

MOVING WELFARE RECIPIENTS TOWARD SELF-SUFFICIENCY: AN ASSESSMENT OF THE HIGH PERFORMANCE LEARNING PROJECT

Final Report

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The National Association of Workforce Boards contracted with Capital Research Corporation to conduct this study. The views in this report are those of the author and do not necessary reflect the views of the National Association of Workforce Boards or the U.S. Department of Labor.

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I. INTRODUCTION

The High Performance Learning Project (HPLP) was a 30-month initiative sponsored by the National Association of Workforce Boards (NAWB), in collaboration with the American Association of Community Colleges (AACC) and Instructional Systems, Inc. Funding for the project came from a \$4.9 million Welfare-to-Work (WtW) Round One grant from the U.S. Department of Labor's Employment and Training Administration (DOL/ETA).¹ The period of performance under this contract with DOL started in July 1998 and concluded in December 2000. Under this grant, NAWB funded projects in 10 localities (see Exhibit 1-1 for background on each project): Birmingham, AL; Central Illinois; Los Angeles, CA; Maricopa County, AZ; New Haven, CT; North Tennessee; Phoenix, AZ; Portland, OR; Prince George's County, MD; and St. Paul, MN. Seven of these 10 grantees completed the terms of their grants; the remaining three sites – Maricopa County, New Haven, and Prince George's County – had their grants with NAWB terminated prior to completion of grant activities.

HPLP was designed to upgrade entry-level skills, promote continuous learning, and assist participants in qualifying for promotions. The original design for the project (which was subsequently modified to fit local conditions at each site) called for welfare recipients enrolled in the project to receive computer-based training in one of five entry-level occupations: building maintenance, customer service representative, home care

¹ Appendix A provides background information about the Welfare-to-Work program, including an overview of funding, participant eligibility, and allowable services.

**EXHIBIT 1-1: OVERVIEW OF HIGH PERFORMANCE
LEARNING PROJECT (HPLP) SITES**

State	HPLP Project Sponsor	Service Area	Total Participants	Early Termination Versus Completed Project
AL	Birmingham Area Private Industry Council	Jefferson County (including Birmingham)	203	• Completed Project
AZ	Maricopa County Human Services Dept. – Employment and Training Division	Maricopa County (excluding Phoenix)	2	• Early Termination Site
AZ	City of Phoenix, Human Services Department	City of Phoenix	187	• Completed Project
CA	Los Angeles County Private Industry Council	Los Angeles County	285	• Completed Project
CT	New Haven RWDB/Private Industry Council	South Central Connecticut	13	• Early Termination Site
IL	Central Illinois Private Industry Council	Peoria, Woodford, Marshal, and Stark Counties	138	• Completed Project
MD	Prince George’s Workforce Services Corporation	Prince George’s County	4	• Early Termination Site
MN	City of Saint Paul Department of Planning and Economic Development	Ramsey County and City of St. Paul	138	• Completed Project
OR	Worksystems, Inc.	Multnomah and Washington Counties	88	• Completed Project
TN	Workforce Essentials	Montgomery, Wilson, Sumner, Roberson, and Dickson Counties	88	• Completed Project

worker, office/clerical worker, and security guard. Using the training software – developed by Instructional Systems, Inc. (ISI) – HPLP participants could, as needed, also complete training modules designed to upgrade basic skills (“workplace reading and math”) and life skills. This training was to be provided as a post-employment service – i.e., at the worksite and after employers had hired welfare recipients. In addition to the training component, HPLP was designed so that mentors (primarily located at partnering community colleges) would track and help participants complete training and retain their jobs.

As part of the WtW grant, the U.S. Department of Labor required NAWB to conduct an assessment at the conclusion of the project to document the various models/strategies employed by local sites and to assess lessons learned from the initiative that may be replicable in other localities. In response to this requirement, NAWB contracted in May 2001 with Capital Research Corporation to conduct this assessment. The scope of work under this study was aimed at producing a final report that NAWB could use both to (1) meet evaluation reporting requirements under NAWB’s Welfare-to-Work (WtW) competitive grant with the U.S. Department of Labor, and (2) provide workforce development boards with information useful for replication of program strategies and interventions developed under the High Performance Learning Project. Under the scope of work for this assessment, key questions to be addressed included the following:

- Who did the HPLP program serve (see Section II)?
- How were welfare recipients recruited into the program, and what factors affected their participation levels (Section II)?

- How were participants served -- i.e., what was the basic structure of the service delivery systems and range of services provided to participants (see Section III)?
- What were the basic outcomes for participants (e.g., job placement, job retention, and wage rates)? To what extent did services provided through the initiative enhance skills and employability of program participants (see Section IV)?
- What were the costs related to providing participant services under the project (see Section V)?
- What program models/strategies should be replicated by other workforce development boards and under what conditions (see Section VI)?

The report's findings and lessons learned are intended to guide the larger community of human service and workforce development agencies in providing services to enhance employability, job retention, and career advancement of welfare recipients and other disadvantaged populations.

This report examines the implementation experiences of the 10 program sites funded under HPLP in providing employment, training, and other services to welfare recipients. Using information collected through telephone interviews with project administrators and staff at grantees and partnering agencies (i.e., primarily community colleges), this report describes how the programs were structured and operated, as well as identifies promising practices and implementation challenges. NAWB and sites provided (in varying degrees) other program documentation, such as the original NAWB proposal for the project, progress reports, NAWB site visit monitoring reports, data on site-level funding, expenditures, and outcomes, and other planning documents. This study uses a case study approach. While some cross-site comparisons are provided of levels of participation, service delivery strategies, and participant outcomes, caution should be taken in drawing conclusions about the effectiveness of project sites or the program strategies they employed. This caution is necessary because of several factors that limit

cross-site comparability: (1) the design for the evaluation was not experimental, and thus, did not feature treatment and control groups intended to gauge net impacts of interventions on participants; (2) project sites varied in terms of the number and types of individuals served (e.g., some sites may have served more disadvantaged populations than others); (3) the demonstration grant amounts and other resources available to sponsoring organizations varied considerably across sites; and (4) environmental conditions (e.g., willingness of other agencies and employers to collaborate, types of partnering employers, and local labor market conditions) varied across sites.

The sections that follow present key study findings from data collected on each of the project sites. Section II analyzes program participation, including program recruitment, numbers and types of welfare recipients served, and factors affecting participation levels. Section III provides an overview of the basic design and structure of initiatives, including: project goals/objectives, types of services provided, and challenges of implementing local projects. Section IV analyzes program outcomes, including job placement rates, wages at placement, job retention rates, and other program effects. Section V examines project funding and expenditures, including project expenditures per participant and per job placement. Section VI provides conclusions and implications of the study, including “lessons learned” from the project about assisting welfare recipients in upgrading skills and securing and retaining jobs. Two appendices have been attached to this document: Appendix A provides additional background information about the WtW program; and Appendix B provides copies of the interview guides.

II. PROGRAM PARTICIPATION

This section examines participation levels in HPLP. It addresses the following questions related to participation: Who was eligible to participate in HPLP? How were welfare recipients recruited into the program? What were the planned and actual levels of participation in HPLP? What were the characteristics of program participants? What were the factors that affected the number and types of welfare recipients served by HPLP sites?

ELIGIBILITY REQUIREMENTS FOR HPLP PARTICIPATION

To be eligible to participate in the HPLP project, a TANF recipient had to meet the eligibility requirements under Welfare-to-Work (WtW), which changed substantially during the course of the project. The WtW legislation originally specified that both the formula and competitive grants were to be used to fund services for the hardest-to-employ welfare recipients and noncustodial parents (NCPs). As originally enacted, the law required that at least 70 percent of the funds be used for:

- Long-term TANF recipients or recipients who were within one year of reaching the TANF time limit and who also had two of three legislatively specified barriers to employment: no high school diploma or GED and low reading or math skills, substance abuse problems, or “poor work history.”²
- Noncustodial parents (NCPs) who had two of the same three legislatively specified barriers to employment and had a child with a custodial parent or (in the case of a child-only case) a child who was a long-term TANF recipient or was within one year of reaching the TANF time limit.

²The WtW regulations define “poor work history” as having worked no more than 13 consecutive weeks full-time in unsubsidized employment in the prior 12 months.

- A person with two of the three barriers to employment (described above) but no longer was receiving TANF, as a result of federal or state-imposed time limits.

Under the original law, up to 30 percent of the funds could be used for TANF recipients or noncustodial parents who have “characteristics associated with long-term welfare dependency,” such as teenage parents, persons with poor work history, or high school dropouts. WtW funds could be used to serve the targeted groups of custodial parents on TANF, noncustodial parents, or both the custodial and noncustodial parents together. As the WtW grants program was implemented, evidence accumulated quickly that the eligibility criteria were slowing enrollment and limiting participation.³ These concerns led to enactment in 1999 of amendments to the WtW eligibility criteria, which made it easier for both TANF recipients and NCPs to qualify for services.⁴ The amendments removed the requirement that long-term TANF recipients exhibit additional barriers to employment. TANF recipients became eligible under the amended criteria if they had received assistance for at least 30 months, were within 12 months of reaching a time limit, or had exhausted their TANF benefits as a result of time limits.⁵

³Perez-Johnson, I., et al., Further Progress, “Persistent Constraints: Findings from a Second Survey of the Welfare-to-Work Grants Program,” Princeton, NJ: Mathematica Policy Research, Inc., 2000.

⁴The amendments to the WtW law went into effect in January 2000 for those receiving a WtW competitive grant and in July 2000 for formula grantees.

⁵The amendments left intact the requirement that 70 percent of WtW funds be spent on a defined category of participants, but allowed NCPs to qualify if they met the following three conditions: (1) they are unemployed or underemployed, or are having difficulty making child support payments; (2) their minor children are receiving or eligible for TANF, or received TANF in the past year, or are receiving or are eligible for assistance under the Food Stamp, Supplemental Security Income (SSI), Medicaid, or Children’s Health Insurance programs; and (3) they enter into a personal responsibility contract under which they commit to cooperating in establishing paternity, paying child

In addition to the basic requirement that participants meet WtW eligibility requirements, HPLP sites originally were designed to serve only welfare recipients who were employed. The original goal of the effort was to provide HPLP services as a post-employment service to upgrade skills and long-term employability and enhance prospects for job retention. As discussed later in greater detail, while sites attempted to implement this basic model of limiting services to individuals already employed, nearly all sites experienced difficulty recruiting enough participants and made the shift to serving mostly unemployed welfare recipients and providing HPLP services both as pre- and post-employment services.

OUTREACH AND RECRUITMENT

A key feature of HPLP local project sites involved development and execution of outreach and recruitment strategies to inform potentially-eligible welfare recipients about training services available through the project and how to become enrolled. In some sites, because of the restrictive definition of WtW eligibility and other factors (discussed below), the recruitment of eligible TANF recipients was one of the most difficult challenges in establishing and operating the project. Three of the ten sites were ultimately unsuccessful in their efforts to recruit participants, and as a result, were terminated from the project. Together, these three projects were able to recruit fewer than 25 HPLP participants before their projects were terminated.

support, and participating in services to improve their prospects for employment and paying child support.

As shown in Exhibit 2-1, the primary means by which local projects recruited HPLP participants was through direct referrals from other local agencies – especially other programs serving TANF recipients. All HPLP sites involved in the project relied to a large extent upon establishing arrangements with local TANF offices and/or other WtW initiatives for referrals of WtW eligible clients. Several sites were successful in establishing such linkages and obtained a fairly steady flow of appropriate referrals; other projects encountered substantial difficulty in establishing such links and gaining access to a pool of WtW-eligible individuals.

Several projects – notably the Birmingham and Portland sites -- already had well-established relationships with local TANF agencies. In most sites though, HPLP site administrators and staff had to establish such a linkage and the methods by which TANF recipients would be referred for services. To do so, HPLP administrators met initially with TANF local agency administrators to inform them about the project and try to establish formal agreements or informal arrangements whereby appropriate WtW-eligible TANF recipients would be identified and referred for enrollment in HPLP. Regardless of whether or not there was a formal agreement with local TANF offices, HPLP administrators and staff in sites where there was success in establishing a flow of referrals found it necessary to regularly contact local TANF administrators and staff to keep them informed about the training and other services available through HPLP.

A complicating factor for a number of sites -- hampering referral of WtW-eligible individuals -- was that the HPLP project was funded under the first round of competitive grants. At the time the first round of competitive funding was distributed, local TANF

**EXHIBIT 2-1: RECRUITMENT METHODS AND PARTICIPATION LEVELS
AT SEVEN HPLP SITES COMPLETING THE PROJECT**

Program Characteristic	Birmingham (AL)	Phoenix (AZ)	Los Angeles (CA)	Central Illinois (IL)	St. Paul (MN)	Portland (OR)	North Tennessee (TN)
Original Participation Goal	168	210	504	168	210	168	126
Modified Participation Goal	170	165	504	92	180	135	150
Actual # of Participants	203	187	285	138	138	88	88
Date of First Enrollments	August 1998	March 1999?	March 1999	November 1998	October 1998	November 1998	October 1998
Planned Target Population (based on proposal)	Long-term TANF recipients and NCPs with multiple barrier to meaningful employment	TANF recipients with multiple barriers to meaningful employment	TANF recipients in subsidized or unsubsidized entry-level, minimum wage jobs in need of skill upgrades to become self-sufficient	Less than job ready or job ready TANF recipients	Long-term TANF recipients and NCPs with significant barriers to employment at a wage that allows for self-sufficiency	TANF recipients	TANF recipients who demonstrate the desire to succeed but are limited by their ability and circumstances
Outreach/ Recruitment Methods	-Local TANF offices referred TANF recipients to Birmingham Works for assessment and development of an individual employment plan - Birmingham Works then referred	-Most HPLP participants recruited from the Career Opportunities Training (COT) at the EARN Alliance (funded under another WtW competitive grant (started at the same time as	-Some referrals from TANF (but slow) -Grantee made presentations at one-stops -Some distribution of brochures to other human service agencies -No TV/radio	-TANF recipients came to WtW orientations referred from TANF; PIC provided information on full range of programs – HPLP being one of them -No direct	-Local TANF agencies assigned TANF recipients to 1 of 9 employment services agencies, who in turn referred appropriate individuals to HPLP -HPLP staff visited TANF	-Community college partner handled outreach – project mainly received referrals from local TANF offices -Community college also recruited some individuals enrolled in its	-HPLP enrolled customers referred to the formula WtW program by the TANF agency. -No advertisements

**EXHIBIT 2-1 (CONTINUED): RECRUITMENT METHODS AND PARTICIPATION LEVELS
AT SEVEN HPLP SITES COMPLETING THE PROJECT**

Program Characteristic	Birmingham (AL)	Phoenix (AZ)	Los Angeles (CA)	Central Illinois (IL)	St. Paul (MN)	Portland (OR)	North Tennessee (TN)
	<p>appropriate individuals to HPLP (and other programs)</p> <p>-No advertisement; grantee resorted to conducting some of its own outreach, mainly informing other agencies about HPLP program</p>	<p>HPLP). Work readiness class handed over for enrollment in the HPLP program</p> <p>-Informed CBOs about HPLP and received small numbers of referrals</p> <p>-No TV/radio advertisement</p>	<p>advertisements</p>	<p>outreach to participants or other agencies.</p>	<p>offices during staff meetings to present HPLP information and distribute brochures</p> <p>-Brochures distributed to potentially eligible individuals.</p> <p>-No advertisements</p>	<p>own TANF-funded work program appropriate for project</p>	
Other notes about recruitment	<p>-Absence of the WtW formula funding meant that PIC did not have the local match needed and made recruitment and paying for support services more difficult</p> <p>-Poor transportation system made it difficult to get workers to come to training at non-worksites locations.</p>	<p>-WtW competitive grant program, which started at the same time, became a key source of referrals – after attending a job readiness workshop.</p>	<p>-Huge TANF population to enroll from</p> <p>-Very slow start-up, in part due to poor links with TANF, which made it difficult to get referral from TANF</p>	<p>-Some confusion about WtW generally – TANF recipients didn't seem to understand program initially</p> <p>-Various WtW grants not well coordinated – resulting in competition for WtW eligible individuals</p> <p>-Some difficulty in linking with DHS – some TANF workers reluctant to refer initially to WtW</p>	<p>-St. Paul Public Schools had worked with TANF program, which facilitated referrals</p> <p>-Adequate pool of TANF recipients from which to recruit</p> <p>-On average, 4 TANF recipients had to be recruited to generate each participant in project</p>	<p>-Community college partners had strong and long-term relationship with TANF local offices and had been JOBS contractor</p> <p>-CC mentors had access to TANF data</p> <p>-At first, hard to determine WtW eligibility using TANF data system</p> <p>-Eligibles did not grasp idea of career building</p>	<p>-Elimination of WtW program in Tennessee greatly impacted the ability to get referrals, although the TANF agency did agree to refer customers.</p> <p>-Not all of the referrals were eligible for enrollment.</p>

offices were not yet that familiar with the WtW program and needed to devise methods for determining whether TANF recipients were eligible under WtW's restrictive eligibility rules. In fact, WtW formula funding had not yet been distributed to many local areas, so HPLP projects were among the first WtW projects in their localities that had to work out arrangements with local TANF offices for referral of WtW-eligible welfare recipients. Several HPLP project administrators indicated that their programs might have fared much better had they come along a little later, after local TANF offices had worked out the procedures needed to identify welfare recipients as eligible under WtW (i.e., perhaps as a second round WtW competitive grant, after WtW formula funds had been distributed). The examples that follow illustrate how participants were recruited at several HPLP sites:

- **St. Paul, MN.** *The local TANF agency assigned TANF recipients to one of nine agencies (e.g., operated by the county, schools, non-profits), who were responsible for providing employment services and other supports to move welfare recipients into jobs. These agencies were encouraged by the HPLP project staff to refer TANF recipients interested in one of the five HPLP training areas (i.e., clerical, nursing, security, etc.). At first, the HPLP staff invited TANF managers and staff to a workshop to explain the project and demonstrate the occupational training software. However, staff from only a few local offices showed up. After that, the HPLP case manager (from St. Paul Public Schools) visited local TANF offices during their staff meetings to provide an overview of HPLP services and hand out brochures explaining the program.*
- **Phoenix, AZ.** *Most HPLP participants were recruited from the Career Opportunities Training (COT) project at the EARN Alliance (funded under another WtW competitive grant, which started at the same time as the City of Phoenix's HPLP project). The EARN program held a 2-week job readiness class (generally attended by between 10 and 30 WtW participants). When this class ended, the entire class was handed over for enrollment to the HPLP program (though there was some attrition during the transition from COT to HPLP). In addition to obtaining referrals through the COT project, HPLP staff informed local community-based organizations about HPLP eligibility requirements and services, and received small numbers of referrals (about 20 over the life of the grant).*

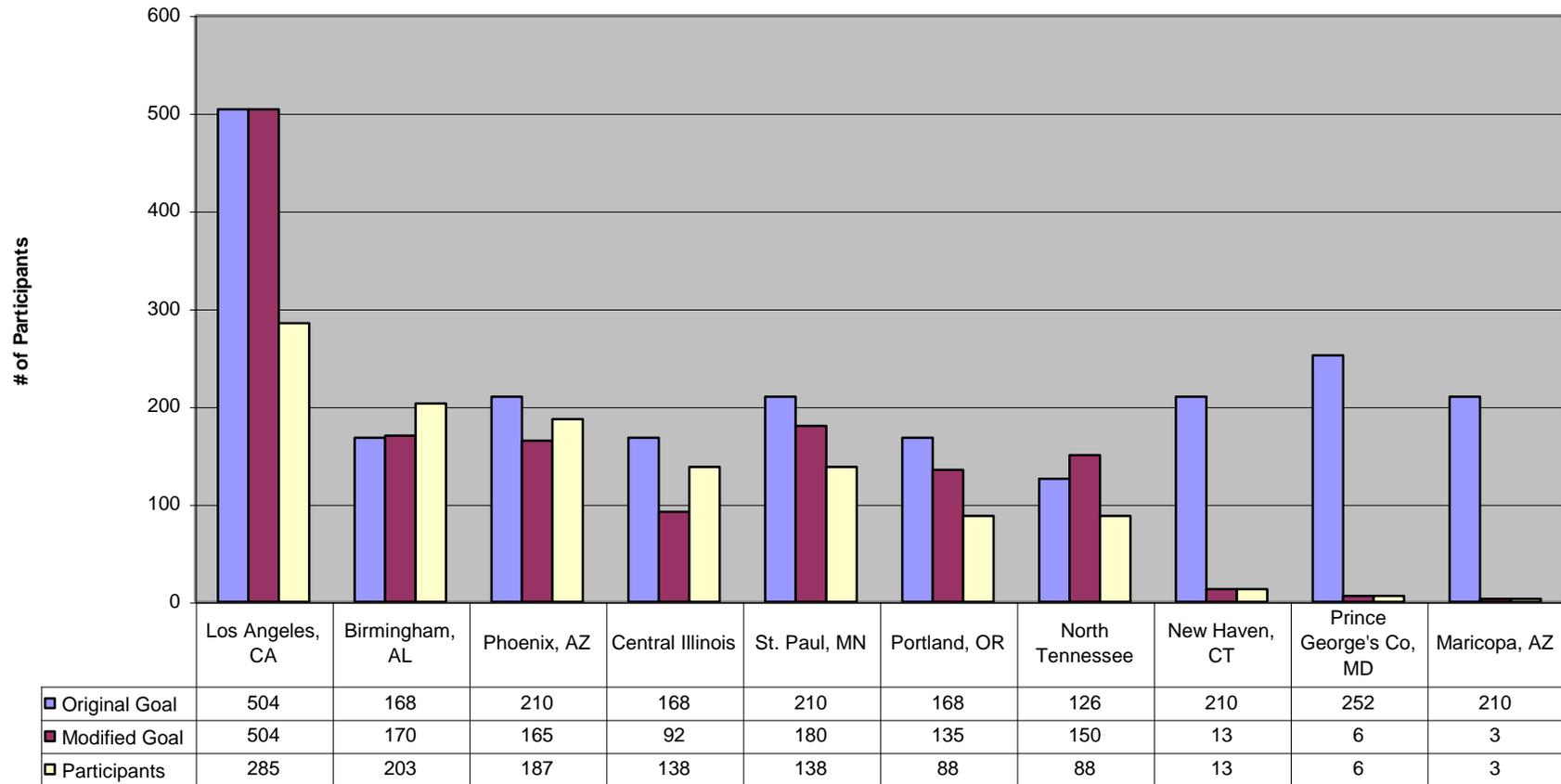
- **Birmingham, AL.** *The basic design was for local TANF offices to refer TANF recipients to Birmingham Works (BW), an agency operating the TANF work program, for assessment and development of an individual employment plan. Birmingham Works then referred appropriate individuals to a range of other local TANF and WtW-sponsored programs – one of which was HPLP. The flow of referrals was erratic, with Birmingham Works tending to keep 70 percent eligibles and sending along 30 percent eligibles. As the project went on, some individual local TANF workers made occasional direct referrals of TANF recipients they felt were appropriate for HPLP (but this represented only small numbers of participants). Because of the slow flow of referrals, the HPLP grantee resorted to conducting its own outreach, mainly in the form of informing other human service agencies about the HPLP program.*

Though obtaining direct referrals from local welfare offices was the predominant means used for generating program participants, HPLP sites also utilized several other types of recruitment methods. These other methods were implemented generally in response to slower than expected referrals from local TANF agencies. Some of the other recruitment approaches employed by sites included: (1) distribution of brochures/flyers at welfare and workforce development offices (e.g., one-stop career centers), other local human services agency offices, and community-based organizations; (2) making presentations at job fairs and career centers; and (3) relying upon word-of-mouth through former participants and community leaders, as well as friends and relatives. None of the HPLP sites relied upon paid advertisement for recruitment of participants (e.g., newspapers, television, or radio advertisements).

PLANNED AND ACTUAL PARTICIPATION LEVELS

As shown in Exhibit 2-2, original contracted goals for participation ranged from a low of 126 planned participants (at the North Tennessee site) to 504 planned participants (at the Los Angeles site). The average participation goal across the 10 HPLP sites was 223 individuals. Four HPLP sites originally planned to serve 210 individuals and an

Exhibit 2-2: Original and Modified Participation Goals and Actual Participation in HPLP



additional three sites planned to serve 168 individuals. Across all sites, the original contracted enrollment goals totaled 2,226 participants.

In response to difficulties nearly all sites experienced with start-up and securing referrals of WtW eligible individuals, in January 2000, NAWB terminated three sites (New Haven, Maricopa County, and Prince George's County sites) and issued modified participation goals to the remaining HPLP sites (see Exhibit 2-2 for modified goals). According to the contract modification issued by DOL to NAWB, the new overall goal for participation for the project was cut in half – from 2,226 to 1,113 participants. In issuing modified goals to each site, NAWB set individual site participation goals that added across all HPLP sites to 1,418 participants – more than the modified goal negotiated with DOL. Given the experiences to date on the project with sluggish enrollment, NAWB wanted to build in some margin (i.e., insurance) in case one or more sites failed to reach its goal. The modified participation goals for the seven remaining (non-terminated) sites ranged from 92 planned participants (at the Central Illinois site) to 504 planned participants (at the Los Angeles site). Of the seven sites remaining in the project, planned goals decreased for four sites, increased at two sites, and stayed the same at one site. With the exception of the three terminated sites (where there were substantial cuts in planned participant levels),⁶ changes in planned participant levels were from an increase of 24 planned participants (in the North Tennessee site) to a decrease of 76 planned participants (in the Central Illinois site). Overall, across the 10 HPLP sites, the

⁶ The modified goals for the three terminated sites were set at levels far below their original goals – at their actual participant levels at the time the sites were terminated – goals for the New Haven site decreased from 210 to 13 planned participants, for the Maricopa County site decreased from 210 to 3 planned participants, and for the Prince George's County site decreased from 252 to 6 planned participants.

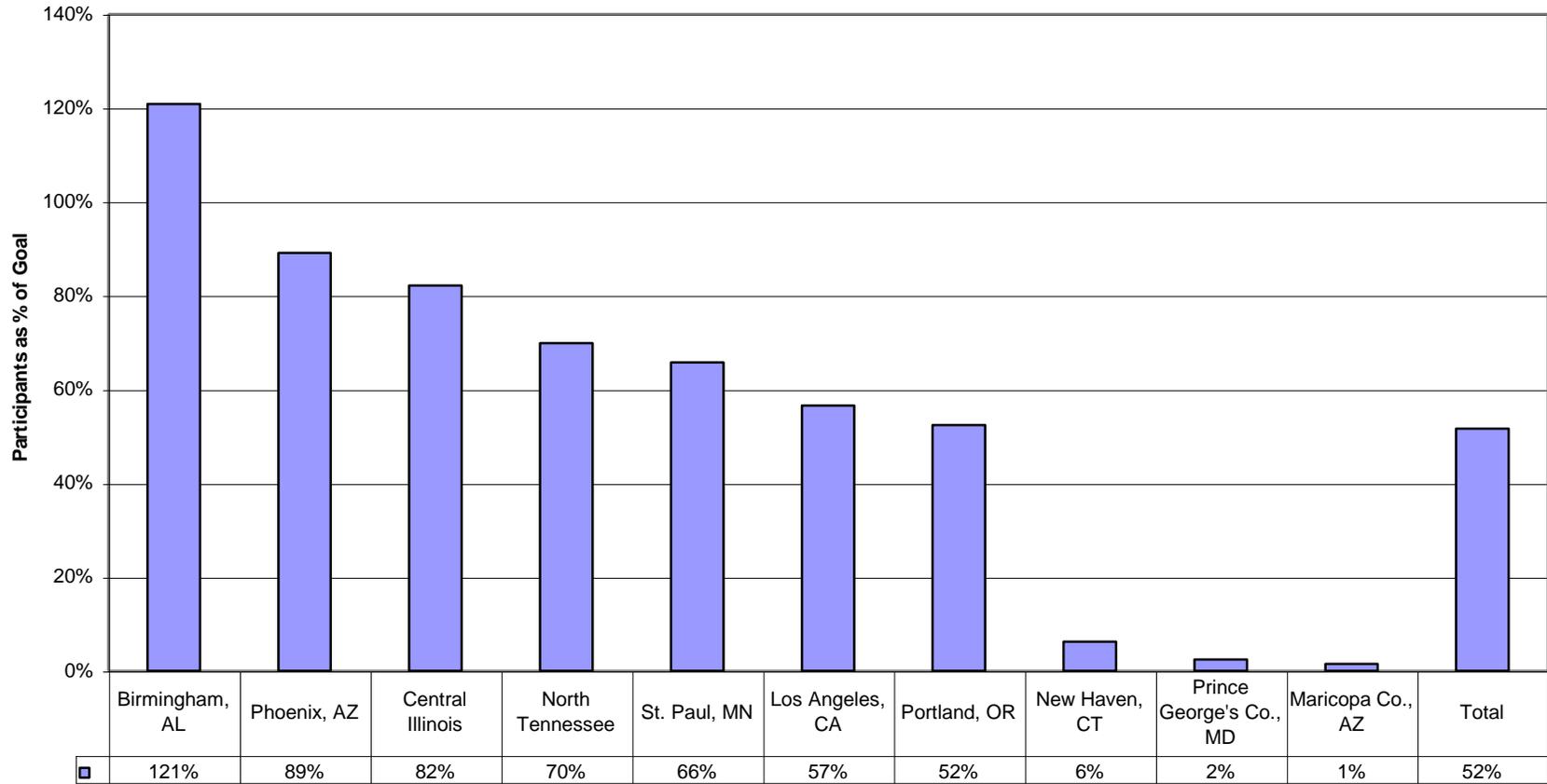
modified goals for participation dropped by slightly over one-third of the original goal (by 36 percent or 808 planned participants) – from an original contracted goal of 2,226 planned participants to 1,418 planned participants. However, most of the decrease in planned participant levels (80 percent) occurred among the three terminated sites.⁷

Over the course of the project, a total of 1,149 welfare recipients enrolled and participated in HPLP across the 10 sites. The average number of participants served per site was 115 individuals. Removing the three terminated sites, the average number of participants served by the seven remaining sites climbed to 161 individuals. As shown in Exhibit 2-2, among the seven sites completing the project, participation levels ranged from 88 individuals (at the Portland and North Tennessee sites) to 285 individuals (at the Los Angeles site).

Reflecting difficulties sites had with recruitment of HPLP participants, the total participation level in HLPL represented about half (52 percent) of the original planned goals across the 10 sites (see Exhibit 2-3). Eliminating the three sites that were terminated early (which together reached just 3 percent of their original participation goals), the remaining seven sites reached nearly three quarters (73 percent) of their overall participation goals. Just one of the ten sites reached or exceeded its original goal (the Birmingham site). Among the six sites completing the project that fell short of their participation goals, participation levels ranged from 52 percent (the Portland site) to 89

⁷Together, the three terminated sites accounted for a decline of 650 planned participants of the overall decline of 808 planned participants.

Exhibit 2-3: Actual Participation Levels as a Percentage of Original Participation Goals, by HPLP Site



percent (the City of Phoenix site) of original participation goals. Despite difficulties that individual sites ran into in recruitment of HPLP participants, together HPLP sites were successful in achieving the modified official participation goal set forth in the contract modification issued by DOL for the project (a modified goal of 1,113 participants).⁸

FACTORS AFFECTING PARTICIPATION LEVELS

Despite efforts to link with local TANF offices and reach out directly to WtW-eligible individuals, virtually all sites struggled with attracting enough candidates for participation in their programs. As discussed above, only one site (Birmingham) exceeded its original goal, and of the other 10 HPLP sites just two were able to reach (or exceed) 80 percent of their original participation goal. Reasons for their inability to reach participation goals varied across sites and were linked to a variety of programmatic and contextual issues:

- inability on the part of programs to connect with the local TANF offices or other local programs that could supply a steady and adequate source of WtW-eligible referrals;
- initial difficulties on the part of local TANF offices in identifying an existing pool of WtW eligible individuals that could be referred to the HPLP project;
- difficulties of qualifying TANF recipients under the initially highly-restrictive 70 percent eligibility definition required under WtW;
- lack of knowledge or confusion on the part of WtW-eligible individuals about the various types of training and other services available through HPLP;

⁸In relation to the modified participation goals issued HPLP sites (which were set about 30 percent above what was needed to reach the modified official goal set for the project as a whole), the ten HPLP sites together were able to reach 81 percent of their modified goals. Three of the seven sites completing the project were able to reach or exceed their modified participation goals; the other four sites fell short of the modified goals by between 57 percent and 77 percent of their modified goals.

- lack of interest on the part of WtW-eligible participants in enrolling in training and/or in entering training for one of the five occupations offered under the program;
- initial targeting of HPLP as a post-employment service (which was later changed), which restricted the pool of targeted welfare recipients to those who were already employed or could be employed with firms willing to sponsor training offered through HPLP;
- low basic skills on the part of some WtW-eligible individuals, which either made it difficult to place participants with employers involved in the program or meant that individuals were not well-suited for the computerized training offered through HPLP;
- competition with other local programs/agencies (e.g., TANF or other WtW-funded employment initiatives) vying for the same pool of WtW-eligible individuals; and
- inability to recruit employers to be part of HPLP – a necessary pre-condition for serving WtW-eligible individuals under the original program model.

The obstacles to recruitment and difficulties in securing adequate numbers of participants are revealed in the implementation experiences of two sites that ultimately fell short of their participation goals:

- **Los Angeles.** *Linkages with TANF program were not yet established which made it very difficult. According to one program administrator, “It was like putting the cart before the horse.” The WtW formula grant was not even yet distributed in the locality when this project began (the formula program did not start locally until November 1998) – so there was not the awareness or experience with WtW, and this made eligibility determination and referral very difficult in the early part of the demonstration.*
- **St. Paul.** *The St. Paul project, which stuck with the basic model of a participant needing to be employed to be considered for program participation, found that it was necessary to intake about 4 TANF recipients in order to get one HPLP participant. This was because to become a participant, individuals had to interview and get hired by an employer that was sponsoring HPLP training (in one of the five occupational areas). In addition, the St. Paul site found that the lack of an already established WtW formula program in the locality made recruitment more difficult.*

PARTICIPANT CHARACTERISTICS

In their initial proposals, some sites specified subpopulations of WtW eligible individuals that they intended to serve (see Exhibit 2-1, earlier). For example, the St. Paul site planned to serve long-term TANF recipients and non-custodial parents with significant barriers to employment at a wage that allows for self-sufficiency, and the Los Angeles site planned to serve TANF recipients in subsidized or unsubsidized entry-level, minimum wage jobs in need of skill upgrades to become self sufficient. Despite plans for targeting, because of difficulties in obtaining adequate flows of new recruits, HPLP sites did not generally target recruitment efforts or limit enrollment to special categories of welfare recipients or NCPs.

In its original proposal, NAWB indicated a desire to include non-custodial parents (NCPs) as a special target group. NAWB set as a goal for sites to serve 220 NCPs and provided encouragement for sites to establish special links with local agencies that could refer NCPs (e.g., child support enforcement agencies, homeless serving programs, and substance abuse treatment programs). Not unlike the experiences of WtW programs across the country, HPLP sites encountered significant barriers to recruiting NCPs and very few NCPs were served in any of the 10 sites (fewer than 20 NCPs across the 10 sites).⁹

HPLP sites were encouraged to run programs that did not burden staff, participants, or employers with paperwork. As a result, no uniform system of participant

⁹ For a detailed discussion of the problems that WtW grantee sites have generally encountered in recruiting NCPs, see: K. Martinson, J. Trutko, D. Strong, Serving Non-Custodial Parents in the Welfare-to-Work Grants Program, The Urban Institute, prepared for the Office of the Assistant Secretary for Planning and Evaluation, U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, 2000.

forms or automated data system were adopted for tracking participant characteristics. Hence, data on the characteristics of program participants is limited. HPLP site administrators indicated that their programs served primarily women receiving TANF at the time of enrollment in the program. Most participants were not employed at the time of entry into the program. One site – the St. Paul site – was able to provide a basic profile of participants served along the following dimensions (for a total of 132 participants):

- 96 percent of participants were female;
- 60 percent were 30 years of age, 36 percent between 30 and 44 years of age, and 4 percent were 45 to 54 years of age;
- 56 percent were African-American, 26 percent were white, 7 percent were Hispanic, and 11 percent were other; and
- 61 percent were high school graduates, 39 percent had not graduated from high school (while 4 percent were post-high school attendees, none were college graduates).

III. DESIGN AND STRUCTURE OF INITIATIVES

This section of the report provides an overview of the basic design and structure of the HPLP initiatives. It is intended to address the following questions: What were the goals of HPLP? How were local projects structured, including the key types of partners with which HPLP grantees collaborated? How did projects actually serve HPLP participants?

ORIGINAL PROGRAM OBJECTIVES AND DESIGN FOR SERVICES

The original proposal submitted by NAWB to DOL emphasized the use of new computer technologies to upgrade skills, enhance employability, and promote long-term self-sufficiency and career advancement of WtW-eligible TANF recipients:

...The High Performance Learning Project will bring state-of-the-art technology together with quality management principles to provide placement services and post-employment training...Through the efforts of our local partners, supervised by the national management team, participants not only will obtain employment but also will upgrade their skills and gain the tools necessary to continue the lifelong learning process, which will ensure lasting employment and self-sufficiency.¹⁰

As envisioned, a local workforce development board (at the time, a Private Industry Council or PIC) would team with a community college partner(s) and local employers to provide post-employment training consistent with a “work-first” service delivery strategy. Central to the training component of the project was to be use of a computer-based training software designed by Instructional Systems, Inc. (ISI), which was to provide entry-level training in five high-demand occupations: (1) building maintenance,

(2) customer services, (3) home care, (4) office skills, and (5) security guard. In addition, the software included two additional components to generally enhance employability and job retention: life skills training, and workplace math and reading instruction. Each site was to be provided with several PCs, which under the original project design would be placed at partnering employer sites. The original design called for employers to hire HPLP participants (if they had not already been hired) and set aside one hour per day of paid time over approximately a 10-week period to conduct training on the ISI software.

The basic design of the intervention -- while placing considerable stress on use of new technologies as learning tools for upgrading job-specific skills -- also emphasized a strong case management and tracking component. Each participant was to be assigned to a mentor at a partnering community college, who would orient the individual on how to use the software and then closely monitor use of the software and provide assistance on an as-needed basis to ensure that the participant successfully completed the training component and retained his/her job. The HPLP participant and mentor would be able to communicate easily using a variety of methods -- via e-mail, telephone, and face-to-face contact. It was envisioned that the mentor would counsel the participant and work with the participant to resolve barriers that might stand in the way of job retention and career advancement. In addition, as noted in NAWB's original grant proposal, involvement of the community college would have other added benefits for the TANF recipient:

...because the new worker's participation in the project automatically results in enrollment in a community college, he or she will develop a new sense of self-esteem and, hopefully, consider taking courses and/or preparing for a

¹⁰ National Association of Private Industry Councils, WtW Competitive Grant Proposal, Submitted to the U.S. Department of Labor, March 10, 1998, p. 8.

degree...HPLP will encourage new workers to become lifelong learners and to continue upgrading occupational as well as academic skills.”¹¹

In the sections below, we highlight how local sites actually structured their initiatives – which in most sites proved to be quite different from the original service delivery model proposed by NAWB. We particularly focus on the structure of the seven sites that completed the initiative.

PROGRAM DESIGN AND SERVICES

HPLP was designed to test the effectiveness of a variety of innovative service delivery approaches and strategies for assisting welfare recipients in upgrading skills, retaining jobs, and advancing to higher paying jobs. As discussed in this section, demonstration sites varied substantially in their approaches to participant intake and assessment, case management, provision of training and other employment-related services, and support services.

Participant Intake, Eligibility Determination, and Assessment

Generally, WtW eligibility was determined prior to referral of the individual to the HPLP site by the referring local TANF office or the agency responsible for assisting welfare recipients in meeting TANF work requirements. In instances where the individual was recruited directly by the HPLP project or came through referral from another agency (other than a local TANF office), the HPLP project staff verified WtW

¹¹ National Association of Private Industry Councils, WtW Competitive Grant Proposal, Submitted to the U.S. Department of Labor, March 10, 1998, p. 10.

eligibility with local TANF offices. See Exhibit 3-1 for an overview of intake, eligibility, and assessment activities conducted by the seven HPLP sites completing their projects.

Nearly all referrals came to HPLP projects having already completed some type of assessment process as a result of their involvement in TANF and/or other programs aimed at helping welfare recipients in making the transition to work. For example, HPLP grantees reported that most recruits came to the project having already been tested for basic reading and math skills (e.g., they came with TABE or ABLE test scores). In addition, most referrals had been interviewed and assessed by referring TANF workers and/or other case managers to determine barriers to employment and potential steps that were needed to achieve self-sufficiency.

Although most new participants came to the program already having been assessed by another agency, HPLP project staff still conducted an intake interview and other assessment activities to determine employment barriers, appropriateness for enrollment in HPLP, and types of services likely to be needed by the individual. Where possible, HPLP administrators indicated that they attempted to build on the assessment efforts of other agencies. For example, HPLP sites would not re-test referrals for basic skills deficiencies, unless test results were out-of-date (more than six months old). However, if the individual came to the program without current reading/math scores, HPLP sites either had the ability to conduct basic skills tests themselves or were easily able to refer an individual to a one-stop career center or other facility for testing. The other most frequently used assessment tool besides the TABE/ABLE was vocational interest testing. Generally, in-house program staff conducted assessments, though if there were special problems, participants could be referred for more professional assessments

**EXHIBIT 3-1: OVERVIEW OF INTAKE, ASSESSMENT, AND CASE MANAGEMENT
/MENTORING AT SEVEN HPLP SITES COMPLETING THE PROJECT**

Program Services	Birmingham (AL)	Phoenix (AZ)	Los Angeles (CA)	Central Illinois (IL)	St. Paul (MN)	Portland (OR)	North Tennessee (TN)
Intake and Assessment	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Most referrals to HPLP already had WtW eligibility determined and had been assessed by TANF and/or Birmingham Works (including TABE and SASSI) -HPLP staff primarily relied upon assessment conducted by other agencies, but developed plan of action for the participant under HPLP 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Nearly all participants came through the WtW competitive grant -- so WtW eligibility was already determined -TABE and assessment conducted prior to involvement in HPLP as part of intake and job readiness class held under another WtW competitive grant 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -TANF local office determined WtW eligibility -Most participants had TABE score at time of entry into the program -HPLP program conducted COPEs, CAPS, OASES on some recruits 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - PIC career counselor, who had access to TANF data system, so could verify WtW eligibility -PIC career counselor conducted the TABE, an interest inventory (Countdown for Horizons), and a substance abuse screening questionnaire 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Case manager interviewed referrals and went through information made available by TANF to determine 30 or 70 WtW eligibility -Case manager interviewed participant and reviewed results of earlier assessment by referring agency - ABLE completed at one stop career center if math/reading results not already available 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Initially had to contact TANF local office to determine WtW eligibility; later state developed WtW coding so CC mentors could verify eligibility by checking the system -Usually recruits came with BASIS score, but CC could test if score dated; SASSI conducted; could refer for learning disability testing on site at CC -EDP developed 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - HPLP project manager at PIC verified WtW eligibility. - TABE administered if scores not available -EDP developed based on results of interviews and testing
Case Management and Role of Community College (CC) Mentor	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -CC partnered with PIC for only 8 months on HPLP - CC mentor primarily responsible for helping participants with 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -CC mentor provided instruction on use of ISI software and monitored training progress -Case management and 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -CC is principal site where ISI software is located and training is conducted. -There was no PIC case manager; the CC 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -1 of the ISI computers at CC -CC mentor helped more from a software perspective – oriented HPLP participant to computer and 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -CC helped with recruiting employers -CC installed software at employer site -CC mentor Oriented each new participant 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -CC housed ISI computers -CC Mentors assessed client needs, developed EDP, oriented on ISI software, track progress on ISI software and 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - CC mentor provided curriculum support and instruction on computer to the customers -CC mentor taught

**EXHIBIT 3-1 (CONTINUED): OVERVIEW OF INTAKE, ASSESSMENT, AND CASE MANAGEMENT
/MENTORING AT SEVEN HPLP SITES COMPLETING THE PROJECT**

Program Services	Birmingham (AL)	Phoenix (AZ)	Los Angeles (CA)	Central Illinois (IL)	St. Paul (MN)	Portland (OR)	North Tennessee (TN)
	<p>the ISI software.</p> <p>-Project experienced difficulties with obtaining space at CC to provide training.</p> <p>-While there was commitment initially from CC President, follow-up lacking at CC administrative/ staff levels.</p>	<p>troubleshooting of problems provided by CC mentor</p>	<p>mentor handled the relationship with the participant, providing ongoing tracking, guidance, help with ISI software, and troubleshooting with the employer</p> <p>-Communication with mentor by e-mail, telephone, or in-person – and typically occurred at least once a week</p>	<p>then tracked and responded to problems participant might have with the software or training</p> <p>-CC mentor had no real intervention with employer</p>	<p>on ISI software at employer site</p> <p>-CC mentor tracked training progress daily and troubleshoot problems as they arose</p>	<p>on job, and provided 1 on 1 counseling</p>	<p>participants to navigate and use the software, and oversaw the operation of the hardware and software</p>

by outside contractors (e.g., vocational rehabilitation, mental health, or substance abuse treatment agencies).

HPLP sites used the results of their assessment process to develop an employability development plan (EDP) or individual service strategy (an ISS) for each participant, which identified the participant's obstacles to employment and a series of steps and activities leading to achievement of longer-term goals. The goals were generally expressed in terms of obtaining employment, upward career mobility, increasing wage levels over time, skills upgrading, and achieving long-term self-sufficiency. Such plans provided a "road map" of tasks and activities for the participant and interim goals/objectives, against which the participant and program staff could measure progress.

The following examples illustrate the ways in which two sites structured their intake and assessment process to help in deciding whether an individual was appropriate for enrollment and to tailor services to individual needs of the participant:

- **Portland, OR.** Typically, the TANF agency had already tested for basic skills deficiencies and provided the HPLP program with scores. If BASIS scores were not current, the community college partner (who played a central role in direct delivery of services in the Portland site) tested the individual. Much of the assessment involved one-on-one discussions between the community college mentor and the client to determine employment barriers and readiness for work (e.g., living situation, child care arrangements). The community college mentor completed the SASSI (a substance abuse questionnaire) with all participants at the time of intake. If a learning disability was suspected, the individual was referred to a learning disability specialist at the community college for testing.
- **Central Illinois.** Potential HPLP participants began by attending an orientation on programs/services available through the PIC. They would then go through a formal assessment – involving in-person interviews, testing, and development of an individual employment plan (IEP). The grantee conducted the TABE, an interest inventory (Countdown For Horizons), and substance abuse screening (in the form of a series of questions aimed at determining the likelihood of substance abuse problems).

Case Management/Mentoring Services

Case management or mentoring services were provided by all HPLP sites for assessing participants' needs, helping participants to obtain the services needed to overcome barriers to employment, and troubleshooting problems that might lead to job loss or attrition from the project. Among the HPLP sites completing the initiative, the general types of case management activities were quite similar, but the division of responsibilities between the grantee (i.e., the workforce development agency) and the community college varied considerably. In some sites – such as the Birmingham and North Tennessee sites -- the role of the community college mentor was narrowly defined to mostly providing instruction on how to use the ISI training software and resolving problems with the software. In other sites, the community mentor role was more broadly defined – notably St. Paul and Portland -- and the grantee organization played a more narrowly defined role.

Regardless of which entity provided case management services, the case management services were fairly similar across sites:

- conduct an intake interview and initial assessment of participant needs;
- develop an individualized services plan (i.e., tailoring services to individual needs of the participant);
- if the participant was not already employed, assist with job search and placement;
- orient the individual to the computer and provide hands-on training on how to use the ISI training software;
- monitor participant utilization of the training software and check test results for each training unit completed by the participant;
- troubleshoot problems using the training software, as well as monitor and respond to problems that the participant might encounter in the workplace with supervisors or fellow workers; and

- arrange for participants to obtain needed support services either directly through the program or through referrals to another agency.

Unlike other WtW initiatives across the nation, a critical part of the case management function involved orienting HPLP participants on how to use the ISI training software, then monitoring that participants followed through and successfully completed training. In addition, case managers – whether they were from the community college or the grantee – maintained frequent contact with participants via several methods – telephone contact, in-person visits, and the Internet (by e-mail). Regardless of how sites managed their caseloads, there was general agreement that successful outcomes hinged upon each participant having a well-developed case plan and good channels of communication and coordination among staff and agencies involved in serving the participant.

Two illustrations of the types of case management services and the ways in which such services were allocated between grantee agencies and community colleges follow:

- **Central Illinois.** *A PIC career counselor coordinated the entire plan for the participant and oversaw involvement in HPLP (and other WtW activities), including: eligibility determination (for WtW); objective assessment; ongoing monitoring and follow-up; placement of the individual in a particular program at the PIC (e.g., HPLP, WtW, WIA); assistance with job search and placement; assistance to the participant in securing support services; and tracking and responding to participant problems within the workplace. The community college mentor's role was more narrowly defined and focused on providing help with the ISI training software: orienting HPLP participant to the computer and then tracking and responding to problems participant might have with the software or training.*
- **St. Paul.** *The grantee (the PIC) mainly oversees the grant, drew up contracts, and worked on general administrative issues (not operational issues). The St. Paul Public Schools was subcontracted to do most of the operational aspects of the program – recruitment of employers and participants, intake and assessment, case management, job placement, troubleshooting to prevent attrition and job loss, and tracking of participants. The community college primarily oriented the*

individual to the ISI software, tracked and troubleshot problems with the software, and provided one-on-one counseling to help retain the individual in training and employment.

One site – the City of Phoenix – used VISTA volunteers to provide additional mentoring services. For example, one VISTA volunteer (several were used by the site) implemented a mentoring program for HPLP participants at 5 employer sites, where she met with participants for one hour each week. The VISTA volunteer discussed how the participant was doing at work and if there were any barriers or concerns that needed to be addressed in order to keep that participant on the job.

Employment and Training Services

In contrast to many WtW programs that have been implemented across the nation, HPLP placed a strong emphasis on training to enhance worker skills and promote job retention and advancement. The underlying design of HPLP called for provision of short-term computer-based training under HPLP, which was to be accompanied by ongoing mentoring services aimed at helping participants to retain their jobs. As noted earlier, the software was designed so that participants could take (on average) about an hour away from work per day for about 10 weeks to complete entry-level training modules in one of five occupational areas: (1) building maintenance, (2) customer services, (3) home care, (4) office skills, and (5) security guard. Despite shared goals, a generally agreed-upon model, and use of the same training software, the structure of the service delivery system and the actual manner in which training was delivered differed substantially across sites. No two sites implemented HPLP in the same manner and only two of the ten sites – the St. Paul and City of Phoenix sites – implemented training in a

manner that closely resembled the model laid out by NAWB prior to the start of the initiative (and even with respect to these two sites there were some variation from the originally planned model). Local project sites varied along several important dimensions:

- which training modules were used;
- where training services were provided;
- duration of training;
- whether training was provided as a pre- or post-employment service;
- whether participants received paid time by the employer to conduct the training; and
- the role of the employer.

Exhibit 3-2 provides a cross-site comparison along several important dimensions of the approaches to providing employment, training, and retention services.

All HPLP sites utilized the ISI training software, which was installed onto PCs and placed at either employer or other training sites. Sites typically had participants complete the life skills component and an occupational skills training component that was most closely associated with each participant's employment. Participants with deficiencies in reading or math also completed portions of or the entire basic skills tutorial included in the ISI software. With the exception of Los Angeles where only the office skills and customer services components were used, other sites reported use of all five of the occupational training modules. Site administrators indicated that the clerical, customer services, and home care modules were used the most by HPLP participants. The building maintenance and security guard modules were used sparingly at the sites. Several administrators noted that the building maintenance and security guard modules

**EXHIBIT 3-2: OVERVIEW OF TRAINING AND OTHER SERVICES
AT SEVEN HPLP SITES COMPLETING THE PROJECT**

Program Services	Birmingham (AL)	Phoenix (AZ)	Los Angeles (CA)	Central Illinois (IL)	St. Paul (MN)	Portland (OR)	North Tennessee (TN)
Main Training Modules Used	-Participants usually completed basic skills module and an occupational skills modules (though perhaps would not complete all units within these modules) -All modules used, but most participants used the clerical, customer service and home care modules	-Participants completed basic skills and one occupational module -About ½ did customer service module; some health; 5 in the security guard area; 3 in the building maintenance	-Only 2 occupational modules used -- clerical & customer service	-HPLP participants assigned basic skills module and then 1 occupational skills module -Customer services, clerical, health, and building maintenance used the most; security module was hardly used	-Everyone did the lifeskills ISI module, then did specialty area (e.g., home health care) -All five of the occupational training modules were used – with the most participants using the home health care and customer service	-Participants completed basic skills module first; once employed, they completed relevant module for their planned or actual employment -Customer services, clerical, and home care modules used the most	- Most were employed upon enrollment in HPLP, so the primary service provided was training in one of the five specific curriculum areas most closely associated with each customer's employment
Location of Computers with ISI Software	-While computers were installed for parts of the project at several worksites (Sears Store, K-Mart, and the U. of AL), main usage of terminals was at PIC office, CC partner site (early on), and a church (later on)	-Computers placed at employer worksites	-Community colleges, GAIN employment agency, YWCA (but no employer sites)	-Peoria Housing Authority, IL Central College, DHS, Workforce Network; 3 employer sites	-All computers at employer sites except one computer placed at one-stop career center for participants in unsubsidized work experience slots	-Resource centers at 3 CC satellite training sites (none at employers)	-ISI computers placed at public libraries and one-stop career centers

**EXHIBIT 3-2 (CONTINUED): OVERVIEW OF TRAINING AND OTHER SERVICES
AT SEVEN HPLP SITES COMPLETING THE PROJECT**

Program Services	Birmingham (AL)	Phoenix (AZ)	Los Angeles (CA)	Central Illinois (IL)	St. Paul (MN)	Portland (OR)	North Tennessee (TN)
Duration of Training	-Duration varied; participants scheduled whenever possible for them to get to training site (e.g., if working, scheduled before /after work, evening, or on weekends)	-Project stuck pretty close to model – 50 hours of computer time, generally 1 hour/day for 10 weeks	-Duration varied; goal was for participant to spend at least 1 hour per day on training; overall duration of training affected by reading skill of participant	-Typically training was for 8 weeks, but varied by individual – goal was 1 hr/day, 5 days/week; but actual schedule varied by participant	-Schedules for training varied by location, but generally participants did the training one or two hours per day (about five hours per week), over about a 10 week period	-Tried to get participant to complete training within 10 weeks; weekly schedule varied (e.g., if working, client scheduled twice a week for 2-3 hour sessions)	-Duration varied; employers unwilling to give time off or flex participants' work schedules, so training times tailored to individual
Employer willingness to provide paid time for training	- Participants did not get paid time during work to conduct training, so scheduled for training as possible	-Employers generally set aside 50 hours paid work time for ISI training (1 hour/week for 10 weeks)	-Participants did training on their own time – no employers gave paid time for training	-Participants did training on their own time – no employers gave time off.	-Employers generally set aside 50 hours paid work time for ISI training (1 hour/week for 10 weeks)	-Few employers provided paid release time.	- Employers were not willing to flex work schedules and were unwilling to pay wages for time spent working on the curriculum
Number of Employers Partners	-100+, but mostly not involved (only hired participants)	-40 expressed interest -Computers placed at about 10 employer sites	-4 main employers involved; several others hired small numbers	-25 employers of varying sizes	-11 employers involved (4 very involved)	-50+ employers involved; mostly small employers hiring at most 3 or 4 participants	~50 employers involved
Employer Role	-Mainly hiring of participants -Several hosted ISI computers, but most training at PIC, CC and church	- Hired participants -Hosted ISI computers -Set aside 50 hours paid work time for ISI	-Mainly hiring of workers -Not willing to have ISI training at employer site	-Mainly hiring of workers -Not willing to have ISI training at employer site -Not willing to give release time	-Screened and hired participants -Provided space for computer -On average, set aside 1 hr/day of	-Not interested in housing computers -Basically only hired workers	-Employers generally unwilling to make special provisions for WTW/HPLP customers as far

**EXHIBIT 3-2 (CONTINUED): OVERVIEW OF TRAINING AND OTHER SERVICES
AT SEVEN HPLP SITES COMPLETING THE PROJECT**

Program Services	Birmingham (AL)	Phoenix (AZ)	Los Angeles (CA)	Central Illinois (IL)	St. Paul (MN)	Portland (OR)	North Tennessee (TN)
	-Mostly interested in people getting to work on time than in the training program	training (1 hour day, five days a week, for 10 weeks)		for training	paid time for 10 weeks for each participant to do ISI training		as time allowed away from the actual job. For many of them, this would disrupt an entire production line
Support Services	-No support services provided through grant, but provided through referrals to other agencies	-No support services provided under the grant	-No support services paid out of grant	-Support services covered out of WtW formula grant (not HPLP) -Most frequently used were: child care and transportation	-No support services were paid for through the project -Mostly project referred participants to TANF and other agencies for support services	-Mostly project referred participants to TANF and other agencies for support services	-No supportive services were provided under the project -Referral made to other local agencies
Post-Employment Services	Primarily ongoing case management by PIC CM -- once employed, PIC case manager contacted participant first and third weeks of employment, then monthly; for some with problems there was more frequent contact	-Primarily ongoing case management by CC mentors -VISTA volunteers provided additional mentoring at employer sites (e.g., weekly visits to employers to check participant progress)	-Primarily ongoing case management by community college mentors	-The PIC career counselor oversaw involvement in HPLP (and other WtW activities), including tracking of employment and help with job retention	-Daily telephone contact with participants - Troubleshooting of problems on the employer site -Referral to TANF and other agencies for support services	- Troubleshooting of problems with employers, but only if employer knows individual is enrolled in HPLP -Once employed, monitors tried to conduct weekly calls to participants	-WtW/HPLP case managers regularly tracked progress of participants.

were not suitable for many welfare recipients, in part because these occupations often required participants to be able to get to remote locations, often for evening and weekend shifts. As a result, to enter these two occupations, workers generally needed to have an automobile and to be able to adjust childcare arrangements to work varying schedules (which included evening and night shifts).

Sites reported that training modules used were tailored both to participants' and employers' needs. Most importantly, the training modules assigned depended upon the type of job an individual either already had or was planning to enter. Sites generally had participants complete all units within an occupational training component. One site – the Portland site – indicated it tailored training further so that participants conducted only the units within a particular occupational area needed on the job.

The ISI software was designed to be “self-paced” to accommodate different levels of basic skills and different schedules available for training at the workplace.

Administrators and staff indicated that individuals with low levels of basic skills (below 9th grade reading levels) generally required more time to complete training units and modules. Duration of training and the schedules for conducting training varied across sites and, within sites, across participants, for example:

- At the *Central Illinois* site, staff reported training on the ISI software typically lasted for about 8 weeks, but varied by individual. While the goal was for participants to conduct one hour per day, 5 days per week, it ended up being more like three or four days per week. The actual schedule varied by participant, with some spending an hour a day on training 4 or 5 days a week, while others spent several hours a day but attending training only several days a week.
- The *Phoenix* and *St. Paul* sites stuck pretty close to the original model for the program, with participants completing about 50 hours of computer time over about a 10-week period (generally one hour per day, five days a week).

- The *Portland* site tried to be flexible and tailor the training to the needs of participants and employers. Typically, if a participant was already employed, the project would have the individual attend training 1 or 2 times a week (for a 2-3 hour session). If a participant was not yet employed, he or she might spend more time per training session – for example, completing the soft skills training module in several days.

Whether training was conducted at the employer site and whether HPLP participants conducted training on “company time” (rather than their own time) had some bearing on the schedule and duration for computer training. Two sites – the Phoenix and St. Paul sites – were able to get employers to host computers at the work site and gained agreement from partnering employers to set aside one hour per day of paid time for 10 weeks for each participant to complete the training. The location of the computer and gaining agreement from employers to give paid time off for training made it much easier for workers to adhere to a specific training schedule. When participants had to travel to another location and/or conduct training before or after work hours, it made involving participants in training more difficult. In particular, when participants had to travel to another location, they were more likely to conduct several hours of training at one time, but to limit the number training sessions per week (e.g., go to the training site perhaps two days, spending two or three hours during each session).

Other HPLP sites were generally not successful in gaining employers’ agreement to host computers on site. Among the other five sites completing the project, four sites were unable to get employers to place computers at the worksite. The main reasons that employers did not want computers at the worksite were that they: (1) did not have a secure location and feared that the computers might be damaged or stolen; (2) had security concerns about the computer being linked into the company’s network of computers (though the ISI software was designed to work on a stand-alone PC, so

connecting the PC with the network was not necessary); or (3) were concerned about participants working on the computers during work hours because it would take away from production time and/or other workers might complain about not having the opportunity to receive similar training opportunities. In response, the grantee sites placed computers away from employer sites in more centralized locations, where HPLP participants could come before or after work to conduct training, including at one-stop career centers, at community college career centers, at TANF offices, and libraries. The fifth site (the Birmingham site) was able to install computers with the ISI software at several employer worksites, but the main usage of the ISI software occurred at other sites, including at computers located at the workforce development agency's office, a community college, and a partnering church.

Program sites (with the exception of the St. Paul and Phoenix sites) also experienced difficulties in gaining agreement from employers to set aside paid time for workers to conduct training. Employers were unwilling to provide paid work time for participants to conduct training for two main reasons: (1) employers were concerned that other workers would feel that it was unfair for HPLP participants to get time off for training when they did not; and/or (2) they were concerned about loss of production time on the part of the worker and/or that it might affect production of others (e.g., an assembly line would be disrupted for the hour the individual was involved in training). In addition, some employers indicated that they still provided company-specific training to HPLP participants as they did for other employees (i.e., the HPLP training did not replace the training that they provided for all new employees) – and hence, they were not eager to provide paid time for HPLP participants to conduct HPLP training.

HPLP administrators and staff had several other perspectives regarding the ISI computerized training:

- Having a limited number of computers with ISI software, meant that if training was to occur at employer sites and the project was to reach its participation goals, it was necessary for sites to work primarily with larger employers, where it was possible to place at least several new workers at one time. The recruitment of large employers willing to hire several welfare recipients at one time proved to be difficult in most of the sites, particularly in projects such as the North Tennessee site, which served mostly rural areas with smaller employers.
- Many employers already had their own training programs – especially larger employers where the HPLP training was most appropriate. These employers felt that while the ISI software was helpful, that it was not tailored to the specifics of the company and was at times redundant with training offered through the company. Some employers said to HPLP administrators, “give us referrals that have basic skills, a good attitude, and show up on time, and we will train them ourselves.”
- Once a participant was employed full-time, they had fewer incentives to complete training and less time to do so, especially if training was not conducted as part of normal, paid working hours.
- Several sites noted difficulties and glitches with the ISI software, which slowed project start-up and undermined some of the early experiences that participants had with the software training package. However, site administrators indicated that ISI was generally responsive in resolving hardware or software problems so that participants could fully utilize the software.
- Several administrators indicated that the ISI software was particularly useful as a career exploration tool – so participants could investigate whether they really wanted to enter a particular occupational field and to get a good feel of whether the occupational field would be an appropriate one.

While the project began with an emphasis on providing ISI training as a post-employment service, this emphasis gave way fairly quickly in nearly all sites to providing training as a pre- and post-employment service. The simple fact that many WtW-eligible individuals were not employed at the time they came to the HPLP program made this change a necessity. In shifting the program to providing training as a pre-employment service, it meant that sites had to provide many participants with some form of job

readiness and job search/placement services so that they could secure work. Most sites worked one-on-one with each participant to help identify potential employers and structure job search activities. While most sites expected participants to search for jobs on their own if they did not already have one, they also maintained close links with employers and provided job leads. In addition, several sites ran formal job readiness workshops, which assisted participants with resume development, job search, and interviewing skills.

Support Services

While acknowledging that support services were a critical component for assisting participants to secure and maintain employment, HPLP sites did not generally pay for support services directly out of the WtW competitive grant. Rather, HPLP mentors and other staff assessed barriers to employment and then typically referred participants to other programs (especially the TANF program and other WtW programs) and human service agencies for services. Sites were able to stretch HPLP funding resources by referring program participants to free or low-cost assistance available through other human service agencies, such as: reimbursement/vouchers for work clothes and equipment; emergency and transitional housing assistance; food stamps and emergency food assistance; legal services; substance abuse treatment/counseling; mental health treatment/counseling; and child care services. Administrators and staff underscored the importance of assessing barriers to employment and having well-established linkages with other human service providers so that participants could be easily referred.

Several HPLP sites made small expenditures out of HPLP grant funds for work clothing, work equipment, and transportation. Several sites also provided incentives to encourage participants to complete training and/or to help offset additional work-related expenses. For example, the Central Illinois site provided participants with a \$50 gift certificate for clothing or work equipment when participants became employed; the City of Phoenix site distributed movie tickets and store gift certificates when participants completed training modules; and the North Tennessee site awarded computers (donated by a private citizen) to participants who completed their assignments and who spent the most time on task.

HPLP staff found that it was important to assess support service needs through frequent interactions with participants as the service needs of participants changed over time. For example, types of assistance needed when participants were first engaged in education, training, or job search activities (e.g., training supplies/materials, tutoring, purchase of clothes for interviews, transportation assistance to go to job interviews, and help with securing tools/equipment to start a job) changed once an individual became employed and had a regular paycheck. HPLP emphasis on mentoring and partnerships with other agencies facilitated ongoing contact with participants and helped to ensure that participants received needed support services before personal problems led to job loss.

IV. PROGRAM OUTCOMES AND EFFECTS

This section examines participant outcomes under the HPLP project, including job placement and retention rates, wage rates at the time of placement, and other effects of the intervention on program participants and employers.

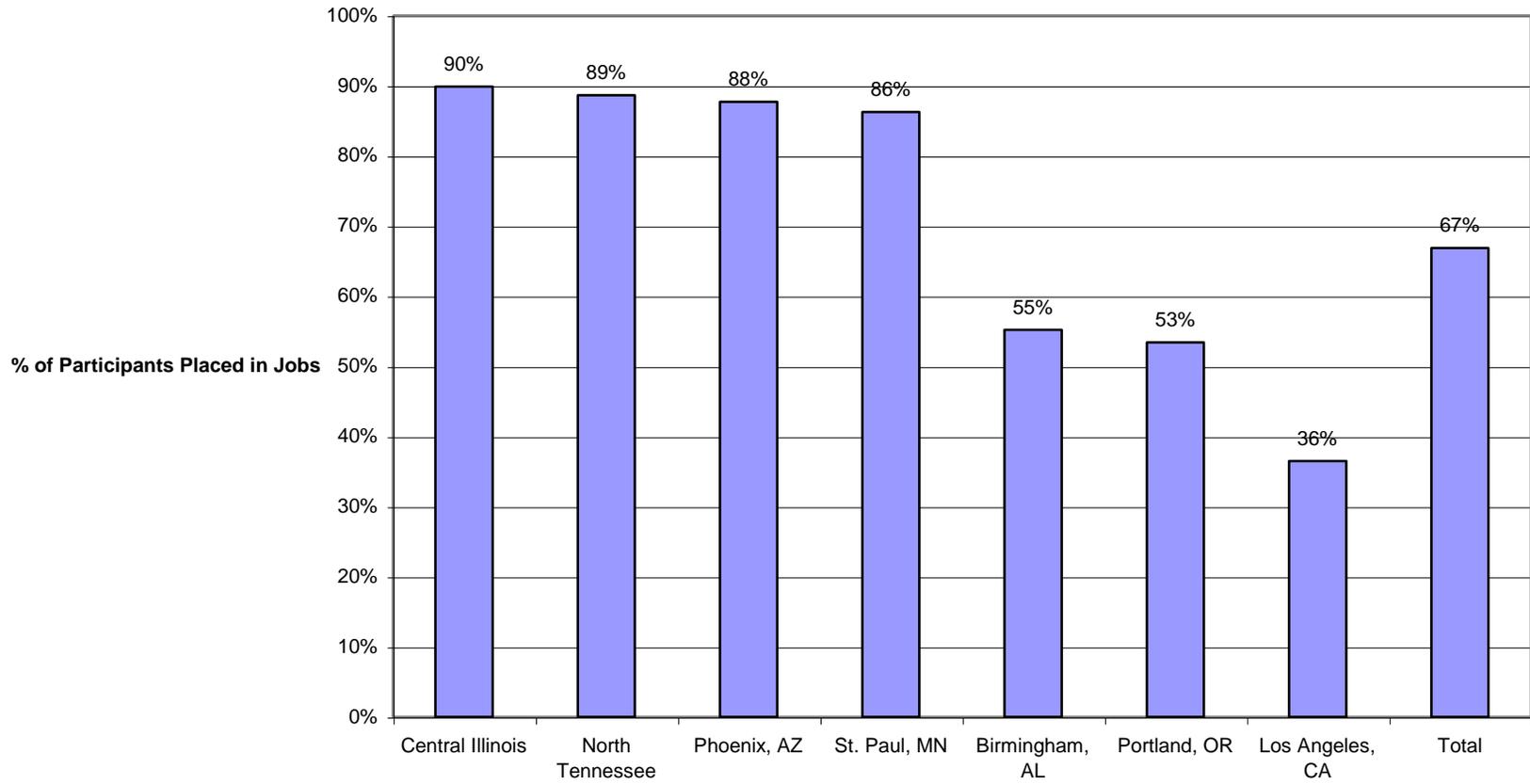
JOB PLACEMENT RATES

Key outcome measures for the project were the extent to which participants obtained and retained employment -- particularly in jobs that had the potential for wage growth and career advancement. Of the total 1,149 participants served under the HPLP effort, a total of 768 were placed in jobs. Overall, two-thirds (67 percent) of participants were placed into jobs. Both the number of individuals placed in jobs and the job placement rate achieved by project sites were well below what was initially anticipated. The original proposal anticipated that “all participants will qualify as placements in unsubsidized employment because the centerpiece of the HPLP is a post-employment training program.” Hence, under the original program design – which was subsequently modified to allow sites to provide training as a pre- or post-employment service -- the expectation was that the program would enroll welfare recipients as HPLP participants only after they were employed and provide training as a post-employment service. Under this assumption, it was planned that HPLP would reach a goal of placing 2,226 WtW-eligible TANF recipients (i.e., the same as the overall goal for participation under the effort) into unsubsidized jobs and, of this group, three-fourths would be successful in retaining their jobs for six months.

Job placement rates across the seven sites completing the project ranged from 36 percent (in the Los Angeles site) and 53 percent (in the Portland site) to nearly 90 percent in four sites (see Exhibit 4-1). The various methods used by project sites to assist participants to secure jobs included job preparation workshops, working one-on-one with participants to structure job search activities and uncover job leads, and direct placement of participants into jobs developed by agency staff. With the exception of the St. Paul site that placed small number of HPLP participants into work experience positions prior to placing them in unsubsidized jobs, sites did not place program participants into subsidized jobs

All sites reported robust local economies and low unemployment rates at the time of the project – unemployment rates at the start of the project ranged from 2 to 4 percent in the project sites, with the exception of the Los Angeles site (7 percent) -- which facilitated job placement and retention efforts. Some sites indicated that if economic conditions had not been so robust that they would have experienced even greater difficulty than they did in enticing employers to be part of the program. A number of site administrators and staff indicated that the completion of the ISI software training and ongoing support of project mentors, enabled participants to obtain entry-level jobs that they may not have otherwise obtained (i.e., the project enabled TANF recipients to “get a foot in the door” with an employer who might have otherwise not considered them for employment).

Exhibit 4-1: Job Placement Rates for HPLP Sites



PLACEMENT WAGES

Under the original grant proposal, it was anticipated that the average wage at placement would be in the range of \$6.50 per hour, and it was expected that average earnings one year after placement in unsubsidized employment would rise to \$7.50 per hour. For the most part, sites involved in the project could only provide estimates of wage rates, rather than exact wage rates at the time of placement for participants. Site administrators indicated that most participants obtained entry-level jobs, with wages generally slightly above minimum wage (i.e., in the \$6 to \$8 per hour range). Site administrators indicated that placement wages were rarely above \$10 per hour.

JOB RETENTION

Promoting job retention, and if possible, advancement was a critical goal of HPLP. The underlying model for the project – with its stress on providing short-term training as a post-employment service – aimed to address one of the most difficult problems that has faced welfare recipients in making the transition to self-sufficiency: retaining jobs and moving up to better paying jobs over time to support the goal of self-sufficiency.

At the time this report was prepared, only preliminary data were available on job retention rates for HPLP participants.¹² Based on available unemployment insurance (UI) data for program participants, about one-half (49 percent) of those originally placed

¹² At the time this study was completed, Unemployment Insurance (UI) wage record data for all program participants was not yet available because of lags in availability of data. Hence, the figures provided in the table are partial and are likely to be an undercount (i.e., figures represent a minimum; actual retention rates are likely to be

in jobs were retained six months after initial placement. Because data were not yet available for all participants, this figure represents a minimum retention rate for sites, which could push higher as additional data become available. The percentage retained in jobs ranged as high as 79 percent in North Tennessee and 71 percent in Los Angeles to 36 percent in Central Illinois and 26 percent in the City of Phoenix (see Exhibit 4-2).

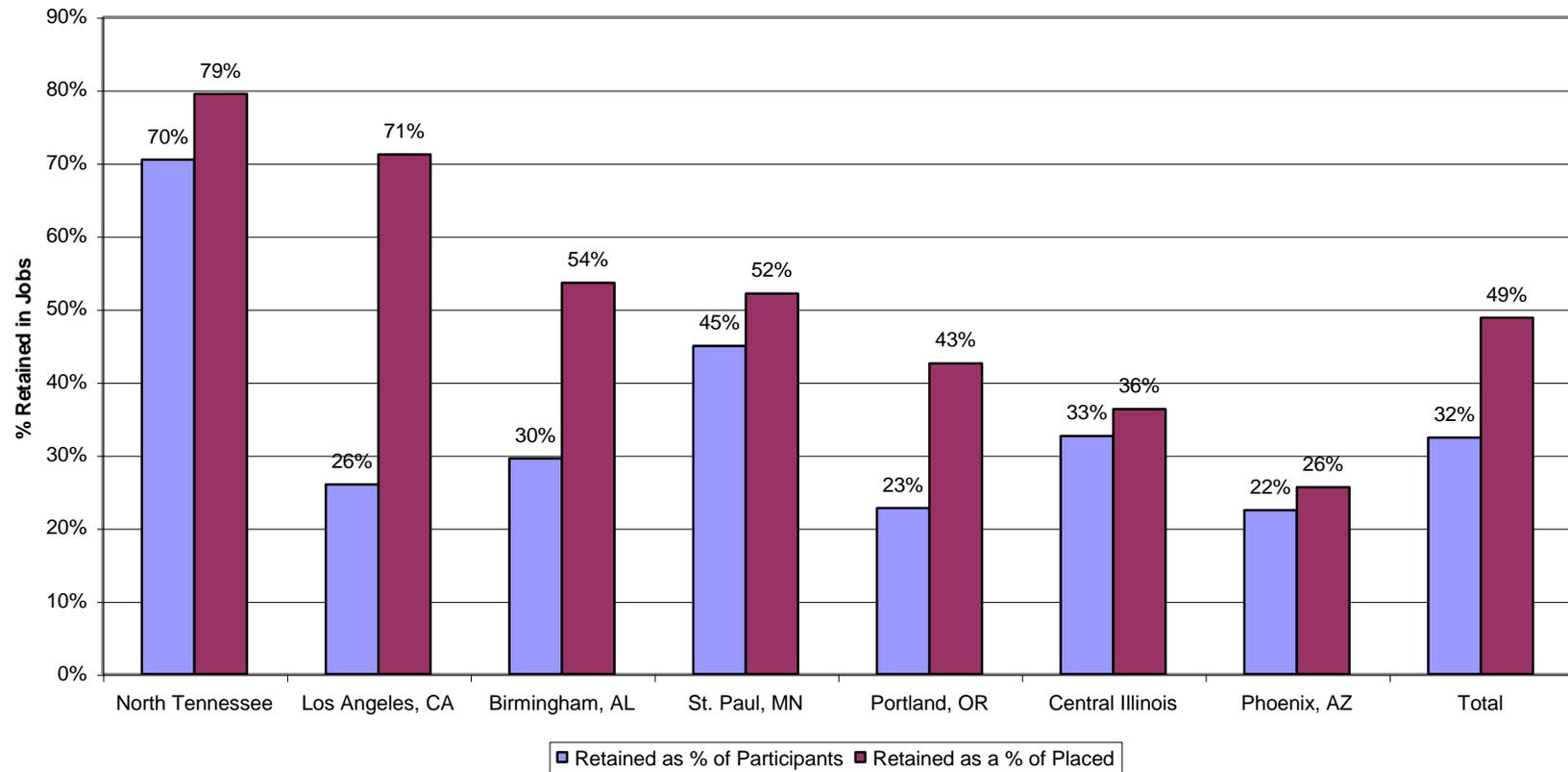
This exhibit also shows that at the seven HPLP projects that completed their projects, nearly one-third of all participants (32 percent) were retained in the jobs for six months. While one site ranged as high as 70 percent retained among all participants (the North Tennessee site), most sites retained between one-fifth and one-third of all participants in jobs over the course of their projects.

Project staff indicated that the likelihood of success with job retention was a function of several factors:

- favorable economic conditions (especially low unemployment rates), which resulted in tight labor markets and favorable conditions for job placement and a desire for employers to retain workers;
- careful assessment of participant strengths and limitations at the time of intake, which helped sites make appropriate placements of participants in jobs in which they could be successful;
- ongoing case management and mentoring, involving frequent contacts with participants and employers, which helped in identifying problems and support service needs before emerging problems led to job loss (e.g., disagreements with supervisors and co-workers, absenteeism or being late for work, poor performance on the job, or transportation, child care, or substance abuse problems); and
- forging strong linkages with partnering employers and keeping lines of communication with employers open.

somewhat higher once complete data are available on all participants). In addition, the figures are only for the seven sites completing the project.

Exhibit 4-2: Job Retention Rates
(Note: Preliminary - Retention Data Not Yet Available for All Placed Participants)



OTHER PARTICIPANT OUTCOMES

Program staff and administrators identified a number of other outcomes of program participation. One area cited by a number of program administrators and staff was upgrading of computer skills as a result of completing the computer-based training modules. A significant proportion of participants came to the program with little or no previous experience in using computers. The project provided a basic orientation to using computers, and over the course of completing the training modules, HPLP participants enhanced both their computer skills and confidence. This helped to make participants more employable.

A second benefit of program participation cited by a good number of project staff was increased self-esteem and confidence, which helped participants in securing and retaining jobs. One administrator noted that HPLP provided an opportunity for program participants to learn outside of the traditional classroom setting, in which they had not been successful in the past.

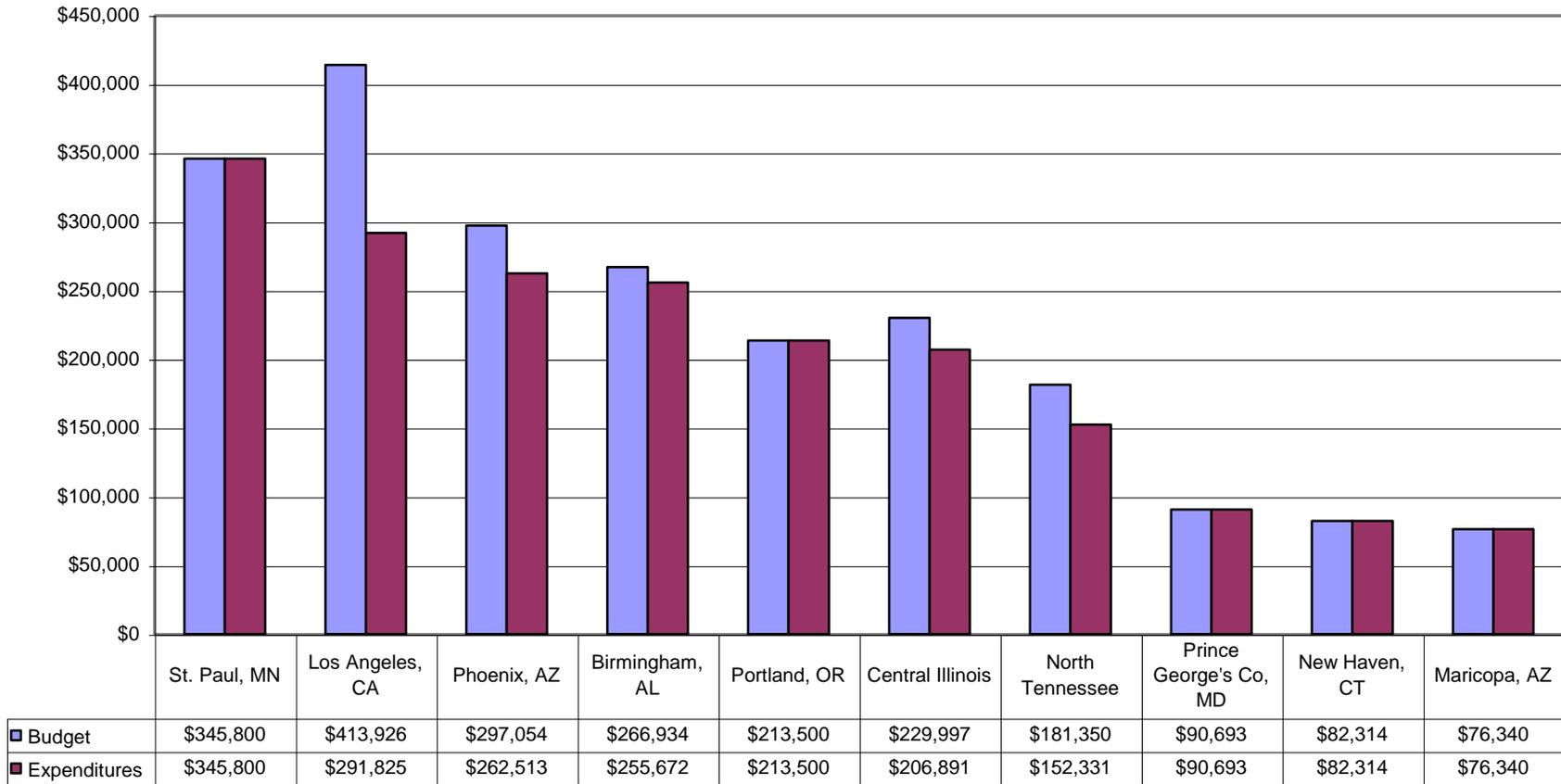
V. PROGRAM FUNDING AND EXPENDITURES

This section examines the funding that was received by sites and costs of serving HPLP participants. Key questions addressed by this section include the following: What were the overall funding levels for each site? How much did sites expend and what were the main sources of expenditures? What were the average costs per participant and per job placement?

FUNDING LEVELS

The total funds dispersed to the ten sites under HPLP totaled \$2.2 million. The average funding levels per site were \$219,790 for all sites and \$278,366 for the seven sites completing the project. Original grants to local sites were modified by NAWB when three of the sites were terminated, with remaining funds from the three terminated sites redistributed to the remaining sites (along with computer equipment). As shown in Exhibit 5-1, the revised budgets for the 10 local sites ranged from \$76,340 (the Maricopa County project) to \$413,926 for the Los Angeles site and \$345,800 for the St. Paul site. The budgets for the three terminated sites – Maricopa County, New Haven, and Prince George’s County – were all less than \$100,000. Among the seven sites completing the project, five had project budgets less than \$300,000 (ranging from \$181,350 in North Tennessee to \$297,054 in Phoenix).

Exhibit 5-1: HPLP Site Funding and Expenditures



GRANT EXPENDITURES AND PER PARTICIPANT EXPENDITURES

Total Project Expenditures

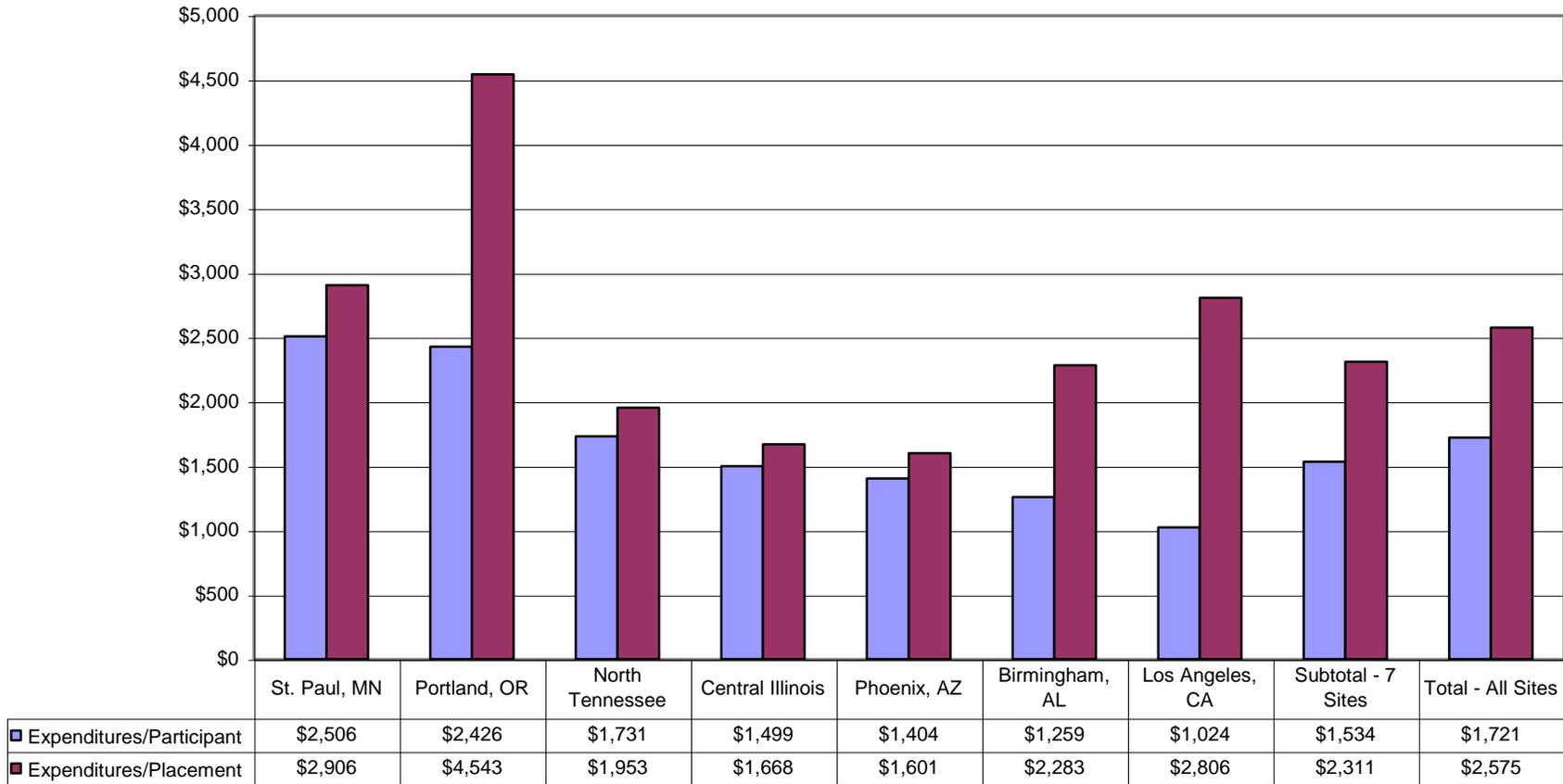
Total project expenditures by the 10 HPLP sites totaled \$2.0 million. Total expenditures by project sites amounted to 90 percent of the revised funding awarded to the sites. Average expenditures per site across the 10 HPLP sites were \$197,788 and \$246,933 per site for the seven sites completing the project. As shown in Exhibit 5-1, site expenditures ranged from under \$100,000 for the three terminated HPLP sites to \$345,800 for the St. Paul site. Among the seven sites completing the project, five had project expenditures that ranged between \$200,000 and \$300,000. Project administrators at all sites indicated that most of their costs were related to personnel involved in providing supervision and direct client services.

Expenditures Per Participant and Per Job Placement

As shown in Exhibit 5-2, average expenditures were \$1,721 per participant and \$2,575 per job placement. Among the seven sites completing the project, average expenditures were slightly lower -- \$1,534 per participant and \$2,311 per job placement. Across the seven sites completing the project, average expenditures per participant ranged from slightly over \$1,000 (\$1,024 at the Los Angeles site and \$1,259 at the Birmingham site) to about \$2,500 (\$2,506 at the St. Paul site and \$2,426 at the Portland site). The two sites that were at the top of the range, were also the sites that most closely replicated the original NAWB model for the project (i.e., featuring training at employer sites over about a 10-week period).

The gap between the highest and lowest sites in terms of expenditures per job placement was considerably greater than per participant expenditures – ranging as high as

Exhibit 5-2: HPLP Expenditures Per Participant and Per Job Placement



\$4,453 at the Portland site, compared with \$1,601 at the Phoenix site and \$1,668 at the Central Illinois site.

Per participant cost differences seemed to be most affected by numbers of participants served. Programs serving more participants were able to spread fixed costs across a larger number of participants (i.e., producing economies of scale) -- reducing costs per participant. Although there were differences in the ways in which sites structured their initiatives – e.g., where participants received training, duration of training, and roles of the PIC versus the community college and employers – these differences did not seem to be driving cost differentials. With regard to expenditures per job placement, as might be expected, the relative success of sites with job placement had a direct impact on costs per placement. As discussed earlier, job placement rates varied considerably across sites (e.g., ranging from 35 percent to 90 percent of participants across sites). Three of the four sites with the highest expenditures per job placement had the lowest job placement rates (among the seven sites completing the project).

IV. STUDY CONCLUSIONS AND IMPLICATIONS

Under the High Performance Learning Project, the National Association of Workforce Boards awarded \$2.2 million to 10 local employment and training organizations to provide computer-based training in five occupational areas to enhance skills and prospects for long-term self-sufficiency for TANF recipients. This WtW funded project was intended to test whether technologically-driven short-term training provided at the worksite could result in skill upgrading and improved rates of job retention for welfare recipients. Below, we highlight major study conclusions and implications.

Program Sites Demonstrated the Feasibility of Using Computer-Assisted Training, Accompanied by Case Management/Mentoring to Assisting Welfare Recipients in Making the Transition to the Workplace. Over the course of the approximately two and one-half years (from July 1998 through December 2000) in which the HPLP project operated, 7 of the 10 selected project sites became fully operational and were mostly successful in providing training and other services to assist welfare recipients in entering entry-level occupations in the five targeted occupations – office workers, customer service representatives, home care workers, building maintenance, and security guards. A total of 1,149 WtW-eligible individuals – mostly referred by local TANF offices -- participated in the project across the 10 project sites, of which two-thirds were successfully placed in jobs. While the seven sites completing the initiative made substantial modifications in the original program model to tailor recruitment efforts and services on the target population, the seven completing project sites were able to demonstrate the feasibility of using computer-based training for preparing TANF

recipients for entry-level jobs. While the computerized training often did not replace training provided by employers, it did help to better prepare participants for jobs and appeared to help at least some TANF recipients to obtain jobs that they would have had difficulty in obtaining without the training and assistance provided through the project.

Most Sites Struggled With Recruitment and Job Placement. While HPLP sites were successful in serving over 1,100 TANF recipients across the 10 projects, sites were only able to recruit about half of the total participants that NAWB had set out as an original goal for the project. Just one of the 10 sites reached its original participation goal under the project – and three of the 10 sites failed to recruit 10 percent of their participation goals for the project and terminated early from the initiative (at about the mid-point of the project). The problems HPLP sites had in meeting enrollment goals stemmed primarily from difficulties with mounting effective outreach and recruitment efforts – particularly establishing partnerships with local TANF offices and other agencies/programs that could provide a steady stream of welfare recipients. Even sites that were able to nearly reach their original enrollment goals noted both the difficulties of recruiting WtW participants and the importance of mounting well-organized and sustained recruitment efforts for such projects. Among the factors that limited the success of recruitment efforts were the following: competition with other local employment and training initiatives serving welfare recipients in the locality; confusion over the WtW eligibility criteria and difficulty (at least at first) in determining WtW eligibility and finding enough individuals that met the original 70 percent WtW targeting criteria; lack of interest among welfare recipients in the specific types of training provided; difficulties in gaining agreement on the part of employers to hire workers and

sponsor training at the worksite; failure on the part of TANF and other linked organizations to provide referrals; and preferences among welfare recipients to work rather than forego earnings to upgrade skills.

Sites also recorded lower-than-expected job placement rates under the project. The anticipation going into the project was that all participants would be placed in jobs because training and other types of services were to be provided only as post-employment services and at employer sites. Although 4 of the seven completing sites were able to achieve job placement rates in excess of 85 percent, the job placement rate across projects dipped to about two-thirds of all participants – below expectations, though not out of the norm for employment programs serving disadvantaged individuals facing often serious barriers to employment. Two explanations provided for lower than expected job placement rates include: enrollment of participants not appropriate for the program and/or for employment, and inability to engage employers to partner with the effort or sponsor training on-site (which meant that some individuals enrolled in the project were not eventually matched up with employers).

The Demonstration Effort Brought Together Varied Partnerships at the Local Level, Featuring Partnerships with Community Colleges and Local Employers. In addition to demonstrating that it was possible to provide computer-based training for welfare recipients and to place participants receiving this training into jobs, the project provided the opportunity for local workforce development agencies to partner with community colleges and local employers. Within each locality, the sponsoring agencies reached out to a community college and for the most part were able to engage the community college in providing mentoring and other services for welfare recipients

engaged in the project. The program however, fell largely short in achieving its goals of interesting HPLP participants in pursuing other educational and training programs at partnering community colleges. While several HPLP sites were successful in reaching out to employers and gaining agreement from employers to sponsor training at the worksite, most sites struggled with gaining involvement of employers in the initiative. In particular, administrators in 7 of the 10 project sites either were unable or were largely unable to gain agreement from employers to place computers (supplied by the program) at the worksites. HPLP sites were also largely unsuccessful – though there were successes with some employers – in gaining agreement from employers to provide paid time for HPLP sites to conduct training and to have employers substitute the ISI training for their own training. Despite difficulties in reaching and engaging employers in the initiative, when projects were able to bring together community colleges (providing mentors) and local employers (providing jobs and training), project administrators reported that the computer-based training and mentoring assistance was helpful from the standpoint of welfare recipients obtaining jobs that they would have had considerable difficulty in qualifying for in the absence of program involvement. Partnerships with community colleges, employers, and other local human service agencies often made the critical difference in leveraging additional resources and providing participants with the full range of services to meet the varied needs of welfare recipients and to support long-term job retention. In particular, program staff stressed the importance of involving local employers in meaningful ways in such initiatives. Local employers can be particularly important in helping to ensure that curriculum, teaching methods, and special equipment used for training are up-to-date and relevant to what is needed within a particular sector.

Employers can also provide opportunities for both on-the-job training experiences and permanent jobs.

Occupations Need to Be Carefully Selected and Vary by Locality. A project featuring training for entry-level jobs might be highly successful in one locality, but only moderately successful or unsuccessful in another location. For example, where building maintenance or security guards – two of the five occupations for which relatively few program participants were trained – may have job openings in some localities, in other there may be few openings. In addition, as was the case under HPLP, there may be few TANF recipients interested in jobs in these occupational areas and difficulties in finding childcare and/or transportation to make these occupations viable alternatives.

One of the lessons to emerge from the project is that what is a good occupation to focus on in one locality might not be in another -- and so, it is imperative to carefully select occupations that are the focus of computer-based training and placement efforts. It is also important to note that labor markets are dynamic -- employers in a locality might face a serious shortage of workers at a particular point in time, but supply or demand conditions can quickly change. For example, shortages of customer service representatives might occur for a year or so in a locality, but conditions may gradually or even abruptly change when market conditions change or employers move to another locality. Hence, it is important when structuring a training program such as HPLP to carefully consider local labor market conditions for specific occupations and industry sectors. Even some of the high-tech growth sectors that appear to offer “can’t miss” opportunities of employment nationally, might not offer much opportunity for welfare recipients in a particular locality. In addition, once a decision has been made on

providing particular types of training, it is crucial to continue collecting labor market information to detect changes in demand/supply conditions and requirements for workers in sub-specialities within selected occupations.

Training Projects Like HPLP Can Target A Wide Range of Welfare Recipients, but Those Selected for Participation Need to Be Carefully Assessed and Screened. Most of those individuals recruited for HPLP were able to cope with and benefit from the computer-based training modules used in HPLP (with the exception of individuals with very low basic reading levels, some of whom struggled with the training modules). Despite the ability to use computer-based training, it is important to remember that not all welfare recipients have the interest, aptitude, ability, and/or desire to complete the training necessary to successfully find work in a targeted field. For example, an individual may lack basic math or reading skills needed to be successful within a clerical or customer services field. They may not possess the necessary strength or agility to enter a building trades or other manufacturing profession. Or they may simply not be interested in working at a particular trade, such as home health care. This points to the importance of conducting outreach that results in recruitment of individuals with the basic interests and skills needed within a particular field for which training is being provided. It also argues for careful up-front assessment and screening of TANF recipients -- an activity that was employed by all of the successful project sites in this demonstration effort. In fact, some HPLP administrators noted that the ISI software served as a valuable career exploration tool for participants to gain a basic understanding of an occupation and determine whether they might want to enter a particular profession.

Projects Employing Computer-Based Training Components Need to Also Provide a Comprehensive Package of Services to Assist TANF Recipients in Making the Transition to Work and Self-sufficiency. HPLP project experience underscored the importance of providing a comprehensive range of services to address the varied problems faced by TANF recipients in making the transition from welfare to working. TANF recipients come to programs usually facing several critical barriers to securing and/or maintaining employment (e.g., basic skills deficiencies, lack of job-specific skills, problems with self-esteem and other mental health issues, substance abuse problems, family-related issues, and lack of transportation). These barriers need to be addressed before individuals are likely to find and retain long-term employment. Project experience suggests that at a minimum -- either through the sponsoring agency or coordination with other local service providers -- the following core services (in addition to the computer-based training) should be made available to serve welfare recipient responsively and effectively:

- assessment and employability development planning, culminating in the development of a written individual services strategy (ISS) that identifies participant goals and activities;
- ongoing case management and individual counseling -- with a focus on early identification of problems and referral to services before small problems become bigger ones;
- orientation by agency staff on how to use the computer-based training job training and ongoing help from staff to troubleshoot problems the individual may encounter in using the software
- ongoing review of the progress participants are making toward completion of the curriculum and follow-up with the individual, where needed, to keep them moving forward productively through each training unit;
- referral to other types of training services that might be needed, such as remedial education and basic skills/literacy instruction, classroom occupational skills

training, and on-the-job training and other types of work experience, such as internships/fellowships;

- job search, job development, and job placement services, including job search workshops, job clubs, help identifying job leads, and direct job placement assistance;
- post-placement follow-up and support services (e.g., additional job placement services, training after placement, self-help support groups, and mentoring); and
- a range of other support services which are either provided directly by the project or through referral arrangements with other human service providers -- including alcohol and other substance abuse assessment and counseling, with referral as appropriate to outpatient and/or inpatient treatment; child care assistance; transportation assistance; referral for mental health assessment, counseling, and treatment; and referral for housing services.

The need for a wide array of services points to the need for strong linkages and coordination arrangements among local service providers. Careful planning of service delivery strategies is needed, including an inventory of services available at the local level and an assessment of how such services might be relevant to the needs of TANF recipients. Grantees operating training programs similar to HPLP need to be able to provide a comprehensive continuum of services for their participants and to leverage funding for providing additional services for participants through extensive use of coordination. Linkages also enabled training sites to refer individuals they cannot effectively serve to other agencies, for example, for basic skills instruction, mental health counseling or services, drug or alcohol rehabilitation, and vocational rehabilitation.

APPENDIX A:
OVERVIEW OF THE WELFARE-TO-WORK (WtW)
GRANTS PROGRAM

APPENDIX A:

OVERVIEW OF THE WELFARE-TO-WORK (WTW) GRANTS PROGRAM

The Welfare-to-Work (WtW) Grants Program, authorized under the Budget Reconciliation Act of 1997, is a primary vehicle for states and localities to provide employment, training, and other support services to welfare recipients. WtW, with \$3 billion in federal funds, was enacted to complement the major welfare reform provisions authorized in 1996 under the Personal Responsibility and Work Opportunity Reconciliation Act (PRWORA), particularly the Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF) block grant. The WtW grants complement TANF in that these funds are specifically designated for work-related activities and not for cash welfare payments.

Under the WtW program, the federal government distributed \$3 billion in fiscal years 1998 and 1999 to help move hard-to-employ welfare recipients into jobs and toward long-term self-sufficiency. Three-quarters of the funds were allocated to states based on a formula; one quarter was distributed competitively based on applications submitted to DOL. Funding for the High Performance Learning Project came through a first round competitive grant of \$4.9 million awarded by DOL to the NAWB. Both formula and competitive grants target the same populations and can be used for the same types of activities.

WTW ELIGIBILITY REQUIREMENTS

The WtW legislation originally specified that both the formula and competitive grants must be used to fund services for the hardest-to-employ welfare recipients and noncustodial parents (NCPs), although recent amendments have substantially broadened targeting requirements (especially for serving NCPs). As originally enacted, the law required that at least 70 percent of the funds be used for:

- Long-term TANF recipients or recipients who are within one year of reaching the TANF time limit and who also have two of three legislatively specified barriers to employment: no high school diploma or GED and low reading or math skills, substance abuse problems, or “poor work history”¹³
- Noncustodial parents who have two of the same three legislatively specified barriers to employment and have a child with a custodial parent or (in the case of a child-only case) a child who is a long-term TANF recipient or is within one year of reaching the TANF time limit.

¹³The WtW regulations define “poor work history” as having worked no more than 13 consecutive weeks full-time in unsubsidized employment in the prior 12 months.

- A person with two of the three barriers to employment (described above) but no longer receiving TANF, as a result of federal or state-imposed time limits

Under the original law, up to 30 percent of the funds could be used for TANF recipients or noncustodial parents who have “characteristics associated with long-term welfare dependency,” such as teenage parents, persons with poor work history, or high school dropouts. WtW funds could be used to serve the targeted groups of custodial parents on TANF, noncustodial parents, or both the custodial and noncustodial parents together.

As the WtW grants program was implemented, evidence accumulated quickly that the eligibility criteria were slowing enrollment and limiting participation.¹⁴ These concerns led to enactment in 1999 of amendments to the WtW eligibility criteria, which made it easier for both TANF recipients and NCPs to qualify for services.¹⁵ The amendments left intact the requirement that 70 percent of WtW funds be spent on a defined category of participants, but allowed NCPs to qualify if they met the following three conditions: (1) they are unemployed or underemployed, or are having difficulty making child support payments; (2) their minor children are receiving or eligible for TANF, or received TANF in the past year, or are receiving or are eligible for assistance under the Food Stamp, Supplemental Security Income (SSI), Medicaid, or Children’s Health Insurance programs; and (3) they enter into a personal responsibility contract under which they commit to cooperating in establishing paternity, paying child support, and participating in services to improve their prospects for employment and paying child support.¹⁶

WTW-ALLOWABLE ACTIVITIES

WtW funds can be used for a range of activities designed to move eligible custodial parents and NCPs into employment, with an emphasis on jobs that have the potential for increasing future earnings. The funds can be used broadly for employment-related activities, including job readiness training/workshops; job placement assistance; on-the-job training; community service or work experience; job retention services and other postemployment services; and a range of support services. Grantees are allowed substantial flexibility in designing WtW strategies geared to the needs of each participant and local labor market conditions.

¹⁴Perez-Johnson, I., et al. *Further Progress, Persistent Constraints: Findings from a Second Survey of the Welfare-to-Work Grants Program*. Princeton, NJ: Mathematica Policy Research, Inc., 2000.

¹⁵The amendments to the WtW law went into effect in January 2000 for those receiving a WtW competitive grant and in July 2000 for formula grantees.

¹⁶The amendments removed the requirement that long-term TANF recipients exhibit additional barriers to employment. TANF recipients are eligible under the amended criteria if they have received assistance for at least 30 months, are within 12 months of reaching a time limit, or have exhausted their TANF benefits as a result of time limits.

The amendments allowed WtW funds to be used for pre-employment vocational education and job training for up to six months (under the original law, WtW funds could not be utilized for stand-alone job training or education). These funds can also be used for training or education once a person has begun work, either as a postemployment service in conjunction with work or as a work-based activity. Finally, WtW funds can be used for community service or work experience jobs, which include subsidized employment in the public, nonprofit, and for-profit sectors, as well as traditional on-the-job training.

APPENDIX B:

**DISCUSSION GUIDES USED FOR INTERVIEWING HPLP
ADMINISTRATORS AND STAFF AND COMMUNITY COLLEGE MENTORS**

**DISCUSSION GUIDE FOR PIC/WORKFORCE
DEVELOPMENT BOARD ADMINISTRATORS/STAFF**

Project Name: _____

Address: _____

Telephone: _____ Fax: _____

Email: _____

Respondent(s): _____

A. PROGRAM CONTEXT AND BACKGROUND ON THE ORGANIZATION

1. What is the geographic area served by the program?

2. What is the local economic environment in which the program operates (i.e., during time of project)?
 - a. local unemployment rate (start and end of grant) --
 - b. availability of job openings (particularly within high-demand occupations for which training is provided) --
 - c. wage rates in the locality --
 - d. major local employers and their employment requirements --
 - e. other local economic conditions that may affect welfare recipient's ability to find employment (e.g., in- or out-migration of major employers, recent major layoffs, base closings)

3. What other programs or initiatives provide employment and training services for welfare recipients in the service area and what general types of services are provided by each of these programs?

- a. TANF:
 - b. WtW (competitive/formula programs):
 - c. Other local programs providing employment and training services for welfare recipients):
4. Please provide background on your organization:
- a. General mission/objectives
 - b. Major programs and funding sources (e.g., WtW, WIA, TANF, city/state funding, foundation)
 - c. Total staff: _____
 - d. General operating expenses/budget for most current year: _____
 - e. Total funding for HPLP: _____
 - f. Estimate of HPLP funding as a percent of annual organization budget (average over course of grant): _____
 - g. Other relevant features about the board that may have affected HPLP implementation/operations:

B. PROJECT OBJECTIVES AND START-UP

1. What are the project's principal goals/objectives for participants?
2. Are program objectives realistic/achievable? If not, how should the objectives be changed?
3. When did the project first start to enroll participants?
4. a. How did project start-up proceed (e.g., on-time, slow, etc.)?
 - b. What factors facilitated project start-up?
 - c. What factors hindered project start-up?

5. What is the current status of the project? Is it still operational? If it ended, when did the program stop operating?

C. OUTREACH, INTAKE AND ASSESSMENT

1. a. What is the size of the TANF population in the program's service area?
 - b. Are there any general conditions that affect (have affected) the size of the TANF population or ability to get referrals of TANF participants to the program?
2. Does the program receive referrals from other agencies (e.g., local TANF offices)?
3. a. Does the grantee conduct its own outreach?
 - b. If so, what specific recruitment strategies and methods are used by the grantee to encourage participation (e.g., TV/radio announcements, newspaper ads, distribution of brochures, word-of-mouth referrals)?
4. a. What has been the response of the targeted population of welfare recipients to the initiative? Has it been easy to recruit welfare recipients to participate in the program? Are there more applicants than the program can serve? Is there a waiting list to get into the program?
 - b. If there have been difficulties in recruiting the number of participants originally projected under the grant, why is this the case?
 - c. What incentives (if any) have been used to encourage participation?
5. a. Who determines eligibility to participate in the project?
 - b. What, if any, criteria are used to select (screen) participants among those recruited and eligible to participate?
6. Why are eligible welfare recipients in the service area not participating?
7. a. Once enrolled, how are the service needs of welfare recipients determined?
 - b. Are any formal assessment tests done (e.g., TABE, interest inventories, substance abuse screening)

- c. What are the most common barriers to employment faced by participants?
 - d. Is an individual service strategy or employment development plan created for each participant?
- 8. a. How and when are participants assigned to case managers?
 - b. How is the role of the PIC case manager different from the community college mentor? What are the specific responsibilities?
 - c. What is the caseload per PIC case manager? Per community college mentor?

D. PROGRAM COMPONENTS/SERVICES

1. What specific employment, education, training, support services are provided under the project?
2. How do program services compare (similarities and differences) with other TANF or WtW-funded employment and training services available in the locality?
3. Is there a typical way in which participants flow through the program (i.e., from recruitment/assessment into training and job search/placement, etc.)? [Note: If available, obtain a flow diagram that shows the typical flow of enrolled participants through the system from the point of intake.]
4. Does the program provide the full range of services needed by program participants? If not, what are the gaps in services?
5. Has the project conducted customer satisfaction surveys? If so, what is the quality of the program/services based on feedback from customer satisfaction surveys? [If available, obtain a copy of the customer satisfaction survey and results.]
6. What methods are used to identify or develop high-demand job openings? How are employers selected to sponsor participants?

7. Were any program components or service elements of the original program design not implemented or abandoned early on? If yes, which ones and why?

8. Has the grantee added any new components? If yes, what are they and why were they added?

E. CLIENT CHARACTERISTICS

1. What are the general characteristics of the welfare recipients participating in the program (if possible, have the project complete Table A detailing participant characteristics)? [Note: If available, also obtain additional reports showing number and characteristics of participants.]
2. What factors (e.g. recruitment strategies, types of training/job placement activities and other services offered, local economic conditions) have influenced the types of participants served?
3. a. What proportion of participants dropped out from the program prior to completion?
 - b. What are the characteristics of participants who dropped out of the program after enrollment?
 - b. When did dropout usually occur and why?

F. SERVICE INTEGRATION/COORDINATION

1. What is the relationship of the program with the community college? What are major roles and responsibilities of each party? How has it gone?
2. What are the other key linkages with other employment, training, education, and support services agencies in the community? (Note: List the organizations, discuss the nature of the linkages with each, and if appropriate, the number and types of program participants referred.)

3. a. What was the nature of the relationship of the grantee with Instructional Systems?
- b. What kinds of services did Instructional Systems provide to the project?
- c. What is the grantee's view of the software and other services available through the Instructional Systems?

G. EMPLOYER INVOLVEMENT

1. How were employers recruited?
2. What was the employers' reaction to the project initially?
3. Did employers provide input on project design, types of workers wanted, and types of training provided (including suggestions on curriculum design)? If yes, please describe:
4. a. How many total employers were involved in the initiative (i.e., enrolled and trained project participants)?

b. For each employer involved, please provide the following:
 - Name of employer
 - Type of employer (e.g., industry)
 - Number of participants referred
 - Number of participants completing training
 - Number of participants retained in employment
 - Types of jobs for which individuals were training
 - Wage rate during training
 - Wage rate when hired as a full-time employee
5. In general, were employers supportive of participants and PIC staff throughout the project?
6. Was there buy-in for the program from all employer staff (or more from management than direct supervisors of participants)?
7. What difficulties were encountered with employers?

8. Did the program meet the training needs of employers or leave them wanting in certain areas?
9. Do you have any other comments relating to employer involvement in the project?

H. PROJECT MANAGEMENT AND STAFFING

1. What is the overall organizational plan for the program? (If available, please provide an organizational chart.)
2. What is the total number of full- and part-time staff involved in the project (i.e., at the time the project was fully implemented)? [For each staff member, provide a description of their role or responsibilities in the project and qualifications for the position.]

Full-time: _____ Part-time: _____

Staff Position	Number	Role/Responsibility
_____	_____	_____
_____	_____	_____
_____	_____	_____

I. PROGRAM OUTCOMES/IMPACTS

[Note: Obtain reports if available on outcome measures.]

1. Please provide outcome data necessary to complete Table B.
2. Please explain significant differences between what was originally planned (or expected) and what is actually reported.
3. How does the placement wage compare to the previous wages earned by program participants?
4. a. How does the placement wage compare to wage levels within the local labor market?
- b. How does the placement wage compare to wage levels for other placed TANF recipients in the local labor market?
5. a. What have been the greatest impacts of the program on program participants?

- b. To what extent and in what areas have basic and job-related skills been improved?
- c. Are there ways in which the program has fallen short of its goals for assisting participants?
- d. Are there other approaches strategies or services that would contribute to better outcomes for program participants?

J. PROJECT COSTS

- 1. What are the major ongoing costs for the program (e.g., staff, equipment purchase or rental, transportation, subcontracts, utilities, security, wage subsidies, etc.)?
- 2. How do the types of participants served affect costs? What types of participants are most/least costly to serve?

K. PROGRAM REPLICABILITY

- 1. To what extent do you think your program could be replicated in other localities?
- 2. What features of HPLP are most amenable to replication?
- 3. a. What features of project are least amenable to replication?
 - b. How does location, the target population served, or other distinctive features of your program make it either non-transferable or limit transferability?
 - c. Would the program be limited to localities with certain characteristics? If so, what are they?
- 4. What do you feel needs to be communicated to other agencies who might be interested in replicating your program?

L. CHECKLIST OF ITEMS TO COLLECT FROM SITE (IF AVAILABLE)

- Background information about the locality
- Background information about the organization

- Additional documentation/reports detailing major services
- Evaluation reports that may have been prepared on the program
- Blank set of client forms used in the participant's case file
- Blank copy of the customer satisfaction form(s); reports on the methodology used and results of the survey
- Diagram showing how participants flow through the program
- Organizational chart for the program

TABLE A: PARTICIPANT CHARACTERISTICS

Site: _____ Total Participants: _____

Data Provided Is as of: _____ Final Results: ___Yes ___No

PARTICIPANT CHARACTERISTICS		NUMBER	PERCENT
Gender:	Male		
	Female		
Age (at Enrollment):	29 and under		
	30-44		
	45-54		
	55 and over		
Race/Ethnicity	White (Non-Hispanic)		
	Black (Non-Hispanic)		
	Hispanic		
	Other		
Highest Grade Completed (at Enrollment)	Less than High School Graduate		
	High School Graduate		
	Post High School Attendee		
	College Graduate or Above		
Hourly Wage in Most Recent Job Prior to Participation in HPLP	\$4.99 or less		
	\$5.00 to \$7.49		
	\$7.50 to \$9.99		
	\$10.00 to \$14.99		
	\$15.00 or More		

Duration of Training Received Through HPLP	None		
	1 to 99 hours		
	100 to 249 hours		
	250 to 499 hours		
	501 to 999 hours		
	1,000 to 1,999 hours		
	Over 2,000 hours		
Types of Support Services Received (Directly Provided and Paid for through the Grant)	Transportation Assistance		
	Child Care Assistance		
	Substance Abuse Treatment/Counseling		
	Housing or Rental Assistance		
	Clothing/Work Equipment		
	Other:		

TABLE B: PARTICIPANT OUTCOMES

Site: _____

Data Provided as of: _____ Final Results: ___ Yes ___ No

PARTICIPANT CHARACTERISTICS	PLANNED	ACTUAL
A. Total Number of Participants Enrolled		
B. Total Number of Participants Completing Training		
C. Total Number of Job Placements		
D. Job Placement Rate (Item C/A)		
E. Average Wage at Placement		
F. Total Number of Job Retentions at 6 Months After Placement		
G. Job Retention Rate (Item F/C)		
H. Average Wage at 6 Months After Placement		
I. Total Cost of the Project		
1. Average Cost per Participant (Item I/A)		
2. Average Cost per Placement (Item I/C)		
J. Workforce Development Area's Average Wage at Placement for WIA Participants		
K. Local Area's Average Wage at Placement for TANF Participants		
L. Average Previous Wage Paid to Participants Prior to Enrollment in HPLP		
M. Other Outcome Measures Used by the Site (List Below):		

**DISCUSSION GUIDE FOR LINKED
COMMUNITY COLLEGES**

Site: _____

Community
College: _____

Address: _____

Telephone: _____ Fax: _____

Email: _____

Respondent(s): _____

1. Please provide background on the community college:
 - e. Student enrollments per academic year: _____
 - f. Number of faculty: _____
 - g. General operating expenses/budget for most current year: _____
 - h. Total funding for HPLP: _____
 - e. Other relevant features about the board that may have affected HPLP implementation/operations:
2.
 - a. When and why did your community college become involved in the High Performance Learning Project (HPLP)?
 - b. Was there a long-standing relationship with the HPLP grantee prior to the project?
 - c. Has your community college been involved in other programs similar to HPLP in the past? If so, what are the differences between this program and other past programs?
3.
 - a. When did your organization first begin receiving HPLP referrals?
 - b. How many HPLP participants have been served by the community college?
4.
 - a. How did start-up of the project go at your community college?

- b. Were there any factors that helped or hindered start-up or early implementation?
5. What has been the general role of the community college in this program?
6. Please discuss the general flow of HPLP participants into and through activities at the community college.
7. a. Please describe the training provided through the community college (types of training, hours per week, number of weeks/month of training). [Note: If an outline of the curriculum for the training is available, please provide it.]
- b. What role did the community college play in developing the training/curricula?
 - c. What role has the community college played in providing training?
8. a. What has been the role of the community college mentor?
- b. What has been the caseload of mentors (i.e., number of HPLP participants per mentor when the program was fully operation)?
9. Has the community college played a role in assessing client needs at the start of their involvement in HPLP? If so, what has been the role?
10. Has the community college worked with employers as part of the project? If so, what has been the nature of the relationship with employers?
11. a. Have participants completed the training portion of the project at the community college?
- b. To what extent have participants dropped out before completing training and why?
12. What, if any, has been the nature of the relationship of the community college with Instructional Systems?
13. Have participants received a degree or certification from the community college at the conclusion of training?

- 14. Has participation in HPLP enhanced the employability of participants? If so, how?

- 15. What has been the total number of full- and part-time staff involved in the HPLP project at the community college (i.e., at the time the project was fully implemented)? [For each staff member, provide a description of their role or responsibilities in the project and qualifications for the position.]

Full-time:_____ Part-time:_____

Staff Position	Number	Role/Responsibility
_____	_____	_____
_____	_____	_____
_____	_____	_____
_____	_____	_____

- 16. Do you have any suggestions on how the program might be improved in the future?

- 17. Do you have any other thoughts or views you would like to share about the program?