



# The Origins and Payoff from the HPOG Three-Armed Experiment

*presented by*  
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# Acknowledgements



- HHS ADMINISTRATION FOR **CHILDREN & FAMILIES** funds HPOG programs
- **OPRE** funds HPOG research & evaluation
- HPOG-Impact Study staff
  - Co-Principal Investigators, Laura Peck & Alan Werner, Abt Associates
  - Project Director, Gretchen Locke, Abt Associates

# The HPOG 3-Arm Experiment



- (1) Origins
- (2) Implementation
- (3) Findings
- (4) Payoff

# HPOG & Its Impact Evaluation



- Intake, enrollment and assessments for **health sector training** for low-income individuals and TANF recipients that includes:
  - (1) career pathways framework
  - (2) rich academic & non-academic support services
  - (3) connections to local employers

# HPOG & Its Impact Evaluation



- Intake, enrollment and assessments for **health sector training** for low-income individuals and TANF recipients that includes:
  - (1) career pathways framework
  - (2) rich academic & non-academic support services
  - (3) connections to local employers
- In 2010, ACF/OFA-funded 32 grantees nationwide
  - Evaluation RFP suggested “3-6 large sites”
  - Abt Associates awarded contract & suggested going “all in”
  - *All* grantees not part of ongoing data collection for other HPOG research (N = 20)
  - Randomize eligible applicants at each grantee to treatment and control groups

# Motivation for the 3-Arm Experiment



- 20 grantees operated 36 programs
- Lots of *natural* variation in program components used → potential to learn “what works”
- Opportunity to introduce even more *planned* variation → 3-way random assignment
  - rigorously identify contribution of randomized components
- What to vary?
- Where to vary?
- How to implement?

# What to Vary Experimentally?



- **Criteria:**
  - prior/suggestive evidence of effectiveness
  - practicality (implementable within short time, within budget)
  - evaluability (feasibility of random assignment)
  - grantee interest

# What to Vary Experimentally?



- **Criteria:**
  - prior/suggestive evidence of effectiveness
  - practicality (implementable within short time, within budget)
  - evaluability (randomizable)
  - grantee interest
- **Selected enhancements:**
  - financial assistance to help with emergencies and other critical needs
  - non-cash incentive program to reward behaviors and achievements
  - facilitated peer support groups to create community and support retention and completion



# Where to Vary Experimentally?



HPOG-Impact Grantees	Facilitated Peer Support	Emergency Assistance	Non-Cash Incentives
Eastern Gateway Community College			
Kansas Department of Commerce			
Schenectady County Community College			
New Hampshire Office of Minority Health			
Milwaukee Area WIB			
South Carolina Department of Social Services			
Buffalo and Erie County WDC			
Gateway Community and Technical College (KY)			
Central Community College			
Suffolk County Department of Labor			
Pensacola State College			
WIB SDA-83 Inc. (LA)			
Research Foundation of CUNY-Hostos Community College			
Will County WIB			
Full Employment Council			
Central Susquehanna Intermediate Unit			
The WorkPlace			
Alamo Community College District and University Health System			
Edmonds Community College			
Bergen Community College (includes 11 programs)			

# Identify Natural Occurrences



Already existing locations (yellow)

HPOG-Impact Grantees	Facilitated Peer Support	Emergency Assistance	Non-Cash Incentives
Eastern Gateway Community College	Yellow	Yellow	Yellow
Kansas Department of Commerce	Light Pink	Light Pink	Light Pink
Schenectady County Community College	Light Pink	Yellow	Yellow
New Hampshire Office of Minority Health	Light Pink	Yellow	Light Pink
Milwaukee Area WIB	Light Pink	Light Pink	Light Pink
South Carolina Department of Social Services	Light Pink	Light Pink	Light Pink
Buffalo and Erie County WDC	Light Pink	Yellow	Light Pink
Gateway Community and Technical College (KY)	Light Pink	Yellow	Light Pink
Central Community College	Light Pink	Light Pink	Yellow
Suffolk County Department of Labor	Light Pink	Yellow	Light Pink
Pensacola State College	Light Pink	Yellow	Light Pink
WIB SDA-83 Inc. (LA)	Light Pink	Light Pink	Light Pink
Research Foundation of CUNY-Hostos Community College	Light Pink	Light Pink	Light Pink
Will County WIB	Light Pink	Yellow	Light Pink
Full Employment Council	Yellow	Light Pink	Yellow
Central Susquehanna Intermediate Unit	Light Pink	Yellow	Light Pink
The WorkPlace	Light Pink	Yellow	Light Pink
Alamo Community College District and University Health System	Light Pink	Light Pink	Light Pink
Edmonds Community College	Light Pink	Yellow	Light Pink
Bergen Community College (includes 11 programs)	Light Pink	Light Pink	Light Pink

# Add “Enhancement” Sites



Locations where randomly assigned (green)

HPOG-Impact Grantees	Facilitated Peer Support	Emergency Assistance	Non-Cash Incentives
Eastern Gateway Community College	Yellow	Yellow	Yellow
Kansas Department of Commerce	Pink	Pink	Pink
Schenectady County Community College	Pink	Yellow	Yellow
New Hampshire Office of Minority Health	Green	Yellow	Pink
Milwaukee Area WIB	Pink	Pink	Pink
South Carolina Department of Social Services	Pink	Pink	Green
Buffalo and Erie County WDC	Green	Yellow	Pink
Gateway Community and Technical College (KY)	Pink	Yellow	Green
Central Community College	Pink	Pink	Yellow
Suffolk County Department of Labor	Pink	Yellow	Green
Pensacola State College	Pink	Yellow	Pink
WIB SDA-83 Inc. (LA)	Pink	Pink	Pink
Research Foundation of CUNY-Hostos Community College	Pink	Green	Pink
Will County WIB	Pink	Yellow	Pink
Full Employment Council	Yellow	Green	Yellow
Central Susquehanna Intermediate Unit	Pink	Yellow	Pink
The WorkPlace	Green	Yellow	Pink
Alamo Community College District and University Health System	Pink	Pink	Green
Edmonds Community College	Pink	Yellow	Pink
Bergen Community College (includes 11 programs)	Pink	Green	Green

# “Selling” 3-Way Randomization



- Offered program \$\$ to implement selected enhancements
- Reached out to all grantees that did not already offer the enhancement component
- Helped interested grantees ...
  - consider enhancements
  - choose from among them
  - craft/submit proposals
- And then...
  - worked with grantees to implement enhancement tests

# Implementation Challenges



- Funds to do the enhancement were crucial (but not just “Fund it and they will come”)
- Also took . . .
  - large outreach effort by the evaluation contractor
  - strong encouragement of grantees by ACF (OFA & OPRE)
  - in-depth review (& revision) of grantee proposals to ensure strong tests
- Non-trivial exercise to determine which programs did not already have a given enhancement

Fidelity of enhancement delivery achieved by all grantees

# Findings at 15 Months



- Emergency assistance = no impact
- Non-cash incentives = no impact
- Facilitated peer support = only impacts were negative
  - program completion -7 percentage points
  - earnings - \$421

Confidence in the veracity of these findings without random assignment would surely be low

- presupposing that non-experimental analysis would have given these correct results!

# Methodological Benefits



- Believable, accurate findings on the impact of each randomized enhancement
  - Opportunity to calibrate non-experimental methods to replicate experimental results
    - for the three program components for which both types of analysis are possible
- ➔ Use the improved non-experimental methods to get more reliable findings for program components not varied experimentally

# Report Information



The HPOG Impact final report with these findings will be out this fall and will be available at:

- <https://www.acf.hhs.gov/opre/research/project/health-profession-opportunity-grants-hpog-impact-studies>
- <http://www.career-pathways.org/>



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