with criminal backgrounds. Also, even if the LA:RISE program helps participants become qualified for these jobs, many will still be on the lower end of the spectrum when it comes to skills and experience. Job placement staff will still work to place individuals, as there are many jobs available, but they may only do so with select employers and jobs.

Bridge employers differ from competitive employers in that they have been developed through REDF's employer network and are small- to medium-sized industries open to hiring people with backgrounds like those of the LA:RISE priority populations. Bridge employers are from a variety of industries such as food services and retail. While some are more straightforward businesses, many are similar to social enterprises in that they are either mission driven or highlight that they hire high-barrier individuals as part of their business model. At the time of the implementation study site visits, the LA:RISE program worked with nine bridge employers, with each one planning to employ five to 20 participants. The list of bridge employers has shifted since the implementation study visits, with some being added and a few—mostly for internal organizational reasons at those employers—not able to produce the positions they initially thought they could. Information on the bridge employers that hired participants will be included in future reporting.

> ## Bridge Employers
>
> LA:RISE service delivery partners can place participants in jobs with one of the following bridge employers:
>
> ➢ BakedLA
>
> ➢ Homeboy Recycling (previously known as Isidore Recycling)
>
> ➢ LA Kitchen
>
> ➢ LA Towels
>
> ➢ RCO Tires
>
> ➢ Tender Greens
>
> ➢ The Giving Keys
>
> ➢ Whole Foods
>
> ➢ With Love

For most of the time study participants were enrolled in LA:RISE, referrals to employers occurred in one of two ways. Competitive employment referrals happened through SE or WDS partners that maintained their own employer networks and monitor job openings; case managers at those organizations notified participants of potential jobs. Hiring for bridge employment happened through the REDF project manager, who had monthly calls with bridge employers to learn about job openings that would be a good fit for LA:RISE participants. The

project manager then notified SEs and WDS partners, who then referred participants to the bridge employers. More recently, this process has shifted and now all placements go through WDS partners.[18] In addition, as discussed more below, participants may find their way to work through their own contacts and sources. Employment placement services are discussed in greater detail in Chapter IV.

Coordinating and Unifying LA:RISE Services

As shown in the service delivery framework, the leadership partners oversee the entirety of the program, including coordinating service delivery by the program's many partners. The following sections outline how, over the early phases of implementation, program leadership has supported and grown partner coordination while helping to standardize and unify program services.

Coordinating Activities

EWDD and REDF continue to drive LA:RISE program implementation forward, managing the grant, overseeing training and technical assistance activities, and helping partner organizations coordinate and implement program services. Their role has been critical in ensuring that that the program's partner organizations engage in continuous communication designed to help them operate cohesively and serve participants in ways that play on their different strengths. To enable and reinforce coordination, leadership partners established several regularly scheduled activities, which are described in Exhibit II-5.

The first five items described in Exhibit II-5 are all meetings or communication between partners that have a similar structure and include activities such as highlighting accomplishments, discussing reporting and contracting issues, and considering implementation challenges. A few notable variations in these first five items are as follows:

- **In leadership team meetings**, program leaders have the opportunity to resolve administrative issues, often with program-wide implications, such as partners coming into or exiting the program, provision of access to the program's case management system to all partners, contracting issues, and development of solutions to partner communication and coordination challenges.

- **LA:RISE academy meetings** offer a longer, in-person forum where partners typically celebrate their work—by sharing participant success stories and recognizing outstanding partner performance—and engage in sharing opportunities. In early academy meetings, sharing opportunities consisted of each partner providing an overview of its menu of services. These have since evolved into activities designed to share implementation lessons and increase and standardize the ways partners work with one another.

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[18]   This change is unlikely to affect most study participants as it occurred late in the overall evaluation cycle.

- **SE/WDS partner meetings** provide an opportunity for program leadership to review and learn about the progress of specific SE/WDS partnerships and provide assistance on issues those partners may be experiencing, such as how to provide certain types of services in line with the program's goals or how to increase or improve coordination around service delivery.

Exhibit II-5: LA:RISE Partner Engagement Activities

Activity	Frequency	Participants	Description
Executive leadership meetings	Monthly or every other month	Program coordinators and executive staff members at EWDD and REDF	Review program progress, growth strategies, administrative challenges, and sustainability (phone/in person)
Program coordinator meetings	Weekly	Program coordinators at EWDD and REDF	Review program progress, growth strategies, administrative challenges, and sustainability (phone/in person)
LA:RISE academies	Quarterly	One or two staff members from each partner organization (except employers)	Partners review program implementation progress, learnings, and updates (in person)
SE/WDS partner meetings	Monthly	Program coordinators and each SE/WDS partner pairing	Providers share updates about enrollment, service provision, and job placement (phone)
SE/WDS partner communication	Ongoing	Program coordinators and each SE/WDS partner pairing	Additional input from leadership partners as needed (email)
Additional trainings	As needed	Relevant staff from partner organizations	Training on specific items such as the MIS, enrollment, or study procedures (in person)
LA:RISE JobsLA module	Ongoing	WDS partners input outcomes; all partners update case notes	A customized LA:RISE module in JobsLA (the city's workforce tracking and case management system) to be used as the program's MIS
Online program resource repository	Ongoing	REDF posts materials; all partners access and use materials	An online repository containing city directives, guidance, rules about meeting formats, and training materials on the LA:RISE program
REDF job lead correspondence	Ongoing	REDF and employers with job openings	REDF learns about job openings at bridge employers through its outreach to employers (phone/in person)

SOURCES: Implementation study site visits and other qualitative data collection

NOTES: Study team members attended all meetings except for some additional trainings and the job lead meetings. Study team members primarily attend by phone but sometimes in person.

The other three activities—the LA:RISE JobsLA module, additional trainings, and REDF job lead correspondence—are different. These activities are designed to help partners coordinate and work better together, but they tend to be ongoing activities that partners regularly engage in

and are centered around very specific topics such as participant challenges, program procedures, or employment opportunities.

While meetings could occasionally be challenging to schedule, partners indicated in interviews that they appreciated and valued the schedule and nature of the different activities created and implemented by the leadership team as well as the many opportunities to meet and learn from one another. One SE staff member, for instance, commented that the SE/WDS partner meetings were an important way to work through partnership details. More than one SE partner staff member also reported that the LA:RISE academy meetings helped them learn about implementing the program and learn things from their peers. In general, it seems that having many activities has been important for establishing a common agenda and helping partners learn to work together.

Leadership partners did experience a few minor challenges. The biggest of these was the speed of implementation around the development of the LA:RISE JobsLA module, which served as the program's MIS. This took program leadership much longer to implement than planned and allows only limited access (to case notes functions, not outcomes) to non-WDS partners. Also, establishing this list of activities and developing this regular system of communication took some time. Overall, the leadership efforts were valued and appreciated, but this type of integration and coordination effort of so many partners took more time than anticipated.

Partner Coordination and Communication

In addition to the leadership-driven activities outlined above, the service delivery framework also prescribes certain relationships between program partners. For SEs and WDS partners, these relationships are specific but have also changed over time. As described above in Exhibit II-3, four of the SEs are paired with a single WDS partner. CRCD and DWC work with the CRCD WorkSource, while Chrysalis and Goodwill work with the Goodwill WorkSource. The other two SEs—LA Conservation Corps and Homeboy—are paired with multiple WDS partners.

The way these partnerships work is that a case manager or another designated staff person at each SE works with the WDS case manager, communicating and meeting on a regular basis. This process begins prior to enrollment when SE staff members communicate with WDS staff members around program eligibility, since checking eligibility requires information about prior WIOA enrollment to which only WDS staff members have access. Once enrolled in LA:RISE, the SE case manager is technically the lead case manager, but both case managers are expected to help with case planning and service delivery as well as placement activities. Coordination between these two types of partner organizations is important for avoiding duplication of services (e.g., two agencies issuing bus passes, issuing work clothes, or helping a participant find child care) and ensuring that services support one another effectively (e.g., that WIOA-funded training fits with the type of employment goals a participant may have expressed to SE staff members).

While some coordination takes place through the SE/WDS meetings organized by program leadership, SE and WDS staff are also expected to communicate regularly via phone or email and WDS case managers are expected to visit SEs at least once per week to meet staff members and participants in person. These in-person visits, prescribed in the partners' contracts, are

particularly important, as staff members noted in interviews, because only when participants get to know their WDS case managers do they begin to work more closely with them to take advantage of supportive services or to get additional training or placement assistance. Also, since WDS partners actively track participants for longer (as per the rules around follow-up services through WIOA), it is important for participants to know and respond to their WDS partner case managers.

The SE/WDS partnership is one of the more novel aspects of the LA:RISE program, as it helps to bridge private and public employment related services, but it was not without some early challenges. One challenge involved finding the right WDS staff to engage with SEs. In interviews, staff members at two SEs reported challenges working with their respective WDS partners— there were delays in the co-enrollment of participants and the case manager was not visiting the SEs. However, this was eventually resolved when that staff member was replaced.[19]

Another challenge led to a change in the SE and WDC pairings whereby LA Conservation Corps stopped co-enrolling participants with UCLA YouthSource, shifting its remaining enrollment entirely to CRCD WorkSource. In this instance, LA Conservation Corps operated a secondary education component as part of its transitional employment program, but its service delivery model often meant that youth were enrolled with LA Conservation Corps for much longer than its YouthSource partner, UCLA, was able to work with youth, due to the timing requirements placed on UCLA through its funding requirements. Moreover, because many of the services that UCLA might otherwise provide were already being provided by LA Conservation Corps, it was challenging for the partners to find the value added by this pairing. This challenge with WIOA/SE partnerships suggests that pairing a youth WIOA provider with a youth-focused SE was not an ideal pairing.

The other type of close coordination illustrated in the service delivery framework occurs between SEs and PSPs to ensure that participants are attached to and working with a PSP as they transition into permanent employment. Unlike the SE/WDS partnerships, each of the six SEs works with all three of the PSP partners. A participant can select the PSP that seems like the best fit based on priority area, geography, or other considerations that are important to the participant. The general process involves PSP staff members visiting the SEs and conducting orientations to their program services. For example, one SE staff member coordinates with one of the PSP staff members to spend about half a day at the SE to provide an orientation and lead employment-related workshops for participants. Then, as participants are ready to begin searching for permanent employment, or if a specific supportive service need arises, SE staff members will work to reconnect participants to that PSP or to whichever PSP the participant has ultimately decided to work with.

At the time of the site visits, very little of this relationship building had occurred because very few participants had reached the point of searching for employment and some of the mechanisms for coordination were still being developed. At the time, only three of the six SEs were in the initial stages of coordinating support services with PSPs and not all the PSPs had

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[19]   The final evaluation report will look at the rates of co-enrollment and the extent to which they may have been affected by this aspect of implementation.

begun regular coordination activities with the SEs. Since the site visits, PSPs have increased their outreach activities with the idea of making that connection with participants sooner in case they leave the transitional employment program earlier than expected. Nevertheless, ensuring participants remain connected to their PSPs and receive more than a few services from them remains an ongoing issue and is being examined by program leadership.

Standardizing Program Services

To create a more unified program experience, the LA:RISE management partners established two main standards for program participants. First, SEs must administer the program's JRA to participants at least twice during their transitional employment experience and participants must pass it twice (with a certain minimum score) prior to moving on to employment placement services. REDF developed the JRA through a review of the skills required for over 10 worker certifications and with input from SEs and employers. It assesses 18 factors grouped into four areas (workplace performance, communication and attitude, attendance and punctuality, and workplace appearance). By implementing this assessment, program leaders hope to increase some of the basic skills people have coming out of transitional employment. Partners can prepare participants for passing the JRA in any number of ways including classes and on-the-job activities.

Second, participants must complete at least 300 hours of employment through the program prior to moving on to employment placement. Given that participants typically spend several hours each week dealing with supportive services and other program requirements, the 300-hour work requirement means that they are typically working at least 10 weeks. Given the way some programs incorporate other components (e.g., secondary education for youth programs, job training classes, and additional supportive services needed for life stability), participants at some SEs can and do work longer.

Neither of these program standards elicited concerns from program partners during the initial site visits. However, for a variety of reasons, participants may not always achieve these two goals. Either the barriers that made them eligible prove too intractable for them to continue with the program or they may simply find work on their own first. The LA:RISE program only sought to have half of participants reach employment, but also recognized that many may do so prior to achieving these two program goals. It will be important in future analyses to more closely examine the overall rate at which participants complete these two goals as a possible explanatory factor in understanding the observed employment outcomes.

Summary and Conclusion

The LA:RISE program brings together several types of partners in a service delivery framework designed and overseen by EWDD and REDF, and which, in theory, allows partners to provide a greater array of services to participants over a longer period than any one of them could do alone. The program begins with a transitional employment experience at an SE partner, co-enrollment in WIOA at a WDS partner, and coordination between the SE and WDS case managers. To complete the transitional employment experience, participants are supposed to

work a minimum of 300 hours in transitional employment and pass the program's JRA assessment at least twice. Participants are also supposed to start working with a PSP, beginning near the end of their transitional employment experience to at least a few months into employment. The partner organizations are also supposed to collaborate during the job placement phase, giving participants access to the combined job opportunity networks of REDF, SE, and WDS partners.

Underpinning this service delivery framework is a series of coordinating activities designed to help partners apply program standards and increase coordination. REDF and EWDD have organized numerous opportunities for coordination, peer-to-peer learning, and communications through regular leadership meetings, quarterly LA:RISE academy meetings, monthly check-in calls, shared case notes in JobsLA, and an online discussion board. Partner staff reported appreciating these opportunities and, as of a little more than a year into implementation, LA:RISE program partners have developed a comprehensive network for delivering program services. However, achieving this current state of operation was not without some challenges. First, this system took some time to develop; partners did not coordinate as much or as well at the beginning of the program as they do now, and some program elements such as the system's MIS took longer to develop than others. Second, several key partnerships, especially those between SE and WDS partners, took time to develop and establish; some staff and partnerships changed over time as the right relationships were established. Finally, despite certain standards that help to unify the program experience, not all participants achieve them due to their own personal challenges or because they find work prior to completing them. Each of these challenges is to be expected to some extent in a pilot program like LA:RISE, but further investigation into the how partnerships affected program enrollment and service dosage will be of interest in subsequent analyses.

III. Recruitment and Enrollment

The LA:RISE program engaged many different partner agencies to deliver program services, but recruitment, eligibility determination, and enrollment primarily resided with the social enterprise (SE) partners. This chapter describes the LA:RISE intake and enrollment process, including how the SEs randomly assigned individuals into the impact study; the results of enrollment, including the composition of the program group; and some ways that services differed between the program and control groups before and after random assignment (RA).

Key Findings

- **SEs primarily recruited their usual target populations.** All SEs have strong track records of supporting and recruiting the priority populations identified for the LA:RISE program. They used their typical recruitment strategies including recruiting from within, participating in community events, and receiving referrals from partner organizations, but they had to adapt to different eligibility criteria and increase their overall recruitment numbers for the impact study.

- **The LA:RISE program met its enrollment goal.** Collectively the SEs enrolled 508 individuals into the LA:RISE program; the goal was 500 people. However, four of the six SE partners fell short of their individual enrollment goals according to the original timeline. The program was able to make its overall enrollment goal by shifting enrollment numbers between SE partners and by extending the enrollment period by two months.

- **SEs successfully implemented RA, resulting in a study sample of 964 people: 481 in the program group and 483 in the control group.** The number of program group members is smaller than the number of individuals in the program overall because the LA:RISE program is required to serve veterans while exempting them from the study.

- **The LA:RISE program successfully enrolled members from the three priority populations.** At enrollment, around half of program group participants had a history of involvement in the criminal justice system, approximately one quarter indicated they were either homeless or in transitional housing, and more than half were 18- to 24-year-old disconnected youth.

- **Control group members had access to LA:RISE-like services both before and after RA.** Three SEs recruited LA:RISE study participants from programs at their organizations and two of these three provided transitional employment services to control group members after RA. Furthermore, control group members were eligible for WIOA and PSP partner services. The final report will examine the extent to which participants accessed these services and how this matters for the impact study.

The Intake Process

Intake into the LA:RISE program (which began in September 2015 and concluded in April 2017) was a multistage process that included outreach and recruitment, eligibility determination, study orientations, completion of study paperwork, random assignment, and enrollment of program group members.

Outreach and Recruitment

To enroll participants into the program, SEs first had to recruit potentially eligible individuals. SEs used four broad strategies for recruitment, which changed little from the strategies used to recruit for their transitional employment programs prior to LA:RISE.

- **Recruiting from other programs within the SE parent organizations.** The transitional employment program at each SE was often just one of many programs the organization operated. Staff members at three SEs (Chrysalis, DWC, and Homeboy) identified participants in their other programs who might be eligible for LA:RISE. In fact, this tended to be the primary pipeline for participants at these three SEs. From their involvement in these services, program staff members identified individuals most in need of transitional employment services.

- **Community outreach activities.** These activities included being part of community events and job fairs, canvassing local neighborhoods, and participating in local collaboratives. Engaging with the community was important for this effort. A CRCD staff member, for example, noted that attending job fairs and community events like the Taste of Soul Family Festival was highly effective for recruiting participants, while a Chrysalis staff member mentioned the importance of being part of the Hope Central Collaborative, a group of similar organizations in the area that hosts an annual job fair for 450 to 700 participants.

- **Referrals from organizations that serve the SEs' own communities.** SEs relied to some extent on referrals from partners and other organizations in their communities. Staff members mentioned that they have worked with the Los Angeles County Office of Probation, the Los Angeles Unified School District, the Department of Corrections, local shelters, transitional housing programs, and WorkSource and YouthSource centers.

- **Word-of-mouth referrals.** Staff and participants frequently mentioned friends, family, and people in the local community (e.g., church members) as major referral sources. These referrals have often come from individuals who previously went through an SE's program and could speak to participants about the ways the program had helped them.

Eligibility Determination

Once SE staff identified individuals interested in the LA:RISE program, they then determined whether these individuals were eligible to participate. To be eligible, applicants had to:

- be at least 18 years old;

- be unemployed, underemployed, or in stop-gap employment;

- exhibit a barrier to employment (criminal background, housing unstable or history of homelessness, long term unemployed, or opportunity youth);

- be eligible to work in the U.S.;

- not have received individual training account funds or on-the-job training through WIOA within the past two years;

- not be enrolled at another WorkSource or YouthSource (not in LA:RISE) for more than 90 days or to have had direct costs expended on them (to allow them to transfer to an LA:RISE WorkSource or YouthSource);

- express interest in long-term employment; and

- have enrolled in selective service (if male).

Participants also had to meet SE-specific eligibility criteria, usually tied to the priority populations they primarily serve. For instance, DWC only serves women at risk of homelessness, Homeboy only works with gang-involved or previously incarcerated individuals, and both LA Conservation Corps and CRCD only serve opportunity youth. In fact, EWDD and REDF recruited the six SE partners because of their histories serving these priority populations. (See Exhibit II-1, which shows the priority populations served by each partner.)

Overall, one of the biggest challenges encountered in the eligibility determination process, and one that required some adaptation to the typical SE enrollment procedures, was checking WIOA eligibility and confirming that applicants had not received previously listed WIOA training services. During the intake process, SEs worked with their WDS partners to verify applicants' WIOA eligibility. By the time of the implementation study site visits, SEs had mostly resolved this WIOA verification process, although there were some challenges early on. Foremost was SE staff members learning to communicate with their WDS partner staff members around WIOA eligibility and the requirements around prior training receipt, which were understood by WDS partner staff members but not SE staff members (who tended not to deal with WIOA funding). Furthermore, there was not initially a process for handling individuals who enrolled in the LA:RISE program but who had begun receiving limited services (i.e., not individual training accounts or on-the-job training funds) at a WorkSource or YouthSource center that was not that SE's WDS partner. EWDD and REDF had to develop a process by which individuals could transfer from one WorkSource or YouthSource to another.[20]

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[20] Goodwill dealt with this issue more than any other SE. A staff member there shared that the fewer services the WDS invested in the participant, the more likely the transfer would be approved. Even after developing a process to transfer participants between WorkSource centers, the staff member reported that it could take up to four months to transfer a participant.

Study Orientations

As part of the RA impact study, all SEs were required to provide study orientations to interested individuals before conducting RA. During these orientations, applicants received an overview of the impact study, watched an RA informational video that was prepared by the study team, reviewed the risks and benefits of participating in the study, and discussed the RA process.[21] Potential participants were also given the opportunity to ask questions about participation. Individuals who agreed to participate were asked to sign the Consent to Participate form, in which they consented to RA and the collection of administrative data. In addition to signing the consent form, individuals had to fill out a Baseline Information Form (BIF). The BIF—which was designed by the study team in consultation with EWDD and REDF—captured personal and demographic information from each study participant.

SEs conducted these orientations at different points in the intake process. Study orientations at Goodwill were the first point of contact applicants had with both the SE and the LA:RISE program. LA Conservation Corps and CRCD provided a study orientation only after applicants attended a general orientation and either interviews or orientation activities, which were used to gauge eligibility and suitability as well as commitment. The other three SEs conducted a study orientation after applicants completed a set amount of other services at the SE's parent organization. For example, DWC conducted a study orientation after applicants completed a pre-employment training program and Chrysalis invited candidates to its transitional employment program after they had gone through their basic employment training program, allowing the organization to identify individuals who were hard to employ and needed more than basic assistance.

Conducting Random Assignment

Once a participant completed an orientation and was determined eligible, SE staff members randomly assigned him or her. This process required staff members to enter participant information into the study's online RA system, which ensured that each participant had a 50 percent chance of being placed into the program group and a 50 percent chance of being placed into the control group. SE staff then communicated the results of RA to study participants either in a group (Chrysalis) or individually (the other five SEs). Program group members were then considered enrolled into the LA:RISE program, which began with the transitional employment experience provided by the SE partner and included co-enrollment into WIOA with the WDS partner. Control group members were allowed to access all other services available to them in the community, which may have included other programs or services provided by the SE parent organization.

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[21] Orientations were conducted in a group most of the time at all but two of the SEs (DWC and Homeboy) where orientations primarily occurred on an individual basis.

Enrollment Results

The program enrollment goal for LA:RISE was 500 individuals. More precisely, the SEs would randomly assign individuals until they achieved at least 500 individuals in the program group, which would result in approximately 1,000 individuals in the study, given the 50/50 ratio for RA. While LA:RISE was able to meet its program enrollment goal, it was only able to do so with some significant adjustments; for other reasons discussed below, the study fell slightly short of its enrollment goal. Exhibit III-1 shows each SE's original program enrollment goal, its adjusted enrollment goal, and the number of individuals enrolled in the program, the program group, and the control group.

Exhibit III-1: Enrollment Targets and Results by SE

SE Partner	Original Program Goal	Revised Program Goal	Enrolled in Program	Program Group	Control Group
Chrysalis	160	180	182	173	173
CRCD	60	No revisions	60	60	62
DWC	10	No revisions	12	11	7
Goodwill	45	65	69	52	53
Homeboy	55	35	35	35	36
LA Conservation Corps	170	150	150	150	152
Total	500	500	508	481	483

SOURCE: The LA:RISE random assignment system

The first two columns in Exhibit III-1 show a modification in the enrollment goals that occurred when four SEs were unable to make their goals according to the original timeline (September 2015 to February 2017). Some of the reasons SEs may not have met their goals include:

- **Staffing changes.** At one SE, both the LA:RISE program manager and the recruitment coordinator left partway through the recruitment period. As a result, this SE had a challenging time onboarding new staff to LA:RISE, and contracted a local nonprofit organization to help with recruitment. Similarly, another SE reported that relatively new frontline staff who were not familiar with LA:RISE program services slowed its internal referral process of LA:RISE applicants.

- **Limited organizational capacity.** Due to high demand for its transitional employment program, one SE only enrolled participants as others graduated.

- **Required pre-enrollment activities.** All but one of the SEs required applicants to complete activities before they could apply to LA:RISE. These activities varied in intensity and included one-on-one interviews with SE staff, pre-employment training programs, and orientation sessions. However, not all applicants were able to follow through on more elaborate screening procedures.

- **Discomfort with random assignment.** One SE staff member reported that some community-based organizations were discouraged from referring individuals to LA:RISE because they interpreted RA as a chance people would not get services.

As a result of these challenges, enrollment was extended from February to April 2017. In addition, EWDD and REDF adjusted these four SEs' program enrollment goals to ensure that they would be able to meet the program's collective goal. As shown in Exhibit III-1, open program slots were shifted to Chrysalis and Goodwill, which had already met their program enrollment goals before the end of February and therefore had capacity to recruit additional participants.

The other enrollment challenge shown in Exhibit III-1 is the discrepancy between the number of individuals enrolled in the LA:RISE program and the number enrolled in the study's program group. There are two reasons for this. First, according to US DOL, veterans were exempted from RA and granted entry into the program if eligible. SEs identified 26 veterans who were given positions in the program this way but who could not be added to the study. Second, participants were allowed to withdraw from the study, and one program group member did so. Thus, while the study randomly assigned 964 eligible individuals, resulting in 481 program group members and 483 control group members, there were 508 individuals in the program.

Program Participant Characteristics

The composition of the program group is shown in Exhibit III-2 and mostly resembles what one might expect given the program's commitment to serving the three priority populations. Key features of the program group are as follows:[22]

- **Males outnumber females by more than two to one.** Males are 71 percent of the program group while females are just 29 percent.

- **More than half the program group are youth ages 18 to 24 years old.** There also are relatively few adults in the 55-and-over age band (9 percent).

- **Most program group members are people of color.** Close to half of program group members identified as Hispanic or Latino. Of those who did not identify as Hispanic or Latino, 86 percent identified as African American.

- **Only about one-third owned or rented their homes.** The remainder were staying with someone, in transitional housing, or homeless, or they had some other arrangement.

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[22]   The study team did not have access to information on individuals in the program but not in the study (i.e., the 26 veterans and one person who withdrew). Therefore, Exhibit III-2 describes only the 481 individuals in the study's program group.

Exhibit III-2 Baseline Characteristics of the Program Group

Characteristics	Program Group (%)
Gender	
Male	70.6
Female	29.4
Age	
18 to 24	53.4
25 to 34	11.4
35 to 44	11.0
45 to 54	15.4
55 or older	8.7
Hispanic/Latino heritage	44.1
Race, Non-Hispanic	
African American	85.5
Asian/AA/PI[1]	5.9
White	12.3
Some other race	1.5
Housing status	
Own, rent	33.3
Halfway/transitional	10.5
Staying with someone	33.1
Homeless	13.9
Other	9.1
Education level achieved	
Less than HS diploma	35.2
HS diploma/HS equivalency diploma	45.6
More than high school	8.5
Other education level achieved	10.8
Have a disability	12.7
Had a job in the past five years	64.5
Received public assistance[2]	62.4
TANF	3.9
SSI/SSDI	7.7
General relief	28.2
SNAP	34.8
Unemployment compensation	1.3
Other	1.3
History with criminal justice system	
Ever arrested	54.0
Ever convicted	45.4
Ever incarcerated	45.6
Currently on parole or probation	21.4

Characteristics	Program Group (%)

- **A little over one-third did not have a high school diploma or its equivalent.** Only around 20 percent had anything more than a high school diploma or its equivalent.

- **Around 13 percent of the program group reported having a disability.**

- **Around one-third of the program group reported not having had a job within the last five years.**

- **About two-thirds of the program group reported receiving some type of public assistance.**

- **Well over half of the program group had some level of involvement with the criminal justice system.** More precisely, 54 percent had been arrested, 45 percent had been convicted, nearly 46 percent had been incarcerated, and 21 percent were currently on parole or probation.

Control Group Member Access to LA:RISE-Like Services

The implementation study also looked at programs and services that control group members receive or have access to both prior to and immediately following RA. Most notable are the services delivered by the SE partners themselves. As discussed earlier in the chapter, three SE partner organizations have recruited participants primarily from other, non-LA:RISE programs and services that they offer. Also, in the case of two SE partner agencies, control group members are allowed to receive transitional employment services after RA. Exhibit III-3 shows the instances where SEs provide services to all study participants prior to RA and to control group members after RA.

The second column of Exhibit III-3 shows the SEs that worked with all study participants prior to RA. At three SEs, recruitment and enrollment procedures were built around individuals having previously engaged in programs at the SEs, typically those that delivered training, work readiness classes, and even internships:

- **At DWC**, interested applicants had to complete a pre-employment training program (called Set to Work 1) to be able to enroll in LA:RISE.

- **At Chrysalis**, individuals had to complete two to four weeks of pre-employment training including computer classes and resume development before they could apply to LA:RISE.

- **At Homeboy**, participants had to be enrolled within the transitional employment program for approximately 60 to 90 days prior to LA:RISE enrollment.

Exhibit III-3: SE Services Available to Control Group Members Prior to and After RA

SE Partner	All study participants received SE program services prior to RA	Control group has access to SE-provided transitional employment after RA
Chrysalis	Yes	Yes
CRCD	--	--
DWC	Yes	--
Goodwill	--	--
Homeboy	Yes	Yes
LA Conservation Corps	--	--
SOURCES: Implementation study site visits and other qualitative data collection		

These pre-RA services were less intensive and not nearly as long as LA:RISE program services. They were also offered to much broader, less selective groups of individuals, many of whom were not otherwise eligible for LA:RISE. Furthermore, SEs used these activities to screen for individuals who were not work-ready and who would otherwise be good candidates for LA:RISE. Nevertheless, the delivery of these services means that LA:RISE control group members at these three SEs received services that were in many ways like LA:RISE services.[23]

The third column in Exhibit III-3 shows that two SEs also provided control group members with access to the transitional employment component of the LA:RISE program—the same program that was offered to program group members. These SEs had ample funding for transitional employment program positions beyond the numbers required of them for the LA:RISE program and they were not willing to restrict these services to program group members. While control group members did have access to the transitional employment program, they did not automatically receive other aspects of the LA:RISE program—co-enrollment in WIOA, coordination and delivery of services by PSPs, access to bridge employers—and they were not subject to the same employment and work readiness requirements.

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[23] At the other three SEs (CRCD, Goodwill, and LA Conservation Corps), LA:RISE candidates were new to the SEs and did not receive services through these agencies prior to RA. Nevertheless, there was some degree of screening—involving interviews, multiple appointments, and other activities—that was designed to not only determine eligibility but also identify a level of commitment to and interest in the program. At one end of the spectrum, Goodwill's screening activities were minimal; CRCD's one- to two-week orientation, on the other hand, included daily exercise sessions and all-day activities designed to identify program commitment.

Something not explicitly noted in Exhibit III-3, however, is that all control group members have access, after RA, to many of the same services delivered to LA:RISE program group members. In particular, control group members are all eligible to receive both WIOA and PSP partner services. As part of their LA:RISE eligibility determination, control group members were determined to be eligible for WIOA services. Also, as discussed in Chapter II, some of the SE providers operated WorkSource centers that partnered with LA:RISE. Control group members would not have benefited from any coordination of services or other benefits, such as incentives offered by PSPs for employment verification or access to bridge employers, and would have had to seek out these services on their own. The degree to which control group members accessed these other services will be explored in the final report.

Summary and Conclusion

This chapter described the process and results of recruiting and enrolling individuals into the LA:RISE program and the impact study. It described how the program was able to meet its enrollment target by extending the timeline and modifying the enrollment targets of individual SEs. Some SEs had a difficult time hitting their program enrollment targets due to staffing changes, discomfort in talking through the study's RA design with partners and participants, limited organizational capacity, and pre-enrollment services provided to applicants before enrolling in LA:RISE. The chapter also explained how despite hitting the program enrollment goal, overall enrollment for the study fell slightly short of the stated goal because veterans were exempted from the study and because one individual withdrew. Throughout this process most of the SEs relied on existing outreach and recruitment strategies to attract candidates to the LA:RISE program, but had to adapt their existing procedures slightly to account for somewhat different eligibility requirements and target numbers than they had previously. In the end, SEs met their program enrollment goals, fell slightly short of the impact study goals, and enrolled a group of participants that resembled what one might expect given the priority populations that the program seeks to serve.

The final report will need to address the implications of the different levels of LA:RISE-like services received, both prior to and after RA, across SE partners. Half the SEs randomly assigned individuals who had gone through other programs and services at an SE's organization. Two also provided LA:RISE transitional employment services to control group members. Furthermore, all control group members were eligible to enroll in WIOA services and receive services delivered by PSP partners. These differing approaches to recruitment and enrollment (and ultimately service delivery) will be examined more fully in the conclusion chapter and in the final report.

IV. LA:RISE Program Services

This chapter focuses on the key service components that the LA:RISE program partners have delivered to participants as well as the successes and challenges they encountered early in the implementation process. These components include transitional employment, work readiness training, education and occupational skills training, case management, supportive services, and employment placement services.

Key Findings

- **The LA:RISE program established a diverse and well-coordinated system for delivering its six service components.** Social enterprise (SE) partners take the lead on delivering (1) transitional employment and (2) work readiness services while coordinating with workforce development system (WDS) and personal support provider (PSP) partners around the delivery of other services including (3) education and occupational skills training, (4) case management, (5) supportive services, and (6) employment placement services.

- **SEs were still developing employment placement services well after they first enrolled participants.** At the time of the site visits, partners had placed few participants into employment and were still learning about the best ways to coordinate placement. SEs were also still considering ways to increase employment placement numbers, although they have been increasing since the site visits.

- **The LA:RISE program continues to face some challenges integrating bridge employers.** Program leadership overcame many initial challenges in defining and integrating bridge employers, but partners still face some challenges in working with them. These include learning to integrate them into established referral procedures and determining the number and types of employment opportunities they have available.

Transitional Employment

A key component of the LA:RISE program is transitional employment, which provides participants with a source of income while they build their resumes and develop on-the-job vocational and work readiness skills. Transitional employment is delivered by the program's six SEs. As depicted in Exhibit IV-1, SEs vary in the transitional employment experiences they offer in two main ways: sector and maximum duration.

The transitional job sectors and the positions offered to participants vary both across and within a given SE, but they are all low-skill positions created with the understanding that participants have few job skills coming into the program. As noted in Exhibit IV-1, common job sectors include street or outdoor maintenance (e.g., gardening, landscaping, graffiti

abatement), food services, and retail. Occupations within these sectors include street sweeper, barista, sales associate, janitor, landscaper, and food server. SEs divide further in terms of how they provide these positions. Typically, those offering outdoor maintenance, janitorial, or street cleaning tend to be based on contracts with other businesses or government clients. The other types of positions, such as those dealing with food service or producing goods, tend to be direct service businesses where the SEs manage a store front or sell items on the internet produced by participants. In each case, the employment structure is similar in that participants have a supervisor, show up for work on a regular schedule, and are paid for the work accordingly.

Exhibit IV-1: Transitional Employment Sector and Maximum Duration for Each SE

SE Partner	Sector	Maximum Duration
CRCD	Outdoor maintenance (e.g., community garden maintenance, graffiti removal) Construction-related (e.g., solar panel installation)	One or more eight-week intervals (alternates with education cycles)
DWC	Food services Retail Inventory and production	12 months
Chrysalis	Street maintenance (e.g., street sweeping)	12 months
Goodwill	Retail Janitorial	Two to three months
Homeboy	Food services Silkscreen and embroidery	18 months
LA Conservation Corps	Outdoor maintenance (e.g., community garden maintenance, landscaping)	Two- to three-month intervals (alternates with education cycles)

SOURCES: Implementation study site visits and other qualitative data collection

The work schedule (both the daily and overall program schedule) and maximum length of employment at the SEs also vary based on the types of participants served:

- **SEs serving youth.** At CRCD and LA Conservation Corps, participants have a work schedule that is typically alternated with secondary school classes such that youth work for a period of approximately two to three months and then attend school for the next two to three months—a schedule they keep up until they both meet other LA:RISE program requirements and earn a diploma or GED.

- **SEs serving only adults.** At the four SEs that serve a wider range of adults, employment tends to begin right away and typically ends when the participant is deemed ready to move on to other employment (based on other LA:RISE program requirements and case manager assessments as well as time in transitional employment). However, transitional employment at these SEs can last upward of a year or more (Homeboy and Chrysalis) or for a much shorter period, typically two to eight months (Goodwill and DWC).

Despite these differences, there are at least two common elements that define the overall period of work. First, most individuals do not work full-time schedules. Typically, they have at least one day a week—and even some time each day—when they are able to work on other aspects of work readiness and life stability and begin thinking about employment placement with SE and other program partner staff members. (These services are discussed more below.) Second, as discussed in Chapter II, participants are supposed to work a minimum of 300 hours and pass the job readiness assessment (JRA) twice before they are referred to employment.

Work Readiness Training

Alongside the opportunity to gain work experience through transitional employment, LA:RISE participants receive work readiness training, including how to build a resume, search for jobs online, and behave in job interviews (as well as practice doing so). Work readiness training also includes guidance around other soft skills such as punctuality, effective communication, teamwork, communication with customers, dressing appropriately, being on time, and communicating with managers (e.g., asking for work hours to accommodate concurrent trainings or long travel times). One focus group participant, for instance, described how she learned about customer service skills through her transitional employment experience; another said that his time on the job improved his communication skills.

At three of the SEs (CRCD, LA Conservation Corps, and Goodwill), some of these skills were delivered through formal classes, typically a week or two, interspersed with work or as part of the educational curriculum. Two others (Chrysalis and DWC) also delivered formal classes to all program participants during the services they received at these SEs prior to enrolling in LA:RISE (see Chapter III). Each of the SEs also delivered work readiness training informally, on the job, via the transitional employment supervisor or one-on-one through case management staff. Finally, LA:RISE participants have had the opportunity to take work readiness classes at the WorkSource or YouthSource that was their LA:RISE WDS partner.

The LA:RISE program also formally measures participants' work readiness through the JRA, which leadership partners created to help unify the program experience. According to the LA:RISE program model, each LA:RISE program participant needs to pass the JRA at least twice (in addition to completing the 300 hours of transitional employment) before moving on to

employment placement.[24] The JRA is typically conducted by each SE's work site supervisor[25] who gives the participant a score of one to four in a series of different categories including attendance and punctuality, workplace performance (e.g., effort and productivity, responsibility, and initiative), workplace appearance, and communication and attitude. SE staff members then assess the areas in which the LA:RISE participant has reached a satisfactory level, made gains, and still needs to improve. The participant passes when he or she has an average score of 3 (and no scores of 1).

SE staff use the JRA as an additional opportunity to exchange feedback between employment specialists and LA:RISE participants. In many ways, it was designed to function much like a performance review at a regular job. The supervisor or case manager (depending on the SE) shares the results of the JRA with the participant. For example, an LA:RISE case manager at one SE described how she discusses the results with the participant alongside any comments she or the WDS case manager has received from the work site supervisor and uses this information to explain how he or she can be a better employee. SE staff try to share information in a positive way that includes constructive feedback. More generally, this process gets participants accustomed to receiving feedback; according to SE staff members, this better prepares them for the transition into permanent employment. Participants also expressed a similar idea in focus groups, stating that they are better able to take constructive criticism due to the feedback received while in transitional employment. Overall, SE staff indicated in interviews they are receptive to the JRA as a tool and they appreciate and welcome using it.

Education and Occupational Skills Training

The LA:RISE program provides opportunities for participants to improve their education and developing job skills through several different mechanisms. First, two of the SEs (CRCD and LA Conservation Corps), both of which serve youth, pair transitional employment with diploma-based secondary education programs at charter schools, with youth rotating between education and employment cycles.[26] At CRCD, for instance, if participants enroll during the school year, they first enroll in a seven-week session at the program's charter school. If participants enroll when school is out of session, they participate in transitional employment and then later enroll in the charter school.

Second, participants learn various occupational skills through on-the-job training as they participate in transitional employment through their SE. Work supervisors spend time providing one-on-one guidance about how to do the job and any skills and approaches they need to do

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[24] Staff members at some SE partners administer the JRA somewhat different. At one SE, staff members reported administering the JRA three times for each individual. Staff members at another SE indicated that they administer the JRA to participants quarterly.

[25] At one SE, the case manager conducts the JRA.

[26] CRCD youth attend the Youth Build Charter School, a competency-based dropout recovery school that gives them the opportunity to earn a high school diploma. Similarly, LACC provides LA:RISE participants with the opportunity to earn a high school diploma through its partner high school, Saito High School.

so. For example, participants in retail positions learn customer service skills and how to process payments, discounts, and returns. Participants in food service positions learn about food preparation and serving food. Cleaning crews learn about various power equipment and safety practices. Site-specific occupational training includes the following:

- Participants at CRCD enroll in a local community college course on construction that teaches them drafting, measurement, tool use, and other construction techniques.

- Chrysalis conducts a training session for participants to learn about job safety, customer service, radio codes, and cleaning equipment needed on its street cleaning crews.

- DWC offers training in each of its employment fields depending on whether participants work in food service or retail.

- Goodwill provides training for both its retail and janitorial track that covers job-specific duties such as operating the cash register and cleaning equipment.

- Homeboy offers participants training opportunities during LA:RISE that include food handler certification, forklift certification, and solar panel training.

- LA Conservation Corps provides participants with training on environmental, CPR, and Occupational Safety and Health Administration (OSHA) standards.

All SEs also offer participants the option to enroll in occupational training, which can be paid for through an individual training account from the WDS partner.

Case Management

Participants interact with case managers from each of the program partners as they progress through the entirety of the LA:RISE program. Upon enrollment, participants are first matched with an SE case manager or another staff member who has a similar role, such as an employment specialist. These staff members have periodic check-ins with participants throughout the program. Since participants are also co-enrolled in WIOA services at the WDS partner from the start of the program, they are introduced to a case manager at the WDS partner early on. As participants move through transitional employment, the frequency of meetings with the WDS case manager tends to increase. Some participants are also connected to a PSP case manager, typically still later in the program. The goal of case management, no matter which partner is delivering it, is to create a stable and well-supported environment for the participant throughout the LA:RISE program experience.

The frequency of visits with SE case managers ranges from daily interactions to more scheduled, less frequent visits. Even when contact with a case manager was less frequent, however, participants often regularly spoke to other program staff such as their transitional employment supervisor. At each of the SEs, participants could request a check-in with their case manager whenever they needed it. However, interviews at SEs suggest that caseloads vary considerably, from 30 cases per case manager at one SE to as many as 275 at another. So, the

additional access to WDS and PSP case managers may be more useful for participants at some SEs, depending on SE case manager availability.

Case managers, no matter their organization, are responsible for providing five main types of services:

- **Assessment.** Case managers utilize a variety of assessment tools to identify participants' backgrounds, goals, and needs throughout the program. They use a range of assessment tools to determine things such as: employment experience; life skills; education and job skills; life stability (e.g., housing and need for supportive services); prevalence of trauma, PTSD, or other psychological barriers; career interests; and other factors that might prevent them from finding and maintaining employment and leading stable lives.

- **Referrals to supportive services.** Case managers refer participants to agencies and organizations that provide housing assistance, physical and mental health care, food assistance, transportation assistance, and other services as needed to mitigate barriers preventing them from completing their education and vocational training and finding and retaining employment.

- **Goal tracking.** Case managers utilize a range of tools to track participants' progress towards employment goals, but most use some kind of individual service plan that tracks barriers and progress towards these goals, which are updated every few months.

- **Motivational support.** Case managers support and guide participants through their time in the program. Focus group participants, for instance, reported that the relationships they developed with case managers were meaningful to them. One noted that his relationship with his case manager was the reason he stayed in the program and described the level of support and encouragement he received. Another reported that she viewed staff members as "big sisters," and that they were motivational and encouraging.

- **Employment services.** LA:RISE case management services focus on preparing participants for permanent employment through work readiness activities (discussed above) and job search services (discussed more below).

With multiple staff members providing similar services across different organizations, there is some potential for miscommunication. This type of coordination was not well established at the time of the site visits but, as discussed in Chapter II, leadership partners have since established several procedures to help partners regularly convene to discuss cases, share assessment information, and facilitate warm handoffs. As one leadership partner described the process, at first it was a little chaotic, but "they now talk to each other as partners."

Supportive Services

Due to the high level of need among participants, case managers and other staff members at SE, WDS, and PSP partners regularly connect participants with supportive services. Partners

provide some of these services directly and most, as needed, through referrals to outside agencies. Below are some of the main supportive services that partners help participants obtain.

Housing

A lack of stable housing is a significant problem for many LA:RISE participants. To address this concern, partners provide referrals to external agencies that offer housing assistance.[27] However, some participants reported in focus groups that the referral process to various agencies is difficult, as there is a shortage of affordable housing available. For example, the Los Angeles Housing Authority has one of the largest affordable housing stocks in the city, but the waitlist for Section 8 has been mostly closed since 2004.[28]

Healthcare

LA:RISE partners work with participants to help them get healthcare services through referrals to community health providers as needed. The LA:RISE program was designed to serve individuals with greater healthcare needs than the general population. About 80 percent of ex-offenders have substance abuse issues, and many have mental health issues as well (Travis et al., 2001). Estimates suggest that mental illness among those incarcerated is two to four times more prevalent than among the non-incarcerated population (Travis et al., 2001). The most common service partners spoke about referring participants to was substance abuse treatment followed by primary healthcare. Other healthcare services participants were referred to include mental health care, dental care, vision care, health classes and workshops, and Medi-Cal application assistance.

Transportation

Program staff members and participants, across all the partners, noted that lack of transportation is a significant barrier to finding and maintaining employment in Los Angeles. Program staff at each of the partner organizations reported offering transportation assistance more than any other type of supportive service. This is most likely because it is a service that most partners provide directly. Staff members provide bus tokens, discounted Metro cards, and gas cards, and help participants obtain discounted IDs and licenses.

Family Supports

Some partners provide participants with various forms of family support services (both on site and through referrals). Some examples include: parenting classes (Homeboy), fatherhood programming and childcare services (Friends Outside and LIFT), baby supplies (Homeboy and

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[27] Subsequent iterations of LA:RISE (known as version 2.0, 3.0, and 4.0) incorporate additional housing opportunities for participants, as this has been a key barrier to successful completion of the program.

[28] For two weeks in October 2017, the waitlist reopened for the first time in 13 years (Smith, 2017).

CRCD), and visitation services for families with incarcerated family members or children in the foster care system (Friends Outside).

Legal Assistance

Many partners also provide legal services. Homeboy, for instance, has volunteer attorneys who provide free consultations and referrals regarding legal matters—including bench warrants and post-conviction matters, immigration law, employment law, and family law—addressing such issues as divorce, child custody and visitation, and child support. Additionally, they help individuals fill out petitions for expungements of criminal records. LA Conservation Corps has a monetary fund to help pay court fees and fines. To access these services, individuals apply through their case manager and must attend a six-hour workshop. After attending the workshop, their application is forwarded to a committee made up of managers and directors who decide whether to fund the individual's court fees. LA Conservation Corps also partners with the Legal Aid Foundation of Los Angeles to help expunge individual records, reduce sentences from felonies to misdemeanors, and make referrals to Homeless Court. Also, participants across partners had access to the Restoration Law Center, which was added as part of one of the later iterations of LA:RISE, but which some earlier LA:RISE participants may have been able to access.

Life Skills and Other Supportive Services

Many partners directly provide life skills training (e.g., financial management, anger management, sexual health) and a range of other on-site services including food assistance, showers, clothing (for employment or otherwise), barber shop services, tattoo removal, help obtaining a mailing address (for homeless participants), sewing classes, and acting classes.

Employment Placement Services

SE program partners take several steps to help LA:RISE participants find employment. The responsibility for delivering these services is shared between the SE and WDS partners, but this process also involves bridge and competitive employers.

SE Partner Employment Placement Services

SE partners described the employment placement process as beginning with participants' initial enrollment into the transitional employment program and as a topic of continuing discussion throughout their time in the LA:RISE program. In addition to a range of work readiness activities (described above), SE partner staff members report that they regularly discuss employment options and the placement process with participants. They also make sure participants are ready for work and for job opportunities before referring them to employers by screening them for employment eligibility and readiness with tools like the JRA.

SE staff members also do what they can to help participants find employment opportunities. For example, DWC participates in and connects with other members of an organization called the Los Angeles Coalition for the Economy and Jobs, which brings together various local

partners focused on the local economy. At Chrysalis, staff members discussed the importance of handholding participants through the process—for example, walking with participants to interviews to make sure that they arrive on time. At the same time, staff noted that job searchers are sometimes self-motivated and self-directed, with some finding work before they complete program requirements. At CRCD, staff noted that job placement occurs while youth are still in their program as they look for part-time work; staff at Homeboy reported that trainees find jobs on their own much of the time.

SE staff members are also dedicated to building and maintaining relationships with employers. The Chrysalis business development manager, for instance, attends networking events and Los Angeles Chamber events, makes cold calls to employers, hosts recruitment events, and follows up by reaching out to contacts in posted job opportunities. LA Conservation Corps' Support and Transition Services Department organizes job fairs where they invite local employers that are hiring. Employers are also invited as guest speakers to worksites and to speak generally about the qualities they are looking for in job candidates. As discussed in Chapter II, SE staff members also coordinate with REDF staff to connect participants to available bridge employer positions and, in some cases, make such referrals themselves.

SE staff members indicated in interviews that they are often uniquely positioned to cultivate these relationships with employers and prepare them for hiring LA:RISE participants because of their knowledge of participants' situations and levels of experience. Part of their role is to mitigate employers' concerns related to perceptions of individuals who experience barriers to employment. For example, while most of Homeboy trainees find jobs on their own, employment counselors at the organization also work with employers that are open to hiring formerly incarcerated individuals to help them better understand their participants.

These efforts of SEs to help with employment appear to be appreciated. Focus group participants described SE services as very helpful in terms of being informed and prepared for applying to job opportunities. One participant mentioned that he "had a better understanding [his] own skills" after being in the program.

WDS Partner Employment Placement Services

As discussed in Chapter II, LA:RISE participants are co-enrolled in WIOA services. As such, WDS partners begin to work with participants while they are still in transitional employment and will help them with employment placement services at whatever point they start their job search. WDS partners offer the following services to assist with job placement: listings on their job boards for immediate openings with local employers; free internet access; equipment needed for conducting job searches (computers, printers, phones, fax machines, and copy machines); workshops related to job searching, interviewing, and developing resumes; and one-on-one interview preparation.

Overall, staff at the WDS partners said they see their role in LA:RISE as building and maintaining relationships with local employers in the construction, hospitality, and retail industries. Business services teams at these partners conduct needs assessments for employers to determine locations, skill needs, and number of available positions. They also work to maintain relationships with employers by attending resource fairs, establishing in-person meetings with

human resources departments, and hosting employers on site for job fairs and to conduct interviews. For instance, a staff member at one WDS partner discussed participating in a coalition of employers and employment agencies; another has an agreement with a large sports and entertainment company to provide jobs.

It is interesting to note that placement support comes from both SE and WDS partners. Participants, especially early in the program, might work with either. While the leadership team exerted a considerable effort to ensure clear communication and coordination between SE and WDS partners, the extent to which this existed around employment placement was still evolving (as was placement itself). The program will benefit from further clarification of roles and responsibilities around this area, such as which partner makes referrals and how follow-up is coordinated across partners.

Bridge and Competitive Employment

As outlined earlier in the report, the LA:RISE program works with two main types of employer partners: bridge employers, which are small- to medium-sized employers that are specially prepared to work with the LA:RISE program's high barrier populations, and competitive employers, which include any other employer partners that SE or WDS partners have worked with over the years and which might have positions that are a good fit for program participants. At the time of the implementation study site visits, very few participants had been placed into employment, and only one had been placed at a bridge employer. Since then, the number placed into employment has continued to increase. While the final report will explore these placement outcomes (and employment impacts) in greater detail, this earlier round of implementation study data collection reveals some interesting lessons around the employers the program has developed as well as around the placement process.

One important change to the program model since the initial implementation of the grant was the definition of a bridge employer. Initially, bridge employers were intended to provide an additional source of employment that would create a "bridge" between transitional and permanent employment for those hardest to employ. It would be an additional form of subsidized employment designed to further ease some participants' transitions into the world of competitive employment. However, that model proved infeasible due to the inability to define necessary criteria and provide the right type of opportunities for all participants. In addition, partners realized many employers—both bridge and competitive—were willing to work with the program's target populations. As a result, the two types of employers resemble one another in terms of their role and the point at which participants go to work for them with the differences centered around their size and the placement process.[30]

As SE and WDS partners already worked with competitive employers, those relationships did not change much except for the increased coordination that needed to transpire between the partners around placement activities. The first round of site visits, however, highlighted a few

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[30] As described in Chapter II, leadership partners informed SE and WDS partners about bridge employment opportunities while SE and WDS partners placed individuals with competitive employers directly. However, a recent program change means that now all placements are supposed to occur through the WDS partners.

challenges partners realized in integrating bridge employers into the placement process. First, bridge employers were often smaller and less flexible about hours worked, had fewer positions, and were not always open to part-time work. For the two SEs serving youth, this was a problem, since many youth participants were completing education and did not have room for full-time work. SE staff members at the other SEs also indicated that their participants were often eager for part-time or seasonal work as they tried to stabilize their lives. Second, SE and WDS partners had existing relationships and communication channels with many employer partners, including their own businesses, and so getting to know newer employer partners was not always easy for them to do.[31] Third, some of the bridge employers were new to LA:RISE and needed time to learn about how best to work with the program. Staff members at these employer organizations were often excited for the opportunity to work with the program. They discussed how they anticipated hiring individuals with no qualifications or experience because they intended to train employees "from the ground up"; they also said they hoped to hire LA:RISE participants with strong soft skills, those who were team players and were kind, social, and open to learning. However, this process was often too slow or too infrequent for the program. One employer, for example, planned to hire three to five individuals during the first year and "see how the program works" before hiring additional participants; another intended to hire participants for a trial period; yet another planned to hire just one participant as an intern.

Summary and Conclusion

The LA:RISE program includes the delivery of six service components: transitional employment, work readiness services, education and training services, case management services, supportive services, and employment placement services. The program starts with the transitional employment experience operated at one of the six SE partner organizations, where participants gain employment experience, earn wages, learn job skills, and learn work readiness skills. During (and sometimes after) their transitional employment, participants also meet and work with their SE, WDS, and PSP case managers. This may provide access to additional education and training opportunities and supportive services that can help them get through their transitional employment experience more smoothly and eventually find their way into the employment search process with either their SE or WDS partner case manager. Through the combined effort of these different partners and the addition of bridge employers, participants have access to an increased set of employment placement opportunities.

While partners have faced some challenges in coordinating the delivery of the LA:RISE program's many services, they have largely seemed to work things out. Partners regularly communicate around participants' progress. This increased coordination has meant that participants meet and begin working with their WDS and PSP case managers during their

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[31] Chrysalis, for instance, operates a staffing agency to which program staff members may refer LA:RISE participants, starting at around three months (although typically later) into the LA:RISE transitional employment programs. Goodwill also sometimes hires LA:RISE participants in customer service or retail positions at its stores after the completion of transitional employment.

transitional employment experience and are thus better able to take advantage of these additional services. In future research, the study team will examine how partners share and coordinate responsibility for areas of service overlap (like support service referrals) and whether partners are specializing in certain areas.

There are two areas where the program is still evolving and may continue to face some challenges. As such, it will be important to examine these in later implementation study research. First, at the time of the site visits, little employment placement had happened. While placement has since increased, this component is much more in development than the others and may benefit from increased clarity around partner roles regarding how placement is to occur, and which staff members are responsible for different aspects of placement and follow-up. Second, there was still some uncertainty around the role and best use of bridge employers, particularly concerning their overall integration into existing networks of employers. Likewise, there was some concern that opportunities from these employers were too infrequent and not always of the right type (i.e., part-time or seasonal). Meeting these partner and participant needs may help to improve participant employment outcomes.

V. Summary and Conclusion

The previous chapters describe the overall design and early implementation of the LA:RISE program, including the partners involved, the service delivery model created, the recruitment and enrollment of participants, and the services that the program delivered to participants. This final chapter summarizes the key findings of the report and considers their implications for the remainder of the implementation period. The chapter also explores the significance of the evaluation's findings for both the final round of implementation study data collection and the evaluation's impact and cost studies.

Implementation Successes

The WIF grant that funded the LA:RISE program began in July 2014 and gave the leadership partners, EWDD and REDF, about a year to establish the program design, select partner agencies and solidify their working relationships, and implement key pieces of the evaluation. Recruitment and program services began in September 2015. Site visits for the implementation study took place approximately one year into program operations (the latter half of 2016). Since that time, study team members also conducted additional data collection activities through attendance at quarterly LA:RISE academy meetings and monthly phone calls with program partners, discussions on program operations with the leadership team, and collecting and processing participant baseline data. The study team observed the following implementation successes during site visits and through the supplemental data collection activities noted above.

- **The LA:RISE program created a new network of partner organizations.** EWDD and REDF, the program's leadership team, leveraged their individual networks to bring together a wide array of organizations that, like the leadership team organizations, had only limited prior working relationships. This new network of organizations includes non-profit social enterprise (SE) providers, publicly-funded workforce development system (WDS) partners, community-based personal support provider (PSP) organizations, larger competitive employers and "bridge" employers (smaller employers with an explicit commitment to hiring the target populations).

- **Leadership partners created multiple mechanisms to facilitate partner coordination.** The LA:RISE service delivery framework relies on coordination between partner organizations. Leadership partners continue to work with partners to increase coordination through staff member co-location, quarterly meetings, monthly calls, program guidance and online tools that help partners communicate participant services to one another. Staff members report that these mechanisms have helped them learn about coordinating services across their respective organizations even if implementing this new way of working took more time than initially planned.

- **Leadership partners developed a service delivery framework that governs the timing of and responsibility for the program's key services.** Participants begin receiving services from SE partners, which take the lead on delivering (1) transitional employment

and (2) work readiness services. Participants are then co-enrolled into the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA) program at WDS partners, and, as participants progress, they are connected with PSPs. Throughout this process, SEs coordinate with WDS and PSP partners around the delivery of other services, including: (3) education and occupational skills training, (4) case management, (5) supportive services, and (6) placement services, including placement assistance, follow-up, and retention incentives. Together the program partners provide a greater, more well-coordinated menu of services than a person might receive from any one of these partner organizations.

- **The LA:RISE program unifies service delivery across partner organizations by establishing minimum standards for advancement.** One challenge in working with so many partners was standardizing the program experience, and doing so in a way that delivered sufficient, high quality programming that helps participants find and retain employment. To overcome this challenge, program leadership established that participants are supposed to work a minimum 300 hours and pass a job readiness assessment prior to employment placement.

- **Through the recruitment and enrollment efforts of the SE partners, the LA:RISE program met its program enrollment goal.** SE partners largely relied on existing approaches for recruiting participants, which led to some initial challenges. The recruitment period had to be extended two months longer than planned and individual SE enrollment targets had to be adjusted. Those adjustments, however, allowed the LA:RISE program to enroll 508 individuals, eight more than its goal.

- **The LA:RISE program also successfully implemented random assignment.** As part of the enrollment process, SEs randomized 964 study participants: 481 program group members and 483 control group members. The study sample is close to, although slightly below, the evaluation enrollment goal of 1,000 individuals. Study enrollment fell short due to circumstances outside partners' control: the program had to exempt veterans from random assignment, placing these individuals directly into the program, but exempting them from the random assignment process.

- **The LA:RISE program successfully enrolled members of the three priority populations – the formerly incarcerated, individuals at risk of homelessness, and opportunity youth.** At the point of enrollment, about half the program group participants had a history of involvement in the criminal justice system, approximately one-quarter indicated they were either homeless or in transitional housing, and more than half were 18- to 24-years old with various other barriers to employment. Furthermore, the population exhibited many other expected characteristics: most participants had a high school diploma or less, about one-third reported not working within the last five years, about two-thirds reported being on some form of public assistance, and the participants were primarily people of color (either Hispanic or African-American).

- **The LA:RISE program responds to a changing policy agenda.** WIOA emphasizes that workforce system agencies should engage in two practices highlighted in the LA:RISE

program: serving the hard-to-employ (including the program's priority populations) and doing so through transitional employment programs. Furthermore, the program's priority populations align with local political priorities (in particular, Los Angeles' emphasis on addressing the homelessness crisis) that emerged more definitively after the program began.

- **The LA:RISE program responds to many of the limitations to transitional employment programs observed in prior research.** Program leadership has: created mechanisms to support and grow timely and well-coordinated service delivery across partners; unified program services across multiple partners; implemented mechanisms to increase retention through stronger preparation of participants and retention incentives; and overcome concerns about the capacity to recruit and enroll participants.

Implementation Challenges

Given these early successes, the LA:RISE program is well-positioned to further develop and grow. However, during this early phase of implementation, partners encountered several challenges, described below, which have implications for how they manage and operate the program in its later stage.

Initial Implementation Challenges

Many LA:RISE service components remain unchanged from what partners provided prior to the program. While LA:RISE introduces some new service components, a major accomplishment of the program was getting partners to work well with one another according to the service delivery framework. While partners have embraced and are implementing these new ways to work together, doing so did not always happen on the anticipated timeline. The following are ways in which adapting these partner approaches took longer than initially planned.

- **SE partners had to recruit and enroll participants differently**. SE partners had to over-recruit participants due to the impact study, which proved more challenging than they anticipated. SE partners also had to consider how to recruit participants who needed to meet somewhat different eligibility criteria than they had previously (e.g., WIOA eligibility), and how to work with WDS partners around those requirements. Furthermore, they had to work with leadership partners to develop procedures like WorkSource and YouthSource transfer policies.

- **Partners had to learn to coordinate service delivery.** The concept of working together according to the service delivery framework required the new approaches and communication mechanisms discussed above. These approaches helped to ensure that participants were provided with services from each type of partner at the right point in their program timeline. However, making these activities regular practices required a dedication to the program, time to adapt and learn, and overcoming organizational differences in service approaches and service delivery cultures.

- **Implementation of the program's MIS took longer than planned.** The MIS is an important tool in helping partners share participant information and in the coordination of services. It was also designed to help program leadership track (and share) participant outcomes. However, the MIS was not fully operational until after partners started serving participants and once it was in place, partners had to learn to use it quickly.

While partners have overcome these challenges, they do suggest that the experience of participants enrolled early in the program may be different than individuals enrolled later in the program. Those enrolled later may have been recruited differently given the need to modify recruitment approaches and organizational recruitment targets part way through the recruitment cycle. The implications of these recruitment-related challenges on participants outcomes are not entirely clear. However, those individuals enrolled earlier in the recruitment cycle would seem to have been enrolled into a program that was more less well-established and had less coordination between partner organizations. Thus, those individuals enrolled later will likely have been enrolled into a program that is a better representation of what leadership partners designed the LA:RISE program to be.

On-Going Implementation Challenges

The LA:RISE program also faced challenges well after the program began which required leadership partners to adapt program elements and make program changes.

- **Enrolling sufficient numbers of participants for the evaluation required modifying SE recruitment goals.** Four of the six SE partners fell short of their individual enrollment goals according to the original timeline. The program was able to make its overall enrollment goal by shifting individual enrollment numbers between SE partners and extending the enrollment period by two months. Overall, program enrollment was a success, but these challenges provide a lesson for program planners as to what it takes to engage in recruitment for a new program such as this, especially one involving a random assignment impact study.

- **Finding the most effective SE and WDS partner pairings was initially challenging and took some attention to creating effective working relationships.** The partnership between SE partner, LA Conservation Corps, and WDS partner, UCLA, ended earlier than anticipated and involved shifting some enrollment numbers to LA Conservation Corps' other WDS partner. AYE joined the program partway through, becoming an additional WDS partner for Homeboy, requiring changes to participant referral procedures and enrollment number changes. While they were able to adapt, leadership partners and program partners had to engage in additional planning and strategizing. These types of mid-program changes, for a pilot program, are not unexpected, but serve to illustrate the need for sufficient planning time and ongoing technical assistance.

- **Staff turnover was an ongoing challenge**. Several staff left their organizations or moved into positions within their organizations that no longer involved working with LA:RISE. With few staff members at any one partner, the departure of staff could substantially limit the ability of partners to coordinate service delivery. Again, while partners were

able to develop systems for training and re-training, including the development by leadership partners of the online shared training materials, these staffing changes slowed the leadership team's ability to rapidly build and grow a uniform program. These changes underscore the potential benefit of some redundancy in staffing and well-documented systems for re-training staff.

Continued Development Around Placement Services

Many LA:RISE program services related to employment were well-established and already integrated into partner operations at the time of the implementation site visits, if not before. These included the development of and requirements around the JRA and the number of transitional employment hours participants were expected to complete. Of course, the employment services that partners had provided to their participants prior to LA:RISE, such as transitional employment or the employment services provided by WDS partners, were also well-established. However, several aspects of placement services, especially those involving the coordination of these services, were still evolving at the time of the implementation study visits. These evolving aspects were as follows.

- **Many program partners were still learning to work with bridge employers.** Program leadership overcame many initial challenges in defining and integrating bridge employers. They ultimately settled on a group of small employers, friendly to the LA:RISE program's priority populations, who would work through REDF to provide placement opportunities. However, partners still faced some challenges in working with bridge employers, including learning to integrate them into established referral procedures and that the opportunities they offered were too few, too infrequent, and too often permanent rather than part-time employment.

- **At the time of the site visits, partners had placed few individuals in employment.** Only a small number of individuals had progressed to the point of needing placement services, but partners were also still learning about the best ways to do so. They were also still learning about the best ways to follow-up with participants and track retention in employment, including how to deal with incentives for retention (delivered through PSP partners) and how to communicate and coordinate job placement progress across partners. While employment placement numbers have increased since the site visits, the program will need to continue to develop these services.

- **Partners were still refining other aspects of placement.** While partners were working to refer participants to both competitive and bridge employers, the program was working on refining or adapting other aspects of placement. These included connecting with new employers, helping improve cross-partner communication around employment availability, further defining which partners should be making referrals to employers and who should engage in follow-up services, what additional funding streams were available to support employment (such as on-the-job training funds through WIOA), and whether other types of opportunities such as vocational training might count as suitable

placement. The study will need to continue to learn about how these program elements grow and change in future rounds of data collection.

In subsequent implementation study data collection, the evaluation will need to give additional attention to how placement services continue to solidify as well as how they grow and change. These are important for understanding a critical element in how the program hopes to achieve its some of its most important outcomes (employment placement and retention) and which also address some challenges identified with transitional employment programs in the literature (namely the ability to match participants to jobs in which they are trained).

Additional Areas to Consider in the Final Report

In addition to the success and challenges outlined above, there are four other areas that the study will continue to monitor and follow in subsequent implementation study data collection with implications for the implementation study as well as the cost and impact studies.

Program Outcomes

While EWDD and REDF established certain employment-related goals for participants, the impact study will be looking at administrative data to determine the program's impact on employment. However, the extent to which participants achieve certain interim outcomes may suggest the extent to which the program was implemented as planned and the extent to which one might expect to see program impacts. For instance, leadership partners have established as a program goal that LA:RISE will co-enroll all 500 program participants into WIOA and ensure that at least half of these participants pass their Job Readiness Assessment and work at least 300 hours in transitional employment. The evaluation's final report will examine program MIS and other city administrative data to determine the extent to which the program achieved these particular goals with the understanding that these outcomes are one overall measure of program dosage; if individuals do not get co-enrolled, do not pass their JRA, or do not work at least 300 hours in the transitional program, they did not receive key components of the program as designed. This could be one explanatory factor in interpreting program impacts (or lack thereof).

Service Contrast

For a randomized control trial to work optimally, two conditions ideally prevail. First, control group members do not receive program services at all. Second, neither program nor control group members receive services similar to program services prior to enrolling in the program, especially from program providers. To the extent that either condition is violated, it diminishes the ability of the impact study to detect differences in outcomes between the program and control group since either a) both groups receive the same services or b) the program can do little to improve upon the baseline level of services that all study participants receive.

As discussed in Chapter III, due to the ways in which the SEs recruited and enrolled individuals into the LA:RISE evaluation, both conditions were violated to some extent. At two of the SEs, after random assignment occurred, control group members were able to receive the

transitional employment services delivered to program group members. While these control group members did not have access to coordinated WIOA co-enrollment, PSP services or bridge employers, they did receive transitional employment, which is, in theory, one of the more significant program components. Also, at these two SEs and at a third, each of the study participants received a set of services from the SEs, prior to LA:RISE enrollment, that were similar to, but less intense than the services delivered as part of LA:RISE, including some work readiness and employment-related services. This means that at the point of random assignment (and enrollment into the study) both program and control group members had already received some services similar to those that they would receive through LA:RISE. LA:RISE program services might therefore do less for the program group thus diminishing the impact of the program.

Both situations provide some interesting possibilities for the impact study. For instance, in the first example above, the study can look at whether impacts are smaller for participants at the two SEs where control group members received transitional employment services. Similarly, the study can look at whether impacts are smaller for participants at SEs where they were recruited from other programs at these same SE partner organizations compared to other SEs. However, due to the study sample size, these subgroups will likely be too small to detect all but very large program impacts. The final report will address more fully how and to what extent these subgroups will be explored.

Evaluating a New Program

While accomplishing much in this early stage of implementation, the LA:RISE program was still growing and developing. Furthermore, it was a new startup effort which sought to develop an entirely new way of having partners operate to delivery program services. This finding has important implications for the impact and cost studies. Testing the impact of a program before it is fully developed could limit the likelihood of observing program impacts. Likewise costs to develop a new program such as this one will be high and thus the marginal costs of any positive impacts will be high. Subsequent rounds of implementation study research will seek to better understand the extent to which the program was implemented as planned and the overall level of investment effort which represents startup costs for the program.

Future Growth and Sustainability

One important question for the implementation study that will be addressed in the final report is the sustainability and scalability of the program. Future rounds of data collection will explore: how and to what extent EWDD is able to acquire funding to continue serving participants; how LA:RISE is able to maintain the commitment of partners over the long term; how and to what extent leadership partners are able to deepen relationships between partners further; how LA:RISE can grow the number of partners, including expanding to new areas; and what changes LA:RISE might need to undergo to sustain itself or to expand. In fact, the program has continued to develop and grow, resulting in subsequent generations and rounds of intake and enrollment (known locally as LA:RISE 2.0, 3.0, 4.0), supported through funding other than WIF. In the final report, the evaluation will more closely examine how this growth occurred and what successes and challenges the program has encountering through this effort to grow.

Final Thoughts

Through its US DOL funded WIF grant, EWDD and partner, REDF, have built a new and innovative employment program with significant potential to help hard-to-employ individuals. Through the program, EWDD and REDF have 1) brought together a new set of partners, 2) set up ways to help them learn to coordinate service delivery, 3) established a distinct set of program services, and 4) helped to unifying program services across partners. Through this effort, program partners have met their enrollment goals and enrolled the priority populations they sought to engage, all while helping to enroll these individuals into a random assignment impact study. Overall, program partners accomplished a great deal in this early phase of program implementation, designing a program that was both innovative and responsive to national and local policy changes. This program has great potential to help train hard-to-employ individuals and provide them with work experience and other supports needed to obtain and retain employment as well as become more productive members of society.

For the remainder of the evaluation, the study team will address three main lines of inquiry that adhere to the three main components of the evaluation. First, the study team will continue to gather information about program implementation. The goal will be to learn about how the program has continued to develop since the early stages of implementation explored in this report, including: new successes and accomplishments, ways in which it overcame challenges highlighted in this report, and new challenges that surfaced in the later stages of implementation. Second, the study will gather information about study participant outcomes. This includes program participant outcomes such as WIOA co-enrollment, transitional employment hours completion and JRA completion success, which will indicate the extent to which the program was able to meet its own outcomes goals and which will provide an indicator of program dosage. This line of inquiry also includes gathering administrative data for both program and control group members that will allow the study team to determine the impact the program had on outcomes such as employment, earnings and recidivism. Third, the study will gather information about program costs to both describe the costs of operating this pilot program and to conduct a cost-effectiveness analysis. The results of these lines of inquiry will be reported on in the evaluation's final report in 2019.

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