Final Report on the
Neighborhood Jobs Initiative

Lessons and Implications for Future Community Employment Initiatives

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Overview

Traditional employment programs have tried to address poverty by focusing on efforts that assist individuals. The Neighborhood Jobs Initiative (NJI) took a different approach. It sought to alleviate concentrated poverty by raising employment levels of entire neighborhoods to match the level prevailing in their metropolitan regions. NJI developers hypothesized that such concentrated efforts, if successful, would gradually transform low-income communities, representing a new approach to neighborhood revitalization. Community organizations with strong ties to neighborhood residents were engaged to lead these efforts. Each was charged with responsibility for identifying ambitious and concrete employment targets and mobilizing public and private partners to reach the targeted outcomes.

Drawing upon the experiences of the lead community organizations during the initiative's implementation phase, this third and final NJI report begins to answer the overarching questions first posed by MDRC and its funding partners: Is it possible to realize large employment outcomes in targeted communities? Are community-based organizations (CBO) effective vehicles for mobilizing, brokering, and delivering employment programs to underemployed and unemployed residents of low-income communities? What programmatic elements appear to contribute to the goal of raising employment levels in targeted communities?

Key Findings

- **Efforts to quantify precisely what was meant by "large employment outcomes" represented a turning point in the initiative and served as a catalyst for bringing partners to the table.** Early attempts to implement the vision of NJI faltered when the sites used abstract goals related to the nature and level of expected employment gains. The lead CBOs were unable to convey to partners what scale of effort would be required to realize large outcomes, and they were unable to gauge progress along the way. Once the employment targets were identified and the partners understood and committed to these targets, it became easier for the CBOs to mobilize the levels of effort needed to reach a larger scale of employment outcomes.

- **To succeed in reaching community-level employment targets, NJI required an extraordinary effort by the CBOs and their partners.** NJI required dedicated organizational, human, and financial resources to be successful. Distinct staff capacities were required at different stages of the initiative, and the lead organization had to be willing to give NJI priority over its other activities and be prepared to dedicate a significant amount of senior staff's time to the effort.

- **CBOs with strong neighborhood connections are ideally suited for mobilizing residents and partners to achieve positive programmatic advantages.** The quality of CBO relationships with neighborhood residents and knowledge of their employment barriers contributed to the type, quality, and accessibility of employment services offered, thereby improving early progress in reaching their employment targets.

- **The scale of operations achieved by NJI sites suggests that it is possible to raise employment rates in low-income neighborhoods.** The initiative ended after just two years of program implementation, and none of the sites had achieved its five-year saturation targets within the time allocated. But early achievements suggest that a number of sites were on a trajectory to realize large outcomes, thereby changing the employment profiles of their respective communities.

- **A neighborhood-focused employment saturation strategy is not appropriate for all low-income neighborhoods.** The NJI experience suggests that more stable neighborhoods with strong local identities experience the greatest benefit from a place-based employment approach like NJI.

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Acknowledgments

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Introduction

From 1998 to 2001, Manpower Demonstration Research Corporation (MDRC) worked intensively with a group of community-based organizations to determine whether it would be possible to substantially raise employment rates within selected low-income neighborhoods. The Neighborhood Jobs Initiative (NJI) was a place-based initiative that sought to transform these economically distressed communities by focusing intently on assisting unemployed and underemployed residents to find employment or find better-quality jobs. Developed by MDRC in partnership with The Rockefeller Foundation, the Chase Manhattan Bank Foundation,[1] the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD), and the Urban Institute, NJI worked originally in five high-poverty urban neighborhoods to assist local organizations in developing strategies to connect residents to employment and in fostering community environments that supported work.[2]

An experienced community-based agency was chosen to lead local collaboratives in each of the implementation sites: the Development Corporation of Columbia Heights (DCCH) in Washington, DC; Project JOBS in Chicago; Rheedlen Centers for Children and Families in New York; Hartford Areas Rally Together (HART) in Hartford; and the Near Northside Partners Council (NNPC) in Fort Worth. Each site received funding as well as intensive technical assistance from MDRC, the Urban Institute, and MDRC's consultants to develop and implement employment strategies. Sites were selected in 1998; the first phase of the initiative — planning and implementing the pilot program — ended in December 1999, and sites engaged in program implementation through the end of 2001.

The initiative's primary goal was to substantially increase employment among residents of targeted neighborhoods, to the point that working, rather than not working, would become the community norm. NJI sites were attempting to raise neighborhood employment rates to the levels that were characteristic of their respective metropolitan regions. To achieve such goals in the targeted communities in the three implementation sites — which had populations ranging from about 15,000 to 17,000 people — the participating organizations needed to place 1,000 to 2,300 people in new or better jobs (with high retention rates) over a five-year period. Moreover, if the initiative was successful in reaching this scale of employment outcomes, it was hypothesized that these communities would experience a range of related improvements (for example,

[1]Now the JP Morgan Chase Foundation.

[2]Five organizations were selected to participate in NJI, but two organizations dropped out of the initiative. One (Rheedlen Centers) decided early that it did not wish to continue, while a second (HART) experienced major financial and managerial difficulties that were unrelated to NJI but that made it difficult for the organization to continue in the initiative.

less crime and better school attendance) resulting from sharp increases in employment and income within these relatively small geographic areas.

Rather than launching NJI as a formal demonstration, planners had the luxury of working with the selected communities for more than three years to determine the feasibility of applying a saturation strategy — analogous to the strategy used in Jobs-Plus[3] — in the context of a general neighborhood rather than a specific housing development. Toward that end, each site was encouraged to develop program services that adapted the three components of the Jobs-Plus model:[4]

- **Employment-related services and activities,** including job development, training, and counseling that incorporates best practices and is available to all residents in the targeted areas and is tailored to their needs
- **Financial incentives to work** — and to help "make work pay" — such as the Earned Income Tax Credit (EITC), various earnings disregards for recipients of Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF), child care subsidies, Medicaid and food stamps, and wage subsidies
- **Community supports for work** that seek to strengthen and expand residents' existing social networks, to facilitate the sharing of information about job opportunities and such support services as child care

Each NJI site was encouraged to convene partners to build the initiative using these three components as well as a fourth one that applied only to NJI: expanding local access to capital. Although the funders were interested in adding this last program element, it was found to be beyond the scope of work and interest of the partners at the sites, and so no site attempted to implement this component.

This feasibility-testing phase did not include a formal research agenda by which to measure program effectiveness. Instead, the designers of NJI sought to determine whether such a program approach could be implemented at the neighborhood level. Unlike more conventional approaches to employment development — which serve individuals, regardless of residency — the focus of NJI was to concentrate employment outcomes exclusively on residents living in specific neighborhoods. As far as was known, this scale of concentrated employment effort had

[3]The Jobs-Plus Community Revitalization Initiative for Public Housing Families ("Jobs-Plus" for short) is a community initiative that focuses on increasing employment among all working-age, nondisabled residents of a targeted public housing development.

[4]Whereas Jobs-Plus seeks to demonstrate the efficacy of the three-component model, the NJI sites were instructed to attempt to implement the three components and to share their experiences in doing so. The sites were also encouraged to begin by developing the employment services component and, once that was established, to build the financial incentives and the community supports for work.

not been attempted elsewhere. Hence, in launching NJI, MDRC and its funding partners sought to explore three primary questions:

- Was it feasible to achieve large employment outcomes in targeted communities? That is, was it realistic to set the goal of getting to scale within an entire neighborhood?
- Were community-based organizations (CBOs) — with their strong connections to residents — effective vehicles for mobilizing, coordinating, and even delivering broad-ranging, locally tailored employment programs to unemployed and underemployed residents of poor communities?
- Which programmatic components were most likely to contribute to the goal of raising employment levels, and what quality of relationships among the partner agencies would be necessary?

Over the course of interactions with the CBO partners, a great deal was learned about these questions and other considerations related to achieving saturation-scale employment at the neighborhood level. Indeed, not only has much more been learned about what it takes to get to scale in a neighborhood, but it is now possible also to discuss preconditions and neighborhood characteristics that support the goals set forth in NJI or that present barriers to achieving them. Now that many of the implementation and operational issues are better understood, it is possible to identify which approaches were successful from an operational perspective. What follows is a brief review of the experience of implementing NJI, including a statement of the project assumptions, a discussion of the major operational issues and lessons that emerged from Round 1 of the initiative, and suggestions on how these lessons might inform future community employment efforts.

To answer the questions posed at the outset of NJI, this report draws heavily on MDRC's experience during the implementation phase of the initiative. It is important to note, however, that in many respects NJI ended just as the sites were beginning to ramp up their efforts and approach full-scale implementation. Whatever the initial expectations were regarding how soon the outcomes might be reached and what scale of outcomes might be sufficient "proof" of the efficacy of the approach, the two years of planning and pilot activities and the two years of implementation make it possible only to judge whether sites were on a trajectory that suggested they were heading toward a saturation scale of outcomes.[5] Although another year of implementation would no doubt increase the confidence underlying the conclusions, the NJI

[5]Although the sites had two years to implement their proposed strategies, 2001 is considered the first full year of implementation, given the high degree of staff turnover experienced in the three remaining sites. Moreover, outcomes data for employment activities were not available until 2001.

experience nonetheless provides a rich body of information about the feasibility of applying an employment saturation approach to an entire neighborhood.

NJI: Project Assumptions

NJI was designed to improve the effectiveness and efficiency of employment programs in neighborhoods of high unemployment and low labor force participation, by combining "best practices" with a community focus. Employment programs typically take the individual as the service unit; that is, individuals are recruited, and each receives a variety of such services as job search assistance, training, coaching, and child care. However, specific obstacles related to location and living environments in distressed or isolated neighborhoods can undermine the effectiveness of such efforts. The designers of NJI sought to determine whether the neighborhood focus would help to mitigate some of the location-related problems that job-seekers face and whether the location and the community might be used to amplify the effectiveness of employment efforts. NJI carried a number of operating assumptions:

- By targeting an entire neighborhood, NJI could efficiently address certain location-related problems that interfere with finding or keeping a job. These problems include such factors as long distances between home and work opportunities, exacerbated by inadequate transportation systems; few employed individuals to serve as role models; personal safety issues that increase anxiety about, say, waiting for buses or leaving children unattended at home; and employers' prejudices about residents of particular neighborhoods. NJI sought to address these place-specific disadvantages that impede employment pursuits in order to benefit a large number of individuals simultaneously. NJI communities could work to improve transportation routes, for example, or to increase the availability of after-school child care.

- To the extent that an initiative draws on the *community* as a means of amplifying its message and supporting its efforts, targeting a neighborhood is potentially more efficient than a program that focuses on individuals. NJI sought to build on the array of formal and informal networks, affinity groups, and mutually supportive relationships that define communities and tie them together. Planners explored whether it was possible to enhance such networks purposefully and to involve communities in the support of residents' pursuit of work. For example, it has been shown that many inner-city communities lack interpersonal links to information about better job opportunities outside the neighborhood. NJI assumed that stronger, more work-directed networks — combined with a range of high-quality employment and support services — could lead to larger employment outcomes than could be

achieved by just providing services alone. NJI explored the extent to which it was possible to identify and to build on these networks in ways that enhance the community's support for work.

- By targeting neighborhoods, NJI could reach segments of the workforce, particularly the "working poor," more effectively than programs targeting individuals. Place-based strategies offer a means to reach those segments of the workforce that, because they are "uncaptured" by the major public systems, are difficult to reach with programs promoting wage progression and access to career ladders. Neighborhood efforts can reach these populations where they reside in typically large concentrations, and because convenience is particularly important to these groups, local service provision can facilitate recruitment and participation. Further, the concentration of workforce-focused activities in the neighborhood helps to publicize those opportunities, enabling the recruitment of additional participants and the engagement of individuals in more than one beneficial activity, thereby increasing the intensity of service utilization.

- Concentrating large-scale employment gains in a place would, over time, produce a spiral of related positive changes in the neighborhood that would themselves improve employment opportunities. NJI's designers anticipated that residents who worked would serve as role models for others to pursue similar efforts and as sources of employment information (about job leads as well as workplace customs); that higher incomes would result in higher investments in the community by residents and businesses; and that higher employment levels and related prosperity would lead to changes in other community indicators, including health, education, and safety.[6]

NJI: Accomplishments and Lessons

MDRC encouraged the lead CBOs and their partners to develop and deliver a range of employment services and supports that would serve to increase employment levels in the targeted communities. The sites were not required to implement the four suggested programmatic components per se; rather, the sites were encouraged to determine whether these components

[6]While such "spillover effects" formed a central part of the theory underlying NJI — that is, the realization of large employment outcomes would translate into positive spillovers, or externalities, in other aspects of community life — the goal during the feasibility stage was only to learn whether it might be possible to get on a trajectory toward large employment outcomes. Planners did not, during this stage, expect to see or to measure any spillover effects.

could be applied to the whole neighborhood and, if not, to develop alternative approaches to achieve high outcomes.

Implementing Three Program Components

Best Practices for Employment-Related Services and Training. An immediate issue was whether each lead CBO was to become an employment service provider or whether it might instead be a broker of services — an intermediary between residents, service providers, and employers. On one end of the spectrum, Project JOBS in Chicago served as a local intermediary, brokering 23 partner agencies' employment and support services for residents of the NJI target area. Because Project JOBS was created expressly for the purpose of coordinating activities, it had limited authority to hold the partners accountable for performance, and so it faced an uphill battle getting the partners to deliver on the promised quality and intensity of support in the targeted portion of the neighborhood. At the other end of the spectrum was Hartford Areas Rally Together (HART) in Hartford. Shortly before joining the initiative, HART had opened a job center and had become an employment service provider, but its initial success in performance and in leveraging public funding proved difficult to sustain, particularly because its employment service provision was felt to conflict at times with the organization's chief role as a community advocate. Further, the funding attached to NJI was a disincentive to HART in spinning off NJI as a stand-alone initiative, inasmuch as HART needed operational support to keep its doors open.

The Near Northside Partners Council (NNPC) in Fort Worth and the Development Corporation of Columbia Heights (DCCH) in Washington, DC, took a mixed approach, acting as both brokers and direct service providers. NNPC built strong partnerships with both public and private service providers, and it developed and provided specialized training when others were not able to do so. NNPC also provided quality control for services offered by its partners, helping each to deliver services in ways that were more closely tailored to residents' needs. DCCH developed direct service capacity while coordinating the participation of partner service providers. While DCCH was the coordinator of a number of partner service providers, in many cases each partner's participation was directly related to the amount of funding that DCCH provided to serve residents in the targeted neighborhood. Based on these experiences, the lead organizations are strongly encouraged to primarily play a brokering role — recruiting partners, developing relationships and agreements with employers, maintaining the neighborhood focus, and providing intensive case management to ensure that each participant has access to a program mix that is suitable for his or her circumstances. Developing direct service capacity might be considered only if that approach fills important service gaps and does not detract from the organization's role as a local intermediary or broker.

With respect to the quality of employment and support services provided at the NJI sites (whether provided directly by the lead organization or by partners), performance was uneven. Three sites — Chicago, Fort Worth, and Hartford — developed or coordinated effective case management systems for resident job-seekers, and Fort Worth's NNPC proved particularly effective at persuading partners to restructure or tailor services to make them more user-friendly. The sites, however, struggled with unevenness among service providers; higher-quality providers were valued members of the collaborative, but some were reluctant to share employer leads, for example, with less effective or less professional-seeming members. Similarly, some partners were unwilling to share employment outcome data, making it difficult to determine whether the collaborative was achieving the scale of effort envisioned.[7] Overall, the sites seemed to exercise very limited quality control over their collaborative partners, and this was true even in the sites that chose to reallocate a portion of their site payments to underwrite partner agencies' contributions to NJI.[8] In general, all sites struggled with how best to exercise quality control. This experience suggests that formal agreements or memoranda of understanding with the major collaborative partners are needed at the outset as one means to empower the lead organizations so that they might have greater leverage vis-à-vis the quality of services provided by their partners.

Financial Incentives to Work. Although NJI did not have funding for rent incentives like those used in Jobs-Plus, the initiative nonetheless sought to increase the utilization of existing public supports that would help make work pay. On several occasions, MDRC provided sites with information and significant technical assistance concerning a variety of support programs,[9] and it made the development of a specific plan for incentives and supports a requirement for accessing the final year's funding. Nevertheless, the sites' performances were mixed in helping clients to package the range of public services, benefits, and supports (such as wage supplements, training vouchers, child care subsidies, EITCs, and food stamps). The primary reason for inconsistency in this area was that the initiative's planners did not include a model of

[7]This experience also points to the need to standardize data management among partners and to obtain their commitment up-front for the type and frequency of data that will be required in determining programmatic outcomes.

[8]A number of sites chose to use their NJI funding to contract with service provider partners, but such approaches generally did not give the NJI CBOs the leverage to hold subcontractors accountable, because their general lack of experience in the workforce domain did not allow them to negotiate from a position of strength. Further, the relative modest funding offered by some NJI CBOs to their partners (for example, $25,000) made it difficult for them to enforce the terms of the contracts, since this funding amount generally did not allow the contracting agencies to dedicate staff to the NJI effort. Perhaps more significantly, the NJI CBOs did not have a track record in workforce development that enabled them to speak with authority or to question others about their efforts. And, in one case, the NJI CBO was reluctant to enforce the contract with its partners because of political tensions and their ramifications.

[9]For example, MDRC staff adapted the Web-based "Income Calculator" that was developed for Jobs-Plus to provide a similar tool to help NJI staff calculate clients' net income and the public benefits that clients might be eligible to receive relative to their wage level.

service delivery, preferring instead to support whatever models each site chose to develop. At the same time, with just one year of funding remaining, sites were reluctant to implement new services. Indeed, feedback from the sites suggested that they would have pursued this component more aggressively if they had had a formal model of service delivery, rather than simply being asked to find their own route to developing this component.[10]

Community Supports for Work. Under the assumption that social relationships and networks — whether based on common membership in religious congregations, ethnic affinity groups, or other associations — have potential as resources to spread work-related information or that they might be mobilized to provide mutual support for their members, NJI sought to emulate the Jobs-Plus approach to community supports for work. NJI sites were encouraged to involve residents in program planning and group activities centered on employment and also to explore whether existing organizations (such as a Southeast Asian association in Washington's Columbia Heights neighborhood) might serve to enrich the community with job-related information. Such encouragement, however, produced little, so MDRC pressed the sites in the final year to develop a formal community supports for work component. One site adopted a "block captain" approach, training neighborhood residents to become outreach workers and employment publicists. Although volunteers were initially enthusiastic, their interest proved hard to sustain, given the demands on their time. Another site convened a community forum as a means to recruit local leaders to help spread the word about job leads and employment services available in the community. For various reasons, these efforts did not take hold in the sites that tried them. Furthermore, NJI's planners did not offer a developed sense of exactly how this component might look or might be implemented, nor did the activities that sites pursued give a clear idea of how this component might be developed in a new generation of sites.

Nonetheless, in sites where the lead agency had already laid the groundwork for neighborhood connections — where the hard work of door-to-door organizing had already been a centerpiece of the agency's agenda — NJI has been able to build on these connections to draw large numbers of participants. This has been true in Fort Worth and Hartford, and the New York site also seems to have this potential. In the future, rather than attempting to create artificial processes of community involvement as a separate program component, it would make sense to select neighborhoods that already have lead agencies with strong ties to residents — agencies that have a history of community organizing and can muster significant participation in community activities. Such organizations would then be encouraged to develop focused campaigns

[10]Recognizing that the sum of financial work supports for which many families are eligible can sometimes double household income, MDRC is now working to develop such a model in the proposed Neighborhood Work Support Centers (NWSCs) — one major function of which will be to organize formal outreach campaigns, with saturation targets, to aggressively promote take-up of multiple financial work supports among the low-wage, "working-poor" labor force.

around specific themes related to their strategies. For example, NNPC in Fort Worth is now working with a local consultant to prepare for a neighborhoodwide advertising campaign that will train local residents to become volunteers to help low-wage workers file for the EITC. The goals are not only to increase the number of residents who file for the EITC but also to reduce the use of proprietary tax services among those who do file. Within the context of MDRC's proposed Neighborhood Work Support Centers, each lead CBO would also be encouraged to use its connections to residents to organize campaigns to promote the take-up of Medicaid, food stamps, and other such supports, and to do so at saturation levels.

Providing Access to Services for Everyone Who Needs Them

Initially it was assumed that a Jobs-Plus saturation approach — providing employment-related services and opportunities to all working-age residents of a public housing development — would also be possible in an entire neighborhood. Considering the challenges of working at the scale of an urban neighborhood, however (in contrast to a single public housing development, where residents are a captive audience, so to speak), it did not seem feasible to provide services to *all* the working-age adults in the target neighborhoods (ranging from 7,000 to 13,000 working-age adults). And since the NJI-targeted neighborhoods were not expected to reach 100 percent employment, it did not make sense to mobilize services for all unemployed adults age 16 or older. Instead, the definition of "saturation" in NJI has been focused on employment outcomes: Saturation is said to have been reached if the neighborhood employment levels for working-age adults are similar to the levels in the region at large. Using this new definition (explained in more detail below), NJI sites agreed to place between 700 and 2,500 newly employed adult residents in jobs, over a five-year period.

Saturation Targets

The revised definition of "saturation" proved to be a powerful catalyst around which the lead organizations in most sites were able to rally support and to focus the efforts of the partners. Having targets made it possible to identify the number and kinds of partners needed (service providers as well as employers and public agencies), and it gave the partners a common purpose and the motivation to — together — make strategic choices. Working backward from the targets, the NJI partners began to identify and recruit additional partners and to determine how their participation would contribute to the overall effort. Some NJI CBOs went as far as asking partners to commit to serving or placing a certain number of residents, as a way to disaggregate the targets and then determine whether, collectively, all partners' efforts would sum up to sufficient coverage to achieve the site's placement goals. Interestingly, not all partners committed to the same vision of reaching saturation in the neighborhood — or even to the same degree of commitment to the targeted neighborhood's residents relative to the population at large.

Even so, having saturation targets resonated with most partners, and, as a result, they were more easily persuaded to coordinate their efforts.

An example is provided by Fort Worth, where NNPC — which recognized that English proficiency was a major barrier to employment for its residents, — convinced the Fort Worth Independent School District to provide English as a Second Language (ESL) instruction in the neighborhood center. Once the classes were located at the center, however, demand for ESL overwhelmed existing capacity, and NNPC helped the school district find additional classroom space throughout the neighborhood in order to eliminate the 400-person waiting list. While the school district did not necessarily buy into the initiative's overall saturation goals, having the employment targets enabled everyone to understand the scale of effort that would be required and to mobilize resources accordingly. Similarly, in Washington, DC, the saturation targets helped determine the roles that various partners would need to play in the employment effort. In this case, DCCH reviewed the neighborhood's existing employment services as a way to identify gaps in the service delivery infrastructure that might impede efforts to attain the targets. In short, having numerical saturation targets had the effect of providing sites with the catalyst needed to move them beyond abstract thinking — and, in some cases, paralysis — to concrete activities and implementation.[11]

Site Performance and Trajectories

The saturation targets helped NJI sites to determine how many adults would need to be assisted in finding and retaining employment and to set annual targets aimed at achieving those goals. Moreover, Chicago and Fort Worth chose not to stop at placement as the end goal but, rather, viewed job quality as an equally important goal, and these sites began to think about which employment sectors and which employers they might target in pursuit of a larger number of "good" jobs for neighborhood residents.

Armed with their placement goals, each of the sites prepared a strategic plan. Four of the five sites set a five-year time line for achieving saturation-level employment, with Chicago indicating that it would reach its goals within three years. Each plan further specified the number of residents that each site would need to serve and place, given certain assumptions about retention. The saturation goals that were stated in each site's strategic plan were ambitious but not impossible: They ranged from placing 750 new adult workers in the labor force in the Harlem's Children's zone (New York City) to a placement goal of 2,300 in Columbia Heights

[11]Notably, other foundations are now establishing similar outcome targets and are working backward from the targets to organize their initiatives and to recruit partners. MDRC has provided technical assistance to some of these foundations' initiatives, and while it is too soon to comment on the effects that this approach will have, prospective partners in these sites have coalesced around the goals in a fashion that had not been evident previously.

(Washington, DC).[12] These targets represented the number of residents who would need to be placed in jobs within the specified time period, and then each site worked backward to figure out, roughly, how many people it would need to place each year, as an indication of whether or not it was on track to reach its five-year goals. Toward these ends, the sites also calculated the number of people they would need to serve — and who must be in the pipeline to employment — to account for the level of placements required each year. And sites also calculated the number of people who might lose jobs, thereby necessitating that they serve a larger number of residents in order to hit the placement and retention targets. Project JOBS in Chicago, for example, projected that it would need to place 1,452 neighborhood residents over a three-year period in order to achieve a retention goal of 50 percent, or 728 sustained jobs.

In considering their placement targets, however, three NJI CBOs made allowances for serving residents outside their neighborhood boundaries. Recognizing that residents from outside the neighborhood would likely hear, through word of mouth, about the employment services offered in the neighborhood, and that some service provider partners were not likely to serve neighborhood residents exclusively, the NJI CBOs established job placement targets that included the total number of people served and placed, of which target neighborhood residents were a subset.[13] In Chicago, for example, Project JOBS estimated that it would serve a total of 5,315 people, yielding a total target-area placement goal of 1,452 residents within three years. Likewise, NNPC assumed that it would place approximately 1,930 people in jobs over five years, out of which 1,210 would be Near Northside residents (Table 1). Hence, in order to yield job placement and retention goals among neighborhood residents, the saturation targets took into consideration the total number of people who would be served in the larger area surrounding the target neighborhoods.

In the first full year of program implementation, most sites focused almost exclusively on the placement targets, abandoning for the short term their companion goal of placing residents in "quality jobs." During this first year, sites were also less focused on ensuring that the residents who found jobs were able to retain employment. With only one full year of self-reported data, and lacking a formal research design, it's not possible to state conclusively whether sites would have reached their saturation targets had they been supported for the full five-year time frame. Nevertheless, early placement data suggest that at least two of the sites,

[12]These calculations used 1990 Census data to provide order-of-magnitude information for goal setting. For more information on NJI's saturation goals, see Frieda Molina and Laura Nelson, *The Neighborhood Jobs Initiative: An Early Report on the Vision and Challenges of Bringing an Employment Focus to a Community-Building Initiative* (New York: Manpower Demonstration Research Corporation, 2001), pp. 12-14.

[13]Operationally, the desire to serve individuals at large, regardless of residency, was a constant tension that some sites were better able to mediate than others. For further discussion of the dynamic between serving neighborhood residents and those at large, see the section below entitled "Engaging Partners."

Table 1

Saturation Goals of the Near Northside Partners Council, Fort Worth

NJI Saturation Goals	Year 1	Year 2	Year 3	Year 4	Year 5	Total
(a) Overall retention goals (percentage)	50%	55%-60%	60%-65%	60%-65%	+70%	
(b) Number of net new workers from Near Northside placed annually	160	200	250	300	300	1,210
(c) Number of total placements required to yield (b)	320	335-360	385-420	465-500	425	1,930-2,025

Chicago and Fort Worth, may have been on a trajectory to realize large-scale employment outcomes in their targeted neighborhoods over five years or more.[14] Early data in Hartford were promising as well, although HART did not continue with NJI beyond the first quarter of 2001. Table 2 shows the number of people that these three sites served and placed in employment during the first year.[15]

In the first full year of implementation, the sites' employment targets seem to have served the purpose of being sufficiently ambitious to push the sites to excel yet were realistic enough to give the sites encouragement that they were making progress toward their goals. For instance, in the first year, NNPC estimated that it would place 160 Near Northside residents in jobs. By year's end, NNPC and its partners had placed a total of 233 people in jobs, and 132 of those people were neighborhood residents, demonstrating that NNPC had attained 82 percent of its goal. In this first year, NNPC staff kept track of the targets and began to use their progress as a way to raise strategic questions related to whether the program was achieving an adequate balance between serving neighborhood residents and people at large, as well as to question how they might change their program offerings to ensure that services saturation targets. In contrast,

[14]Two of the five sites joined the initiative 10 months after the others; as such, they did not have a full four years to develop and implement their neighborhood-focused employment strategies. Moreover, staff turnover and a longer-than-expected planning period resulted in delays in the project implementation in most sites. The placement numbers must therefore be viewed against this backdrop. Nonetheless, the data for one year in Fort Worth and Chicago show the promise that, given more time, these sites would have hit if not exceeded their project goals.

[15]All these participation and placement numbers are self-reported and have not been verified by MDRC.

Project JOBS estimated that its partners would successfully place 410 target-area residents in jobs, and it met this goal with 418 placements (Figure 1).

The Neighborhood Jobs Initiative

Table 2

NJI Sites' Employment Placement Outcomes

First Year (2001)	Project JOBS (Chicago)	Near Northside Partners Council (Fort Worth)	Development Corporation of Columbia Heights (Washington, DC)
Total people served	NA	1,199	484
Total neighborhood people served	2,772	552	366
Total people at large placed[a]	NA	233	452
Total neighborhood residents placed (first-year goal)	418(410)	132 (160)	345 (333)

NOTE: [a]This represents the total people placed regardless of residency. Comparable figures are not available for Project JOBS, as its collaborating partners only reported placements of residents from the NJI targeted neighborhood, not total citywide placements.

Access to the Program and Levels of Participation

The volume of people who sought services at NJI sites — regardless of their employment outcomes — seems to confirm the initial assumption that residents would seek out and utilize employment services that were offered in the neighborhood if those services were sponsored or provided by a trusted community-based organization (CBO). There was steady improvement in the volume of clients who availed themselves of NJI's services. In Chicago, for instance, Project JOBS provided employment-related services to a total of 2,772 unduplicated clients during the first year.[16] Similarly, in Fort Worth, NNPC provided services to 1,199 unduplicated clients during this same period. In both cases, these levels of participation were achieved in circumstances where participation was voluntary. And while the volume of clients

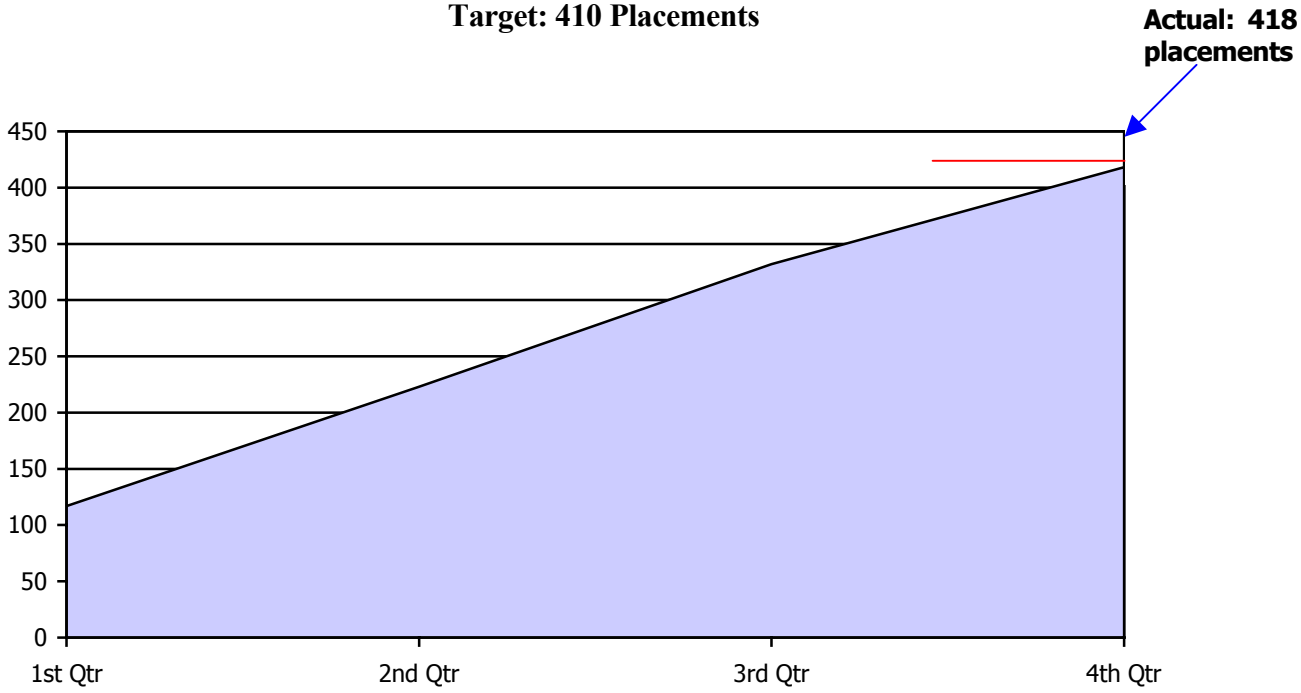
[16]Outcomes data for Chicago illustrate the scale of outcomes that can be achieved at the neighborhood level, but they are not meant to suggest that these outcomes were attributable to NJI per se. More than the other sites, Chicago had substantial employment service capacity prior to the launching of NJI, and these organizations would likely have realized a significant scale of outcomes had NJI not operated there. While it could also be argued that no one knows what scale of outcomes might have been attained in the other sites as well, given the limited availability of employment services in those neighborhoods prior to the advent of NJI, it seems clear that this initiative was a significant factor in the participation and placement numbers that were eventually attained.

The Neighborhood Jobs Initiative

Figure 1

Project JOBS 2001 Job Placements

Target: 410 Placements



says nothing about the quality of services received or about whether participants subsequently found jobs, it nonetheless illustrates the draw that community organizations have for a neighborhood's residents, and it suggests that CBOs have important roles to play in outreach, recruitment, and brokering.

Efforts to facilitate better program access took a variety of forms, including ensuring that bilingual staff were available to interact with residents in the language they were most comfortable speaking, offering services in a nearby and unimposing location, and providing services during hours that made sense to the residents being targeted. In Chicago, the outreach staff for Project JOBS conducted regularly scheduled visits to residence complexes and shelters for homeless families, to meet with current and potential NJI participants where they lived. In these meetings, residents could make appointments to see an employment case manager, learn about

potential loans or grants to support work, and discuss their employment goals with a member of the Project JOBS staff. In Fort Worth, NNPC made sure that ESL classes were offered at convenient times during the day and evenings: Daytime classes were well attended by women who were not currently working or who worked at night and hoped to improve their job prospects by building their English skills; evening classes were frequented by underemployed residents seeking better-paying jobs for which English proficiency was a prerequisite. NNPC staff took care to welcome all visitors and to treat them with respect and consideration — which encouraged hesitant individuals to stick around long enough to learn about the program's opportunities and to enroll in activities. In Hartford, potential participants were allowed to "hang out" at HART's Job Center, helping to create a welcoming atmosphere. In short, the relatively large volume of clients who sought services in NJI sites attests to the quality of the programs' connections to their communities and to the translation of such relationships into services that residents seemed to have found easy to use.

Mobilizing Resources Sufficient to Saturate a Neighborhood

While the establishment of saturation targets and employment outcomes goals proved to be an important catalyst for all the NJI sites, sites nonetheless faced the challenge of figuring out what scale of resources would be needed to achieve these ambitious goals. In most cases, sites had difficulty recognizing that the scale of outcomes they were positing would require an extraordinary effort — one that would challenge previous determinations of organizational priorities and that might compete for and possibly strain management and organizational resources.[17] Reaching the initiative's goals required focused efforts in three main areas: (1) the quality and amount of staff deployed by the lead CBO and by key partners; (2) the priority accorded NJI by the lead organization, as evidenced by the devotion of full-time staff or, at least, by substantial attention to the initiative (given that, in each case, the lead CBO was engaged in a range of activities in its neighborhood); and (3) the extent to which the lead CBO and partners were engaged in the initiative and able to amass resources to match the employment strategies and mobilization efforts needed to achieve the target scale of outcomes. Efforts in all three areas — selecting the right staff, making NJI *the* priority relative to other activities, and organizing local resources to advance the goals — proved to be ongoing challenges over the course of sites' involvement in the initiative.

[17]Only New York's Rheedlen Centers for Children and Families came to understand the extent to which NJI would cause a realignment of organizational priorities, and, in the end, this understanding caused Rheedlen to withdraw from the initiative.

Staffing the Initiative

In the early stages of NJI, sites' assumptions about what it might take to organize the effort were reflected in the selection of staff responsible for carrying out the NJI mandate, often assuming that one person had all the skills needed to lead the effort. In considering the deployment of staff, most sites made a common mistake in trying first to juggle current staff time and to move someone already on staff into the role, despite planners' urging that particular capacities were needed. Other sites felt compelled to view any jobs that were created by their participation in the initiative as early employment gains, and thus they sought to fill the positions with neighborhood residents. In all but Hartford, sites underestimated, early on, the quality and range of skills needed during program planning and start-up, which in MDRC's estimation included knowledge of workforce systems and the ability to design a model for local employment service delivery that would get the neighborhood to scale. Further, NJI needed a local champion, that is, someone who could sell the initiative to the broader community and could cultivate relationships and build support among agency administrators, political leaders, and employers. At the same time, NJI needed a voice on the inside to keep residents' interests and needs in the forefront, so that the emerging strategies would be responsive to residents' employment needs. Also important in this early phase was the ability to conceptualize how the pieces would fit together into a coherent strategy, but the emerging vision had to be based in reality, in order to give all the partners a sense that the vision could be achieved, despite the ambitious scale of outcomes sought.

The early staffing pattern in Hartford is instructive of the range of staff capacities required to launch the initiative. Strong urging to hire someone with workforce development experience led the site to hire two new staff, each with important and complementary capacities — one with substantial knowledge of employment systems, and the other with strategic planning and visioning skills.[18] During the first year of operation, the skills and talents of this two-person NJI team were a strong combination: One person was responsible for overseeing and convening the service provider collaborative, for raising additional public monies for the NJI effort, and for interfacing with public agency staff at the workforce board; the other person concentrated efforts on strengthening the internal operations of the Job Center, on designing a client-tracking system, and on leading the planning that culminated in a sound NJI strategic plan.

While program planning and start-up required one set of skills, the sites' ability to implement program strategies depended on different staff capacities. In this second phase of NJI, three important skills sets were needed: the ability to implement, supervise, and manage employment services; the capacity to refine and sharpen the NJI strategy after gaining early experi-

[18]The decision to hire two new staff was made after MDRC and a representative from another project with which HART was involved strongly recommended that HART minimally hire staff who had knowledge of workforce systems and funding.

ence from program implementation; and political acumen to keep partners engaged during the twists and turns of implementation. In this latter stage, knowledge of workforce systems was critical, since the employment services involved so many components: program flow, case management, clients' barriers to employment, management information systems, skills training, and working with employers. Even though managerial skills became more important during this implementation phase, NJI still required someone to maintain and preserve the initiative's vision, to avoid reducing NJI to a set of routinely provided services.

To a great extent, early miscues about staffing reflected the fact that none of the organizations engaged in serious thinking about how to develop NJI, the types of services and delivery models that might be needed, the operating and management structures suggested by these delivery models, the capacities and partnerships required to reach large outcomes, or the possible organizational or staffing changes that their approach to NJI implied. The lack of such thinking reduced the decisions about how to deploy staff to a simple calculation of selecting individuals (some with ties to the lead organization), rather than focusing on the range of skills and capacities that might be needed to plan and launch NJI and, perhaps, initiating a search to locate such skilled candidates. Over time, and after significant turnover in staff, some sites came to recognize that different types of capacities were needed to launch and implement NJI, but this recognition came after numerous setbacks and the loss of valuable time. In short, the decisions that sites made about how to staff the initiative failed to recognize that, to be successful, NJI would need to draw on a range of staff capacities, perhaps across a number of people, during the initiative's various stages. Sites also failed to comprehend that NJI would place significant demands on staff and on the lead organization, in order to give NJI the best possible chance of succeeding.[19]

The Lead Organization: Setting Priorities and Dedicating Resources

Among other considerations, sites were selected to participate in NJI based on their track records and success in their chosen areas (such as housing, commercial development, community organizing, social service delivery). By definition, the organizations that were selected were busy with other programs and, in some cases, with other neighborhood initiatives. Initially, it was assumed that NJI would provide sites with a framework for organizing their programs, helping them to use their other activities to support the NJI effort. In practical terms, the lead CBOs were expected to make connections between their employment efforts and other

[19]Staffing issues were raised during an internal review of MDRC's community initiatives as well as in a separate, final meeting of NJI site representatives and project directors. Both groups concluded that, in future initiatives, MDRC should play a more direct role in writing job descriptions and in selecting staff, given that poor initial selections in NJI translated into months or years of poor performance while sites searched for appropriate staff.

programs. For instance, the Development Corporation of Columbia Heights might use NJI to prepare a steady pipeline of qualified candidates for job opportunities that were created by DCCH's commercial or housing development projects. Similarly, Rheedlen Centers might set aside child care slots for neighborhood residents who completed the eight weeks of training offered in Rheedlen's Employment and Technology Center. In essence, the goal was for each site to lead with employment and to connect its other programming to support the NJI saturation effort. Of the sites remaining in the initiative during implementation, only Fort Worth successfully integrated its activities to support its larger employment goals. The norm for most sites was to view NJI as being an independent project that was somewhat outside the bounds of their main business and organizational priorities.

Operationally, sites were expected to devote significant resources to the effort, reflected in the amount of time that the executive director and other senior staff would devote to NJI. To ensure that NJI got sufficient attention, funding was provided to underwrite staff time spent on the initiative, with specific instructions given to each site that the executive director's time should be included in the staffing calculation. Despite these instructions, the executive directors of the participating organizations seemed to spend little time on NJI (although Fort Worth and Chicago were exceptions), preferring to delegate responsibility to other staff and only stepping in from time to time to monitor the project, particularly when NJI funders came to town. The lack of attention was especially noteworthy in two sites where executive directors seemed to be largely absent from the day-to-day planning and program implementation. The strongest indication of NJI's limited status was made evident during a meeting with the board members of one lead organization to inform them that they were being dropped from the initiative because of poor performance. After the initiative and its performance expectations were described to a subcommittee of the board, its members remarked how interesting the project sounded, indicating that, had they known more about it, they would have worked to ensure stronger performance.

In contrast, the experience in another site made it evident that significant progress could be made when NJI was given steady attention by executive-level staff. During the first year, this site made only modest progress in implementing NJI, and it did not capitalize on relationships established early on; nor did technical assistance translate into stronger program activities. And because a consultant led the NJI effort, the lead organization seemed to treat the initiative as an appendage. Sensing that the organization was in jeopardy of loosing NJI funding, its executive director assigned the new deputy director to get NJI on track. Within two months, the deputy was able to accomplish what the two previous NJI directors had not been able to do: research job club models, develop a job club curriculum, and run a pilot test of the job club on-site. The deputy director was also able to revive dormant partnerships with local organizations, to seek out relationships with employers, and to hire additional staff to recruit program participants. Unfortunately, this early progress could not be sustained as the deputy director's focus on NJI waned and gave way to other demands that competed for her attention.

Yet even when NJI commanded more attention from the executive director, the incongruity between NJI and the organization's priorities relegated the initiative to a small separate project in which achieving employment targets seemed more driven by the need to comply with the NJI grant award contract than by any sense of the efficacy of reaching saturation employment targets in the community. In describing NJI, one site used the analogy of a wheel with spokes emanating from the center, with NJI serving as one of the spokes of the wheel, rather than as the central hub around which other activities revolved. And, if asked, most of the service provider partners could not articulate NJI's vision, and few had more than a limited understanding of what the initiative is, except insofar as to describe it as a project of the lead organization.

Similarly, in another site, NJI took a back seat relative to the lead organization's main business; it was an isolated project with specific staff responsible for implementing it, but the organization overall gave limited attention to the effort and failed to use its the full weight and connections to bring NJI's larger vision to fruition. In this case, over time, the vision of NJI was relegated to the operations of a soft-skills training program, where staff spent more energy justifying their modest performance than honoring the ambitious spirit of the vision they had established. Finally, in a third site — one with significant employment activities — few staff viewed the complement of activities as summing up to a comprehensive NJI strategy. Instead, line staff were more likely to equate the employment center with NJI, despite the full vision outlined in the organization's strategic plan for NJI. In sum, the lack of a strong visionary to communicate the NJI strategy resulted in the initiative's becoming an independent, isolated activity.

In comparison, the Near Northside Partners Council (NNPC) in Fort Worth spent a lot of time and organizational resources to plan for and implement NJI. While the day-to-day management of the initiative was left to the NJI director, NNPC's executive director concentrated her time on building support for the initiative within the city, calling on local political leaders to inform them of the goals of NJI; meeting with Workforce Investment Board officers to describe the approach and convince them that NNPC and its partners would be better able to serve the underserved Latino population on the North Side; and, when necessary, calling on influential civic leaders to publicly announce their commitment to the project. At the same time, the executive director also made sure that the plans developed by staff and NNPC's partners accurately reflected the neighborhood residents' interests and needs. Residents' input took a variety of forms, including numerous focus groups, surveys, and neighborhood meetings as well as a standing column in the local Latino newspaper in which NNPC periodically informed residents of progress on NJI. And once NJI classes commenced, students were provided with regular opportunities to give structured feedback on the class instruction to be used for further course refinement. Although NNPC faced a number of staffing setbacks, the dedication of the executive director and her emphasis on NJI — and, by extension, the message that she conveyed to NNPC staff about the importance of the initiative — not only helped NNPC weather several staff turn-

overs but also made a difference in the progress that NNPC made in building support for and implementing a neighborhood-focused employment program.

Engaging Partners

Achieving large-scale employment outcomes depends not only on having the requisite local capacities and the lead organization's attention and commitment but also on mobilizing new resources — services and financial resources — to meet local employment goals. Securing local resources for NJI took two forms: obtaining local participation by public, private (employer), and nonprofit service providers and raising public funding to support employment services. The ability to go to scale, therefore, was highly dependent on the availability of local infrastructure and funding. All the sites faced these challenges. Some sites had an abundance of local service providers that offered preemployment training and services to address specific barriers, but, in many cases, they did not feel responsible for achieving NJI's goals. Other sites were able to assemble significant public resources for job placement, but — given the barriers that clients presented — staff were challenged to meet their contractual funding obligations. In still another case, the local employment training infrastructure was limited to small, understaffed, and underperforming agencies, and only limited funding was available to build their capacity or to underwrite additional services. These conditions presented serious obstacles for the lead organizations, yet several worked within the constraints of their locale and were able to mobilize public and private resources sufficient to get them on a trajectory to realize large outcomes.

The NJI sites sought the participation of local partners in a number of ways. One site approached the task of assembling resources strategically, focusing first — through a series of neighborhood focus groups — on understanding residents' employment barriers and using this information to persuade public service providers to join the effort and to redirect program services accordingly. Armed with information on residents' employment needs, NNPC in Fort Worth approached the school district and gained a commitment to increase the number of English as a Second Language (ESL) and General Educational Development (GED) classes in the neighborhood, and it worked with the school district to provide services in a manner that resulted in classes with full enrollments. Beyond increases in the quantity of services, the CBO asked the school district to change its curricula, to offer classes at the neighborhood center, and to provide classes during hours when the neighborhood's working population could take advantaged of them — on evenings and weekends. To obtain the participation of the Workforce Investment Board, the site convinced the WIB that it could more effectively serve a Latino population by locating services in a user-friendly and culturally competent environment. Since the WIB had been under pressure from the community to reach what had been an underserved Latino population, NJI offered the board an opportunity both to reach this population and to do so

more effectively than in the past. For other participating partners, NNPC was able to deliver a willing clientele for services and thus helped them satisfy their funding obligations.

Chicago's Project JOBS took a modified approach to assembling NJI resources. Operating in a service-rich environment (including a few agencies with national reputations in workforce development), the task of the lead organization was one of convincing partners to concentrate their efforts on a confined geographic area. In this case, the lead organization focused its efforts on establishing a "no wrong door" delivery system — one whereby clients could access services at any of a number of providers and then get timely and accurate referrals to other providers, should their needs fall outside the initial agency's range of expertise. Although serving low-income residents was within the capacity of the two dozen or so partner organizations, no single agency felt responsible for ensuring that the NJI targets would be reached. Nonetheless, the impressive scale of quarterly placements that the partner organizations achieved collectively suggests that local communities do have the resources — if directed and coordinated — to achieve saturation-level outcomes.

An equally challenging task that each site faced was raising local funding to support the NJI effort. Most sites did this through their collaborative, relying on partners' existing funding to underwrite service delivery. However, existing services got sites only so far, since, in the absence of new funding for NJI, most partners were reluctant to commit their resources exclusively to the target neighborhood, given their larger organizational mandates to serve individuals citywide. Moreover, when partners joined the efforts early on, they underestimated how the increased localized demand for their services would affect them. As demand for services grew, several partners expressed concern that the needs of residents in the targeted neighborhood outstripped their ability to respond to and serve the populations they were mandated to serve. Commitments from other public agencies were less consistent. In some cases, promised commitments never materialized, given local politics; in other cases, initially strong commitments could not be sustained. For most NJI sites, the result was a never-ending struggle on the part of the lead CBO to cobble together the scale of services and funding that was needed to sustain and, where necessary, expand NJI operations.

A related issue was the challenge that sites faced in juggling the targeted goals of NJI and the conditions that came with accepting public monies for workforce development to serve low-income individuals generally. Although at the outset sites were quick to agree to the notion of targeting a neighborhood, once chosen for NJI and focused on implementing the emerging services, the tension between serving everyone and staying true to the neighborhood focus loomed large. In terms of both funding perspective and philosophical point of view, some sites had a hard time balancing this dynamic. One site, in particular — the one that was most successful in raising public resources early on — failed to consider how it would accomplish both goals: reaching saturation employment targets in the neighborhood while satisfying its public

partners. The need for additional public funding for service delivery drove the need to raise funds, without a great deal of attention being paid to how these funds could strategically assist the organization in serving the needs of neighborhood residents. Yet, NJI's performance expectations and the performance measures that come with public funding need not be mutually exclusive, irreconcilable goals.

One site was successful at managing what appeared to be inconsistent expectations. With a firm grasp of the employment issues facing neighborhood residents, the site was strategic about which public funds it chose to apply for and how these funds could be used to serve the targeted neighborhood. Funding that did not specifically match residents' employment needs was not considered, even when public contracts were likely to be substantial. In fact, on a couple of occasions, the lead organization was approached by the Workforce Investment Board and was asked to apply for funding for services that were not consistent with the employment problems that the neighborhood residents faced. Rather than apply for funding, the organization suggested to the board that these monies were not appropriate for the site at that time.

This example does not suggest that the organization only serves residents from its targeted neighborhood. In fact, its doors are open to all people who walk in requesting assistance. Instead, the organization has resolved this dynamic in the following ways: by being strategic about which funding it chooses to apply for and making sure that funding closely matches residents' needs; by constantly reviewing intake data to ensure that at least 70 percent of clients are from the neighborhood; by conducting strategic outreach within the neighborhood, especially when participation starts to slip, to get the word out in order to stimulate demand for services; by developing new programs that are tailored to the needs of residents, rather than trying to develop generic programs that serve a broader clientele; and by making tough and informed decisions about which public funds to seek.[20]

[20]Recently, two Workforce Investment Boards (the local board and one in an adjoining jurisdiction) asked this same organization to apply for public monies to develop a health care literacy program for unemployed and underemployed monolingual clients, who have health care backgrounds from their country of origin. After much thought and deliberation, the organization chose to apply for the funding, and this decision was based on an agreement that NJI residents would be eligible to enroll for the programs offered. Equally important in the decision to apply was the experience and strategic advantage that the CBO would gain in how to serve a resident base that has similar workforce issues as those exhibited by the target population. This experience will give the organization a strategic advantage in applying for a much larger workplace literacy contract that is expected to be vetted in the coming year. Through the lessons learned on this grant, the NJI CBO believes that it will be well positioned to apply for upcoming funding. Further, the funding for the current grant provides the NJI CBO with the ability to create a career ladder in a growing industry for many former graduates of the previous NJI training program for health care aides.

Community-Based Organizations: Building on Connections

Community-based organizations (CBOs) were selected as the lead agencies responsible for developing and implementing NJI's employment saturation programs in their respective neighborhoods. Although experience as an employment service provider was considered an advantage, it was not a requirement for selection. Instead, a premium was placed on the quality of the organization's connections to residents and to other resources that were to be mobilized in the effort. It was assumed that these individual and institutional relationships would ultimately make a difference in whether residents felt comfortable using the services, whether partners felt comfortable joining the effort, and whether funders felt that their considerable investment in the initiative would be productive.

These assumptions about the importance of community connections were confirmed in two sites, Fort Worth and Hartford, where outreach efforts quickly increased the use of NJI services. In Fort Worth, for example, it is not uncommon to have more than 400 individuals participating in the various employment-related services offered monthly at the community center — a demand for services that has, at times, proved difficult to meet. In Hartford, before the site left the initiative, the lead CBO was inundated with more than a thousand service requests annually. And the collaborative partners of Project JOBS in Chicago have served more than 600 residents with employment services on a quarterly basis.[21]

The lead CBO's level of connectedness to the community and its residents also seemed to carry a number of important programmatic advantages. In each of the NJI sites, the lead agencies have firsthand knowledge of the barriers that residents' face in pursuing meaningful employment. This information allows the CBOs to tailor programs to residents' circumstances. In Fort Worth, for example, where the main neighborhood employment issue is underemployment (more accurately, poorly paid *over*employment, as a large number of residents work long hours for low pay), NNPC recognized that residents would not enroll in short-term skills training — even if a better-paid job was virtually guaranteed upon completion — if it meant giving up the modest income of their current job. NNPC partnered with the Workforce Investment Board and found an employer that was desperate for workers and willing to pay residents $6.50 per hour while in training. To make sure that employed residents didn't miss out on other training opportunities, NNPC has convinced partner agencies to offer classes after work hours and on weekends. These adjustments have had an overwhelming result: Residents are signing up and participating in classes, and the CBO has waiting lists for enrollment.

[21] Once again, however, although Chicago's NJI site enjoyed high participation, that cannot be attributed to NJI, and it is impossible to determine what portion of these participation numbers resulted from NJI activities relative to the programs that were already being operated by the partners.

The experience described above and similar experiences in the other NJI sites illustrate the value of having a local lead CBO that is grounded in the community and has firsthand knowledge of the constituency base — a broker that can translate and communicate this knowledge to other public and private institutions so that the local service mix and quality more closely match the needs of individual residents and the overall community. This is not to suggest that the lead CBO should become the primary provider of employment services but, rather, that it can play a critical role in disseminating knowledge and building relationships that translate into stronger program delivery by other organizations. The combination of having connections to the community, being held in trust by residents, and understanding the community's employment-related needs is a major factor in the ability of an initiative like NJI to achieve its targeted scale of employment outcomes at the neighborhood level.

Selecting Neighborhoods with Appropriate Characteristics for a Saturation Strategy

Experience suggests that a neighborhood-focused saturation strategy might be more appropriate in places that have more stable, less transitory populations. Considering the first round of NJI sites, at one end of the spectrum was Fort Worth, with the most stable neighborhood and only moderate movement in and out of the community. In this case, residents have a strong identification with the neighborhood; large numbers of families are apparently long-term residents, and many report an interest in remaining in the neighborhood. There are also strong networks and relationships that NJI can tap in publicizing aspects of the program. The large majority of residents are expected to be around long enough to benefit from NJI's range of services.

At the other end of the spectrum is Chicago's Uptown, which is a "gateway" community of new immigrants and which includes a concentration of single-room occupancy (SRO) residences that house a large number of the city's formerly homeless population. Between these sites are Hartford, which is close to the more stable end, and Columbia Heights, which is perennially at risk of gentrification. The Fort Worth end of this spectrum, where populations are more stable, would be expected to include appropriate candidates for a saturation strategy. Greater stability means that a significant number of residents would remain in the neighborhood long enough to benefit from the NJI program, which could build relationships and networks around these long-term residents to strengthen the work pursuits of other residents over time.[22]

[22]Opportunities are also being explored in communities that might fall in the middle of the spectrum, such as Columbia Heights, where an aggressive employment strategy designed to raise incomes — possibly tied to a homeownership strategy — might enable formerly low-income households to stay in a community at risk of gentrification.

As a second generation of saturation initiatives is being considered against this backdrop, both the literature and Census data on neighborhood mobility are being used to better define this spectrum of neighborhoods and to identify where a saturation approach might be most appropriate. This method also aims to ensure that there are a sufficient number of similar neighborhoods in major cities to suggest that successfully demonstrating the approach in some neighborhoods would have relevance for a good number of other neighborhoods as well. More generally, the goal is to develop a theory about what nature of neighborhood — with what degree of stability or mobility — would benefit most from a saturation strategy.

The Legacy of NJI

From the outset, NJI sites were selected to participate in the initiative not because of their existing employment capacity but, rather, because of their leadership, track records, and relationships with neighborhood residents. All the lead agencies— regardless of whether they were selected — exhibited a strong commitment to address their neighborhood's employment needs, which contributed to the decision to include them in the project. While the developers of NJI sought to determine whether it would be feasible to mobilize communities toward the goal of achieving large employment outcomes in a targeted neighborhood, they also held a companion goal of making sure that local employment capacity would be built to further each site's interest in addressing neighborhood employment problems long after NJI ended. Toward these ends — despite the challenges, struggles, and twist and turns that sites took in planning and implementing their NJI strategies — the employment capacity that remains in each site represents the true legacy of NJI. In some cases, the NJI influence was significant, and the groundwork that was laid is furthering fundraising efforts and new programming. In other places, elements of the NJI approach are being applied to new employment projects. And in still other sites, NJI helped to build staff capacity in the workforce arena that is being applied to other local employment initiatives.

The most lasting and enduring example of NJI survives in Fort Worth, Texas, where the Near Northside Partners Council (NNPC) took an incremental and measured approach to NJI. When NNPC joined the initiative, the size of its operating budget and the number of paid staff were modest. The organization had a history of community organizing, and it counted a large number of volunteer residents among its supporters. With no experience operating employment programs, NNPC developed into a respected and nationally recognized broker and provider of employment services. The organization continues to maintain its neighborhood employment focus, and it has become successful in raising both public and private funding to support its employment activities. NNPC's success in providing quality services to an underserved low-income Latino population has helped build strong rapport with the local workforce board. Its relationship with the board and the respect that the board holds for NNPC's work has translated

into its position as the "go to" organization on the Northside when the workforce board wants to pilot-test new activities and ideas. Further, the model that NNPC has developed for serving this predominately low-wage Latino population is receiving national attention from other foundations as well as national intermediaries. The local workforce board has considered applying NNPC's model to other low-income neighborhoods in Fort Worth, and NNPC has received requests from other CBOs in the city for technical assistance. From a paid staff of two when the initiative started, NNPC has grown to a staff of ten and has been recognized with the 2001 Workforce Development Award for Excellence by the National Association of Counties as well as the 2001 Fort Worth's Mayor's Award from the Workforce Advantage Board and the local Workforce Governing Board.

In Chicago, Project JOBS entered NJI as a volunteer organization made up of an advisory group of members from various service provider agencies in the Uptown/Edgewater neighborhood. NJI funding allowed Project JOBS to hire its first paid staff, and this grounding helped the organization to file for its 501(c) status as an independent nonprofit organization. As a local workforce intermediary, Project JOBS had a broad membership base, including experienced and respected workforce service providers. In this respect, NJI was not responsible for building capacity, as the local service provider infrastructure was already quite strong. NJI did, however, serve to provide the organization with a strategic approach for launching new programs on a broader scale. Using the targeted geographic focus as a starting point, Project JOBS used the smaller geographic frame to test new ideas and to refine its model before launching full-scale operations. The discipline of starting small, gathering information about issues and needs through surveys and focus groups, and then building and refining programs from this vantage point has assisted Project JOBS in being strategic about how to bring new ideas to fruition. As a next approach, Project JOBS is planning to develop training curricula for its service provider partners to use in assisting ex-offenders who are making the transition back to the community and are seeking work with employers with which Project JOBS has built a relationship.

When Hartford Areas Rally Together (HART) was selected to participate in NJI, it was already involved in providing employment services to low-income Hartford residents. Through its organizing efforts, HART had formed a collaborative with other service provider agencies and was also partnering with public and private employers in the Frog Hollow neighborhood. Under the auspices of the NJI project, HART set forth a comprehensive vision for achieving large employment outcomes in the Frog Hollow neighborhood. NJI was viewed as an umbrella and organizing framework under which all of HART's employment activities would fall. One such activity was its sector employment work, which had a targeted focus of assisting Hartford residents in securing training and jobs with living wages in the health care and construction industries. Both industries were slated to grow, and both industries had job opportunities available within the targeted neighborhood.

With support from the Center for Community Change's sector initiative as well as the Hartford Foundation for Public Giving and the State of Connecticut's General Fund, HART staff developed an innovative model for training women and minorities for jobs in the construction industry. Working closely with several trade unions (for example, the bricklayers, Allied Trades, Local One) to understand the unions' entry-level apprenticeship requirements, HART staff designed a preapprenticeship program for residents of Frog Hollow and the Hartford area. Participants received three months of training by the unions, and, after successful completion, they were placed in construction jobs on the new Learning Corridor project taking place in Frog Hollow. During this training period, HART used part of its Chase Manhattan Bank's JobStart loan program to help trainees pay for tools and obtain a driver's license, utilities, and other emergency needs so that they could maintain their participation in the training program.

After its initial success, the construction initiative, under the leadership of a former HART staff member, was expanded to a citywide effort. Today the Hartford construction project is viewed as a statewide model, and the cities of New Haven, Waterbury, and Bridgeport hope to replicate this effort. In 2002, the Hartford construction project received the 2002 Workforce Development Award for Excellence by the National Association of Counties. The early success of the construction initiative is reflected in the number of people placed in construction jobs as well as in the wages commanded and the high retention rates of those placed. The construction job effort was initially launched as a pilot program with the goal of placing 250 people in construction-related employment. During this period, the project exceeded its goals and placed a total of 390 people in construction and related nonconstruction jobs. (Table 3 shows a breakdown of job placements from 2000 to 2002, based on a random review of 100 case files.)

The Neighborhood Jobs Initiative

Table 3

Case File Review of 100 Placements, Hartford Construction Initiative

Year	Total Placements	Construction Jobs	Nonconstruction Jobs
2000	42	23	19
2001	32	16	16
2002	26	20	6
Total	100	59	41

As shown in Table 4, for the Hartford residents who were placed in 2000, the average retention rate for construction-related employment was 118 weeks, with an average wage of

$19.66 per hour. For those placed in 2001, the average wage was $16.45 per hour, and the average period of job retention was 57.2 weeks.[23] For residents placed in construction and nonconstruction jobs, these hourly wages and the retention rates constitute an impressive track record.[24]

Table 4

Job Retention and Wage Rates, Hartford Construction Initiative

Placed in 2000	Construction Jobs (23)	Nonconstruction Jobs (19)
Average retention	118 weeks	109 weeks
Average wage per hour	$19.66	$10.24

Placed in 2001	Construction Jobs (16)	Nonconstruction Jobs (16)
Average retention	52.7 weeks	63.3 weeks
Average wage per hour	$16.45	$10.89

Over the course of NJI, sites faced a variety of institutional, programmatic, and personnel challenges to implementing the initiative's vision, as outlined in their strategic plans. Successes and setbacks came hand in hand: No sooner had a site secured the commitment of an important partner than the NJI director chose to leave; or when new staffing was in place, organizational problems with partners threatened to stall service delivery. Despite these ups and downs of program implementation, sites remained steadfast in their commitment to focus on neighborhood employment issues. While some sites made more progress than others did in fully implementing their vision for NJI, it appears that the lead CBOs benefited in various ways from their participation in the initiative. The examples described above suggest that, at its conclusion, NJI had influenced the practices, approaches, and strategic directions of a number of the sites that participated.

[23]Retention rates for residents placed in 2001 are likely to increase as their time on the job increases.

[24]It's important to note that these outcomes data do not depict the impact of the Construction Jobs Initiative, as it is not known whether these same individuals would have found these jobs on their own or how their outcomes would compare with individuals who did not enroll in the Construction Jobs Initiative.

Conclusion and a Look Ahead

The experiences of the first NJI sites provide evidence that a targeted neighborhood employment strategy can be designed and implemented and can result in large employment outcomes for communities. It also seems likely that a formal demonstration would be able to reach some neighborhood residents more effectively than traditional programs that focus on individuals without regard to location. NJI's early experiences demonstrate the efficacy of the following:

- A focus on neighborhoods as a means to reach the working poor and other low-income populations
- An emphasis on goals and ambitious, population-level outcomes around which communities are mobilized and strategies are developed
- A recognition that sites need to develop service agreements that have clearly defined commitments from partners
- The provision of services to all residents, with a concentration on strategic subgroups of the population
- The selection of lead community-based organizations that have strong ties to residents and strong knowledge of residents' employment needs — but without requiring that CBOs themselves operate each aspect of the local employment service mix
- Attention to issues of mobility and neighborhood cohesiveness in the selection of neighborhoods to target

In addition to the foregoing lessons and practices that should inform the next community employment initiative, the new iteration also should address two longstanding problems that arose during NJI's feasibility phase: the need to test a formal model of program/service delivery and the need for a simple program model that might be adapted for a clearly defined public audience. The following section outlines how both these issues might be addressed in building the next community employment initiative.

A Future Community Employment Initiative: Program Model and Policy Audience

NJI was successful in mobilizing communities and building partnerships around ambitious targeted employment outcomes, thereby favorably answering, it seems, the first-level question: whether it would be feasible to mobilize local actors to pursue the goal of realizing large employment gains in a specific place. In the process, much was learned about building and formalizing partnerships among local actors in pursuit of large employment outcomes. However, even in

the strongest sites, NJI was able to cobble together only one or two of the Jobs-Plus program components; NJI lacked a formal model to be tested, and it lacked formal agreements about which services would be delivered and what each partner's responsibility would be in providing these services. Further, NJI did not have special funding for financial incentives or employment services. Though some of the sites were eventually able to provide a broad range of services that seemed to prove effective, these services did not sum up to a program model that can be tested. In short, there is no answer to the question: "What will NJI neighborhood residents get, and how distinctive is what they get relative to what they would have gotten anyway, or relative to what other job-seekers might get in other communities?"

There has also been a longstanding concern with respect to the policy audience for NJI, in that it lacked a superagency that had responsibility for all aspects of community life — as is the case, for example, with a public housing authority's responsibilities with respect to its housing developments. The concern, specifically, is that an effort that is primarily foundation-funded and led by a private community organization (given all the flexibility that this entails in blending funding sources and working across systems) would have no natural public policy audience that might adapt this approach with the same flexibility, even if the approach were successful in some measure. Indeed, many NJI partners, such as Workforce Investment Boards, indicated that they found it difficult to conceive how they might transfer their NJI experiences to other communities, given the initiative's operational complexity and unusually flexible funding.

Accordingly, answers to the questions "What's the program?" and "Who's the audience?" might be found by merging the next-generation NJI explorations with work already under way at MDRC, in which Work Support Centers (WSCs) are being explored as vehicles to provide services to the working poor. WSCs are conceived as enhanced versions of the One-Stops mandated by the Workforce Investment Act. Originally a means to colocate services to reach a cross-section of the labor force, One-Stops are publicly mandated entities that have statutory responsibility for serving the workforce development-related needs of working-poor and unemployed clients. The reconceptualization of One-Stops would entail enhancements that are designed to better enable clients to navigate the maze of available services, income supplements and supports, rules and procedures, and educational and training program entry requirements —which most One-Stops have not been found to deliver effectively. The WSCs would be models of service delivery with the objective of giving clients better access to the range of employment retention and advancement services and the full package of work supports (EITCs, food stamps, Medicaid, CHIP, child care, and so on) that are available to — but are often not accessed by, — the working poor.

Rather than constituting a new network of institutions, however, WSCs are viewed as an institutional framework and as a set of functions and practices that could be adapted to a range of venues (One-Stops, family resource centers, community colleges, and other labor mar-

ket intermediaries) that are chosen for the advantages they might offer in reaching particular subpopulations. With respect to community employment initiatives, a WSC would be linked with community-based organizations, thereby creating a Neighborhood Work Support Center (NWSC). This neighborhood-focused version would undertake the same range of functions as a Work Support Center but with the additional task of taking an employment saturation approach by identifying the scale, level, and/or quality of employment gains and then working back from these outcomes goals to mobilize sufficient community resources to reach and well serve the targeted population. Through aggressive marketing to populations within defined neighborhood boundaries — and by carefully tailoring programs to residents' needs — an NWSC would better reach and serve resident workers than would an employment effort that is focused on individuals at large.

Neighborhood Work Support Centers and Placed-Based Saturation Strategies

Neighborhood Work Support Centers would have several advantages that were not available in NJI. First, they would develop and deliver a formal program model combining employment retention and advancement services and financial work supports. Second, paralleling a test of the efficacy of general WCSs that serve clients in a metropolitan area at large, the NWCSs would allow a formal test of a similar program model, but one that undertakes a saturation employment approach. In this manner, it might be learned not only how well the program worked for individuals using the services but also whether the program was effective in reaching neighborhood residents, whether residents' participation increased, and whether residents' employment and earnings improved.

A third advantage is that by organizing Work Support Center functions at the core of a new generation of saturation employment initiatives and by vesting in the NWSCs statutory responsibility for the provision of services mandated by the Workforce Investment Act and Temporary Assistance for Needy Families, the lack of a policy audience for community employment initiatives would be addressed by building models for employment saturation that could be emulated by other locations and public institutions. In short, if NWSCs were found to be effective in reaching and servicing the working poor, they would provide a model of service delivery that would be recognizable to public actors and also could be implemented in multiple contexts.

The Next Neighborhood Jobs Initiative

In summary, the Neighborhood Work Support Center version of NJI will look similar to the current NJI. Intensive employment services will be focused on residents of a defined neighborhood that is characterized by poverty and low rates of employment. Trusted CBOs will serve as local intermediaries or brokers to link residents with services, supports, and em-

ployers, and they will render those services more user-friendly. Sites will set ambitious outcomes goals, and the design of programs and deployment of resources will be largely determined by those goals. Yet there will be some differences. Neighborhoods will be selected more carefully, based on a strategic vision about neighborhood cohesiveness and population turnover. Within the neighborhood, key subgroups will receive additional attention both as a way to apply saturation in the context of a general neighborhood and in an attempt to heighten the spillover effects of increased employment. The lead CBO(s) will enter into formal agreements with the public workforce development and welfare systems, and each CBO will serve as a local workforce intermediary, ensuring that the neighborhood has a high quality of services and strong connections to employers. CBOs without prior workforce development experience will not be put in the position of learning this field from scratch. Finally, the NWSC version of NJI will, from the beginning, incorporate a formal research design to evaluate the impacts of the initiative over time.

Recent Publications on MDRC Projects

Note: For works not published by MDRC, the publisher's name is shown in parentheses. With a few exceptions, this list includes reports published by MDRC since 1999. A complete publications list is available from MDRC and on its Web site (www.mdrc.org), from which copies of MDRC's publications can also be downloaded.

Reforming Welfare and Making Work Pay

Next Generation Project

A collaboration among researchers at MDRC and several other leading research institutions focused on studying the effects of welfare, antipoverty, and employment policies on children and families.

How Welfare and Work Policies Affect Children: A Synthesis of Research. 2001. Pamela Morris, Aletha Huston, Greg Duncan, Danielle Crosby, Johannes Bos.

How Welfare and Work Policies Affect Employment and Income: A Synthesis of Research. 2001. Dan Bloom, Charles Michalopoulos.

How Welfare and Work Policies for Parents Affect Adolescents: A Synthesis of Research. 2002. Lisa Gennetian, Greg Duncan, Virginia Knox, Wanda Vargas, Elizabeth Clark-Kauffman, Andrew London.

ReWORKing Welfare: Technical Assistance for States and Localities

A multifaceted effort to assist states and localities in designing and implementing their welfare reform programs. The project includes a series of "how-to" guides, conferences, briefings, and customized, in-depth technical assistance.

After AFDC: Welfare-to-Work Choices and Challenges for States. 1997. Dan Bloom.

Work First: How to Implement an Employment-Focused Approach to Welfare Reform. 1997. Amy Brown.

Business Partnerships: How to Involve Employers in Welfare Reform. 1998. Amy Brown, Maria Buck, Erik Skinner.

Promoting Participation: How to Increase Involvement in Welfare-to-Work Activities. 1999. Gayle Hamilton, Susan Scrivener.

Encouraging Work, Reducing Poverty: The Impact of Work Incentive Programs. 2000. Gordon Berlin.

Steady Work and Better Jobs: How to Help Low-Income Parents Sustain Employment and Advance in the Workforce. 2000. Julie Strawn, Karin Martinson.

Beyond Work First: How to Help Hard-to-Employ Individuals Get Jobs and Succeed in the Workforce. 2001. Amy Brown.

Project on Devolution and Urban Change

A multiyear study in four major urban counties — Cuyahoga County, Ohio (which includes the city of Cleveland), Los Angeles, Miami-Dade, and Philadelphia — that examines how welfare reforms are being implemented and affect poor people, their neighborhoods, and the institutions that serve them.

Big Cities and Welfare Reform: Early Implementation and Ethnographic Findings from the Project on Devolution and Urban Change. 1999. Janet Quint, Kathryn Edin, Maria Buck, Barbara Fink, Yolanda Padilla, Olis Simmons-Hewitt, Mary Valmont.

Food Security and Hunger in Poor, Mother-Headed Families in Four U.S. Cities. 2000. Denise Polit, Andrew London, John Martinez.

Assessing the Impact of Welfare Reform on Urban Communities: The Urban Change Project and Methodological Considerations. 2000. Charles Michalopoulos, Johannes Bos, Robert Lalonde, Nandita Verma.

Post-TANF Food Stamp and Medicaid Benefits: Factors That Aid or Impede Their Receipt. 2001. Janet Quint, Rebecca Widom.

Social Service Organizations and Welfare Reform. 2001. Barbara Fink, Rebecca Widom.

Monitoring Outcomes for Cuyahoga County's Welfare Leavers: How Are They Faring? 2001. Nandita Verma, Claudia Coulton.

The Health of Poor Urban Women: Findings from the Project on Devolution and Urban Change. 2001. Denise Polit, Andrew London, John Martinez.

Is Work Enough? The Experiences of Current and Former Welfare Mothers Who Work. 2001. Denise Polit, Rebecca Widom, Kathryn Edin, Stan Bowie, Andrew London, Ellen Scott, Abel Valenzuela.

Readying Welfare Recipients for Work: Lessons from Four Big Cities as They Implement Welfare Reform. 2002. Thomas Brock, Laura Nelson, Megan Reiter.

Welfare Reform in Cleveland: Implementation, Effects, and Experiences of Poor Families and Neighborhoods. 2002. Thomas Brock, Claudia Coulton, Andrew London, Denise Polit, Lashawn Richburg-Hayes, Ellen Scott, Nandita Verma.

Comparing Outcomes for Los Angeles County's HUD-Assisted and Unassisted CalWORKs Leavers. 2003. Nandita Verma, Richard Hendra.

Monitoring Outcomes for Los Angeles County's Pre- and Post-CalWORKs Leavers: How Are They Faring? 2003. Nandita Verma, Richard Hendra.

Wisconsin Works

This study examines how Wisconsin's welfare-to-work program, one of the first to end welfare as an entitlement, is administered in Milwaukee.

Complaint Resolution in the Context of Welfare Reform: How W-2 Settles Disputes. 2001. Suzanne Lynn.

Exceptions to the Rule: The Implementation of 24-Month Time-Limit Extensions in W-2. 2001. Susan Gooden, Fred Doolittle.

Matching Applicants with Services: Initial Assessments in the Milwaukee County W-2 Program. 2001. Susan Gooden, Fred Doolittle, Ben Glispie.

Employment Retention and Advancement Project

Conceived and funded by the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services (HHS), this demonstration project is aimed at testing various ways to help low-income people find, keep, and advance in jobs.

New Strategies to Promote Stable Employment and Career Progression: An Introduction to the Employment Retention and Advancement Project (HHS). 2002. Dan Bloom, Jacquelyn Anderson, Melissa Wavelet, Karen Gardiner, Michael Fishman.

Time Limits

Welfare Time Limits: State Policies, Implementation, and Effects on Families. 2002. Dan Bloom, Mary Farrell, Barbara Fink.

Leavers, Stayers, and Cyclers: An Analysis of the Welfare Caseload. 2002. Cynthia Miller.

Florida's Family Transition Program

An evaluation of Florida's initial time-limited welfare program, which includes services, requirements, and financial work incentives intended to reduce long-term welfare receipt and help welfare recipients find and keep jobs.

The Family Transition Program: Implementation and Three-Year Impacts of Florida's Initial Time-Limited Welfare Program. 1999. Dan Bloom, Mary Farrell, James Kemple, Nandita Verma.

The Family Transition Program: Final Report on Florida's Initial Time-Limited Welfare Program. 2000. Dan Bloom, James Kemple, Pamela Morris, Susan Scrivener, Nandita Verma, Richard Hendra.

Cross-State Study of Time-Limited Welfare

An examination of the implementation of some of the first state-initiated time-limited welfare programs.

Welfare Time Limits: An Interim Report Card. 1999. Dan Bloom.

Connecticut's Jobs First Program

An evaluation of Connecticut's statewide time-limited welfare program, which includes financial work incentives and requirements to participate in employment-related services aimed at rapid job placement. This study provides some of the earliest information on the effects of time limits in major urban areas.

Connecticut Post-Time Limit Tracking Study: Six-Month Survey Results. 1999. Jo Anna Hunter-Manns, Dan Bloom.

Jobs First: *Implementation and Early Impacts of Connecticut's Welfare Reform Initiative*. 2000. Dan Bloom, Laura Melton, Charles Michalopoulos, Susan Scrivener, Johanna Walter.

Connecticut's Jobs First Program: An Analysis of Welfare Leavers. 2000. Laura Melton, Dan Bloom.

Final Report on Connecticut's Welfare Reform Initiative. 2002. Dan Bloom, Susan Scrivener, Charles Michalopoulos, Pamela Morris, Richard Hendra, Diana Adams-Ciardullo, Johanna Walter.

Vermont's Welfare Restructuring Project

An evaluation of Vermont's statewide welfare reform program, which includes a work requirement after a certain period of welfare receipt, and financial work incentives.

Forty-Two-Month Impacts of Vermont's Welfare Restructuring Project. 1999. Richard Hendra, Charles Michalopoulos.

WRP: Key Findings from the Forty-Two-Month Client Survey. 2000. Dan Bloom, Richard Hendra, Charles Michalopoulos.

WRP: Final Report on Vermont's Welfare Restructuring Project. 2002. Susan Scrivener, Richard Hendra, Cindy Redcross, Dan Bloom, Charles Michalopoulos, Johanna Walter.

Financial Incentives

Encouraging Work, Reducing Poverty: The Impact of Work Incentive Programs. 2000. Gordon Berlin.

Minnesota Family Investment Program

An evaluation of Minnesota's pilot welfare reform initiative, which aims to encourage work, alleviate poverty, and reduce welfare dependence.

Reforming Welfare and Rewarding Work: Final Report on the Minnesota Family Investment Program. 2000:

Volume 1: Effects on Adults. Cynthia Miller, Virginia Knox, Lisa Gennetian, Martey Dodoo, Jo Anna Hunter, Cindy Redcross.
Volume 2: Effects on Children. Lisa Gennetian, Cynthia Miller.

Reforming Welfare and Rewarding Work: A Summary of the Final Report on the Minnesota Family Investment Program. 2000. Virginia Knox, Cynthia Miller, Lisa Gennetian.

Final Report on the Implementation and Impacts of the Minnesota Family Investment Program in Ramsey County. 2000. Patricia Auspos, Cynthia Miller, Jo Anna Hunter.

New Hope Project

A test of a community-based, work-focused antipoverty program and welfare alternative operating in Milwaukee.

New Hope for People with Low Incomes: Two-Year Results of a Program to Reduce Poverty and Reform Welfare. 1999. Johannes Bos, Aletha Huston, Robert Granger, Greg Duncan, Thomas Brock, Vonnie McLoyd.

Canada's Self-Sufficiency Project

A test of the effectiveness of a temporary earnings supplement on the employment and welfare receipt of public assistance recipients. Reports on the Self-Sufficiency Project are available from: Social Research and Demonstration Corporation (SRDC), 275 Slater St., Suite 900, Ottawa, Ontario K1P 5H9, Canada. Tel.: 613-237-4311; Fax: 613-237-5045. In the United States, the reports are also available from MDRC.

Does SSP Plus Increase Employment? The Effect of Adding Services to the Self-Sufficiency Project's Financial Incentives (SRDC). 1999. Gail Quets, Philip Robins, Elsie Pan, Charles Michalopoulos, David Card.

When Financial Work Incentives Pay for Themselves: Early Findings from the Self-Sufficiency Project's Applicant Study (SRDC). 1999. Charles Michalopoulos, Philip Robins, David Card.

The Self-Sufficiency Project at 36 Months: Effects of a Financial Work Incentive on Employment and Income (SRDC). 2000. Charles Michalopoulos, David Card, Lisa Gennetian, Kristen Harknett, Philip K. Robins.

The Self-Sufficiency Project at 36 Months: Effects on Children of a Program That Increased Parental Employment and Income (SRDC). 2000. Pamela Morris, Charles Michalopoulos.

When Financial Incentives Pay for Themselves: Interim Findings from the Self-Sufficiency Project's Applicant Study (SRDC). 2001. Charles Michalopoulos, Tracey Hoy.

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Making Work Pay: Final Report on the Self-Sufficiency Project for Long-Term Welfare Recipients (SRDC). 2002. Charles Michalopoulos, Doug Tattrie, Cynthia Miller, Philip Robins, Pamela Morris, David Gyarmati, Cindy Redcross, Kelly Foley, Reuben Ford.

Mandatory Welfare Employment Programs

National Evaluation of Welfare-to-Work Strategies

Conceived and sponsored by the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services (HHS), with support from the U.S. Department of Education (ED), this is the largest-scale evaluation ever conducted of different strategies for moving people from welfare to employment.

Do Mandatory Welfare-to-Work Programs Affect the Well-Being of Children? A Synthesis of Child Research Conducted as Part of the National Evaluation of Welfare-to-Work Strategies (HHS/ED). 2000. Gayle Hamilton.

Evaluating Alternative Welfare-to-Work Approaches: Two-Year Impacts for Eleven Programs (HHS/ED). 2000. Stephen Freedman, Daniel Friedlander, Gayle Hamilton, JoAnn Rock, Marisa Mitchell, Jodi Nudelman, Amanda Schweder, Laura Storto.

Impacts on Young Children and Their Families Two Years After Enrollment: Findings from the Child Outcomes Study (HHS/ED). 2000. Sharon McGroder, Martha Zaslow, Kristin Moore, Suzanne LeMenestrel.

What Works Best for Whom: Impacts of 20 Welfare-to-Work Programs by Subgroup (HHS/ED). 2000. Charles Michalopoulos, Christine Schwartz.

Evaluating Two Approaches to Case Management: Implementation, Participation Patterns, Costs, and Three-Year Impacts of the Columbus Welfare-to-Work Program (HHS/ED). 2001. Susan Scrivener, Johanna Walter.

How Effective Are Different Welfare-to-Work Approaches? Five-Year Adult and Child Impacts for Eleven Programs – Executive Summary (HHS/ED). 2001. Gayle Hamilton, Stephen Freedman, Lisa Gennetian, Charles Michalopoulos, Johanna Walter, Diana Adams-Ciardullo, Anna Gassman-Pines, Sharon McGroder, Martha Zaslow, Surjeet Ahluwalia, Jennifer Brooks.

Moving People from Welfare to Work: Lessons from the National Evaluation of Welfare-to-Work Strategies (HHS/ED). 2002. Gayle Hamilton.

Los Angeles's Jobs-First GAIN Program

An evaluation of Los Angeles's refocused GAIN (welfare-to-work) program, which emphasizes rapid employment. This is the first in-depth study of a full-scale "work first" program in one of the nation's largest urban areas.

The Los Angeles Jobs-First GAIN Evaluation: First-Year Findings on Participation Patterns and Impacts. 1999. Stephen Freedman, Marisa Mitchell, David Navarro.

The Los Angeles Jobs-First GAIN Evaluation: Final Report on a Work First Program in a Major Urban Center. 2000. Stephen Freedman, Jean Knab, Lisa Gennetian, David Navarro.

Teen Parents on Welfare

Teenage Parent Programs: A Synthesis of the Long-Term Effects of the New Chance Demonstration, Ohio's Learning, Earning, and Parenting (LEAP) Program, and the Teenage Parent Demonstration (TPD). 1998. Robert Granger, Rachel Cytron.

Ohio's LEAP Program

An evaluation of Ohio's Learning, Earning, and Parenting (LEAP) Program, which uses financial incentives to encourage teenage parents on welfare to stay in or return to school.

LEAP: Final Report on Ohio's Welfare Initiative to Improve School Attendance Among Teenage Parents. 1997. Johannes Bos, Veronica Fellerath.

New Chance Demonstration

A test of a comprehensive program of services that seeks to improve the economic status and general well-being of a group of highly disadvantaged young women and their children.

New Chance: Final Report on a Comprehensive Program for Young Mothers in Poverty and Their Children. 1997. Janet Quint, Johannes Bos, Denise Polit.

Parenting Behavior in a Sample of Young Mothers in Poverty: Results of the New Chance Observational Study. 1998. Martha Zaslow, Carolyn Eldred, editors.

Center for Employment Training Replication

This study is testing whether the successful results for youth of a training program developed in San Jose can be replicated in 12 other sites around the country.

Evaluation of the Center for Employment Training Replication Sites: Interim Report (Berkeley Policy Associates). 2000. Stephen Walsh, Deana Goldsmith, Yasuyo Abe, Andrea Cann.

Focusing on Fathers

Parents' Fair Share Demonstration

A demonstration for unemployed noncustodial parents (usually fathers) of children on welfare. PFS aims to improve the men's employment and earnings, reduce child poverty by increasing child support payments, and assist the fathers in playing a broader constructive role in their children's lives.

Fathers' Fair Share: Helping Poor Men Manage Child Support and Fatherhood (Russell Sage Foundation). 1999. Earl Johnson, Ann Levine, Fred Doolittle.

Parenting and Providing: The Impact of Parents' Fair Share on Paternal Involvement. 2000. Virginia Knox, Cindy Redcross.

Working and Earning: The Impact of Parents' Fair Share on Low-Income Fathers' Employment. 2000. John M. Martinez, Cynthia Miller.

The Responsible Fatherhood Curriculum. 2000. Eileen Hayes, with Kay Sherwood.

The Challenge of Helping Low-Income Fathers Support Their Children: Final Lessons from Parents' Fair Share. 2001. Cynthia Miller, Virginia Knox.

Career Advancement and Wage Progression

Opening Doors to Earning Credentials

An exploration of strategies for increasing low-wage workers' access to and completion of community college programs.

Opening Doors: Expanding Educational Opportunities for Low-Income Workers. 2001. Susan Golonka, Lisa Matus-Grossman.

Welfare Reform and Community Colleges: A Policy and Research Context. 2002. Thomas Brock, Lisa Matus-Grossman, Gayle Hamilton.

Opening Doors: Students' Perspectives on Juggling Work, Family, and College. 2002. Lisa Matus-Grossman, Susan Gooden.

Opening Doors: Supporting CalWORKs Students at California Community Colleges: An Exploratory Focus Group Study. 2002. Laura Nelson, Rogéair Purnell.

Education Reform

Career Academies

The largest and most comprehensive evaluation of a school-to-work initiative, this study examines a promising approach to high school restructuring and the school-to-work transition.

Career Academies: Building Career Awareness and Work-Based Learning Activities Through Employer Partnerships. 1999. James Kemple, Susan Poglinco, Jason Snipes.

Career Academies: Impacts on Students' Engagement and Performance in High School. 2000. James Kemple, Jason Snipes.

Career Academies: Impacts on Students' Initial Transitions to Post-Secondary Education and Employment. 2001. James Kemple.

First Things First

This demonstration and research project looks at First Things First, a whole-school reform that combines a variety of best practices aimed at raising achievement and graduation rates in both urban and rural settings.

Scaling Up First Things First: Site Selection and the Planning Year. 2002. Janet Quint.

Closing Achievement Gaps

Conducted for the Council of the Great City Schools, this study identifies districtwide approaches to urban school reform that appear to raise overall student performance while reducing achievement gaps among racial groups.

Foundations for Success: Case Studies of How Urban School Systems Improve Student Achievement. 2002. Jason Snipes, Fred Doolittle, Corinne Herlihy.

Project GRAD

This evaluation examines Project GRAD, an education initiative targeted at urban schools and combining a number of proven or promising reforms.

Building the Foundation for Improved Student Performance: The Pre-Curricular Phase of Project GRAD Newark. 2000. Sandra Ham, Fred Doolittle, Glee Ivory Holton.

Accelerated Schools

This study examines the implementation and impacts on achievement of the Accelerated Schools model, a whole-school reform targeted at at-risk students.

Evaluating the Accelerated Schools Approach: A Look at Early Implementation and Impacts on Student Achievement in Eight Elementary Schools. 2001. Howard Bloom, Sandra Ham, Laura Melton, Julienne O'Brien.

Extended-Service Schools Initiative

Conducted in partnership with Public/Private Ventures (P/PV), this evaluation of after-school programs operated as part of the Extended-Service Schools Initiative examines the programs' implementation, quality, cost, and effects on students.

Multiple Choices After School: Findings from the Extended-Service Schools Initiative (P/PV). 2002. Jean Baldwin Grossman, Marilyn Price, Veronica Fellerath, Linda Jucovy, Lauren Kotloff, Rebecca Raley, Karen Walker.

School-to-Work Project

A study of innovative programs that help students make the transition from school to work or careers.

Home-Grown Lessons: Innovative Programs Linking School and Work (Jossey-Bass Publishers). 1995. Edward Pauly, Hilary Kopp, Joshua Haimson.

Home-Grown Progress: The Evolution of Innovative School-to-Work Programs. 1997. Rachel Pedraza, Edward Pauly, Hilary Kopp.

Project Transition

A demonstration program that tested a combination of school-based strategies to facilitate students' transition from middle school to high school.

Project Transition: Testing an Intervention to Help High School Freshmen Succeed. 1999. Janet Quint, Cynthia Miller, Jennifer Pastor, Rachel Cytron.

Equity 2000

Equity 2000 is a nationwide initiative sponsored by the College Board to improve low-income students' access to college. The MDRC paper examines the implementation of Equity 2000 in Milwaukee Public Schools.

Getting to the Right Algebra: The Equity 2000 Initiative in Milwaukee Public Schools. 1999. Sandra Ham, Erica Walker.

Employment and Community Initiatives

Jobs-Plus Initiative

A multisite effort to greatly increase employment among public housing residents.

Mobilizing Public Housing Communities for Work: Origins and Early Accomplishments of the Jobs-Plus Demonstration. 1999. James Riccio.

Building a Convincing Test of a Public Housing Employment Program Using Non-Experimental Methods: Planning for the Jobs-Plus Demonstration. 1999. Howard Bloom.

Jobs-Plus Site-by-Site: An Early Look at Program Implementation. 2000. Edited by Susan Philipson Bloom with Susan Blank.

Building New Partnerships for Employment: Collaboration Among Agencies and Public Housing Residents in the Jobs-Plus Demonstration. 2001. Linda Kato, James Riccio.

Making Work Pay for Public Housing Residents: Financial-Incentive Designs at Six Jobs-Plus Demonstration Sites. 2002. Cynthia Miller, James Riccio.

The Special Challenges of Offering Employment Programs in Culturally Diverse Communities: The Jobs-Plus Experience in Public Housing Developments. 2002. Linda Kato.

The Employment Experiences of Public Housing Residents: Findings from the Jobs-Plus Baseline Survey. 2002. John Martinez.

Children in Public Housing Developments: An Examination of the Children at the Beginning of the Jobs-Plus Demonstration. 2002. Pamela Morris, Stephanie Jones.

Jobs-Plus Site-by-Site: Key Features of Mature Employment Programs in Seven Public Housing Communities. 2003. Linda Kato.

Neighborhood Jobs Initiative

An initiative to increase employment in a number of low-income communities.

The Neighborhood Jobs Initiative: An Early Report on the Vision and Challenges of Bringing an Employment Focus to a Community-Building Initiative. 2001. Frieda Molina, Laura Nelson.

Structures of Opportunity: Developing the Neighborhood Jobs Initiative in Fort Worth, Texas. 2002. Tony Proscio.

Connections to Work Project

A study of local efforts to increase competition in the choice of providers of employment services for welfare recipients and other low-income populations. The project also provides assistance to cutting-edge local initiatives aimed at helping such people access and secure jobs.

Designing and Administering a Wage-Paying Community Service Employment Program Under TANF: Some Considerations and Choices. 1999. Kay Sherwood.

San Francisco Works: Toward an Employer-Led Approach to Welfare Reform and Workforce Development. 2000. Steven Bliss.

Canada's Earnings Supplement Project

A test of an innovative financial incentive intended to expedite the reemployment of displaced workers and encourage full-year work by seasonal or part-year workers, thereby also reducing receipt of unemployment insurance.

Testing a Re-Employment Incentive for Displaced Workers: The Earnings Supplement Project. 1999. Howard Bloom, Saul Schwartz, Susanna Lui-Gurr, Suk-Won Lee.

MDRC Working Papers on Research Methodology

A new series of papers that explore alternative methods of examining the implementation and impacts of programs and policies.

Building a Convincing Test of a Public Housing Employment Program Using Non-Experimental Methods: Planning for the Jobs-Plus Demonstration. 1999. Howard Bloom.

Estimating Program Impacts on Student Achievement Using "Short" Interrupted Time Series. 1999. Howard Bloom.

Using Cluster Random Assignment to Measure Program Impacts: Statistical Implications for the Evaluation of Education Programs. 1999. Howard Bloom, Johannes Bos, Suk-Won Lee.

The Politics of Random Assignment: Implementing Studies and Impacting Policy. 2000. Judith Gueron.

Assessing the Impact of Welfare Reform on Urban Communities: The Urban Change Project and Methodological Considerations. 2000. Charles Michalopoulos, Joannes Bos, Robert Lalonde, Nandita Verma.

Measuring the Impacts of Whole School Reforms: Methodological Lessons from an Evaluation of Accelerated Schools. 2001. Howard Bloom.

A Meta-Analysis of Government Sponsored Training Programs. 2001. David Greenberg, Charles Michalopoulos, Philip Robins.

Modeling the Performance of Welfare-to-Work Programs: The Effects of Program Management and Services, Economic Environment, and Client Characteristics. 2001. Howard Bloom, Carolyn Hill, James Riccio.

A Regression-Based Strategy for Defining Subgroups in a Social Experiment. 2001. James Kemple, Jason Snipes.

Explaining Variation in the Effects of Welfare-to-Work Programs. 2001. David Greenberg, Robert Meyer, Charles Michalopoulos, Michael Wiseman.

Extending the Reach of Randomized Social Experiments: New Directions in Evaluations of American Welfare-to-Work and Employment Initiatives. 2001. James Riccio, Howard Bloom.

Can Nonexperimental Comparison Group Methods Match the Findings from a Random Assignment Evaluation of Mandatory Welfare-to-Work Programs? 2002. Howard Bloom, Charles Michalopoulos, Carolyn Hill, Ying Lei.

Using Instrumental Variables Analysis to Learn More from Social Policy Experiments. 2002. Lisa Gennetian, Johannes Bos, Pamela Morris.

Using Place-Based Random Assignment and Comparative Interrupted Time-Series Analysis to Evaluate the Jobs-Plus Employment Program for Public Housing Residents. 2002. Howard Bloom, James Riccio.

About MDRC

The Manpower Demonstration Research Corporation (MDRC) is a nonprofit, nonpartisan social policy research organization. We are dedicated to learning what works to improve the well-being of low-income people. Through our research and the active communication of our findings, we seek to enhance the effectiveness of social policies and programs. MDRC was founded in 1974 and is located in New York City and Oakland, California.

MDRC's current projects focus on welfare and economic security, education, and employment and community initiatives. Complementing our evaluations of a wide range of welfare reforms are new studies of supports for the working poor and emerging analyses of how programs affect children's development and their families' well-being. In the field of education, we are testing reforms aimed at improving the performance of public schools, especially in urban areas. Finally, our community projects are using innovative approaches to increase employment in low-income neighborhoods.

Our projects are a mix of demonstrations — field tests of promising program models — and evaluations of government and community initiatives, and we employ a wide range of methods to determine a program's effects, including large-scale studies, surveys, case studies, and ethnographies of individuals and families. We share the findings and lessons from our work — including best practices for program operators — with a broad audience within the policy and practitioner community, as well as the general public and the media.

Over the past quarter century, MDRC has worked in almost every state, all of the nation's largest cities, and Canada. We conduct our projects in partnership with state and local governments, the federal government, public school systems, community organizations, and numerous private philanthropies.