



Expanding Opportunities & Reducing Barriers to Work: Delaware Final Report

Evaluation of Pilot Projects to Promote Work and Increase State Accountability in the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program



(Evaluation of USDA, Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) Employment and Training Pilots)

May 2022

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May 2022

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Glossary

ABAWD	Able-bodied adult without dependents. 18- to 49-year-old adult who is not disabled and does not have dependents
APEX	Advancement through Pardons and Expungements
CARES Act	Coronavirus Aid, Relief, and Economic Security Act. An economic stimulus bill signed into law on March 27, 2020 that implemented a variety of programs to address issues related to the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic
CASAS	Comprehensive Adult Student Assessment System. A competency-based assessment system used to assess the skills of adult learners
Control group	A group of individuals enrolled in a SNAP Employment and Training (E&T) pilot that was eligible for services available through existing SNAP E&T programs if such programs were available to the control group in the pilot location
CPT	Certified production technician
DelTech	Delaware Technical Community College
DOE	Department of Education
DOL	Department of Labor
DSS	Delaware Department of Health and Social Services, Division of Social Services
FBD	The Food Bank of Delaware
Food security	Having access at all times to enough food for an active, healthy life. Individuals who experienced food access limitations due to lack of money or other resources are said to be food insecure
GED	General Education Development. A group of subject tests which, when passed, certify that the test taker has high school-level academic skills
HMO	Health maintenance organization
ICP	Individual career plan
ITT	Intention-to-treat analysis. An analytical method where individuals are evaluated based on their initial random assignment group regardless of whether they received the treatment
JPS	Job placement specialist
LIUNA	Laborers' International Union of North America
LWIA	Local workforce investment area. A group of one or more counties that provide workforce development services
MIS	Management information system
NCCER	National Center for Construction Education and Research

OS	Outreach specialist
PolyTech	PolyTech Adult Education
PPO	Preferred provider organization
Random assignment	An experimental technique for assigning individuals enrolled in a SNAP Employment and Training pilot into research groups (a treatment or control group)
Research group	A group of individuals enrolled in a SNAP Employment and Training pilot that was either eligible for enhanced services (a treatment group) or eligible for services available through existing SNAP E&T programs where available (a control group)
SNAP	Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program. A Federal food assistance program
SNAP E&T	A program that assists SNAP participants in obtaining employment by providing services, such as job search assistance, job skills training, education, work experience, or workfare, and supports, such as assistance with transportation and child care costs
SSI	Supplemental Security Income. A Federal income supplement program
TANF	Temporary Assistance for Needy Families. A Federal grant program designed to help needy families achieve self-sufficiency
Treatment group	A group of individuals enrolled in a SNAP Employment and Training pilot that was eligible for the enhanced set of services developed under the pilot
UI	Unemployment insurance. A Federal program to provide unemployment benefits to eligible workers
USDA	U.S. Department of Agriculture
Very low food security	A severe form of food insecurity characterized by disrupted eating patterns and reduced food intake
WIA	Workforce Investment Act Gold Standard Evaluation. The most recent national study of the Adult and Dislocated Worker program services conducted in 2012
WIC	Supplemental Nutrition Program for Women, Infants, and Children. A Federal assistance program that provides food, health care referrals, and nutrition education to low-income pregnant, breastfeeding, and non-breastfeeding postpartum women, and to infants and children
WIOA	Work Innovation and Opportunity Act
WONDER	Work Opportunity Networks to Develop Employment Readiness. The SNAP Employment and Training pilot implemented in Delaware
Work registrant	SNAP participant who has not met any Federal exemptions from SNAP work requirements and is therefore required to register for work

Overview

This report presents findings from the evaluation of a SNAP Employment and Training (SNAP E&T) pilot—Work Opportunity Networks to Develop Employment Readiness (WONDER)—that was implemented in Delaware from February 2016 to December 2018. This was one of 10 pilots Congress authorized and funded under the Agricultural Act of 2014 that offered enhanced SNAP E&T services to assist SNAP participants in obtaining employment. The Delaware Department of Health and Social Services, Division of Social Services (DSS) enrolled 6,814 SNAP participants in the pilot, with roughly half randomly assigned to the WONDER group (eligible for enhanced services and any employment and training services available in the community) and the other half assigned to the control group (eligible for existing SNAP E&T services and any employment and training services available in the community). DSS targeted new work registrants (those who had not received SNAP benefits during the six months before random assignment). WONDER services were voluntary and offered statewide. WONDER offered individuals four service tracks focused on construction, culinary arts, manufacturing, and job placement services. Overall, these tracks provided industry-specific training programs, subsidized employment, job placement assistance, job readiness assistance, intensive case management, and support services. All WONDER group members also could be referred to Advancement through Pardons and Expungements (offering assistance with criminal records) and Stand By Me (offering financial literacy education).

DSS was able to create new partnerships with providers in the community to create industry-specific training and subsidized employment. It also developed a service pathway that provided job placement and job readiness assistance. Although it exceeded its recruitment goals and enrolled many individuals in the pilot, it struggled to engage many of them, and few participated in occupational skills training and work-based learning through the industry-specific tracks. These issues led to small differences between research groups in participation in and completion of activities. Ultimately, WONDER did not lead to an increase in earnings, generally did not affect rates of SNAP participation, and did not impact employment in Years 2 and 3 following random assignment. Because WONDER group members did not earn significantly more than control group members, the overall cost of implementing the pilot outweighed its benefits.

The lack of impacts on earnings and employment may reflect that only 40 percent of WONDER group members started an employment or training-related activity, meaning nearly two-thirds did not participate in a substantive activity. In addition to the lower overall participation rate, the rate of participation in industry-specific tracks was much lower than DSS and providers expected. Although DSS always intended for most WONDER group members to receive services through the job placement track, both it and the providers had anticipated higher rates of participation in the industry-specific tracks. The lower rates of engagement could have been due to several factors, including slow implementation of the tracks and individuals' difficulty in meeting eligibility criteria for training or lack of interest in training. Whatever the reason, most WONDER group members were placed in the job placement track, where they generally did not develop new skills—they mostly received help developing resumes, preparing for job interviews, and obtaining job leads. These activities were similar to those received by the control group in the existing SNAP E&T program. WONDER group members likely were receiving more intensive case management and general support in obtaining jobs, but the percentage of them becoming employed, and the wages for those jobs, may not have been much different from what was available to the control group. In fact, the control group may have had access to a wider array of jobs openings, as the existing SNAP E&T provider had been developing its relationships with employers for many years and had contracts with some employers, such as Amazon, whereas the job placement specialists were developing new employment leads for WONDER rather than starting from an existing employer network.

Executive Summary

The Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) is the primary source of nutrition assistance for many individuals and families with low incomes. SNAP provides monthly benefits to help participants obtain adequate access to food; for some program participants, it also provides work supports through SNAP Employment and Training (E&T) programs to help them become economically self-sufficient. Although States are required to administer a SNAP E&T program, they have flexibility in determining and designing its services and activities. States typically offer SNAP participants some case management and support services, and a range of activities, that include job search assistance or training, occupational skills training, and basic education.

Because SNAP E&T programs are so varied and are administered at the State or local level, information about the most effective approaches for helping SNAP participants gain skills and find work is limited. For this reason, as part of the Agricultural Act of 2014, Congress authorized and funded the SNAP E&T pilots to test innovative strategies for connecting SNAP participants with jobs that would increase their incomes and reduce their need for public assistance. In 2015, the U.S. Department of Agriculture’s Food and Nutrition Service (FNS) awarded grants to 10 States—California, Delaware, Georgia, Illinois, Kansas, Kentucky, Mississippi, Vermont, Virginia, and Washington—which represented diverse service areas and populations. The pilots varied in whether they operated statewide or only in selected areas, and whether they focused on urban communities, rural communities, or both. The majority of individuals the pilots targeted were unemployed or underemployed and faced significant barriers to employment, such as being homeless or having a criminal history or substance use disorder. Pilots generally expanded the types and amounts of services provided through States’ existing SNAP E&T programs. Services typically included (1) a comprehensive skills or clinical assessment to determine an individual’s work readiness, skills, and barriers to employment; (2) case management services that developed and supported a detailed individualized work and barrier-reduction plan; and (3) support services,¹ such as transportation assistance, child care, housing assistance, and training or work supplies that helped reduce barriers to both engagement in the pilot and employment. The pilots also offered a range of employment and training-related activities, such as independent job search, job readiness training, job search assistance, basic education, occupational skills training, and work-based learning opportunities (such as subsidized employment, work experience, internships, and work study). Each pilot enrolled 3,000 to 7,000 individuals, for a total of 44,359 individuals across the 10 pilots.

Services are resources provided or administered to individuals, such as assessments, case management, and support services.

Activities are employment or training-related events in which individuals participate, such as job search assistance training, basic education, occupational skills training, or work-based learning.

The authorizing legislation also required a rigorous, longitudinal evaluation of the pilots to assess whether the innovative strategies they used were successful in connecting SNAP participants with jobs that increased their incomes and reduced their need for public assistance benefits. This report summarizes

¹ Referred to as participant reimbursements in the SNAP E&T program; however, for this report, we describe the package of services as support services.

evaluation findings for one State—Delaware.² It provides a detailed description of the pilot’s design and implementation and, using data for up to three years following random assignment, examines the services individuals received and assesses the effectiveness of those services in improving individuals’ outcomes. The report also includes findings from the cost-benefit analysis, which itemizes specific monetary costs and benefits of pilot services, and assesses whether the benefits of the services and activities offered through the pilot were large enough to offset their costs.

Delaware pilot background

In February 2016, the Delaware Department of Health and Social Services, Division of Social Services (DSS), which administers SNAP, began enrollment in its pilot, Work Opportunity Networks to Develop Employment Readiness (WONDER), statewide. From February 2016 to August 2018, DSS enrolled 6,814 SNAP participants in the pilot, mostly targeting new work registrants (those who had not received SNAP benefits during the six months before enrollment into the pilot).³

WONDER services were voluntary and consisted of industry-specific skills training, subsidized employment, job placement assistance, job readiness assistance, and support services. Individuals were placed into one of four tracks focused on construction, culinary arts, manufacturing, and job placement services. In addition, individuals in any track could be referred to Advancement through Pardons and Expungements (APEX), which offered assistance in expunging criminal records, or Stand By Me, which offered financial literacy education.

Evaluation overview

The evaluation included the following four components:

1. An **implementation analysis** that documented the context and operations of each pilot
2. A **participation analysis** that examined the characteristics, participation levels, and service paths of individuals in the pilots
3. An **impact analysis** that identified what works, and for whom, by examining impacts on employment and earnings; public assistance receipt; and other outcomes, such as food security, health, well-being, and housing
4. A **cost-benefit analysis** that estimated the return on each dollar invested in the pilots

The evaluation used an experimental research design in which individuals eligible for SNAP E&T who were enrolled into the pilot were randomly assigned into the WONDER group or a control group in roughly equivalent numbers. Individuals assigned to the WONDER group were eligible for the enhanced set of services developed under the pilot, whereas control group members were eligible for services

² Similar reports for each pilot and a summary report are available at www.fns.usda.gov/research-and-analysis.

³ Work registrants are SNAP participants who have not met any Federal exemptions from SNAP work requirements and are therefore required to register for work. Federal exemptions apply to individuals who are younger than 16 or older than 59; physically or mentally unfit for employment; subject to and complying with work requirements for another program; a caretaker of a dependent child younger than 6 or an incapacitated individual; participating in a drug or alcohol treatment and rehabilitation program; employed at least 30 hours a week; or enrolled at least half time in a recognized school or training program.

available through the existing SNAP E&T program in the State. Individuals in both the WONDER and control groups continued to be eligible for any other employment and training services available in their communities. Through random assignment, the two groups were, on average, similar across a range of characteristics at the time they enrolled in the pilot. They differed only in the services they subsequently were eligible to receive. This research design allows us to confidently attribute differences in outcomes between the groups to the WONDER services rather than other potential causes.

For the evaluation, we collected and analyzed several types of data including the following:

- **Implementation data** from interviews with WONDER staff and WONDER group members to understand the planning and implementation of the pilot and provide context for other analyses
- **Administrative service use data** to describe participation in services and activities
- **Unemployment insurance (UI) wage records** to measure employment and earnings
- **SNAP administrative data** to measure participation in SNAP, Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF), and Medicaid, and the amount of SNAP and TANF benefits
- **12- and 36-month follow-up survey data** to provide additional information about individuals' service receipt, employment, and earnings, as well as food security, health, well-being, and housing status
- **Cost data** from grantees and providers and time-use data to estimate the cost of services and net costs and benefits to individuals, the government, and society

WONDER overview

DSS developed WONDER to provide more robust services and supports than were offered under its existing SNAP E&T program. DSS wanted to provide these services to the broadest group possible, so it offered WONDER statewide (to any eligible SNAP participant in the State's three counties—Kent, New Castle, and Sussex) and to all new work registrants. DSS administered the pilot and contracted with six key providers—Eastside Rising, the Food Bank of Delaware (Food Bank), Delaware Technical Community College (DelTech), PolyTech Adult Education (PolyTech), KraftHeinz, and Career TEAM—to offer four service tracks that provided individuals with access to industry-specific training programs, subsidized employment, job placement assistance, job readiness assistance, and support services.

After random assignment, individuals assigned to the WONDER group met with an outreach specialist (OS) who conducted an intensive intake and assessment process that generally took place over multiple visits. After completing all assessments and developing an individualized career plan (ICP), individuals selected one of four tracks based on location, interest, and readiness. Also, OSs offered individuals intensive case management and support services while in a track.

Services and activities offered to WONDER group members included:

Track 1: Construction. Eastside Rising provided construction pre-apprenticeship training in New Castle County. Individuals first completed a two- to three-week classroom training focused on basic construction lessons and soft skills development, then entered a two- to three-week field training that provided hands-on construction training. Following training, individuals worked with an Eastside Rising job developer to enter employment or an apprenticeship (the training was developed to qualify as a pre-apprenticeship program). While enrolled in the track, individuals also received intensive case management provided by the Eastside Rising case manager (in addition to case management provided by the OS). Initially, the field

training was provided by a local union, which allowed individuals to join it (obtaining a union card) and conferred the benefits and employment opportunities of union membership. However, due to a low number of referrals, the union stopped offering classes, and Eastside Rising developed an in-house training for hard skills, based on a nationally credentialed curriculum (National Center for Construction Education and Research), but this training did not provide union membership.

One-day construction-related training. From June to December 2018, WONDER offered several one-day courses in both the New Castle and Milford areas that provided certification in rigging, flagging, or forklift operation. These construction-related trainings were offered to anyone in WONDER and were provided by three separate training providers (not associated with Eastside Rising).

Track 2: Culinary arts. The Food Bank provided culinary arts training to WONDER group members in New Castle and Sussex Counties. The training consisted of 12 weeks of classroom training and hands-on training in an on-site kitchen. The training included basic and advanced cooking skills, kitchen roles, food safety, and life and soft skills. Individuals attended training every day for the 12-week period; this track also included a paid two-week internship in the food industry. A Food Bank case manager also provided day-to-day support to those in Track 2, in coordination with the OSs. Each individual who completed the track received a nationally recognized ServSafe certification, job placement support from the Food Bank, and 25 weeks of post-graduation wraparound services that included job coaching, mentoring, and access to an alumni network, staff, and the kitchen to improve skills.

Track 3: Manufacturing. Initially, DelTech provided an online certified manufacturing training and those who completed training were offered a subsidized job at a local manufacturing plant, KraftHeinz, in Kent County. The self-directed certified production technician training included four modules; individuals received a certificate for completing each module, but they had to pass all four modules to receive the nationally recognized certification. Upon receiving the certification, individuals were placed in a full-time, entry-level production position at the KraftHeinz manufacturing plant for a 90-day trial period. If individuals successfully completed their trial period, KraftHeinz retained them as full-time employees. Due to delays in implementing the activities and the difficulty of the curriculum, only two WONDER group members completed the training and started their 90-day trial period at KraftHeinz by mid-2017. In response, DSS worked with DelTech to make changes in the curriculum and the training process to better meet individuals' needs. Despite these changes, it did not significantly improve the completion rate of training, so DSS contracted with another training provider, PolyTech, in November 2017. PolyTech offered an instructor-based manufacturing training that lasted for nine days, Monday through Friday from 8:30 a.m. to 4:00 p.m. Many WONDER group members were able to complete the training, but shortly after classes began, KraftHeinz imposed a hiring freeze and did not offer any more subsidized positions to WONDER group members after April 2018.

Track 4: Job placement services. Individuals who were ineligible for or uninterested in Tracks 1 through 3 received services through Track 4, which was the largest track. Those who were deemed work ready (placed at or above an 8th grade level on the Comprehensive Adult Student Assessment System [CASAS]) worked with job placement specialists who provided job placement support and job skills building assistance (such as help with resumes, soft skills training, mock interviews, and rides to interviews). Those who were deemed not work ready (placed below an 8th grade level on the CASAS or needed additional soft skills training or help reducing barriers) could enroll in courses to improve math, reading skills, and soft skills offered by staff at Career TEAM, a community employment and training provider, who were co-located at the WONDER offices. Few individuals were interested in engaging in these courses, but those who did could become work ready and continue in Track 4 to find employment or

enter another track. Although WONDER did not pay for education and training under Track 4, job placement specialists made referrals to adult basic education for General Education Development (GED) classes and helped a small number of people find and enroll in short-term training, such as certifications for medical assistants and commercial driving licenses.

Intensive case management and support services. WONDER offered intensive case management, including identifying and helping individuals reduce barriers to employment. OSs were required to contact individuals at least once a week and meet face to face at least once a month. Through case management, OSs discussed what barriers individuals faced and what supports might help them. WONDER offered child care, transportation assistance, and other supports to reduce barriers, such as books, uniforms, tools, equipment, or background check fees for employers that required one. However, as part of the case management approach, WONDER group members were asked if they had a way to mitigate the barrier before receiving assistance (such as getting a ride from a friend to get to training). Consequently, direct supports were a last resort in most cases. WONDER also provided direct referrals to financial literacy coaching through Stand By Me and expungement and pardon assistance through APEX. In July 2018, in response to the need for housing, car repairs, and more clothing assistance, DSS expanded its package of available support services to include these as well.

Participation in WONDER services and activities

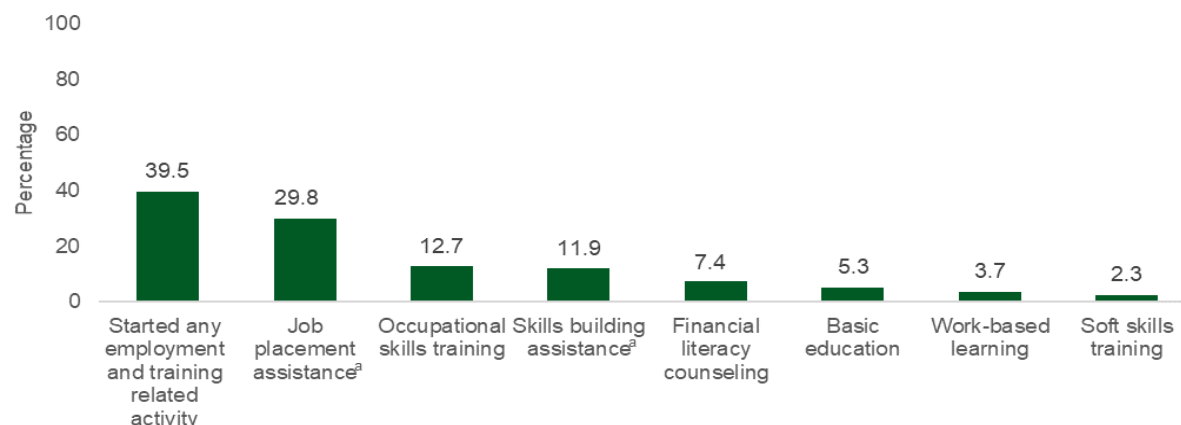
Only about 68 percent of WONDER group members returned after enrollment and received at least one service—that is, they were assessed, completed their ICP, or engaged in an employment or training-related activity. About half of all WONDER group members ultimately started at least one of the four tracks, and 40 percent started an employment or training-related activity after they completed intake and assessments (Exhibit ES.1). Most of those who started a track participated in Track 4 (46 percent of all WONDER group members). Fewer individuals started Track 1 (3 percent), Track 2 (6 percent), or Track 3 (3 percent). Although DSS and providers had anticipated higher rates of participation in Tracks 1 through 3, the model always intended for most WONDER group members to receive services through Track 4. Because most individuals were in the job placement track, the most frequently started activities were job placement assistance (30 percent of all group members) and skills building assistance (12 percent); 13 percent started occupational skills training.

Most individuals who started a track completed it (68 percent). The completion rates for each track were similar—37 to 39 percent—but completion rates by type of activity among those who started it varied. Most of those who started work-based learning completed it (90 percent), whereas between 60 to 70 percent of those who started job placement assistance, basic education, occupational skills training, and soft skills training completed the activity.

Virtually all WONDER group members had at least one contact with a case manager, and 58 percent received a support service. Transportation assistance was the most common, with 56 percent of WONDER group members receiving it. On average, WONDER group members who received support services received \$356 in total support service payments.

Individuals spent an average of four to five months in WONDER. Nearly all of them exited WONDER within their first year (96 percent), with almost half exiting within the first quarter. Most individuals exited before successfully completing all of their services or activities, though nearly one-third of them completed the program before exiting. Many individuals who enrolled in the pilot also exited SNAP in the first 12 months after random assignment.

Exhibit ES.1. About 40 percent of WONDER group members started an employment or training-related activity, with most starting job placement assistance or occupational skills training



Source: SNAP employment and training evaluation administrative service use data.

Note: Estimates are based on data from 3,391 WONDER group members.

^aIncludes only those participating in the activity as part of Track 4.

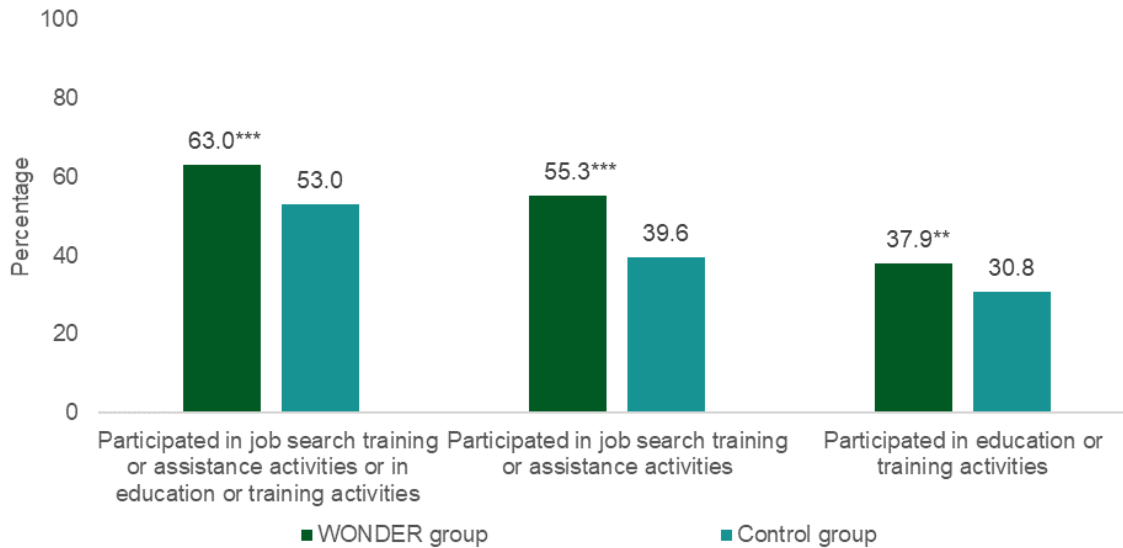
Differences in service receipt for the WONDER and control groups

Whether WONDER impacted individuals' employment, earnings, and receipt of public assistance depends, in part, on whether there were differences between the WONDER and control groups in their receipt of services and their participation in and completion of activities. To provide context for the impacts of WONDER, we examined differences in service receipt between the two research groups.⁴ Data were collected in the 12- and 36-month follow-up surveys and captured all types of services and activities, regardless of whether they were provided through WONDER, through existing SNAP E&T, or were generally available in the community through programs such as Work Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA) or through community colleges, nonprofits, or other organizations.

During the three years following random assignment, the WONDER group was more likely than the control group to participate in job search training activities and in education and training activities. Sixty-three percent of the WONDER group participated in a job search training or assistance activity or in an education or training activity compared to 53 percent of the control group (Exhibit ES.2). In addition, the WONDER group was more likely than the control group to participate in job search training or assistance activities (7 percentage point difference) and education or training activities (16 percentage point difference). The WONDER group had greater participation in these activities than the control group in Year 1 only; there were no statistically significant differences between research groups in Years 2 and 3. The WONDER group had higher rates of participation than the control group in most activities, including general job skills training (11 percentage points), occupational skills training (5 percentage points), and work-based learning (1 percentage point).

⁴ In this analysis, "service receipt" includes both services (assessments, case management, and support services) and employment and training-related activities.

Exhibit ES.2. Over a three-year period, the WONDER group participated in activities offered by WONDER, existing SNAP E&T, or the community at higher rates than the control group



Source: SNAP employment and training evaluation 12- and 36-month surveys, weighted data.

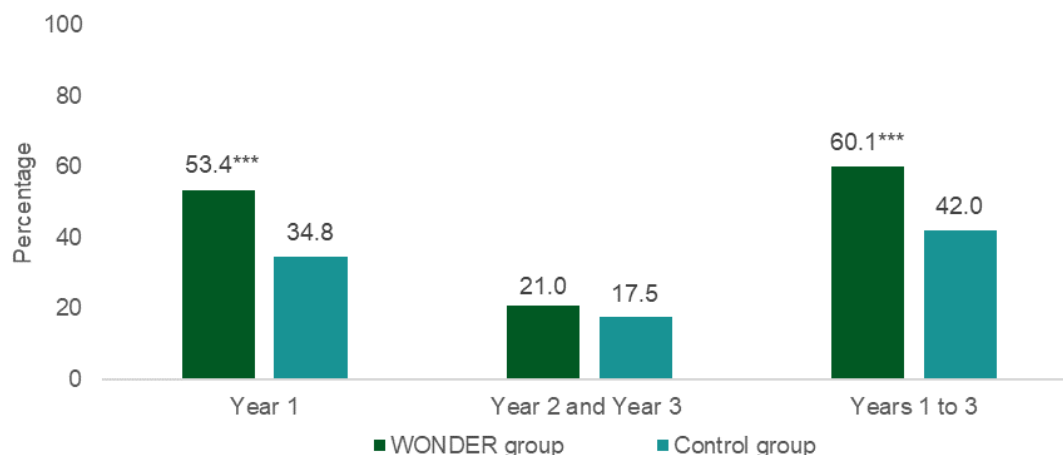
Notes: Estimates cover the 36 months following random assignment. Estimates are based on data from 619 WONDER group members and 628 control group members.

***/**/* Difference between WONDER group and control group is significantly different from zero at the 0.01/0.05/0.10 level, two-tailed test.

WONDER group members were more likely than control group members to complete an activity. Overall, WONDER group members were 8 percentage points more likely than control group members to complete any type of education or training activity. Differences between research groups in rates of completion were present only in Year 1. Individuals in the WONDER and control groups each spent, on average, about four months in activities, but those in the WONDER group spent more hours per week in activities (six versus three hours). WONDER group members were more likely than control group members to receive an occupational certificate or license (5 percentage point difference).

WONDER group members were also more likely than the control group to receive case management (60 versus 42 percent; Exhibit ES.3). On average, WONDER group members had more than twice as many contacts with an employment professional or case manager than control group members (eight versus three contacts).

Exhibit ES.3. WONDER group members were more likely than control group members to receive case management



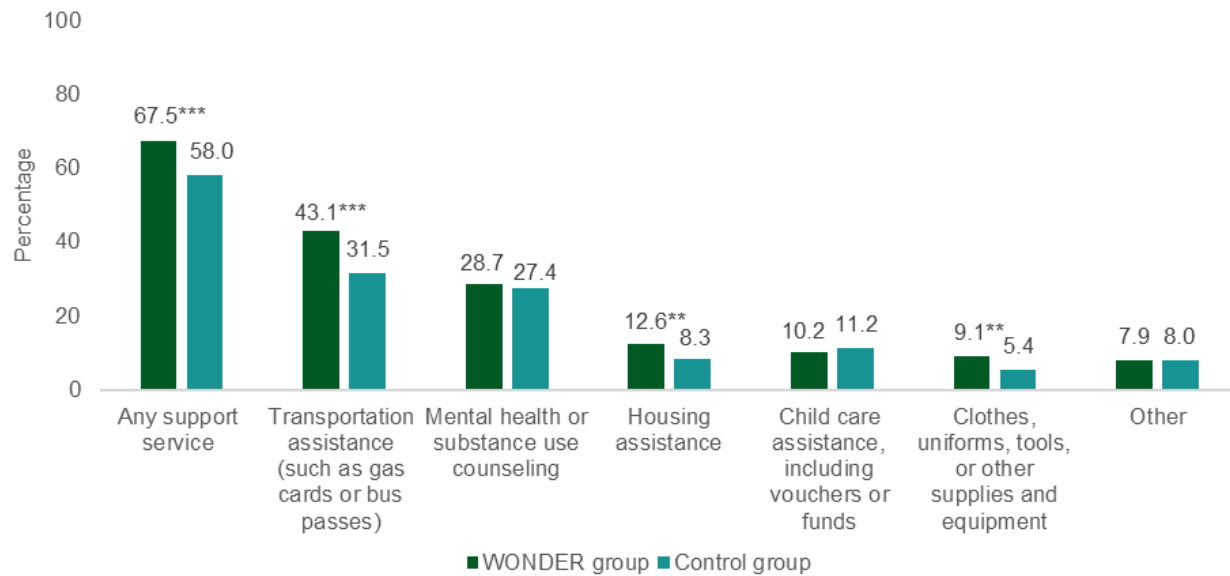
Source: SNAP employment and training evaluation 12- and 36-month surveys, weighted data.

Notes: Estimates cover the 36 months following random assignment. Estimates are based on data from 619 WONDER group members and 628 control group members. The 12-month survey requested information about receipt of case management and support services between the date of random assignment and the date of the 12-month interview. The 36-month survey requested information about receipt of case management and support services between the date of the 12-month interview and the date of the 36-month interview. As a result, it is not possible to provide quarterly estimates in any year or to estimate receipt of assistance separately in Years 2 and 3.

***/**/* Difference between WONDER group and control group is significantly different from zero at the 0.01/0.05/0.10 level, two-tailed test.

WONDER group members also were more likely than control group members to receive support services. About 68 percent of individuals in the WONDER group received a support service compared to 58 percent in the control group (Exhibit ES.4). The largest differences were for the receipt of transportation assistance and housing assistance.

Exhibit ES.4. WONDER group members were more likely than control group members to receive support services



Source: SNAP employment and training evaluation 12- and 36-month surveys, weighted data.

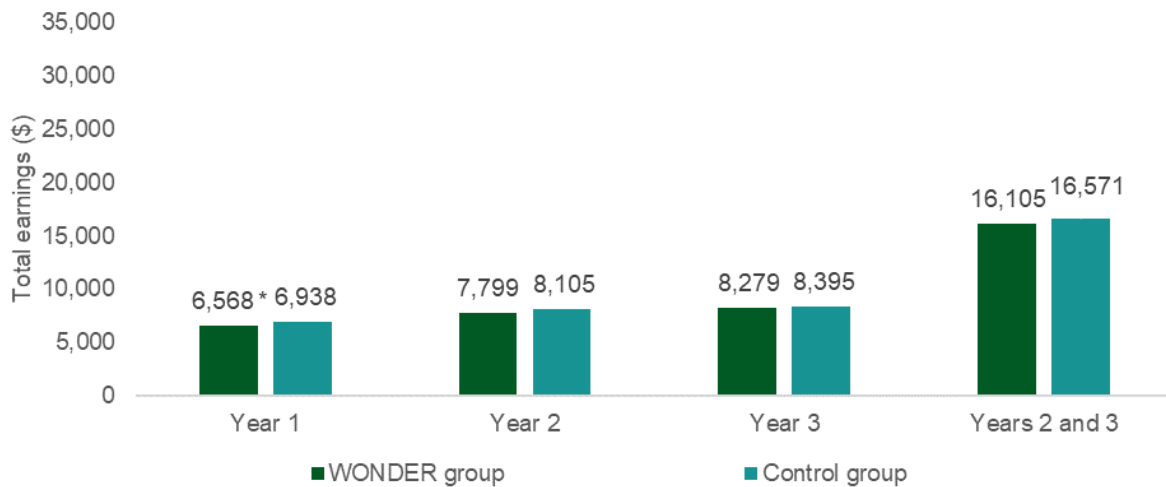
Notes: Estimates cover the 36 months following random assignment. Estimates are based on data from 619 WONDER group members and 628 control group members. "Other" included assistance with payment of utilities such as electricity, phone, heat, or gas; food assistance; and assistance with medical care.

***/**/* Difference between research groups is significantly different from zero at the 0.01/0.05/0.10 level, two-tailed test.

Impacts of WONDER on employment and SNAP participation outcomes

We estimated the impacts of WONDER on individual outcomes over the three years following random assignment. Before analyzing the data, we selected two primary outcomes: earnings (based on both the UI and survey data) and SNAP participation. Analyses of earnings and employment were based on both UI and survey data due to differences in data coverage or quality, or in the analysis samples and time periods covered in the data. Instead of focusing on outcomes in Year 3, we focused on those over a two-year period consisting of Years 2 and 3 after random assignment. This approach balanced potential concerns about how the COVID-19 pandemic may have affected outcomes in Year 3 with measuring impacts on outcomes after individuals had sufficient time to participate in WONDER activities in Year 1. The estimated impacts on other outcomes are considered exploratory and are used to support findings for the earnings and SNAP participation outcomes by examining whether they had similar impacts.

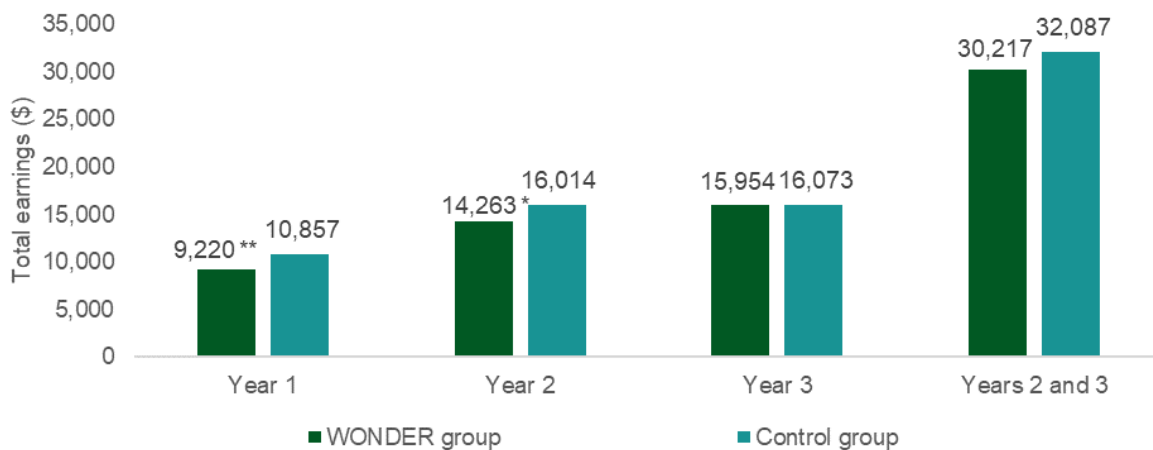
Earnings. Based on both UI and survey data, WONDER had no impact on earnings in the two-year period (Years 2 and 3; Exhibits ES.5 and ES.6). The WONDER group earned less than the control group in Year 1 (based on UI and survey data) and Year 2 (based on survey data only). In Year 3, the WONDER group continued to earn less than the control group, but differences were not statistically significant based on both data sources. Both research groups generally experienced increases in average earnings over time.

Exhibit ES.5. WONDER did not affect earnings (UI data)

Source: SNAP employment and training evaluation UI wage records, weighted data.

Note: Estimates are based on data from 2,672 WONDER group members and 2,672 control group members.

***/**/* Difference between the WONDER group and control group is significantly different from zero at the .01/0.05/0.10 level, two-tailed test.

Exhibit ES.6. WONDER did not affect earnings (survey data)

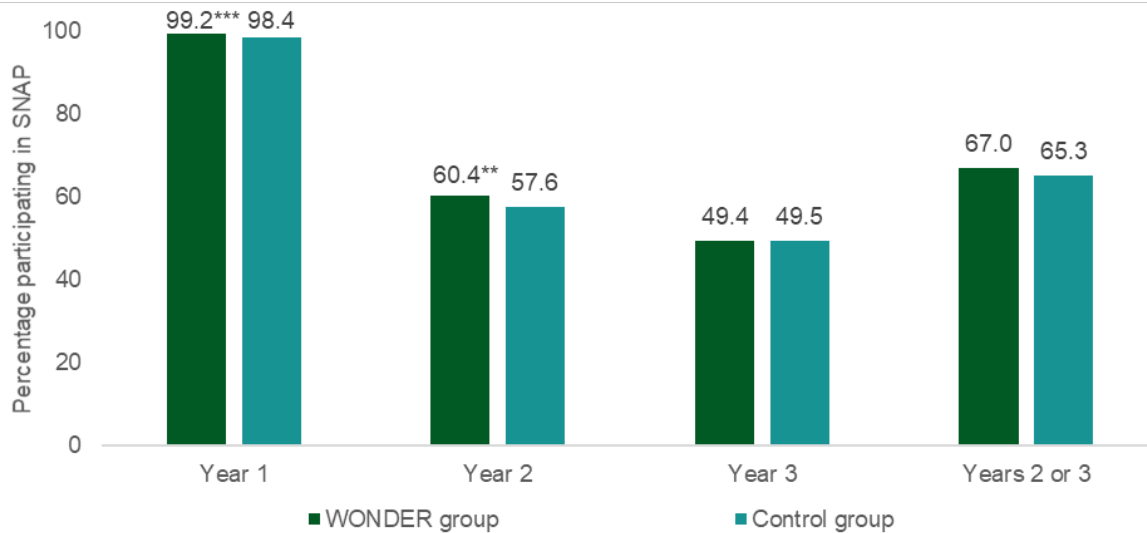
Source: SNAP employment and training evaluation 12- and 36-month surveys, weighted data.

Note: Estimates are based on data from 619 WONDER group members and 628 control group members.

***/**/* Difference between the WONDER group and control group is significantly different from zero at the .01/0.05/0.10 level, two-tailed test.

SNAP participation. WONDER did not affect SNAP participation in the two-year period (Years 2 and 3) following random assignment. About 67 percent of WONDER members and 65 percent of control group members participated in SNAP at some point during this period (Exhibit ES.7). In Years 1 and 2 after random assignment, WONDER led to a statistically significant increase in SNAP participation, but differences between groups were smaller and statistically insignificant in Year 3. Over time, SNAP participation decreased for both research groups from approximately 99 percent in Year 1 to approximately 50 percent in Year 3.

Exhibit ES.7. SNAP participation rates based on SNAP administrative data were similar for the WONDER and control groups in Years 2 and 3 combined



Source: SNAP employment and training evaluation SNAP administrative data, weighted data.

Note: Estimates are based on data from 2,672 WONDER group members and 2,672 control group members.

***/**/* Difference between WONDER group and control group significantly different from zero at the 0.01/0.05/0.10 level, two-tailed test.

Employment, hours worked, and other job characteristics. Based on both UI and survey data, employment rates were similar for WONDER and control group members for Years 2 and 3 combined and in each year individually. Based on the UI data, about 69 to 70 percent of individuals in each research group were employed in Years 2 and 3.

Employment rates provide information about the percentage of individuals employed during a given time period but do not describe the extent or duration of employment. To assess these employment characteristics, we examined the average amount of time individuals were employed each year. Findings were similar to those for rates of employment. Both data sources showed that the WONDER and control groups were employed for similar numbers of quarters/months in each year. Also, there were few impacts of WONDER on hours worked or on the characteristics of jobs among the employed. In Year 1 after random assignment, the WONDER group worked significantly fewer hours per week than the control group (14 versus 16 hours), but differences in subsequent years were smaller in magnitude and not statistically significant. The majority of employed individuals in both research groups received an employer-offered benefit, but those in the WONDER group who were employed were almost 12 percentage points less likely than employed control group members to receive paid sick leave and 10 percentage points less likely to receive tuition assistance or reimbursement.

SNAP benefits and exit. There was an impact of WONDER on the average SNAP benefits received, both in absolute terms and as a percentage of the maximum benefit amount. The average SNAP benefit amount in Years 2 and 3 for the WONDER group was \$117 more than for the control group.

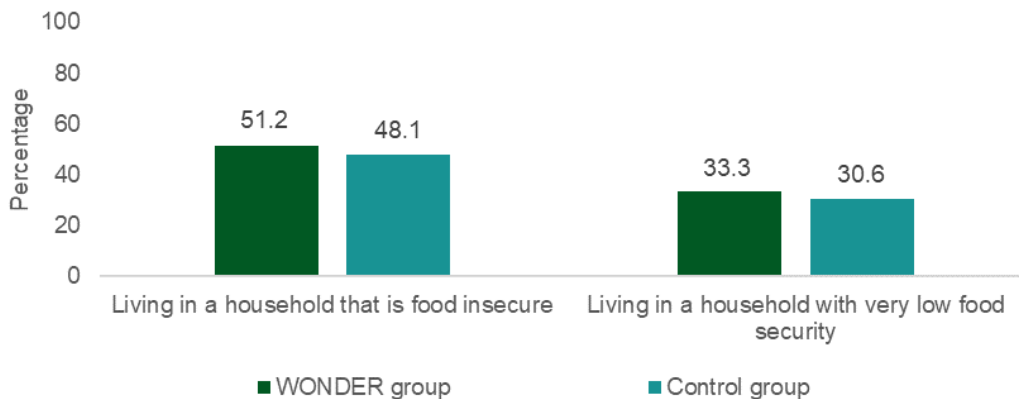
The WONDER group and control group had similar likelihoods of exiting SNAP across the three years following random assignment—about 91 percent of each group exited SNAP at some point during this period. Individuals who exited SNAP included those who left and did not re-enter SNAP in the three-year period, as well as those who left and re-entered before the end of the period. Thus, even though 9 percent

of the WONDER group participated in SNAP for the full three years, SNAP participation at the end of this period was 37 percent, reflecting that individuals left and re-entered SNAP during the three-year period. These patterns of exiting and re-entering SNAP resulted in both research groups having a similar number of SNAP spells. About 52 percent of the WONDER group had a single SNAP spell (meaning they either remained on SNAP for the full three-year period or exited and did not re-enter), 32 percent had two spells, and 16 percent had three or more spells. For the control group, these percentages were 50, 34, and 17, respectively.

Impacts of WONDER on other outcomes

Rates of food insecurity were similar in the WONDER and control groups. About 51 percent of WONDER group members were food insecure compared to 48 percent of control group members (Exhibit ES.8). Rates of very low food security (a severe form of food insecurity) were also similar between groups (33 versus 31 percent).

Exhibit ES.8. WONDER did not affect food insecurity



Source: SNAP employment and training evaluation 36-month survey, weighted data.

Note: Estimates are based on data from 619 WONDER group members and 628 control group members.

***/**/* Difference between the WONDER group and control group is significantly different from zero at the 0.01/0.05/0.10 level, two-tailed test.

There were few statistically significant differences between the WONDER and control groups for other outcome measures related to health, well-being, and housing status. Approximately one-quarter each research group screened positively for depression. Both research groups had similar levels of health, and self-esteem and self-efficacy scores. The majority of each research group owned or rented a home or apartment (about 55 to 56 percent of each group), although WONDER group members were more likely to be homeless compared to control group members (5 versus 3 percent).

WONDER costs relative to benefits

WONDER costs. DSS and its partners and providers reported spending \$12,785,610 from April 2015 to December 2018 on the planning and implementation of WONDER (\$1,028,609 during the planning period, \$2,640,013 for recruitment, and \$9,116,988 for WONDER services and activities. The FNS grant funded 86 percent of these costs; partners and providers leveraged other funding sources for the remaining 14 percent. Administration costs accounted for 53 percent of total costs, including time for staff meetings, supervision, and other activities (\$6,794,082). Direct services accounted for 18 percent of total costs (\$2,322,906), with case management and assessments being the largest share of those costs.

Costs relative to benefits. In the cost-benefit analysis, we measured the difference in the average costs of all services received by WONDER and control group members—that is, the differential costs of WONDER services—and compared the differential costs of WONDER to the value of benefits received by WONDER group members. As in the analysis of services received, we considered costs associated with all services and activities, including those delivered by WONDER as well as community programs and organizations. This approach reflects the fact that impacts of WONDER on individuals' outcomes, such as earnings, were influenced by *all* services individuals received during the 36-month follow-up period, not just those received through WONDER.

The estimated total costs of all WONDER group services were \$8,309,641, including costs for both direct services and ongoing administration. This estimate is about 9 percent lower than the costs of WONDER services alone (\$9,116,988), suggesting there were differences between administrative records of service use and individuals' recollection of services they received during the follow-up period in the survey data, which were used to estimate these costs. The difference could also reflect non-response in the survey data in Delaware. There were likely few services received outside of WONDER through existing SNAP E&T and the community given these differences. The services received by the control group measure what services would have been available to the WONDER group members if WONDER were not in place. The estimated costs of all control group services received were \$5,240,165, including costs for direct services and ongoing administration. On average, the total costs of all direct services and activities received by WONDER group members was \$1,750 per individual, on average. The total costs of all services control group members received through existing SNAP E&T and the community were \$1,392, on average.

Estimates of the benefits received by WONDER group members reflect earnings and fringe benefits they accrued during the 36-month follow-up period. These data were obtained from the two sources of data used in the impact analysis: (1) UI wage records and (2) 36-month survey data. For the cost-benefit analysis, we used a framework to comprehensively list WONDER group benefits and costs relative to the control group from multiple perspectives, including those of (1) individuals enrolled in WONDER, (2) government and taxpayers, and (3) society as a whole—the sum of the other two perspectives. For each perspective, we estimated the net benefit (the difference between total benefits and total costs). A positive net benefit means the benefits outweighed the costs, whereas a negative net benefit means the costs outweighed the benefits. The net benefits of all services WONDER group members received were negative for all perspectives (WONDER group members, government and taxpayers, and society) during the 36-month follow-up period based on both data sources. The net benefit to society was negative by \$1,363 per WONDER group member according to UI wage records and by \$4,073 per WONDER group member according to 36-month survey data. These findings were robust to changes in assumptions about benefits and costs from all perspectives, such as the values of fringe benefits, taxes, and present values.

Main conclusions and discussion

The goal of the 10 SNAP E&T pilots was to test innovative strategies for increasing SNAP participants' employment and earnings and reducing their need for public assistance benefits. Through its comprehensive data collection and rigorous experimental design, this evaluation assessed whether WONDER—the innovative SNAP E&T program Delaware designed and implemented targeting new SNAP work registrants—was effective in achieving these goals.

DSS was able to coordinate with a few service providers in the community to create industry-specific training and subsidized employment programs in construction, culinary arts, and manufacturing. It also developed a service pathway that provided job placement and job readiness assistance. Although it

exceeded its recruitment goals and enrolled many individuals in the pilot, it struggled to engage many of them, and few participated in occupational skills training and work-based learning through the industry-specific tracks. These issues led to small differences between research groups in participation in and completion of activities and, ultimately, no impact on earnings or receipt of public assistance. Because WONDER group members did not earn significantly more than control group members, the overall cost of implementing the pilot outweighed its benefits.

WONDER impacts in context of employment and training literature. The findings are consistent with the previous literature that has often found small or no labor market effects of employment and training programs for low-income populations offering similar services as WONDER. The literature suggests that programs serving low-income populations can typically engage individuals and increase their receipt of services relative to those received by the study control groups in their local areas. The differences for service receipt can be large, especially for receipt of occupational skills training and subsidized employment, translating into positive effects on the percentages of individuals who participate in training activities and the attainment of associated certificates and credentials. However, few of the studies have found that the programs lead to long-term increases in earnings or independence from public assistance (at least over the time period covered by many studies, which is typically less than four years).

There are notable exceptions, however, that show that the types of activities (such as occupational skills training in high-demand industries) offered by WONDER could be effective. As a result, it is important to understand how take-up and completion of WONDER activities, as well as challenges experienced in implementation may have contributed to the evaluation findings.

Discussion of WONDER impacts. Although WONDER did not lead to increased earnings or reduced participation in SNAP, it increased the percentages of individuals who received case management and support services relative to the control group, as well as the percentage of those who participated in employment or training-related activities. This accomplishment is notable, given the prevalence and extent of barriers WONDER group members faced—only 13 percent were employed at the time of random assignment, and nearly one-quarter of them did not have a high school diploma. The higher rates of receipt of case management and support services among WONDER group members, particularly transportation assistance, may have allowed some individuals to overcome barriers associated not only with starting employment or training-related activities, but also sustaining participation over time and ultimately completing those activities. These differences did not translate into impacts on individuals' earnings, however.

The lack of an impact may reflect that only 40 percent of WONDER group members started an employment or training-related activity, meaning nearly two-thirds of WONDER group members did not participate in a substantive activity. In addition, only about 10 percent of WONDER group members participated in industry-specific tracks. Although DSS always intended for most WONDER group members to receive services through the job placement track, both it and the providers had anticipated higher rates of participation in the other industry-specific tracks. The lower rates of engagement could have been due to several factors, including that (1) some tracks were not as mature as others and struggled to provide the promised services; (2) some individuals chose the job placement track because they needed employment immediately and were not interested in building their skills; (3) some individuals did not meet the criteria for a track (could not pass a drug test or did not meet the education-level requirements); and (4) some individuals thought the training options were limited and seemingly not well targeted to the labor market or the individual's interests. For example, some WONDER group members pointed out that the tracks were focused on more male-oriented industries and suggested that tracks focused on careers

such as banking, customer service, and medical assisting would have been more attractive to some individuals.

Whatever the reason, most WONDER group members were referred to the job placement track, where they generally did not develop new skills. Job placement specialists mostly provided support in developing resumes, preparing for job interviews, and offering job leads. These activities were similar to those received by the control group (those referred to Career TEAM, which provided existing SNAP E&T services to all control group members, primarily received job placement support as well). WONDER group members likely were receiving more intensive case management and general support in obtaining jobs, but the percentage of them becoming employed, and the wages for those jobs, may not have been much different from what was available to the control group. In fact, the control group may have had access to a wider array of jobs openings, as Career TEAM had been developing its relationships with employers for many years and had contracts with some employers, such as Amazon, whereas the job placement specialists were developing new employment leads for WONDER rather than starting from an existing employer network.

Looking across all types of activities, rates of participation and completion were only slightly higher among WONDER group members than among control group members. However, even those WONDER group members who started or completed activities did not have different impacts on outcomes compared to those who did not start or complete activities. These findings are surprising, as we expect the participation in and completion of activities to help connect individuals to meaningful employment. It is possible that some WONDER group members who participated in employment or training-related activities may have continued to face substantial barriers to employment and could have benefited from additional or more intensive case management and support services.

When considering the overall findings from the WONDER pilot, there are a few additional factors that may have contributed to the results, including the following:

- **Earnings impacts might depend on the type of activities in which individuals participated.** Earnings impacts may not be apparent for all WONDER group members, but that finding does not mean specific activities, such as occupational skills training or work-based learning, were ineffective. For example, many WONDER group members valued the skills acquired in the culinary track (Track 2) and many who completed it found employment soon after obtaining their certification. However, due to the limited number of individuals who participated in each of the substantive, industry-specific tracks, we were not able to separately assess their effectiveness. Assessing the effectiveness of services and activities separately and in combination would help to identify promising practices for improving outcomes.
- **The COVID-19 pandemic began during the 36-month follow-up survey period.** Outcomes measured in Year 3 for participants who were randomly assigned in the pilot between March 2017 and December 2017 could have been affected by the COVID-19 pandemic, which began to dramatically affect life in the United States in March 2020. However, there is no indication that the COVID-19 pandemic may have hindered our ability to identify impacts in Year 3. Earnings, employment rates, and SNAP participation rates generally were similar in Year 1 and Year 2. Although it is possible that impacts may have emerged in Year 3 in the absence of the pandemic, the pre-pandemic patterns of changes in outcomes over time do not provide much support for this conclusion. Nevertheless, the pandemic may have affected individuals' ability to participate in

employment or training-related activities in Year 3 and also may have affected outcomes differently based on their occupation, if they were employed, or the occupation they were training to enter.

- **WONDER costs were higher than the financial benefits of the program, but this primarily reflects the absence of an impact on earnings.** The net benefit was negative for WONDER due to the differential costs of WONDER group services not being offset by the benefits accrued through earnings and fringe benefits during the 36-month follow-up period. When interpreting this finding, it is also important to consider that WONDER services were new and experimental. Even though we excluded the costs of planning and recruitment in considering the cost differential between WONDER and control group services, the costs of WONDER group services were likely higher for the three years of the pilot than they would have been if administered over a longer period of time.

Despite WONDER not leading to impacts on earnings or receipt of public assistance, SNAP E&T program administrators can learn from the recruitment approach it used. DSS developed a detailed outreach and recruitment process before the pilot began, focused on meeting SNAP participants where they were in the community. Staff viewed WONDER as “a mobile program.” The OSs traveled into the community and could do their work with individuals from anywhere (staff all had laptops, Wi-Fi, and cellphones). Some OSs were rarely in the WONDER office and worked primarily in the community. Although they did reach individuals by telephone or letters, much of their recruitment effort was focused on approaching people in the community—at their homes, SNAP offices, or libraries or other local organizations—and explaining what WONDER offered. Also, DSS found success in changing its recruitment model by designating a group of OSs to focus on recruiting and enrolling, and another group on case management. This change also allowed DSS to assign staff to roles based on their strengths, placing those who liked to interact with the public in the recruiter roles and those who were more hesitant to conduct outreach or preferred to work one on one with individuals in the case manager role. Playing to staff strengths allowed staff members to excel in their designated role and led to a dramatic increase in recruitment without a change to the types of recruitment activities being performed. It also provided the case managers the time needed to focus on meeting the needs of the individuals in the program, instead of splitting their time between recruitment and case management. As more SNAP E&T program administrators and providers look for ways to grow their programs, identifying staff who have skills and a preference for marketing the program, and giving them the flexibility to meet people where they are, may improve engagement.

I. Introduction

The Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) is the primary source of nutrition assistance for many individuals and families with low incomes. SNAP provides monthly benefits to help participants obtain adequate access to food; for some program participants, it provides work supports through SNAP Employment and Training (E&T) programs to help them become economically self-sufficient. Although States are required to administer a SNAP E&T program, they have flexibility in designing and determining its services and activities. States typically offer participants assessments and support services, and a range of activities, including job search assistance or training, occupational skills training, and basic education.

Despite the importance of SNAP E&T programs, information about the most effective approaches that help SNAP participants gain skills and find work is limited. For this reason, as part of the Agricultural Act of 2014, Congress authorized and funded SNAP E&T pilots to test innovative strategies for connecting SNAP participants with jobs that would increase their incomes and reduce their need for public assistance benefits. In 2015, the U.S. Department of Agriculture’s Food and Nutrition Service (FNS) awarded grants to 10 States—California, Delaware, Georgia, Illinois, Kansas, Kentucky, Mississippi, Vermont, Virginia, and Washington.⁵ This legislation also funded a rigorous, longitudinal evaluation of these pilots.

The pilots varied in their target populations, geographic reach, and the number of individuals enrolled. The majority of individuals the pilots targeted were unemployed or underemployed and faced significant barriers to employment, such as being homeless or having a criminal history or substance use disorder. Some pilots operated statewide, whereas others operated in select areas of the State, such as counties, community college districts, or local workforce investment areas. Most pilots offered services in both rural and urban areas, but a few focused only on rural or urban communities. Each pilot enrolled 3,000 to 7,000 individuals, for a total of 44,359 individuals across the 10 pilots.

Services are resources provided or administered to individuals, such as assessments, case management, and support services.

Activities are employment or training-related events in which individuals participate, such as job search assistance training, basic education, occupational skills training, or work-based learning.

The SNAP E&T pilots generally expanded the types and amounts of services provided through States’ existing SNAP E&T programs. Services typically included (1) a comprehensive skills or clinical assessment to determine an individual’s work readiness, skills, and barriers to employment; (2) case management services that developed and supported a detailed individualized work and barrier-reduction plan; and (3) support services,⁶ such as transportation assistance, housing assistance, and training or work supplies (for example, uniforms, books, clothes, or tools) that helped reduce barriers to both engagement in the pilot and employment. The pilots also offered a range of employment and training-related activities,

⁵ SNAP in California is administered by the counties. The FNS grant was awarded to the State SNAP agency and the State oversaw the pilot, but only Fresno County conducted and primarily administered it. We refer to the Fresno pilot as “California.”

⁶ Referred to as participant reimbursements in the SNAP E&T program; however, for this report, we describe the package of services as support services.

such as independent job search, job readiness training, job search assistance, basic education, occupational skills training, and work-based learning opportunities (such as subsidized employment, work experience, internships, and work study).

The activities the pilots offered generally were more expansive than those offered under existing SNAP E&T programs, which in most States tended to focus on less intensive independent job search and job search assistance. Moreover, while the pilots were operating, existing SNAP E&T programs could not fund some of the activities and services the pilots provided, such as subsidized employment,⁷ substance use disorder counseling, and mental health counseling. Appendix Table A provides a summary of each pilot's characteristics, including the target population, pilot location, and pilot start and end dates, and Appendix B provides more detail about the SNAP E&T program and work requirement policies.

This report summarizes evaluation findings for one State—Delaware.⁸ It provides a detailed description of the pilot's design and implementation, the services individuals received, and the effectiveness of those services in improving individuals' outcomes. The report also includes findings from the cost-benefit analysis, which itemizes specific monetary costs and benefits of pilot services, and assesses whether the benefits of the services and activities offered through the pilot were large enough to justify their costs.

A. Overview of Delaware's pilot

Delaware began enrollment in its pilot, Work Opportunity Networks to Develop Employment Readiness (WONDER), statewide on February 1, 2016 (Exhibit I.1). The State is made up of just three counties: New Castle, Kent, and Sussex. Delaware is primarily urban, with more than 80 percent of the population

Exhibit I.1. Pilot locations



located in urban or suburban areas. New Castle County is the largest and most urban of the counties, and Sussex includes the most rural areas. In the year before Delaware began WONDER enrollment, the average unemployment rate in the State was 4.9 percent (Bureau of Labor Statistics 2019).

The Delaware Department of Health and Social Services, Division of Social Services (DSS), administers SNAP. Its SNAP E&T program is voluntary. At the time of the evaluation, SNAP E&T was offered to all SNAP participants in the State's three counties, but those who participated were generally able bodied adults without dependents (ABAWDs)—adults ages 18 to 49 who are not disabled and have no dependents. Individuals who were interested in the program were

referred to Career TEAM, a statewide service provider, which provided all SNAP E&T services. Because of limited funding, the program primarily focused on job placement, mainly offering job search assistance and workfare for ABAWDs. Take-up of the SNAP E&T program had traditionally been relatively low, and few participants were subsequently placed into long-term employment.

DSS developed WONDER to provide more robust services and supports than were offered under its existing SNAP E&T program. The voluntary pilot targeted new work registrants (those who had not

⁷ The Agriculture Improvement Act of 2018 (P.L. 115-334) made subsidized employment an allowable SNAP E&T component; the final rule published in January 2021 (FNS 2021) permitted States to begin offering it as an E&T component in March 2021.

⁸ Similar reports for each pilot and a summary report are available at www.fns.usda.gov/research-and-analysis.

received SNAP benefits during the six months before random assignment).⁹ DSS administered the pilot and contracted with six key providers—Eastside Rising, the Food Bank of Delaware (Food Bank), Delaware Technical Community College (DelTech), PolyTech Adult Education (PolyTech), KraftHeinz, and Career TEAM—to offer four service tracks that provided individuals in WONDER with access to industry-specific training programs, subsidized employment, job placement assistance, job readiness assistance, intensive case management, and support services (Exhibit I.2). All individuals selected one of four tracks based on location, interest, and readiness:

- Track 1: Construction (New Castle County; offered by Eastside Rising)
- Track 2: Culinary arts (New Castle and Sussex Counties serving all counties; offered by Food Bank)
- Track 3: Manufacturing (Kent County serving Kent and Sussex Counties; training offered by DelTech or PolyTech, and subsidized employment offered by KraftHeinz)
- Track 4: Job placement services (New Castle and Sussex Counties serving all counties; offered by WONDER staff and Career TEAM)

Exhibit I.2. Pilot characteristics

Characteristic	
Pilot operation period	February 2016 to December 2018
Location	Statewide (the three counties in Delaware—Kent, New Castle, and Sussex)
Grantee agency	Department of Health and Social Services, Division of Social Services
Key providers	Career TEAM Delaware Technical Community College Eastside Rising Food Bank of Delaware KraftHeinz PolyTech Adult Education
Target population	New work registrants
Number enrolled	6,814
Program type	Voluntary
Existing SNAP E&T program	Delaware offered limited services through Career TEAM, which included basic case management, job search assistance, workfare, job placement assistance, and small transportation stipends
Key WONDER services	Four tracks: three industry-specific skills training and employment tracks—construction, culinary, and manufacturing with subsidized employment at KraftHeinz—and one job placement track Intensive case management Job readiness assistance Financial literacy counseling Support services, including referrals to criminal background remediation

⁹ Work registrants are SNAP participants who have not met any Federal exemptions from SNAP work requirements and are therefore required to register for work. Federal exemptions apply to individuals who are younger than 16 or older than 59; physically or mentally unfit for employment; subject to and complying with work requirements for another program; a caretaker of a dependent child younger than 6 or an incapacitated individual; participating in a drug or alcohol treatment and rehabilitation program; employed at least 30 hours a week; or enrolled at least half time in a recognized school or training program.

In addition, individuals in any track could be referred to Advancement through Pardons and Expungements (APEX), which offered assistance in expunging criminal records, and Stand By Me, which offered financial literacy education.

From February 2016 to August 2018, Delaware enrolled 6,814 SNAP participants into the pilot. Individuals enrolled were randomly assigned in roughly equivalent numbers to a treatment group (that received enhanced services; referred to as “the WONDER group”) and a control group (that received only services available to anyone in the community). DSS continued providing services until December 2018.

B. Evaluation of SNAP E&T pilots

The evaluation included the following four components:

1. An *implementation analysis* that documented the context and operations of each pilot
2. A *participation analysis* that examined the characteristics, participation levels, and service paths of individuals in the pilots
3. An *impact analysis* that identified what works, and for whom, by examining impacts on employment and earnings; public assistance receipt; and other outcomes, such as food security, health, well-being, and housing
4. A *cost-benefit analysis* that estimated the return on each dollar invested in the pilots

The evaluation of each pilot used an experimental research design in which individuals eligible for SNAP E&T who were enrolled into the pilot were randomly assigned into treatment and control groups that were offered differing arrays of services. Random assignment ensures that any differences in outcomes between the two groups are a result of the enhanced services and not driven by the differences in the characteristics of the individuals who did and did not receive those services. Treatment group members were eligible for the enhanced set of services developed under the pilot, and control group members were eligible for services available through existing SNAP E&T programs in the State; both the treatment and control groups continued to be eligible for any other services available in their communities. Through random assignment, the treatment and control groups within a pilot were, on average, similar across a range of characteristics at the time they enrolled. They differed only in the services they subsequently were eligible to receive.

FNS published an evaluation report that presented interim findings in Delaware for each component of the evaluation (Rowe et al. 2021). The implementation and cost analyses described the planning and early implementation periods of the pilots, and the participation and impact analyses focused on the 12-month period following random assignment for those enrolled through 2017. We reported these findings for most of the individuals (5,348, or 78.5 percent) who eventually enrolled in the pilots.

The interim report described several notable findings:

- **Implementation.** Delaware successfully developed services, created partnerships, enrolled individuals within a year of receiving the grant, and generally implemented the pilot as intended. However, most of the industry-specific training programs were slow to start and served a smaller number of individuals than planned. Staff found it challenging to keep individuals engaged, and most did not start any activities, or they focused on job placement and readiness assistance instead of starting an industry-specific training program.

- **Participation.** Almost all individuals in the WONDER group met with an outreach specialist, started an assessment, or received a support service. However, less than half of the WONDER group started an employment or training-related activity. Few individuals received a credential, certification, or degree. Almost three quarters of individuals left the pilot within six months after enrollment and generally before completing services.
- **Impact.** Although the WONDER group was more likely than the control group to start and complete job search training activities and education and occupational skills training activities, WONDER generally did not lead to an increase in employment and earnings, but did lead to an increase in the likelihood of participating in SNAP within the first year after individuals enrolled.

This final evaluation report builds on the interim report to provide more conclusive evidence about the effectiveness of the pilot's services. The full effects of the enhanced services may not have materialized during the short-term, 12-month follow-up period examined in the interim report, especially for some individuals still receiving services at the 12-month point. Therefore, this report focuses on individuals' outcomes over a period of up to 36 months after random assignment, allowing an assessment of relatively longer-term impacts including, for some individuals, those measured after DSS stopped providing services in December 2018. In addition, the final evaluation report includes participation and impact analyses for all individuals who enrolled in the pilot, including those who enrolled in 2018. Finally, the implementation and cost analyses in the interim report described the planning and early implementation periods of the pilots but did not cover the full period during which the State offered services and incurred costs. This report expands the implementation analysis to include the full period during which the pilot was implemented and discusses the potential for its sustainability and replicability. It also builds on the interim cost analysis to determine the net benefit (relative to costs) of providing WONDER services.

C. Organization of this report

The remainder of this report is organized as follows:

- Chapter II presents the data and methodology used to conduct the analyses in the evaluation.
- Chapter III describes how enrollment changed over time and the characteristics of the individuals who enrolled.
- Chapter IV describes the pilot's planning and implementation, the ways in which its implementation differed from the original design, challenges experienced, and responses to these challenges. It also describes the sustainability and replicability of WONDER.
- Chapter V presents findings from the participation analysis, which describe the services that individuals in the WONDER group received.
- Chapter VI describes differences in the services received by the WONDER group and the control group.
- Chapter VII presents findings from the impact analysis, which describes the impact of WONDER on employment, earnings, benefit receipt, and other outcomes.
- Chapter VIII describes the costs of services the WONDER group received and compares the costs and benefits of those services.
- Chapter IX offers conclusions.

Appendix A describes the primary characteristics of the 10 pilots; Appendix B provides an overview of the SNAP E&T program; and Appendices C to H present detailed findings from the analyses described in Chapters V through VIII, as well as additional subgroup analyses.

II. Data and methodology

This chapter describes the sources of the data we collected for the evaluation and how we used them in the analyses. We discuss how we obtained the data and the types of information each source contained. We also explain which individuals we included in each analysis and the methods we used to address the evaluation's research objectives. A technical supplement in a separate volume describes the data and methodology in detail (Dotter et al. 2022).¹⁰

A. Data sources

We collected data to support the evaluation from a variety of sources:

1. **Baseline registration form.** After obtaining study consent, pilot intake staff collected baseline information about individuals in the pilot, including their demographic characteristics, employment histories, and receipt of public assistance. We collected baseline data for all WONDER and control group members.
2. **Implementation data.** We collected most of the implementation data during three rounds of site visits to the State, during which we collected information about implementation, challenges, and lessons learned during different periods of pilot operation:
 - Round 1 (July 2016): The planning and early implementation periods
 - Round 2 (June 2017): The first full year of pilot operations
 - Round 3 (October 2018): The last year of pilot operations, as well as planning for the end of the pilot and sustainability of its services

We also collected information during technical assistance and monitoring site visits and telephone calls throughout the planning and service delivery periods.

The site visits included in-person and telephone interviews with DSS staff, WONDER supervisors, outreach and job placement specialists, and provider staff; structured observations of service provider operations; in-depth interviews with four WONDER group members who participated in activities and received services; three focus groups that included either WONDER group members who were engaged in services or those who never engaged or stopped engaging before completing services; and targeted discussions with five employers that hired WONDER group members for unsubsidized employment.

3. **Administrative service use data.** DSS and its providers collected and shared administrative data that documented the types of training, education, and services they provided to WONDER group members and, where applicable, control group members. The administrative data analyzed for this report included information on service receipt from the date of random assignment for each individual through either the last known date of service or the end of WONDER's service period (December 2018).

¹⁰ The supplement provides additional information about the analysis approach, including details on the study design, analytic weights, approach to addressing missing data, and the impact estimation approach.

4. **Unemployment insurance wage records.** We obtained data on employment status and earnings from State unemployment insurance (UI) wage records. We obtained data for each individual in the pilot who had earnings for 8 quarters (two years) before the date of random assignment, at least 12 quarters after random assignment for individuals randomly assigned through September 2017, and at least 8 quarters after random assignment for individuals randomly assigned after September 2017. The data contained earnings amounts for each quarter, which we also used to construct indicators of quarterly employment status.
5. **SNAP administrative data.** DSS provided SNAP administrative caseload data. We used these data to construct measures of receipt of public assistance (receipt of SNAP and Temporary Assistance for Needy Families [TANF]), SNAP and TANF benefit amounts, and income. We also used these data to characterize individuals' recent history of SNAP participation. DSS provided monthly data for all individuals in the pilot from one year before random assignment through December 2020.
6. **12- and 36-month follow-up surveys.** The 12- and 36-month follow-up surveys were important sources of service receipt and outcomes data examined in this report. We conducted telephone surveys about 12 months after random assignment with individuals enrolled in the pilot through December 2017 (2,091 WONDER and control group members). We also conducted telephone surveys about 36 months after random assignment among individuals who responded to the 12-month survey (1,243 WONDER and control group members). The 12-month survey asked for information about individuals' service receipt, employment, and earnings in the 12 months after random assignment. The 36-month survey asked for similar information for the period between the 12- and 36-month surveys. These surveys also provided data for measures of household food security status, health, well-being, and housing status around the time of the interview. The survey data complemented the UI wage records and provided more detail on individuals' employment and earnings, including the number of jobs they held over time; the job start and end dates (if applicable); and characteristics of the jobs, such as hours worked per week, weekly earnings, job type, fringe benefits, and occupation.
7. **Cost data.** To estimate WONDER costs, we collected data from cost workbooks completed by DSS and providers through the end of the WONDER service period. The workbooks were the basis for calculating total costs and describing the categories of costs for the WONDER group, including those for staff, direct services, supplies and equipment, and overhead and operations. In addition, to estimate the total cost of each type of service, we administered a time-use survey to collect data on the percentage of time direct service providers spent on each type of service for WONDER group members. As described in the technical supplement, we used data from other sources to estimate the costs of control group services and the dollar values of benefits included in the cost-benefit analysis.

B. Analysis approach

The findings presented in this report are based on a comprehensive set of analyses.

1. Implementation analysis

The implementation analysis summarized and synthesized the data collected through the site visits and during technical assistance and monitoring. The analysis focused mainly on the data collected from formal interviews, but we incorporated the information from technical assistance and monitoring into

findings when appropriate. Information from the focus groups and case studies is included to provide context; however, it is important to note that we collected these data from small numbers of WONDER individuals and employers, and their experiences and opinions are not necessarily representative of the entire WONDER group or all employers.

We organized the data by topic, interviewee, and pilot office to facilitate analysis by type of respondent (for example, DSS or provider) and pilot location within the State. We developed tables and synthesized information across respondents to describe the flow of services and how they changed over time, the challenges staff faced, and lessons learned.

2. Participation analysis

The participation analysis used administrative service use data recorded by DSS and service providers to summarize engagement and participation in services following random assignment for WONDER group members (control group members were not included in this analysis). The data measured individuals' receipt of services and participation in pilot activities during the entire period in which individuals could have been engaged in services (February 2016 through December 2018). All individuals enrolled in the pilot (through August 2018) are included in the main analysis presented in the report. However, to understand service receipt patterns in the group of individuals on which the impact analysis is based, we re-estimated several participation analyses in the appendix using individuals randomly assigned through December 2017 (Appendix Table D.1).¹¹

We created timelines for each WONDER group member to describe when they started to receive services and, for those who completed services, end dates. These timelines allowed us to estimate the order in which individuals typically proceeded through activities and the length of time they spent on each one and in WONDER overall.

3. Analysis of differences in service use between WONDER and control groups

This analysis statistically compared receipt of services among WONDER and control group members over the 36 months following random assignment. Comparing the differences between WONDER and control groups in service use provided context for understanding the impacts on employment, earnings, and receipt of public assistance.

The analysis was based primarily on 12- and 36-month survey data, which were available for both WONDER and control group members randomly assigned through December 2017.¹² The 12-month survey data provided information on service receipt and participation in activities from the date of random assignment through approximately 12 months later, whereas the 36-month survey provided similar information from the date of the 12-month interview until about 36 months after random assignment. We combined these 12- and 36-month survey data to form a single longitudinal data file that describes, for each member of the WONDER and control groups, the employment-related services and education and training activities in which they participated during the 36-month period following random assignment,

¹¹ Due to the limitation of available data, the main impact analyses restricted the individuals included to those randomly assigned through December 2017 so we could have a long enough period to analyze 36-month outcomes.

¹² The analysis also used administrative data analyzed in the participation analysis when information on the use of specific services was available for both WONDER and control group members; we present some statistics in Appendix E.

including type and duration.¹³ The survey data captured any type of service received, regardless of whether it was provided through WONDER, existing SNAP E&T, or providers in the community, such as Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA) programs, community colleges, nonprofits, or other organizations.

We compared regression-adjusted averages of measures of service receipt for the WONDER and control groups. To improve the precision of the estimates, the regressions controlled for the characteristics of individuals as measured at the time of random assignment, including demographic characteristics (such as age, educational attainment, and number of children in the household) and economic characteristics (such as employment status and earnings). We weighted the observations to ensure that the differences were representative of all individuals enrolled in the pilot before the end of 2017. We constructed the weights to reflect the random assignment process, survey design, and survey nonresponse, and used t-tests to determine whether service receipt differences between the WONDER and control groups were statistically significant.

4. Analysis of impacts on employment and well-being outcomes

To estimate how WONDER affected individuals' outcomes, we compared the average outcomes of the WONDER and control groups over the 36 months following random assignment. Because WONDER and control group members' baseline characteristics on average were the same at the time of random assignment (see Chapter III and Appendix C), differences in their outcomes after random assignment can be attributed to differences in the services offered to individuals in each group.

We used three data sources to measure outcomes: (1) UI wage records, (2) SNAP administrative data, and (3) 12- and 36-month follow-up survey data. The outcomes examined included employment status, earnings, and job characteristics, such as hours worked and occupation. We measured employment and earnings by quarter and year, using the start and end dates of jobs reported in the surveys. Household food security status was measured over the 30 days before each survey period, whereas health, well-being, and housing status were generally measured at the time of each survey interview.

We estimated impacts for most outcomes for individuals randomly assigned through December 2017. However, because UI wage records were available only through September 2020, estimates of impacts on employment and earnings measured using UI wage data include only those individuals randomly assigned through September 2017.

We analyzed outcomes related to earnings and employment using both UI wage records and survey data. Findings for these parallel analyses may differ because of differences in data coverage or quality, or in the analysis samples and time periods covered in the follow-up data. For example, UI wage records are not subject to the recall error that presents a potential problem in surveys. However, UI wage records do not cover all types of jobs, exclude jobs in certain industries, do not contain information on job

¹³ The activities measured in the survey included (1) job search assistance or job search training and (2) education and occupational skills training. Job search assistance or job search training activities included those that helped individuals with resume writing, interviewing, and networking. Education and occupational skills training activities included education in the form of adult basic education or General Education Development (GED) courses, English as a second language (ESL) classes, or college courses; occupational skills training programs that prepared individuals for specific occupations; general job skills training programs that helped individuals learn widely applicable job skills and readied them for work; and work-based learning activities, such as paid or unpaid internships and apprenticeships.

characteristics, and are subject to other reporting errors.¹⁴ The omissions are nontrivial, and workers in sectors with no or partial coverage in UI wage records comprise about 10 percent of U.S. employment (Hotz and Scholz 2002; Kornfeld and Bloom 1999). Additionally, UI wage records do not cover workers who are casually employed, such as day laborers or part-time helpers, and exclude most cash-only work and work that is part of the “gig economy” (Abraham et al. 2018; Katz and Krueger 2016, 2019). Survey data also have limitations. In addition to the potential for recall error, these data were not available for everyone enrolled in the pilot because some individuals did not respond to the survey. Also, the characteristics and experiences of individuals who responded to the survey may have differed from those who did not respond.¹⁵

Further, the time periods for which data were available differed for the UI and survey data, which means that analysis samples for 36 months of follow-up were different for the two data sources. Survey data included individuals randomly assigned from February 2016 through December 2017, whereas UI wage records for WONDER included individuals randomly assigned from February 2016 through September 2017. The shorter time frame for the UI wage records reflects a typical lag in the availability of these administrative data associated with employer reporting schedules and the need for State agencies to process data after employers have reported them. Finally, we note that even though there are differences between the data sources, each should provide unbiased estimates of the impacts of WONDER on the outcomes they measure because the WONDER and control groups were balanced on individual characteristics at the time of random assignment.

With an experimental design, unbiased impact estimates are attainable from the differences between average outcomes of the WONDER and control groups. We estimated impacts on outcomes by comparing regression-adjusted averages for each research group to improve the precision of estimates and adjust for small baseline differences between groups that may have arisen by chance or because of survey nonresponse or missing administrative records data. Regressions controlled for individuals’ characteristics as measured at the time of random assignment.¹⁶ We used t-tests to determine whether there were significant differences between the WONDER and control groups that were unlikely to have occurred purely by chance.¹⁷

¹⁴ In particular, UI wage records do not cover self-employed workers, railroad employees, workers in service for relatives, most agricultural labor, some domestic service workers, and part-time employees of nonprofit organizations (U.S. Department of Labor 2014).

¹⁵ An analysis of the differences in individual characteristics of survey responders and nonresponders, and the differences between research groups, is in the technical supplement.

¹⁶ The full set of characteristics and additional information on their selection can be found in the technical supplement.

¹⁷ Analyses in this report tested for statistical significance at the 0.01, 0.05, and 0.10 levels. We used the 0.10 level because the evaluation was assessing the effectiveness of new interventions for which there was no previous evidence of effectiveness for SNAP participants. A more stringent statistical significance threshold often is used when evaluating ongoing programs for which there is an established literature on program effects based on prior studies. Using a more stringent statistical significance threshold in the current evaluation would have reduced statistical power and limited our ability to identify and highlight promising sets of services offered through the pilots. By using a 0.10 statistical significance level, the evaluation aimed to build knowledge in the field of workforce development for SNAP participants on which future SNAP E&T evaluations can expand, and eventually apply more stringent tests of effectiveness once programs and service models have been established for a longer period of time.

We calculated average outcomes for research groups by applying weights to each observation to help ensure that estimated differences between the WONDER and control groups were representative of all individuals enrolled in the pilot in the State. We constructed these weights to reflect the random assignment process and, for analyses based on the survey data, adjust for survey nonresponse bias based on observable characteristics recorded prior to random assignment.

We estimated the impact of WONDER on many outcomes and across several subgroups, performing statistical tests for each. However, the likelihood that some estimates are found statistically significant simply by chance increases with the number of estimates tested, potentially leading to the false discovery of impacts not really caused by WONDER. To help guard against this problem, known as multiple comparisons bias, we selected two primary (confirmatory) outcomes before analyzing the data: (1) earnings (based on both the UI wage records and survey data) and (2) SNAP participation in the two-year period (Years 2 and 3) after random assignment. We defined the primary outcomes over this period of available data because many WONDER group members were expected to be engaged in education and training in the first year, which could have reduced their opportunity for employment during that time. Although it is typical to examine longer-term effects of employment and training programs on outcomes by using a time period farthest from when individuals participated in activities, we did not consider Year 3 outcomes among our primary outcomes due to concerns about the adverse effects of COVID-19 on individuals' outcomes in that year. (For about 66 percent of individuals who were randomly assigned, the COVID-19 pandemic took place during their third year after random assignment [with the start of the pandemic defined by the nationwide enactment of the CARES Act on March 27, 2020].) Although WONDER's effect on employment was important to assess in the evaluation, we excluded employment from the set of primary outcomes due to our focus on the two-year period (Years 2 and 3); the rate of employment is a more suitable outcome when measuring impacts over a narrower period of time such as a month or quarter. For example, employment was included as a primary outcome for the interim evaluation of this study, which focused on the fourth quarter from random assignment only. In the final evaluation, we used the estimated impacts on employment and other outcomes, as well as for subgroups, to support findings for the primary outcomes by examining whether they fit within a pattern of similar impacts. We view these analyses as exploratory, providing policy-relevant but less rigorous evidence about the effects of WONDER. This information could be valuable for continuous program improvement and identifying potential hypotheses for more rigorous examination in the future.

5. Cost analysis

The cost-benefit analysis compares the benefits individuals enrolled in WONDER received in dollar terms through changes in earnings and public assistance with the costs of the services provided during the WONDER service period. The analysis estimates the extent to which the benefits exceeded the costs of providing services to the WONDER group compared with the benefits and costs of providing services to the control group. In this section, we present the methods used for the cost-benefit analysis.

Description of costs. For the cost-benefit analysis, we estimated three groups of costs: (1) the costs of WONDER; (2) the costs of all services provided to WONDER group members through WONDER and the community; and (3) the costs of all services provided to control group members through existing SNAP E&T and the community. For each group of costs, we estimated the total costs, costs by service type (such as case management or education), and costs per individual. The difference between the costs of all services WONDER and control group members received is the basis for the cost-benefit analysis.

Costs of WONDER. The costs of the WONDER included those for planning, recruiting, and delivering services. We based the estimates of WONDER costs on cost data provided by DSS and partners and providers with direct subcontracts through the FNS grant. These data were reported through standardized cost workbooks submitted for the planning period and on a quarterly schedule during service delivery. DSS, NCRC, Eastside Rising, and nine other partners and providers each submitted workbooks with their own cost information. They submitted workbooks for the planning period (April 2015–January 2016) and for 13 quarterly service delivery periods (February 2016–December 2018) through the end of services and closeout activities, which occurred in March 2019.

- **Total costs.** The workbooks captured data on a set of four core cost categories, or cost ingredients, including staff, direct services, supplies and equipment, and overhead and operating costs. These costs included those paid for with FNS grant funds and those paid for with funds leveraged from other sources. We used the cost ingredients to build an estimate of the total costs of WONDER by summing them across the four cost categories.¹⁸
- **Costs by service type.** In addition to the cost workbooks, a web survey collected data on the percentage of time provider staff spent on key services for WONDER group members—for example, management, assessments, and job readiness or life skills workshops (such as a job club or job readiness training). We allocated the costs of (1) staff, (2) supplies and equipment, and (3) overhead and operating costs to direct service costs using the percentage of time staff reported spending on these key direct services.
- **Costs per individual.** To estimate the costs of serving the average individual and the range of costs for serving all WONDER group members through WONDER, we used individual-level data on participation in services to attribute a cost to each service in which the individual engaged. We used administrative service use data collected by DCBS and providers on participation in WONDER services only. We used data on the unit (or per-service) cost of WONDER services to estimate the total cost of services for each individual in the administrative service use data. We then estimated the mean cost of services for an individual.

Costs of all services received by WONDER group members. In addition to estimating the costs of WONDER, we estimated the cost of *all* services that WONDER group members received from the WONDER and the community. We used the costs of all WONDER group services in the cost-benefit analysis because the benefits WONDER group members could have accrued through changes in employment and earnings were a product of all services in which they participated during the follow-up period, not just the WONDER services.

- **Total costs, costs by service type, and costs per individual.** We estimated the costs of all services WONDER group members received per individual using the same method we used to estimate the per individual costs of WONDER. We used individual-level data on participation in services to attribute a unit cost to each service in which each individual engaged and estimated the mean and range of costs per individual. We summed the individual-level estimates to get an estimated total cost of all services WONDER group members received.

¹⁸ The ingredient, or build-up, methodology used for the cost data collection and analysis has been used in similar evaluations of public workforce programs and is detailed in Levin, Henry M., and Patrick J. McEwan. *Cost-Effectiveness Analysis: Methods and Applications*. Thousand Oaks, CA: SAGE Publications, 2001.

We used the unit costs of WONDER services and individual-level participation data from the 12- and 36-month follow-up surveys to estimate the costs of all services WONDER group members received. We chose to use the survey data to estimate the cost differentials between the WONDER and control groups because, unlike the administrative service use data, the survey data were collected for both the WONDER and control groups. In addition, these data reflect all services both groups received, thus maximizing the comparability of the two sets of service costs.

Costs of all services received by control group members. Most grantees were unable to report detailed information on costs for the services received by control group members. As a result, we estimated the costs of all services control group members received using recently published data on the costs of similar services offered through the WIOA Adult and Dislocated Worker programs. Services for the control group were generally similar to or a subset of WIOA services, including case management, assessments, job clubs, job readiness training, independent job search (called resource room visits), education, occupational skills training, work-based learning, and support services. For case management and all employment and training-related activities, we used cost data from the WIA (Workforce Investment Act) Gold Standard Evaluation, which were collected using the same methodology as this evaluation and the same workbook and cost ingredients (staff, direct service, supply and equipment, and overhead and operating costs).¹⁹ For cost estimates of support services, we used 2018 FNS-583 form data on reported costs of support services in existing SNAP E&T programs. We adjusted the cost estimates to 2016 dollars to facilitate a direct comparison with WONDER group cost workbook estimates, which we also adjusted to 2016 dollars.

- **Total costs, costs by service type, and costs per individual.** We used the same method to estimate the costs of all control group services that we used to estimate the costs of all WONDER group services. We attributed the WIOA unit cost of each service to individual-level data on participation in the services control group members reported receiving through the community in the 12- and 36-month follow-up survey data. We estimated the mean and range of costs per individual and summed the individual-level estimates overall and by service type to estimate the costs of all services control group members received.

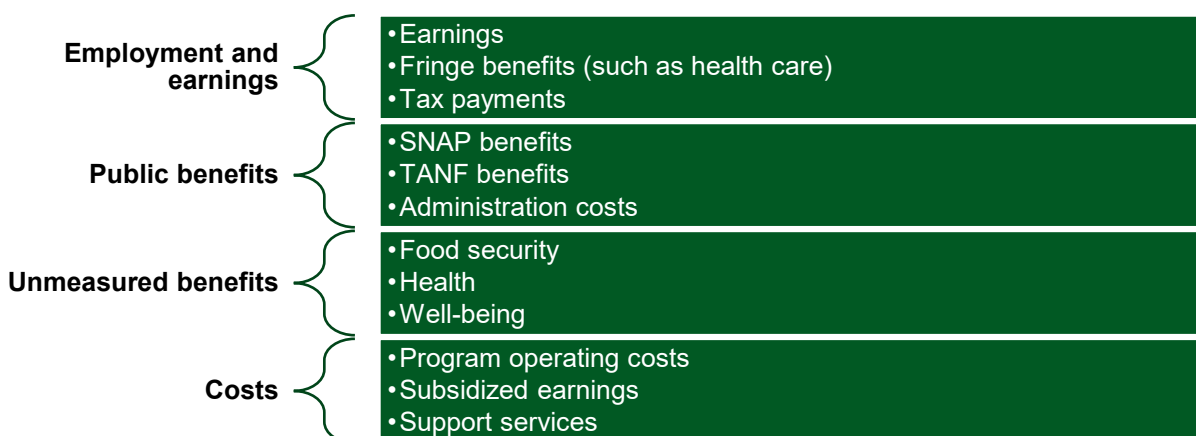
Approach to cost-benefit analysis. The cost-benefit analysis used a framework to present a comprehensive listing of WONDER group benefits and costs, relative to the control group, from three perspectives: (1) individuals enrolled in WONDER, (2) government and taxpayers, and (3) society as a whole, which represents the sum of the other two perspectives. The framework is similar to an accounting ledger, listing benefits and costs as dollar values that could be positive from one perspective or negative (a cost) from another. All costs and benefits are expressed as the difference between the WONDER group and the control group, and reflect all services those individuals received during the 36-month follow-up period.

Measures of costs and benefits. Given FNS' and Congress's goals for the SNAP E&T pilots, the primary benefits of interest were (1) increased earnings (through increased employment), which reflect individuals' increased productivity from participating in services; and (2) reduced need for public

¹⁹ The WIA Gold Standard Evaluation is the most recent national study of the Adult and Dislocated Worker program services, conducted in 2012 and with findings published in 2016. WIA was reauthorized in 2014 under the WIOA. Although WIOA made important changes to the workforce system, it did not significantly change the basic set of services offered, nor who was eligible to receive them. We refer to the WIA Gold Standard Evaluation as WIA because that was the name of the authorization at the time the data were collected.

assistance benefits, such as SNAP or TANF (Exhibit II.1). Additional benefits to government and taxpayers, as well as society, include taxes that individuals pay as part of their post-service employment and reductions in public assistance benefits. The primary costs of interest include costs for operating program services and providing subsidized earnings and support services to individuals while they are engaged in services. While operating costs and resources provided to individuals are a cost to government and taxpayers, the latter are a benefit to individuals.

Exhibit II.1. Measures of costs and benefits



Although we can attribute a dollar value to benefits such as earnings, fringe benefits like health care, or SNAP benefits, there are other benefits and costs associated with changes in employment and earnings that are more difficult to value. Changes in the rates of food insecurity and well-being (such as improved housing or health status or lower rates of depression) are important outcomes that could be associated with a change in employment and earnings. It is challenging to quantify the dollar value of these benefits reliably—for example, it is difficult to attribute a dollar value to a one-point change on the depression or food security scales used to assess the presence and extent of these issues. Outcomes such as a change in depression or food security might have more value than can be represented by a change in earnings or expenditures, given the relationship of those outcomes to overall and long-term health and well-being. In addition, there are other potential costs to individuals related to employment, such as changes in child care or transportation needs. We did not make assumptions about the values of these benefits or costs because they could influence estimates with a high degree of uncertainty. However, it is important to recognize the potential value of these costs and benefits to individuals, government and taxpayers, and society.

Costs and benefits by perspective. The findings of the cost-benefit analysis depend on the perspective from which the costs and benefits are considered. For example, an increase in tax payments because of an increase in employment and earnings is a cost to individuals but a benefit to government and taxpayers. We considered variation in the costs and benefits by perspective:



Individuals enrolled in the WONDER group could have realized benefits from increased post-program earnings and incurred costs from decreased benefit receipt. Individuals did not incur costs for services but benefitted from receiving subsidized wages and support services while receiving services.



Government and taxpayers (meaning everyone other than individuals) paid costs to fund the services and could have realized benefits from increased taxes from individuals and decreased benefit receipt and program administration costs.



Society as a whole experienced the overall effect of the costs and benefits to individuals and government and taxpayers. Costs or benefits to society were the sum of the costs and benefits to individuals and government and taxpayers. For example, if taxes were a cost to individuals and a benefit to government and taxpayers, there would be a net neutral (zero) benefit to society.

Summary measures. To estimate the net benefit, we took the difference between total benefits and costs for each perspective. A negative net benefit is a net cost from that perspective. We also estimated the return to society on each dollar invested by estimating the ratio of benefits to costs. A benefit-cost ratio greater than 1 suggests that overall benefits of all WONDER group services exceeded their costs. A benefit-cost ratio less than 1 suggests that the benefits of all WONDER group services, relative to the services WONDER group members would have received otherwise, did not outweigh their costs within the 36-month follow-up period. In other words, the costs exceeded the benefits realized.

Accounting for benefits accruing later than costs. The costs of services were incurred during the time when individuals were enrolled in services, but the benefits of those services likely did not accrue fully until a later date. We adjusted the costs and benefits in two ways to make their dollar values comparable during the baseline year of 2016, when WONDER started incurring service costs and individuals started accruing benefits.

- **Price deflator.** To account for inflation, we used the implicit gross national product price deflator from the Bureau of Economic Analysis to convert costs and benefits occurring in later years into constant 2016 dollars.
- **Discount rate:** A dollar in the baseline year was worth more than a dollar in later years because it could have been invested and earned interest. To account for this effect, we used a discount rate to convert all costs and benefits incurred in later years into constant 2016 dollars based on the 30-year Treasury bond rate on January 1, 2016 (approximately when WONDER started), which was 2.98 percent.

Sensitivity analyses. Like most cost-benefit analyses, our estimates required many assumptions. We examined the sensitivity of our findings to changes in these assumptions to assess whether our results were robust to these changes. We assessed whether our results differed for each of the following changes:

- **Alternative discount rates.** We used an alternative Treasury bond rate to assess the sensitivity of estimates to different rates of return through the discount rate. We tested the sensitivity of our findings to using alternative discount rates of 2 percent and 4 percent.
- **Alternative fringe benefit rates.** We used an alternative fringe benefit rate to assess the sensitivity of estimates to the assumption that the average fringe benefits were worth 20.9 percent of earnings (according to the Department of Labor's National Compensation Survey). We tested the sensitivity of our findings to using fringe rates that were decreased and increased by 5 percent of earnings.

- **Alternative tax rates.** We used a single marginal tax rate based on the mean earnings impact and characteristics of individuals in WONDER at enrollment. Because individuals' effective tax rates could vary based on their earnings and other deductions, we tested the sensitivity of our findings to using tax rates that were decreased and increased by 5 percent.
- **Alternative assumption that subsidized earnings are not included in UI wage record estimates of earnings.** We assumed that subsidized earnings provided to individuals engaged in work-based learning activities were reported to State UI agencies and were included in UI wage record estimates of earnings. It is possible that not all providers reported subsidized earnings to State UI agencies. We tested the sensitivity of our findings to the alternative assumption that subsidized earnings were *not* included in UI wage record estimates of earnings, but instead were a direct transfer benefitting individuals. We assumed subsidized earnings were included in 36-month survey estimates of self-reported earnings.
- **Alternative assumption that treatment group members only received services through WONDER.** The main analysis assumes that WONDER group members received additional services outside of WONDER through existing SNAP E&T and the community during the pilot period. We use data from the 12- and 36-month follow-up surveys to estimate service receipt for WONDER group members and assume any difference in estimated costs of WONDER and all services WONDER group members received based on the survey is attributed to services received outside of WONDER. Survey data are self-reported and could over or underestimate the services that WONDER group members received. This sensitivity analysis uses the alternative assumption that WONDER group members only received services through WONDER and estimates the net benefits using these alternate estimates of costs.

6. Subgroup analyses

For many of these analyses, we examined subgroups that may have been affected differently by the services offered to the WONDER group.

Subgroups defined by baseline characteristics. We analyzed a subset of service use and impacts among groups of individuals defined by their status at the time of enrollment, such as the presence of children in the household, work experience, income, age, and presence of severe barriers to employment. For all subgroup analyses, we conducted F-tests to assess research group differences in service receipt or impacts across subgroups. These findings are included in the appendices.

Subgroups defined by the timing of pilot enrollment. We analyzed a subset of service use and impacts by enrollment time period. We divided individuals enrolled through December 2017 into two groups based on when they were enrolled in the pilot—those enrolled before versus after the midway point of the pilot's full enrollment period (February 2016 to June 2017 versus July 2017 to December 2017). We meant the mid-enrollment distinction to capture differences between earlier and later cohorts, independent of how specific pilot operations changed over time. There could have been changes both within and outside of the pilot that contributed to differences in outcomes before and after the mid-enrollment point, including shifts in local labor market demand, changes in implementation policies or practices, or characteristics of individuals. We used t-tests to determine whether the magnitude of differences between WONDER and control groups varied across enrollment periods.

Subgroups defined by whether individuals started or completed activities. The main findings presented in this report do not differentiate between individuals enrolled in the pilot who participated in activities

and those who did not. These estimates provide information about impacts that can be expected for all SNAP participants who were offered the WONDER activities. However, because some individuals did not engage in WONDER or start an activity, these estimates mask how well individuals who did participate in such activities may have fared. For this reason, we conducted additional analyses to examine impacts among SNAP participants who did engage in the pilot and participate in activities.

We grouped activities into (1) job search or job search training activities (consisting mostly of independent job search) and (2) education or training activities (consisting of occupational skills training, basic education [GED class and the National Career Readiness Certificate], and work-based learning). We estimated differences in service receipt between WONDER and control groups, as well as impacts on outcomes among individuals who started a pilot activity compared with those who did not, and among those who completed a job search or job search training or education or training activity compared to those who started but did not complete an activity.

To conduct this non-experimental analysis, we used a rich set of baseline data collected from all individuals enrolled in the pilot to estimate WONDER group members' propensity for starting an activity using regression-based predictive models. These models were then used to predict control group members' propensities to start an activity had they been in the WONDER group. The resulting propensity scores were then used to define subgroups of individuals in each research group based on the percentages of the WONDER group that started an activity. We repeated this process for WONDER group members who did not start an activity, completed an employment or training activity, completed a job search or job search training activity, or started but did not complete an activity.²⁰

C. Study limitations

This evaluation of the SNAP E&T pilots used an experimental design, rigorous analysis methods, and a multifaceted longitudinal data set to assess whether the pilots were effective in connecting SNAP participants with jobs that increased their incomes and reduced their need for public assistance benefits. Because individuals were randomly assigned to WONDER and control groups, we can confidently attribute differences in outcomes between the groups to WONDER services rather than differences in the characteristics of the two groups when they enrolled in the pilot, such as differences in education, work readiness, or barriers to employment.

Nonetheless, the evaluation has several methodological limitations:

- 1. Some analyses did not include all individuals who enrolled in the pilot.** We have about three years of follow-up data for most, but not all, individuals who enrolled into the pilot. Because the reporting and data collection schedules did not always align, we had to limit some analyses to a subset of the individuals enrolled in the pilot. For example, we collected survey data only from individuals randomly assigned through December 2017. Similarly, although we collected UI wage records for all individuals who were randomly assigned, those randomly assigned later in the enrollment period contributed less than three years of data to the analysis. Thus, it is possible the analyses that included a full three years of data for all individuals who were randomly assigned might produce different findings. We assessed the sensitivity of our findings to these limitations by using the UI wage records for *all* individuals who were randomly assigned to estimate two-year impacts of the pilot on outcomes

²⁰ Additional information regarding these procedures can be found in the technical supplement which accompanies the report.

and compared these impacts to those for individuals randomly assigned through September 2017—those for whom we had three-year observation periods. Our findings were robust to this restriction, suggesting that the need to restrict the populations included in some analyses did not affect the main conclusions of the evaluation.

2. **Survey nonresponse may have led to potential bias in estimates of service receipt and outcomes.** Data collected from the 12- and 36-month follow-up surveys played an important role in understanding differences between the WONDER and control groups in receipt of services available through SNAP E&T and in the community, as well as estimating impacts on employment, earnings, and food security and well-being outcomes. With the exception of employment and earnings data in the UI wage records, much of this information is not available through other data sources. Even when it is available, there are fundamental differences between UI and survey data in the types of jobs covered and the information available to assess job quality. However, because we collected survey data from individuals 12 and 36 months after random assignment, we were unable to locate a nontrivial percentage of individuals enrolled in the pilot via telephone or residential address; thus, they could not participate in the survey. (The response rates of the 12- and 36-month surveys were 52 and 60 percent, respectively.) As a result, characteristics of individuals who responded and did not respond to the survey could have differed between WONDER and control groups. If true, this situation would bias the estimates of pilot impacts. To address this possibility, we performed a comprehensive nonresponse bias analysis, using information collected before random assignment, and constructed and applied survey weights based on these analyses to ensure that findings were representative of all individuals who enrolled in the pilot.
3. **Having incomplete control group data in the cost-benefit analysis led to the use of estimated costs of control group services.** The cost-benefit analysis compares the costs of WONDER group services with their counterfactual—those services individuals would have received in the absence of the WONDER group services. Most grantees were unable to report detailed information on costs for the services received by control group members, so we estimated those costs using the unit costs of services that were similar to those the control group received, using data from a recently published evaluation of the WIOA Adult and Dislocated Worker program. As a result, the difference in the costs of services represented in the cost-benefit analysis could be over- or underestimated.
4. **The assessment of WONDER’s effectiveness on individuals who participated in activities was not based on an experimental research design.** The subgroup analysis examining differences in pilot impacts among individuals who did and did not start or complete an activity was important for assessing pilot effectiveness among individuals who engaged in the pilot. However, an important limitation of this analysis is that it was not based on an experimental design. The experimental design in the main analysis randomly assigned individuals who enrolled in the pilot to the WONDER group or the control group. Individuals in the WONDER group chose whether to start an activity and/or complete one based on factors we could not necessarily observe. Thus, because individuals were not randomly assigned to start or complete activities, there is a risk that the factors predisposing individuals to greater participation in activities may have influenced their likelihood of gaining employment or earning higher wages, independent of their starting or completing an activity. To account for this potential bias, we used a rich set of baseline data available for all individuals enrolled in the pilot to generate weights that balanced the characteristics of WONDER group members who started or completed an activity and control group members who would have had a high propensity to start or complete one had they been in the WONDER group, thereby reducing the risk of selection bias.

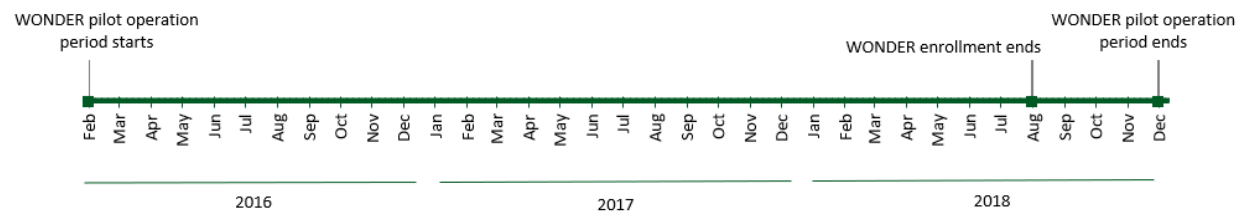
III. WONDER Enrollment and Characteristics

This chapter describes patterns of enrollment into the pilot and the local economic context in which the pilot operated. It also describes the characteristics of enrolled individuals at the time of random assignment and compares the characteristics of those who enrolled in the pilot earlier to the characteristics of those who enrolled later.

A. Patterns of enrollment

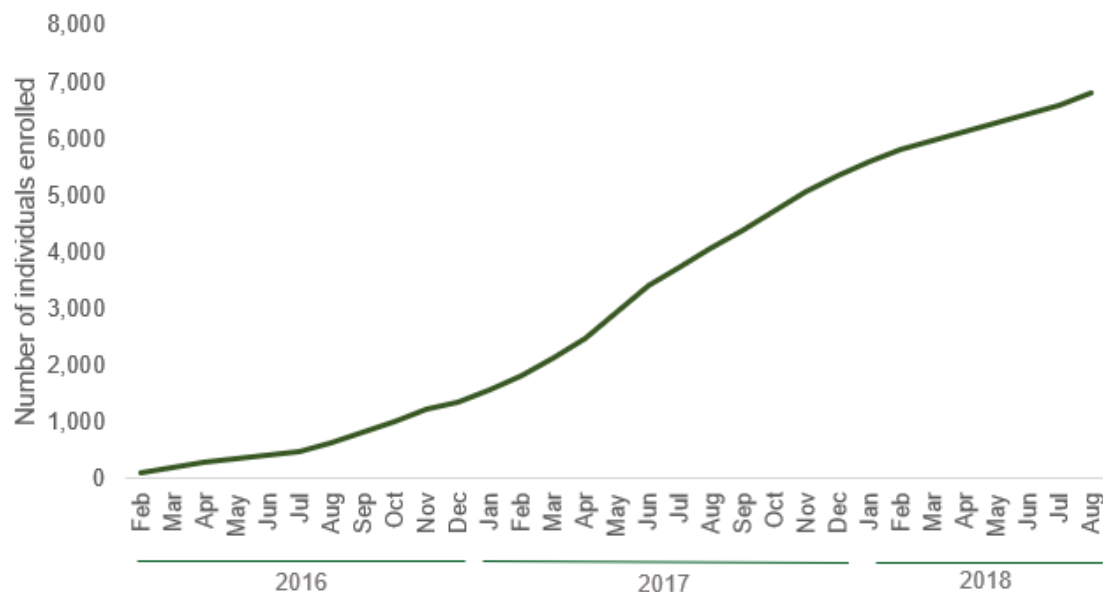
From February 2016 to August 2018, Delaware enrolled 6,814 individuals into the pilot (Exhibit III.1). SNAP participants who enrolled in the pilot were randomly assigned in roughly equivalent numbers to the WONDER group and a control group. The number of individuals enrolled steadily increased over time, averaging about 122 individuals per month in 2016, 334 individuals per month in 2017, and 181 individuals per month in 2018 (Exhibit III.2).

Exhibit III.1. Overview of pilot enrollment



Source: SNAP employment and training evaluation enrollment data (February 2016 to December 2018).

Exhibit III.2. Cumulative number of individuals enrolled in each month of the enrollment period



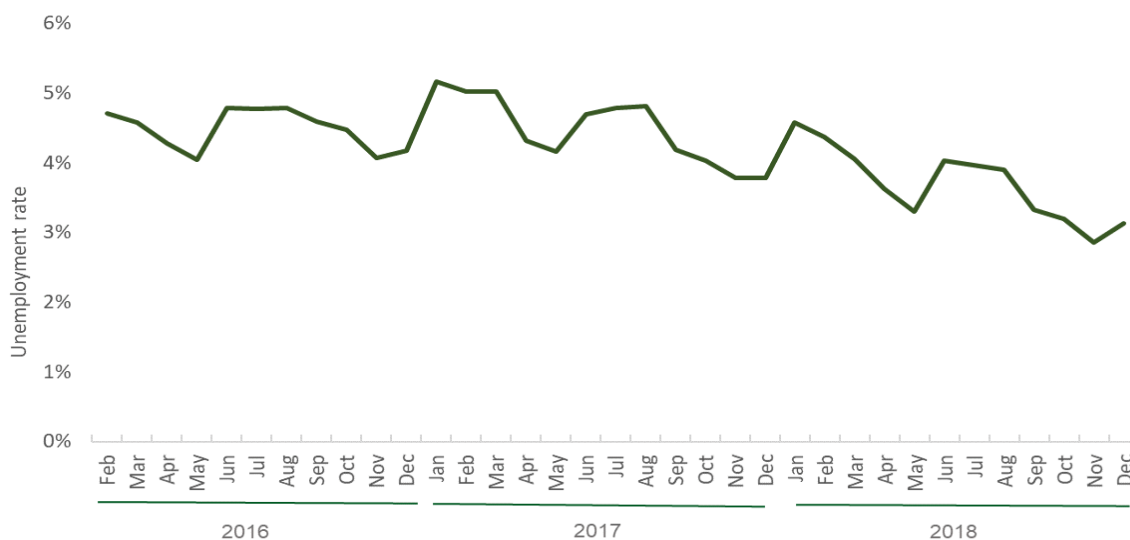
Source: SNAP employment and training evaluation enrollment data (February 2016 to August 2018).

Note: All values are numbers of individuals enrolled and include both WONDER and control group members. Individuals enrolled in the pilot include all WONDER and control group members who completed baseline enrollment registration and did not subsequently revoke their consent to participate in the evaluation of the pilot (6,795 out of the 6,814 enrolled individuals).

B. Local economic context in the WONDER pilot area over time

Delaware experienced fairly consistent unemployment rates during the pilot operation period, with average monthly unemployment fluctuating between 2.9 and 5.2 percent (Exhibit III.3). For much of the pilot operation (between February 2016 and March 2018), the average monthly unemployment rate fluctuated between 3.8 and 5.2 percent. From April 2018 until the pilot stopped offering services in December 2018, unemployment was between 2.9 and 4.0 percent.

Exhibit III.3. Local unemployment rate in the WONDER pilot area for each month of pilot operation



Source: Bureau of Labor Statistics Local Area Unemployment Statistics (February 2016 to December 2018).

Note: All values are average monthly unemployment rates across all counties in the State.

Common occupations among the general population in the region of the pilot remained fairly consistent from 2016 through 2019 (Bureau of Labor Statistics 2020). The most common occupations throughout this period were office and administrative support such as customer service representatives, administrative assistants, accounting and auditing clerks, and office clerks; sales and related occupations such as cashiers and retail salespersons; food preparation and serving related occupations such as fast food and counter workers, waiters and waitresses, and food preparation workers; healthcare practitioners and technical operations such as registered or vocational nurses, physicians, emergency medical technicians, and pharmacy technicians; and transportation and material moving occupations such as stockers, tractor-trailer truck drivers, and freight, stock, and material movers (Exhibit III.4).

Exhibit III.4. Common occupations and median wages in Delaware over time

Wage (hourly in dollars)	2016	2019
Office and Administrative Support Occupations	16.87	18.37
Sales and Related Occupations	12.00	13.23
Food Preparation and Serving Related Occupations	9.60	10.73
Healthcare Practitioners and Technical Occupations	32.29	34.46
Transportation and Material Moving Occupations	13.85	15.04

Source: Bureau of Labor Statistics

Note: Data in this table represent the most common jobs per one thousand individuals in the State of Delaware.

Among the general population, median hourly wages for these occupations in 2016 ranged from \$9.36 (sales and related occupations) to \$16.87 (office and administrative support occupations), but were significantly higher for healthcare practitioners and technical occupations (\$32.29) which typically require credentials and licenses. Wages generally grew by \$1.13 to \$1.50 per hour from 2016 to 2019, with healthcare practitioners and technical operations workers experiencing an increase of \$2.17 over this period.

C. Characteristics of enrolled individuals

The baseline registration form captured demographic, residential, and economic characteristics at the time of random assignment for individuals who enrolled in the pilot. Exhibit III.5 and Appendix Table C.1 show the key characteristics of individuals who enrolled from February 2016 to December 2017—the individuals on whom many of this report’s analyses are based.²¹ Half of these enrollees were Black; a majority were male (58 percent). The average age was 34, with 72 percent between 25 and 49 years old, and 20 percent between 18 and 24 years old. Almost one-quarter of individuals did not have a high school diploma or equivalent education.

Most individuals (85 percent) lived in a metropolitan area.²² Seven percent were married or cohabiting. Nearly three-quarters of individuals were able bodied adults without dependents, while under one-fifth lived in households with children.

Almost all individuals had been employed at some point in the past (97 percent), but only 12 percent were employed at the time of random assignment (Exhibit III.5). About 22 percent were employed consistently in the two years preceding random assignment, meaning they were employed for at least seven out of the preceding eight quarters, whereas 35 percent either were not employed or were employed for only one of the preceding eight quarters.

We also assessed individuals’ barriers to employment based on whether they completed high school and if they were employed in the 12 months before random assignment. Although 92 percent faced the fewest or moderate numbers of barriers, 8 percent faced the most barriers, defined as not being employed in the past 12 months and not completing high school or the equivalent.

Most individuals (70 percent) had participated in SNAP in the year before enrolling in the pilot. About 41 percent participated for one to six months of the year, and 29 percent participated for more than six months.

²¹ Compared to analyzing outcomes for all enrolled individuals, analyzing them for individuals who were randomly assigned through December 2017 allows for a longer period of about three years in which to observe service receipt and impacts on outcomes. As shown in Appendix Table C.1, the characteristics of this group of individuals were similar to those for all individuals who enrolled in the pilot.

²² Urbanicity is measured using the Economic Research Service’s 2010 Rural-Urban Commuting Area (RUCA) codes. Metropolitan areas are urbanized areas of 50,000 people or more or areas in which most or many commuters in the area commuted to an urbanized area.

Exhibit III.5. Baseline characteristics of individuals enrolled in the pilot

Source: SNAP employment and training evaluation baseline information registration form (February 2016 to December 2017 data).

Note: All values are percentages unless otherwise noted. Individuals enrolled in the pilot through December 2017 include all WONDER and control group members who completed baseline enrollment registration and did not subsequently revoke their consent to participate in the evaluation of the pilot (5,344 out of the 6,814 enrolled individuals).

^a Participated in SNAP reflects any SNAP participation in the year before random assignment based on SNAP administrative records. All individuals who enrolled into the pilot were required to be on SNAP at the time of random assignment.

^b Employment experience is defined using UI wage record data for the two years before random assignment. "Consistently employed" includes individuals who were employed for at least 7 out of 8 quarters preceding random assignment. "Sometimes employed" includes individuals who were employed for 2 to 6 quarters preceding random assignment. "Never employed" includes individuals who were employed for at most 1 quarter preceding random assignment.

D. Characteristics of individuals who enrolled earlier versus later

Some analyses in this report examine differences in service receipt and impacts between individuals who were enrolled earlier versus later in the enrollment period. Below we summarize differences in baseline characteristics of WONDER group members in these two groups of individuals.

Later and earlier enrollees in the WONDER group were similar on most characteristics, although later enrollees were more likely than earlier enrollees to be Black, non-Hispanic (53 versus 46 percent) and less likely to be White, non-Hispanic (36 versus 40 percent) and Hispanic (7 versus 10 percent). Later enrollees were less likely to live in a household with children (17 versus 21 percent) and to live in

metropolitan areas (84 versus 86 percent; Appendix Table C.4). Rates of SNAP participation were similar for earlier and later enrollees, with approximately 69 percent of individuals in each group participating in SNAP in the year before random assignment.

IV. Implementation Analysis

In this chapter, we describe the implementation of the WONDER pilot based on qualitative analysis of data collected through staff interviews, focus groups, and case studies with individuals in WONDER. Data presented in this chapter were collected during the planning, implementation, operational, and close-out periods, from March 2015 through October 2018 (Exhibit IV.1 provides a pilot timeline).

Exhibit IV.1. Pilot timeline

Pilot activity	Date
Grant awarded	March 2015
Enrollment began	February 2016
Enrollment ended	August 2018
Services ended	December 2018

In the following sections, we provide information about the pilot background and describe the planning and early implementation process. We then detail services and operations, including the recruitment and enrollment processes; control group services and pathways; and WONDER group services and pathways, management and collaborations, service receipt patterns, barriers among WONDER group members, staffing, and performance reporting. We also discuss the sustainability and replicability of WONDER services after the pilots ended, and summarize the key findings discussed in this chapter. Unless otherwise noted, each section describes the policies implemented, not what was planned.

A. Pilot background

DSS has administered a voluntary SNAP E&T program since 1987. It contracts with Career TEAM to provide SNAP E&T services statewide, mainly offering job search assistance and workfare for ABAWDs. DSS staff felt the program has been “highly underutilized and yields low success rates for employment placement.” According to DSS, data showed that approximately 28 percent of those referred to the program engaged with the provider, and 4 percent obtained employment. However, the agency found much higher rates of participation and employment with its TANF work program (about 30 percent obtained employment), which offered more robust services, including job-specific training opportunities, on-the-job training, and work experience.

Based on these outcomes and feedback from focus groups conducted in 2014 with SNAP frontline staff and individuals who participated in SNAP E&T, DSS leadership identified several factors that prevented the SNAP E&T program from meeting its goals. First, the program lacked wraparound support services to assist individuals in addressing basic needs that act as barriers to participating in services and to acquiring and retaining employment. Second, the program included non-individualized, “cookie-cutter” services that did not engage individuals with varying needs. Third, the program lacked education and training offerings that would prepare individuals for high-demand/higher-wage job placements and incentivize them to participate. Finally, the program did not provide effective outreach and engagement. DSS saw the pilot as an opportunity to develop a program that could address these gaps that had been identified in their SNAP E&T program by providing intensive case management, additional support services, individualized services, and education and occupational skills training in growth industries. DSS wanted to provide these services to the broadest group possible, so it offered WONDER statewide and to all new work registrants.

For the pilot, DSS continued to offer existing SNAP E&T services to the control group, but it developed four tracks (three were industry-based) with wraparound services for the WONDER group. Of the six key providers offering the track services, DSS previously had worked with the Food Bank and Career TEAM, but it sought out new relationships with Eastside Rising, DelTech, KraftHeinz, and Polytech (beginning in November 2017) to provide occupational skills training and employment in growth industries with high-wage potential. The majority of the provider costs associated with offering services was paid for with grant funds, but each organization offered some in-kind resources, including time from leadership and some materials. In addition, DSS provided funding to APEX and Stand By Me to offset staff costs and payments for APEX fees (expungement and court filing fees) associated with referrals to these services. Early in the process, DSS also contracted with the Department of Education (DOE) and Department of Labor (DOL) to accept referrals for adult basic education and workforce classes, but few individuals were referred to or participated in these services. In 2018, DSS also contracted with All Purpose Crane, Delaware Safety Council, and Eastern Lift Truck Company, which provided one-day certified training in rigging, flagging, and forklift operation. respectively.²³

In addition to expanded employment and training activities, WONDER group members received intensive case management and had access to a broader range and higher amounts of support services than were available to control group members.

B. Pilot planning and implementation

DSS led the overall planning and implementation process, with little direct involvement from service providers. Two full-time DSS staff members (a project director and a policy administrator) oversaw the planning and implementation, but they also hired a management team over the course of the planning and early implementation period. The team, which was hired through Goodwill as temporary employees but supervised by DSS, initially included a clinical supervisor, a program manager, data managers, and a contracts manager to help develop materials and systems, hire and train frontline staff, and work with providers.

Although DSS and the management team developed policies and processes for the pilot overall, each provider was responsible for developing the WONDER service tracks and flow through the tracks. These efforts were fairly segregated, as providers were not directly involved in conversations about WONDER policies and processes, and DSS was not directly involved in how the services were developed or refined. This was partly because most providers had existing services in place before the pilot began and made few changes to their overall models for WONDER. All providers needed to adjust their processes slightly to coordinate with WONDER staff, and most providers hired additional staff in anticipation of serving more individuals. However, in general, their existing models did not change significantly.

DSS encountered several challenges during the planning period. The most significant challenge was the loss of a major proposed provider, which significantly changed the initial model for WONDER. Delaware DOL was to provide services, office space, and staff for Track 4, as well as office space for WONDER staff. However, in summer 2015, DOL determined that the level of funding was not sufficient to provide

²³ DSS also contracted with Sussex Technical High Adult Education and the Hospitality School in 2018 to offer additional construction (Track 1) and hospitality (Track 2) training options. However, only two individuals completed the construction training at Sussex and none started training at the Hospitality School. These trainings are not discussed in this report. DSS also attempted to contract with additional training and employment providers in fiber optics and welding, but these did not materialize.

services and chose not to participate. Consequently, DSS had to restructure its approach to providing Track 4 services and identify alternative office space and staff. As a result, DSS led the development and delivery of Track 4 services in house. It hired and oversaw numerous temporary employees including a management team, outreach specialists (OS) to provide intensive case management and conduct recruitment and enrollment, and job placement specialists to provide job search and job placement services. Identifying and hiring qualified staff took longer than anticipated, and most of the management team were not hired until late summer or early fall 2015 and about six staff members subsequently left their positions during the planning period. These staffing challenges delayed the development of systems and training materials, and put additional burden on DSS staff, who had to focus on re-hiring. Several OSs and job placement specialists (and some management staff) were hired and trained from November 2015 to January 2016.

At the time the pilot began enrollment on February 1, 2016, Delaware had not completed all of its preparations. Specifically, DSS had not finished hiring or training all of its staff, it was still developing and finalizing some of the documentation and procedures for the frontline staff, only one of the office locations was fully operational, and it had not finished developing its data system for tracking WONDER group member service receipt. Therefore, it implemented a soft start for about five months while it resolved these issues and fully rolled out services in July 2016.

For more information about pilot planning and implementation, please see the Expanding Opportunities & Reducing Barriers to Work: Delaware Interim Report (Rowe et al. 2021).

C. Pilot services and operations

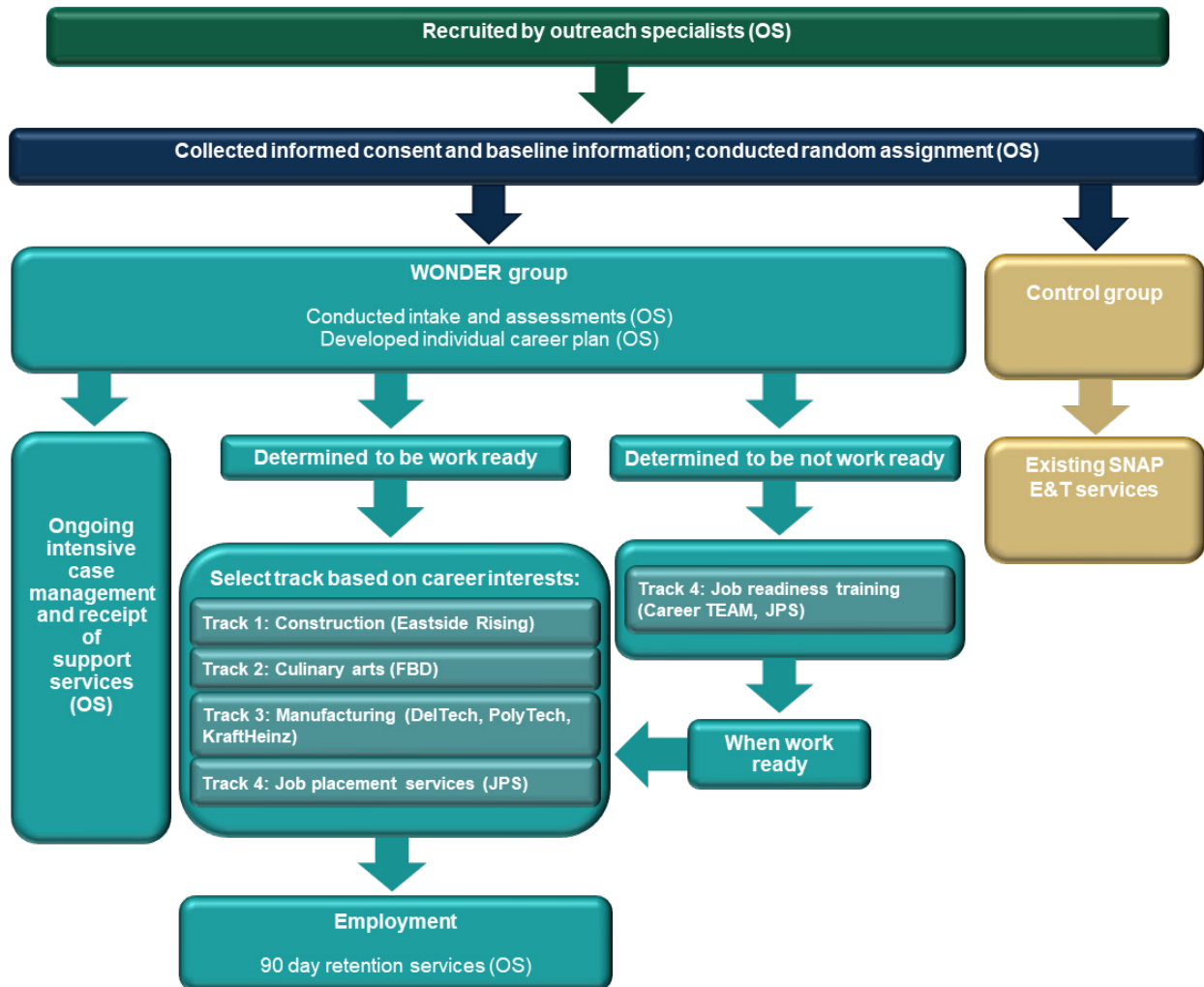
When the enrollment began statewide in 2016, DSS targeted new work registrants (work registrants who had not received SNAP benefits in the past six months). As described in Exhibit II.2, OS staff reached out to work registrants to discuss the benefits of the pilot, and those who were interested went through the enrollment process. Individuals were randomly assigned to the WONDER group or the control group. Those assigned to the control group received existing SNAP E&T program services, and those assigned to the WONDER group started their intake assessment immediately or were given an appointment for a later time. Those who were determined to be ‘work ready’ selected a service track:

- **Track 1: Construction:** Eastside Rising offered a small construction program in Wilmington for a few years that it expanded for WONDER
- **Track 2: Culinary arts:** the Food Bank offered a culinary arts program for over 20 years in New Castle and Milford
- **Track 3: Manufacturing:** DelTech and KraftHeinz (both located in Dover) developed a new partnership for WONDER. DelTech offered a self-guided, standardized national exam that resulted in a certification. A new provider, PolyTech, later developed an alternative classroom-based course that individuals could select to receive their certification. Those who were certified received a subsidized job at KraftHeinz
- **Track 4: Job placement services:** DSS developed a new set of services that support WONDER group members in preparing for and finding employment

Those who were ‘not work ready’ were placed in Track 4 to increase their basic skills. Career TEAM used their existing curricula to help individuals who were not job ready improve their math and reading

skills. (After they improved their skills, these individuals could move to another track or remain in Track 4 and received job placement services.) WONDER group members also received intensive case management and support services and received job placement support within each track.

Exhibit IV.2. Client flow and pilot pathways



1. Recruitment and enrollment

During the SNAP application process, eligibility staff identified new work registrants using a screener in the eligibility system and marked those who were not exempt as work registrants. WONDER staff had access to the eligibility system, and supervisors distributed lists of new work registrants to the OSs who recruited individuals and provided case management to WONDER group members. OSs called, sent letters, or visited the homes of work registrants to describe WONDER services and encourage participation. OSs also were located in the local SNAP offices, so eligibility workers could send SNAP participants directly to the OSs for enrollment while the individual was at the SNAP office. In 2017, staff posted flyers advertising the pilot in service centers and at community organizations, and in 2018, DSS created the “Finish Strong” campaign to enroll as many individuals as possible before enrollment ended, including developing radio and bus advertisements.

Individuals who were interested in the pilot met with an OS in person to enroll. Staff obtained consent, collected baseline information, and randomly assigned individuals to the WONDER or control group. Those assigned to the control group were referred to Career TEAM for services. Depending on their availability, those assigned to the WONDER group either began the intake process with the OS who enrolled them or set up an appointment to do this later.

Throughout 2016, enrollment lagged below monthly targets. This was due to the delay in fully launching the pilot, staff turnover, and large WONDER group caseloads that made balancing recruitment and case management difficult. In response, DSS made significant changes to its recruitment process in 2017. DSS designated a group of OSs to focus on recruiting and enrolling work registrants, and another group to focus on case management. Enrollment rates increased dramatically after this new process was fully implemented. DSS also requested to extend enrollment from February 2018 to August 2018 to ensure it had enough WONDER group members for the remaining occupational skills training classes starting in 2018. DSS met its enrollment target of 5,292 individuals in by the end of 2017, but it intended to continue recruiting new individuals, so it reverted back to its prior recruitment model (OSs conduct both enrollment and case management) in February 2018, which slowed enrollment. At the end of the enrollment period, staff had enrolled 6,814 individuals in the pilot.

2. Control group services and pathways

Career TEAM provided existing SNAP E&T program services statewide. The program is voluntary, so it generally served ABAWDs who would be time limited if they did not meet work requirements. Career TEAM received a list of new referrals each month (including the control group members and other individuals who did not enroll in the pilot) and sent a letter to each individual inviting them to an orientation that explained the available services, their responsibilities, and employment opportunities. Several orientations were scheduled each week.

After the orientation, staff held one-on-one meetings with interested individuals to conduct a general intake and assessment, and to determine which services they needed. Career TEAM offered the ‘Do What You Are’ personality inventory and the Comprehensive Adult Student Assessment System (CASAS) education level assessment to everyone it served. It also provided basic case management (employment focused), job search assistance and soft skills training, job placement assistance at a network of employers, work experience, and support services (\$20–\$24 in transportation assistance per month and clothing assistance or work-related supplies, as needed). All control group members developed a resume and uploaded it to JobLink, a statewide website administered by DOL for job seekers and employers to connect. Career TEAM staff also made referrals to other agencies if individuals had barriers that it could not resolve, such as unstable housing or mental health issues. Some individuals were referred to DOL for occupational skills training services or other assistance, but this was uncommon.

3. WONDER group services and pathways

Individuals assigned to the WONDER group engaged in an intensive intake and assessment process that included several steps. This process generally took place over multiple visits during the first month after enrollment. The OSs began by completing a one- to two-hour comprehensive assessment of the individuals’ core life functioning, covering their housing situation, household demographics, employment history, criminal background, educational background, transportation situation, mental and physical health, substance use, child care needs, and additional barriers to training or work. After completing the

core life assessment, the OSs determined whether the individuals needed any immediate supports or community referrals and addressed those before he or she left the office.

Next, individuals were referred to Career TEAM staff, who were co-located at the WONDER offices, to conduct assessments. They completed both the Do What You Are and CASAS assessments. The results determined whether an individual was work ready (placed at or above an 8th grade level on the CASAS) or not work ready (placed below an 8th grade level or needed additional soft skills training). This also guided assignment to a track, as most had minimum reading and math requirements.

OSs then used the results to inform the development of an individualized career plan that described individuals' strengths, areas needing improvement, necessary referrals (such as for housing, APEX, Stand By Me, or child care services), short- and long-term goals, and steps needed to reach those goals. Those who were determined to be work ready selected which of the four tracks they would like to begin (assuming they met the other eligibility criteria for the track). Those who were not work ready were placed into Track 4 and offered job readiness training to build basic skills. After individuals' skills improved and they tested at an 8th grade level, they could move into another track.

Three of the four tracks focused on occupational skills training for in-demand industries. Track 1 focused on pre-apprenticeship training in construction; Track 2 focused on training and work experience in culinary arts; and Track 3 focused on obtaining a manufacturing certificate followed by a 90-day subsidized placement at a local manufacturer. Track 4 focused on remedial education, soft skills, and help obtaining employment; the track also allowed individuals to seek occupational skills training in other industries, though pilot funds were not offered to pay for the cost of the training. WONDER group members could choose their preferred track, but Tracks 1, 2, and 3 had additional, specific entry criteria such as testing at a certain education level, passing a background check, or passing a drug test, and these tracks were not offered in all locations. Individuals primarily selected one of the four tracks, but they could participate in multiple tracks. For instance, some started in Track 4 to build their skills or while they waited for a class to open and then moved to another track.

Track 1: Construction. Track 1 provided construction pre-apprenticeship training through Eastside Rising. To be eligible, individuals needed to test at a 5th grade reading level and pass a drug test. Through this track, individuals first completed a two- to three-week classroom training focused on basic construction instruction and soft skills development. After completing the classroom training, individuals entered a two- to three-week field training. Initially, this hands-on training was provided by the Laborers' International Union of North America (LIUNA), which resulted in individuals obtaining a union card (membership) with Local Union 55. The track was developed to offer a minimum of 216 hours of classroom and field work that qualified as a pre-apprenticeship program. Following that training, individuals worked with an Eastside Rising job developer to enter employment or an apprenticeship. While enrolled in the track, individuals also received intensive case management provided by the Eastside Rising case manager (in addition to case management that their OS provided).

LIUNA and Eastside Rising expected that each class would have about 10 WONDER group members and that the cohort generally would complete the classroom training in one month and the fieldwork in the following month. However, referrals to Track 1 were extremely limited (one to five individuals a month) during 2016, and LIUNA could not continue to offer classes every month for so few people. Initially, LIUNA indicated it would offer field training every other month, but even then some bi-monthly classes were cancelled because fewer than five individuals were ready for training. This caused a delay in hard skills training for WONDER group members who did complete the classroom training. In late 2016,

LIUNA stopped providing training for Track 1. At that point, Eastside Rising developed an in-house, hard skills training based on a nationally credentialed curriculum (National Center for Construction Education and Research [NCCER]), but this training did not provide union membership and did not have the breadth and depth of hard skills training that LIUNA could offer. Although the new approach helped provide continuous services, it made job placement challenging because individuals lacked a union card. OSs and those participating in Track 1 reported that delays in conducting hard skills training frustrated some individuals, and they left the track before completing it. Because of the delays and concerns from those who had participated in the track previously, OSs also were reluctant to send new individuals to the track, which compounded the low referral issues.

Low referrals to Track 1 also limited Eastside Rising's resources to fully staff the track as intended, including not having resources to employ full-time mentors or a dedicated job developer (though, one was eventually hired in 2017) who could reach out to employers and develop a pipeline of jobs and apprenticeships for individuals who completed the classroom and field work.

Challenges with low referrals continued throughout the service period and several classes in 2017 and 2018 were canceled because no one or just one or two people were referred each month. Provider staff pointed out that many individuals had been convicted of a felony, making it difficult for them to find employment, particularly on State or Federal construction sites. Many also did not have identification cards, reliable transportation, or were actively dealing with substance use issues. Eastside Rising worked with DSS to improve the assessment process to ensure those it referred were likely to be successful in the track. This resulted in individuals starting the track who were better suited to it but fewer people overall. Ultimately, relatively few WONDER group members participated in Track 1, and many of them did not complete the track. Eastside Rising staff also struggled to place individuals in apprenticeships, and many of the job placements for those in Track 1 were not in the construction field.

One-day construction-related training. From June to December 2018, WONDER offered several one-day courses in both the New Castle and Milford areas that provided certification in rigging, flagging, or forklift operation. These construction-related trainings were offered to anyone in WONDER and were provided by three separate training providers.

- All Purpose Crane, based in California, offered classroom-based rigging and signal training. The four to six hour training was followed by a certification exam.
- The Delaware Safety Council offered flagging training. It typically was a four hour training that incorporated classroom instruction and video examples. The exam was both written and practical. Individuals were offered two accreditation exams—one for conducting flagging in Delaware and one for Maryland.
- Eastern Lift Truck Company offered a forklift operator training. The six to eight hour training included instruction and hands-on training. Those who passed the course received a certification.

Track 2: Culinary arts. The Food Bank provided culinary arts training to WONDER group members who tested at or above an 8th grade reading and math level, passed a drug test, and had no violent or sexual criminal history. The Food Bank offered a class in both New Castle County and in Sussex County every 15 weeks. The 12-week training incorporated classroom training and hands-on training in an on-site kitchen each day. Individuals attended training from 9:00 a.m. to 4:00 p.m. Monday through Friday for the 12-week period. The training included basic and advanced cooking skills (knife skills, developing sauces, cooking meats, baking, interpreting and developing recipes); kitchen roles (commercial kitchen functions, inventorying, pricing and budgeting, developing front-of-the-house skills); and food safety.

The curriculum also included training in life skills and soft skills, which focused on anger management, industry-relevant reading and math, time management, interviewing, computer training, and ethics. Toward the end of the training period, individuals also completed a paid two-week internship identified by the Food Bank based on each student's skill level and interests. Internships took place in various settings, including corporate cafeterias, restaurants, nursing homes, and child care facilities.

A Food Bank case manager also provided day-to-day support to those in Track 2, in addition to services provided by the OSs. Each individual who completed the track received a nationally recognized ServSafe certification, job placement support from the staff, and 25 weeks of post-graduation wraparound services that included job coaching, mentoring, and access to an alumni network, staff, and the kitchen to improve skills.

The Food Bank anticipated enrolling 10 to 15 individuals per class, but it, too, encountered lower referrals than anticipated throughout 2016. Despite the low numbers, the Food Bank did conduct classes because staff had been hired specifically for WONDER, but it determined that having only one to three people in a class was not effective for the students. As a result, after initially requiring that classes include only WONDER group members, DSS allowed the Food Bank to co-enroll other students from the community in the WONDER-only classes to help fill them. In late 2016, the number of referrals in Sussex County was closer to capacity, although the referrals in New Castle County never reached those levels. In 2017 and 2018, the number of referrals for each class were up and down, but were always closer to capacity in Sussex County and below capacity in New Castle.

An individual's experience in WONDER

This individual lived with his one child. He had started community college after high school, but had to leave after two semesters due to an accident that required several surgeries. He had consistently worked since in several restaurants or kitchens at schools and long-term care facilities.

He had been unemployed for about a week (the coffee shop where he was employed was sold) when he received a call from an OS. He was not sure how the person found him, but when he heard about the culinary training, he *"felt like it was meant to happen."* He said he was *"kind of defeated"* after losing his last job and decided to take a chance on the training: "I was looking at the bigger picture, that if I can do this I will have a career for the long run and won't need to work at [fast food]."

He was referred to the Food Bank within in a few days, and despite working in kitchens for over a decade, when the classes started he realized he knew little about "real" cooking. He said it *"felt like they were speaking another language."* It took him a lot of time to try to catch up but after hard work and valuable support from the staff, *"it was like a light switched on"* and he successfully completed the training.

A few days before graduation, he found a job at a restaurant helping with food prep. As he worked, he tried to learn from others and looked for opportunities to move up. He was able to work his way up to sauté chef (two promotions) and now earns \$4 more an hour than when he started. He is very happy with the job but also would like to keep improving.

He gave WONDER an "A+" and said, *"It really gave me confidence...At graduation I felt like I could work anywhere and take on any challenge."* He found the staff at the Food Bank and his OS very supportive. He met his OS at least once a week, where she gave him a \$10 gas card and asked him about training.

He said, *"This was the best decision I ever made, period. I am just so thankful for the opportunity. I'm really happy with how this turned out."*

Provider staff indicated they successfully placed many individuals into culinary arts-related employment, including those with high barriers to employment. WONDER group members in Track 2 who were interviewed all agreed that after they began working with the Food Bank, they had a great experience and found the occupational skills training valuable. They spoke highly of the support they received from the chefs and other Food Bank staff. After training, all found employment and indicated they were well prepared for the job.

Track 3: Manufacturing. Track 3 initially consisted of an online training provided by DelTech community college, followed by a 90-day subsidized job at a local manufacturing plant, KraftHeinz. Individuals interested in Track 3 had to pass an extensive background check and meet educational requirements (10th grade reading level and 9th grade math level). In addition, individuals could only attend DelTech if they had not been convicted of a sexual offense.

The self-directed certified production technician training at DelTech consisted of 160 hours of curriculum split into four individual certificate modules: (1) Safety, (2) Quality Practices and Measurement, (3) Manufacturing Processes and Production, and (4) Maintenance Awareness. Individuals received a certificate for completing each module, but they had to pass all four modules to receive the nationally recognized production technician certification. The online training could be completed at home or in a resource room at the DelTech campus, but there was limited staff availability for help or instruction. The training could be completed in about four to six weeks. Upon receiving the certification, individuals in the track were placed in a full-time, entry-level production position at the KraftHeinz manufacturing plant in Dover for a 90-day trial period. Individuals received \$15.00 per hour, and DSS offset the salary by paying KraftHeinz a \$2.00-per-hour subsidy up to 40 hours per week for each person during the 90-day period. If individuals successfully completed their trial period, KraftHeinz retained them as full-time employees.

Track 3 had significant challenges, resulting in only two WONDER group members starting their 90-day trial period at KraftHeinz by mid-2017. One of the most significant challenges resulted from miscommunication about background checks. DSS knew KraftHeinz required a background check but did not realize until after the pilot started that KraftHeinz required that the check be done by a specific company it used for all potential employees. DSS had to negotiate and develop a contract with the company to do background checks before anyone could be assigned to the track, which took several months. The background checks took longer than expected and delayed individuals from starting training.²⁴ After a few months, DSS revised the process with the company to expedite the reviews.

Once individuals began the training, WONDER staff realized that almost no one was completing it. After investigating, WONDER staff determined that individuals were dropping out because they found the training modules to be overly complex and generally were not passing the tests for each module. In spring 2017, KraftHeinz, DelTech, and DSS jointly revised the training to align with KraftHeinz's needs, which meant that those in the track needed to complete only two of the four modules before moving to KraftHeinz. In addition, DSS later allowed individuals to begin the production technician training while they waited for their background checks to be completed. DSS also felt that the self-directed training was

²⁴ DSS planned to conduct the background checks before individuals enrolled in the certified production technician course; however, the checks were taking several weeks (sometimes months) to complete, leaving individuals in the track unable to start training for long periods of time. The background check company indicated that background checks of WONDER group members were taking longer than anticipated, as they were more complex because of individuals' criminal histories. The company also required confirmation of high school completion and struggled to obtain high school diplomas or verification from high schools for many individuals.

not conducive to helping people finish, so it later required individuals to go to DelTech each day to focus on the training.

Despite these changes, it did not significantly improve the completion rate of training, so DSS contracted with another training provider, PolyTech, in November 2017 that used a classroom approach for manufacturing training. WONDER group members could choose either DelTech or PolyTech, but most OSs generally directed them to PolyTech. The instructor-based training lasted for nine days, Monday through Friday from 8:30 a.m. to 4:00 p.m. The training included three modules: safety practices, maintenance fundamentals, and preventative maintenance practices. It included 28 hours of classroom instruction and lab time (hands-on training), and 34 hours of online (independent) learning. There was a test for each module to obtain the certification.

PolyTech last offered a training class in August 2018 because KraftHeinz stopped accepting WONDER group members. After a company merger, KraftHeinz imposed a hiring freeze for the entire plant in May 2018, so it no longer was placing WONDER group members in subsidized employment. However, due to staff turnover and lack of communication, DSS did not learn about this until June. KraftHeinz suggested creating a waiting list for employment, but when more than 10 individuals were waiting for positions, WONDER group members, PolyTech staff, and OSs became frustrated that there was no pipeline to employment for those who completed training. Eventually, OSs stopped referring people to Track 3 because of uncertainty around hiring at KraftHeinz.

Although everyone agreed that the idea of this track was good, most WONDER group members who participated in it and the OSs thought the track needed improvement. Many of those interviewed discussed that the content of certified training did not seem to prepare them for the work at KraftHeinz and the training seemed unnecessarily complicated and difficult to complete. Some also found the PolyTech training difficult to complete because class hours were not flexible, it provided a large amount of information for individuals to absorb quickly, and it required multiple exams each day. However, most agreed that the hands-on portion of the PolyTech training was valuable and it had a “great” instructor. Many also suggested that there should have been other employers included, so when issues arose for one, people could be funneled to others.

Track 4: Job placement services. Individuals who were ineligible for or uninterested in Tracks 1 through 3 received services through Track 4, which was the largest track. Those who were deemed not work ready could enroll in ‘Boost-Up’ courses (to improve math and reading skills) and CareerAchieve (a soft skills training), offered by Career TEAM staff who were co-located at the WONDER offices. Few individuals were interested in engaging in the Boost-Up courses, but those who did could become work ready and continue in Track 4 to find employment or enter another track. Career TEAM had intended to offer the Boost-Up and CareerAchieve courses regularly, but because so few individuals participated in the courses, they were offered as needed, generally one on one.

Those who were deemed work ready worked with job placement specialists who provided job placement support and job skills building assistance (such as help with resumes, soft skills training, mock interviews, and rides to interviews). Job placement specialists also were responsible for reaching out to employers to develop job leads for individuals in Track 4. For individuals interested in education and occupational skills training that were not offered under Tracks 1 through 3, job placement specialists could make referrals. Although WONDER did not pay for education and occupational skills training under Track 4, a small number of people enrolled in short-term training, such as certifications for medical

assistants and commercial driving licenses. Job placement specialists also made referrals to adult basic education to help with General Education Development (GED) support.

In addition, job placement specialists, in coordination with OSs, followed-up with individuals who became employed for up to 90 days after starting their job. The job placement specialist would check to see how individuals were doing and if they needed any counseling or short-term supports (such as a bus pass). The job placement specialists also reached out to employers to determine if the WONDER group member was meeting expectation or could use more training or counseling in certain areas.

A few employers that worked with WONDER were interviewed and all agreed that one of the greatest advantages of working with WONDER was the ability to access a new source of qualified local candidates. They also suggested that additional training in soft skills, such as attendance, communication, and critical thinking, could help prepare individuals for working at their businesses. All of the employers discussed how helpful the job placement specialists were to them and how easy it was to work with them.

WONDER group members who were in Track 4 had mixed reactions to how useful the assistance was to them finding employment. Most found the hiring fairs and other job placement services helpful but felt most of the work involved in finding a job was placed on them. Several indicated they were never given any job leads or were just placed in front of a computer to look through job listings, without much guidance. Although several indicated they found a job, some did not and others indicated they did not receive enough assistance in finding work, which led them to leave WONDER before completing it. Most suggested that it depended on which job placement specialist you were assigned. One individual mentioned that her job placement specialist was always keeping her in mind saying, “...even when I got a job and I was no longer in, they were still sending me e-mails, [that said] ‘Hey, if you’re still looking for something else, we’re having a job fair’.” Most of those who were employed discussed that they rarely found sustainable employment after working with WONDER—many were working at fast food or other low-wage jobs that did not pay a livable wage.

Intensive case management. WONDER offered intensive case management, regardless of track, including identifying and helping individuals reduce barriers to employment. OSs were required to contact individuals at least once a week and meet face to face at least once a month. Approaches for making contact varied depending on the OS, the individual’s preferences, and the individual’s location. Common methods included telephone calls, text messages, and home visits. The key aspect of WONDER is that it is “a mobile program.” The OSs traveled to where the WONDER group members were and could do their work with individuals from anywhere (staff all have laptops, Wi-Fi, and cellphones). Some OSs were rarely in the WONDER office and worked primarily in the community.

One OS frequently described the role as “*mama, daddy, driver, psychologist*.” Individuals had a lot of barriers and needed “*a lot of hand holding*.” This often was much more than any of the OSs anticipated, and some staff were not equipped for the level of support some individuals needed. DSS and management staff recognized that they could have better served individuals if they had hired clinicians or individuals with clinical backgrounds to provide on-site mental health services that would have addressed many of the issues WONDER group members faced.

WONDER group members’ satisfaction with their OSs differed depending on their particular OS. Some described their OS as a “*superstar*” who regularly communicated with them and readily connected them with resources, such as gas cards and expungement services. Others discussed that it was difficult to get in contact with their OS—calls were not returned, the OS never reached out, or their assigned OS left and no one told them who to contact.

Support services. WONDER offered child care, transportation assistance, and other supports to reduce barriers, such as books, uniforms, tools, equipment, or background check fees for employers that required one. However, as part of the case management approach, WONDER group members were always asked if they had a way to mitigate the barrier before receiving assistance (such as getting a ride from a friend to get to training, moving in with a family member if housing was unstable, or having a parent babysit a child). OSs noted that they mostly provided bus passes or gas cards, as access to other supports were much more limited. Many OSs reported that the policies and procedures for which supports they could provide were unclear, and the approval process to get a clothing voucher or payment for a background check, for example, could take weeks or months. Because the process was often not timely, some OSs stopped requesting these supports, and others indicated they had never requested one. A few of the WONDER group members in focus groups also reported difficulty accessing support services, including transportation assistance. Most were unaware of the support services available through WONDER and suggested that when they had asked for help with specific needs, such as housing assistance or clothes to wear to a job or an interview, they generally were told that these supports were not available and did not receive referrals to supports in the community.

In July 2018, in response to the need for housing, car repairs, and more clothing assistance, DSS revised the package of available support services. It offered up to \$3,000 in housing assistance (up to three months of rent or mortgage or up to 30 nights in a hotel) and up to \$1,500 in direct payment to an auto repair shop to make a vehicle roadworthy. DSS also expanded the clothing allowance to \$350 per person. WONDER also began offering ‘interview kits’ to individuals who were actively interviewing for jobs, which included a portfolio, folders, paper, pens, a voucher for clothing, and a hygiene packet.

WONDER provided direct referrals to financial literacy coaching through Stand By Me and expungement and pardon assistance through APEX. The number of referrals to these organizations was lower than anticipated, in part because of the slow start-up of the pilot, but also because of problems with the overall referral process. For example, the referral process to Stand By Me was not initially well defined, and OSs were asked not to directly refer an individual to the coach (who may have been in the same office); instead, a manager had to approve the referral before the coach could provide services. Consequently, WONDER group members faced delays in accessing services and sometimes did not follow through on meeting the coach when the referral was approved. In addition, some staff suggested that individuals may not have understood the value of these services and therefore did not take advantage of them; this was supported by some OSs reporting that many individuals did not think financial counseling could help them if they did not have a job, so the OSs did not refer them to Stand By Me.

4. WONDER group services management, partnerships, and communication

In January 2016, DSS and the WONDER management team began conducting monthly steering committee meetings with provider leadership and frontline staff meetings with WONDER and provider staff. The meetings were generally well attended, but the steering committee meetings became more sporadic after 2016. Providers noted that turnover at the management and OS levels sometimes made it difficult for their staff to maintain communication with WONDER staff on behalf of those in their tracks. In 2017, DSS reorganized the management team to better distribute work and to improve coordination with staff and providers. Members of the management team began holding weekly meetings with staff from Eastside Rising and the Food Bank to discuss service-related issues, including issues with individuals in the tracks, referrals to the tracks, and messaging for the tracks. The management team also began to monitor providers’ performance more actively. It more thoroughly reviewed the data submitted by providers and conducted unannounced visits to their locations to monitor service provision to

WONDER group members. According to the providers, increased coordination and communication with WONDER management was helpful, but some noted that the lines of communication could still be improved through closer coordination with the OSs. Because of these concerns and a high level of turnover among the OSs (discussed in Section C.6), in 2018, the management team assigned each track provider an OS as the primary point of contact. The designated OS was tasked with overseeing the assignment of individuals to the track and sharing information between OSs and provider staff, thereby eliminating the need for providers to work with multiple OSs and ensuring that providers knew whom to contact if an issue arose. Everyone agreed that this helped to identify clear lines of communication and better service individuals in the tracks.

DSS, management team, and provider staff agreed that if they had established strong communication channels early on, coordinating and communicating during the pilot period would have been easier. Similarly, many service delivery challenges that WONDER and provider staff encountered were the result of changing policies and procedures after the pilot started. Some of these changes were to be expected with the development of a new program, but hiring a management team earlier in the planning phase would have provided more time and capacity to finalize and communicate policies and procedures before enrollment began. In addition, DSS and the management team recognized that many policies and procedures were communicated verbally, which increased the likelihood that they could be misinterpreted, forgotten, or not circulated to everyone. Consequently, DSS began providing both verbal and written guidance toward the end of 2016.

Because strong partnerships were not developed early between DSS and the providers, when the pilot began there was a lot of miscommunication, lack of mutual understanding, and mistrust. This relationship frequently affected the delivery of services, as there were not open conversations about why referrals were low, if they would increase, or how they all could work together to improve the situation. Providers often were making decisions without full information and were relatively siloed from DSS. The Food Bank, which was a more mature program—having operated for many years—was better positioned to make adjustments to their procedures to align with pilot requirements and develop options for keeping training classes on schedule, such as co-enrolling classes. However, the other providers that were still developing their programs were not as able to pivot without more support and coordination from DSS. Eastside Rising's program was relatively new, and working with a new partner (DSS) and a population with substantial barriers to employment was more challenging than it anticipated. They were facing normal issues that arise when new programs are developing such as scaling up, refining services, and dealing with challenges of a hard-to-serve population, but these start-up issues were compounded by the need to comply with the pilot's policies and procedures that were not always clear. Similarly, the partnerships between KraftHeinz, DelTech, and DSS did not exist before the pilot, so there were challenges in developing and starting Track 3, most of which related to communication. DSS had little communication with KraftHeinz: calls and emails often went unanswered, which caused challenges in understanding requirements for employment. In addition, the key staff person at DelTech was unavailable for several months due to a medical emergency, which stalled progress and communication among the college, KraftHeinz, and WONDER staff. All agreed that more communication and coordination between DSS and providers during the planning period could have identified and addressed some of the issues that emerged only after enrollment began.

5. WONDER group services and participation trends

Despite the pilot starting slowly and having low enrollment in the first year, enrollment swelled in 2017 and the pilot exceeded its enrollment target. However, as described previously, the number of individuals

referred to Tracks 1, 2 and 3 were lower than anticipated, and most entered Track 4. There were several reasons for this. First, not everyone was interested in the three industry-related tracks. Second, the other tracks had a small number of slots available based on capacity of the providers (Track 1 had 400, Track 2 had 270, and Track 3 had 180), whereas Track 4 had an unlimited number of slots. Third, Track 4 did not have any eligibility criteria to enter. Finally, individuals could enter Track 4 to improve their skills and resolve barriers before moving into one of the other tracks.

WONDER staff also suggested that the availability and length of Tracks 1, 2, and 3 affected enrollment. Only Track 2 was available to individuals living in all three counties, whereas Track 1 was offered only in New Castle and Track 3 was offered to those living in Kent and Sussex. Track 2 sometimes had long wait times between classes; individuals who enrolled shortly after a class began occasionally had to wait up to three months for the next class to start. Additionally, staff suggested that although individuals may have wanted to participate in Track 2, the culinary arts training took too much time to complete (two to four months) and took too large a toll on their ability to earn needed income.

Drop-off points and exits. WONDER had several drop-off points (places in the flow of services that create obstacles or opportunities for individuals to stop participating or not move to the next step in the process) in its model. Staff generally struggled to keep individuals engaged in services, but key drop-off points were between enrollment and assessment, and right before or early in the training period. A number of individuals never showed up for or never completed their assessments after random assignment. This issue reportedly increased after DSS changed the recruitment model. Staff suggested that introducing two people into the intake process in 2017 (a recruiter who enrolled the individual and an OS who assessed and worked with the individual) created another potential drop-off point during the handoff from the recruiter to the OS. Some staff suggested that after individuals built a rapport with the recruiter, they were reluctant to be “passed off” to a new person. Also, as enrollment surged due to the new recruitment model, caseloads grew, making it difficult for OSs to serve individuals and keep them engaged in services. Providers also reported that only a portion of those referred to their track showed up for the first day of classes, and among those who started occupational skills training but dropped out, they reported that most left shortly after training began—often due to personal issues, such as substance use or the need for employment, or they were removed for not complying with rules, such as missing too many classes or causing a disturbance. Those who completed occupational skills training generally moved on to find employment and complete WONDER.

Completion rates were relatively low, as most exits were due to dropping out of the pilot or losing contact with staff. If WONDER group members explicitly told staff that they no longer wanted to participate, OSs would close the case. However, more often cases were closed because individuals did not continue to participate in services and did not respond to their OS when contacted. OSs were required to contact individuals every week for four weeks before closing a case. They also had to conduct a home visit if they could not reach the individual by telephone or email. Any individual who exited the pilot could come back and continue services at any time if they chose to re-engage.

In 2018, WONDER staff focused on trying to re-engage individuals who left before completing. Staff reached out by telephone, email, or home visits, but they often were not able to reach most individuals. Despite these efforts, few WONDER group members re-engaged in services. WONDER staff noted that many of the participants with whom they tried to re-engage were employed and did not need services or faced significant barriers that limited engagement, such as unstable housing, lack of education, substance use disorders, and mental health issues.

Participation trends. WONDER and provider staff reported that many individuals faced challenges with transportation, housing, and a criminal history. Staff indicated that WONDER group members had difficulty accessing reliable transportation; this issue was more challenging in the southern part of the State, which has some very rural areas that were two hours away from providers or employers. Buses were available in the cities (Wilmington, Dover, and Milford) but did not go to some locations where large employers were located and were not available for those working late night shifts. Generally, there were no buses outside of the cities. Staff also reported that lack of driver's licenses was a frequent barrier.

Many individuals also experienced unstable housing or had no housing when they entered services. Housing and shelters were very limited in Delaware, so the OSs had few options for individuals. During the first two years of WONDER, no direct support services were available for housing assistance, so OSs tried to work with individuals to identify friends or family who could help or to make referrals to local shelters or churches that provided emergency housing (although space was very limited and there were many restrictions to accessing assistance). In 2018 when DSS added housing assistance to WONDER, staff all agreed that it was helpful but wished it was there since the start, particularly for individuals who were homeless, as it was difficult for them to focus on occupational skills training or finding a job when they were worried about where they would sleep.

In addition, OSs and providers frequently mentioned that a number of individuals had criminal convictions for a felony, which often made finding employment or enrolling in occupational skills training a challenge. Certain tracks would not accept people with certain types of felonies, and employers had similar policies. OSs referred individuals to APEX, which could help them obtain expungements or pardons, but this process took months or even years.

Some staff and WONDER group members who were interviewed also mentioned a few additional barriers. Several reported that many individuals chose Track 4 because they needed employment immediately and they were not really interested in building their skills. Some also had a substance use disorder and were not able to pass a drug test for occupational skills training or employment, and some were resistant to go to treatment. Several staff noted that some individuals did not have the right attitude for success—they were not ready to commit to the work, needed more soft skills training, or were not prepared to leave SNAP. WONDER group members who were interviewed, as well as some OSs, also mentioned that the service options were limited and did not seem well targeted to the labor market or individuals' interests, which led some individuals to disengage. They pointed out that the tracks were focused on more male-oriented industries and suggested that tracks focused on careers such as banking, customer service, and medical assisting would have been more attractive to some individuals and were in high demand in Delaware. In addition, individuals in Track 4 often requested commercial driving licenses training from the job placement specialists.

6. Staffing

DSS struggled to retain WONDER staff, mainly during 2015 through 2017. Throughout the planning period and the first 18 months of WONDER, staff were leaving almost every month, creating a consistent cycle of vacancies, hiring, and training. In early 2017, DSS decided to hire more OSs and job placement specialists than it had vacancies, to ensure it would have the necessary staff as others left. By mid-2017, WONDER was close to fully staffed for the first time, but many staff had not yet been trained.

This level of turnover not only created inefficiency for management (given the time needed to interview and train new staff), it also created large caseloads for trained OSs (averaging about 50 individuals each)

and job placement specialists (80 to 100 individuals each), disruptions for individuals in WONDER who were frequently changing OSs, and low morale among WONDER staff. Providers also found the turnover to be disruptive, as they rarely were informed when an OS left and did not know whom to contact about individuals they were serving. By the end of 2017 and through mid-2018 the level of turnover slowed and caseloads became more manageable. As the pilot drew to a close, many staff were leaving for permanent employment, but caseloads were still relatively low as enrollment ended and WONDER group members were completing services or exiting.

DSS staff stressed the importance of thinking strategically about how OS and job placement specialist positions were structured. It noted that using temporary positions with limited benefits made it difficult to find and retain qualified staff. The OSs and job placement specialists also stressed that this kind of work requires people who can be flexible and adjust to frequent changes.

Most providers did not encounter much turnover; however, KraftHeinz lost several management and human resources staff during spring and summer 2018, including all of the staff who previously worked with WONDER. Most of the remaining staff were less familiar with WONDER and its goals, and not many staff were left to champion the program.

7. Performance management

DSS did not have a system that tracked existing SNAP E&T data, so staff had to develop a database to track service receipt data for WONDER group members. DSS hired staff to develop a worksheet-based data system that was developed over the course of a year. However, it was not finalized before the pilot began, which created multiple challenges for OSs and providers. Because the worksheet-based data system and documentation were not available, staff were not fully trained on data collection procedures and were tracking data inconsistently. Once the system was completed, the data managers sent WONDER staff and providers a workbook each month, which they populated and then sent back to the data managers to be consolidated into an Access database. The workbook had few data checks, did not provide for real-time access to data, and was time-consuming to use. Staff also had to spend a significant amount of time entering data for those enrolled before the system was in place, and staff quickly identified numerous limitations with the system.

Therefore, in 2017, DSS hired a firm to develop a new cloud-based management system, which simplified data tracking for WONDER staff and providers. The new system included numerous checks to ensure data quality and allowed managers to view data in real time. The database also allowed staff and managers to see individuals' statuses in the service flow, which helped staff monitor the pilot and ensure no one fell through the cracks. This was especially important given the high staff turnover rates that led managers to redistribute caseloads frequently. The system had a few standard reports, but managers were not able to tailor the reports to their needs, which was sometimes frustrating.

D. Sustainability and replicability

Staff shared their insights on how they would serve WONDER group members who were still receiving services when the pilot ended, their plans for sustaining WONDER, and how they would implement it differently if given the opportunity.

As the pilot was about to end, DSS was developing a plan to create a new component for their existing SNAP E&T program, called WONDER Works, that would incorporate some aspects of WONDER. They

planned to implement the new services in January 2019. Any WONDER group members still in services in December 2018 would move seamlessly into the new component.

DSS described that WONDER Works would serve a more expansive target population, employ an alternative partnering structure, and utilize the current WONDER database. DSS planned to hire about 15 WONDER staff members to administer WONDER Works to both SNAP and TANF participants. It was still determining what services would be provided, but staff discussed services likely would include job search assistance, intensive case management, and support payments. It would not include occupational skills training or tracks, but DSS was releasing a request for proposals to contract with providers that could offer an array of occupational skills training opportunities in the future.

If DSS or another State chose to replicate WONDER, DSS and providers suggested they would:

- Develop strong partnerships where everyone understands the SNAP E&T program policies and procedures and possibly develop a handbook for providers that clearly describes the program requirements so providers know what is expected. This will help providers align their policies to the SNAP E&T program.
- Recognize that it is not realistic to develop and start a new program in six months. A planning period that brings everyone to the table is important and takes time. Also, including a three month start-up period where staff were onboarded and trained would have helped.
- Start small and plan to effectively grow when you have the ability to grow and have realistic expectations for growth.
- Hire staff to oversee the program and hire them early before the program launches. WONDER needed a dedicated project manager to oversee the staff and providers. Also, assigning managers to each track could have addressed potential issues earlier.
- Understand the needs, barriers, and interests of the target population and design the program to meet those needs. Identify occupational skills training and employment options that best meet those who will enter the program. Consider that many SNAP participants likely will have criminal background issues or education levels that will not meet the criteria for all training opportunities, so other options will be needed for those with significant barriers.
- Focus on clear, consistent, and open communication. All staff need to be flexible and open to feedback.

E. Key implementation analysis findings

Key findings from WONDER's planning, implementation, operations, and close-out periods are summarized below.

- **Planning should include all of the key partners and providers to ensure clear understanding of the SNAP E&T and training programs, and to build relationships.** DSS staff noted that most of their planning *"focused on launching things within DSS and we tried not to burden partners until we felt confident about forms [and] processes."* However, several of the provider staff suggested they would have welcomed more early communication between the two, and they would have encouraged DSS to rely on the providers' experiences serving the population to understand the challenges that might arise. In retrospect, DSS staff also recognized that engaging more closely with providers before starting services could have helped them identify and address potential drop-off points and service

delivery issues that they were not anticipating. One provider also recommended that the planning period would have been a time to *“build a partnership.”*

- **Beginning enrollment and services before all systems and processes are in place can have a negative effect on enrollment, services, and staffing.** Beginning enrollment before all policies and procedures, data systems, coordination with providers, and WONDER staff training were complete slowed implementation and enrollment over the first six months of the pilot. The slower enrollment also affected the number of referrals to providers and required them to modify their models often by training smaller cohorts than anticipated, which did not provide for the ideal learning environment for individuals. OSs and job placement specialists discussed that their roles were not clearly defined at the start of the pilot and there was often overlap in their responsibilities and duplication of efforts. Also, the evolving policies and procedures and tracking requirements created staff dissatisfaction. In some cases, this led to staff turnover, which resulted in inconsistent service delivery.
- **Establishing clear communication among DSS, WONDER management, OS, job placement specialist, and provider staff early and continuously can improve coordination and service delivery.** Virtually every staff member discussed the communication challenges that existed across levels and organizations that frequently led to misunderstanding and mistrust. Many of the service delivery challenges that WONDER and provider staff encountered were the result of limited coordination between organizations and changing policies and procedures that were not always clearly communicated. In addition, early in the implementation period, management often communicated policies verbally to staff and providers, potentially causing them to be miscommunicated, forgotten, or not circulated to everyone. Communication improved after additional staff were added to the management team who could focus on collaborating directly and frequently with providers and WONDER staff.
- **More options for occupational skill training that meet the needs of a wider audience could increase participation in training.** Although staff and WONDER group members generally spoke highly of the training provided by Food Bank, the number of referrals were lower than anticipated and many fewer were referred to the other tracks. Most WONDER group members participated in Track 4. This could be due to several factors but two include individuals not meeting the criteria for entering training and not being interested in the three industries offered. Knowledge of the barriers and interests of the population the program plans to serve would help determine which industry-related training would be most appropriate and attract the greatest number of individuals.

V. Participation Analysis

In this chapter, we present findings on the services that WONDER group members received and the employment or training-related activities in which they chose to participate. Using the administrative service use data recorded by service providers, we examine overall engagement in WONDER, the types of activities in which individuals participated, the order in which they typically proceeded through them, and how long they spent in each type of activity. The chapter also presents details about participation in education, occupational skills training, and work-based learning activities; receipt of support services; receipt and intensity of case management services; and the timing of and reasons for exiting WONDER. In addition, to account for potential differences in the implementation and availability of services for individuals who enrolled at different times, we estimated several service receipt measures by enrollment timing to describe differences in participation between those who enrolled in the pilot earlier compared to those who enrolled later.²⁵ Appendix D contains additional data on the characteristics of those who did or did not complete WONDER activities and a discussion of service receipt among subgroups, based on characteristics at the time of random assignment, as indicated in the baseline registration form.

A. Participation in WONDER

After random assignment, WONDER group members either immediately began an intensive intake process with the OS who enrolled them or set up an appointment to do so at a later date. The intake process included multiple steps and generally took place over multiple visits during the first month after enrollment.

The OS began by completing a comprehensive assessment of each individual's core life functioning to identify and provide urgently needed supports or community referrals.

Following assessment, WONDER group members were referred to Career TEAM staff to conduct a job skills assessment. The results of the job skills assessment determined whether the individual was work ready and guided the development of an ICP. Work ready individuals selected one of four service tracks described in Chapter IV. Individuals who were not work ready were placed in Track 4 and offered skills building and soft skills assistance to help them become job ready.

After random assignment, about two-thirds of WONDER group members returned to receive services.

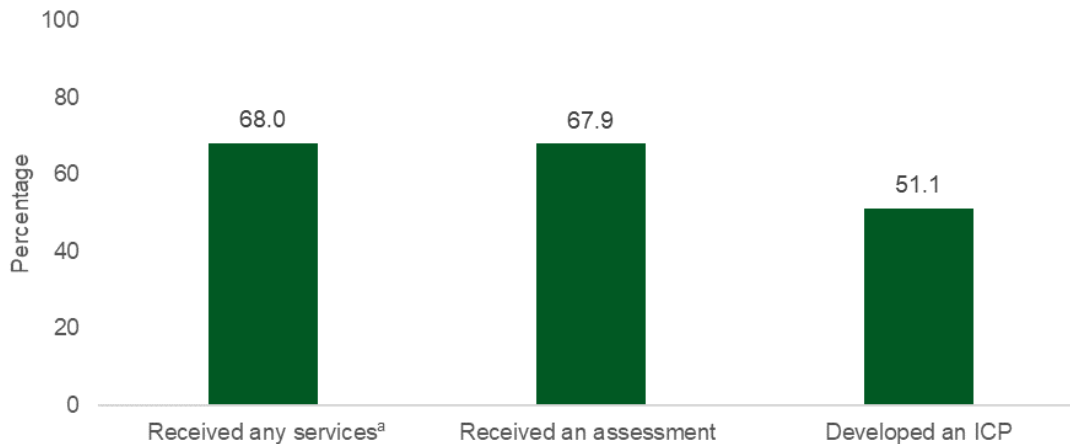
1. Overall engagement in WONDER

Only about 68 percent of WONDER group members returned after enrollment and received at least one service—that is, they started an assessment, completed their ICP, or engaged in an employment or

²⁵ The pilot extended enrollment over a 31-month period but the service period was fixed. Consequently, the service period for individuals who enrolled later was shorter than for those who enrolled earlier. For example, individuals who enrolled in 2016 could have received services for up to 35 months. In contrast, those who enrolled in 2017 could only receive services up to 24 months; those who enrolled in 2018 could only receive services for up to 12 months. This range is large across the entire pool of WONDER group members (Appendix Table D.2), but most group members (79 percent) had a potential window of at least 12 months in which to receive services, and 20 percent were enrolled early enough to allow for 24 months of services. However, the actual participation rates show that only 5 percent of WONDER group members participated in services for 12 months, and less than 1 percent participated for 24 months. Therefore, the variation in service periods does not appear to have affected actual participation in services (Appendix Table D.2).

training-related activity (Exhibit V.1).²⁶ A similar percentage of individuals started at least one of the assessments; however, only 51 percent of the WONDER group subsequently developed an ICP after completing assessments. When comparing the baseline characteristics (age, gender, race and ethnicity, education, employment status, and presence of children in the household) of individuals who did and did not receive services or an assessment, we find variation for most characteristics between the two groups. Individuals who did not receive services or an assessment were more likely to be ages 18 to 49, male, White, non-Hispanic, live in a household without children, and not have a high school diploma or equivalent than individuals who received services or an assessment (Appendix Table D.12).

Exhibit V.1. Percentage of WONDER group members who engaged in services



Source: SNAP employment and training evaluation administrative service use data.

Note: Estimates are based on data from 3,391 WONDER group members.

^a“Received any services” measures engagement in activities, including assessments, developing an ICP, and employment or training-related activities; the measure does not include orientations, case management, or support services because individuals often engaged once to meet with a case manager or get a support service.

ICP = individualized career plan

Length and timing of engagement. On average, WONDER group members who engaged in services spent about six months (168 days) in WONDER services (Appendix Table D.5). Most individuals began receiving services within the first quarter after random assignment (66 percent), with another 1 percent starting services in Quarter 2 (Appendix Table D.6). Few additional individuals first engaged after Quarter 2. The timing of those first starting assessments had a similar pattern.

2. Engagement in activities

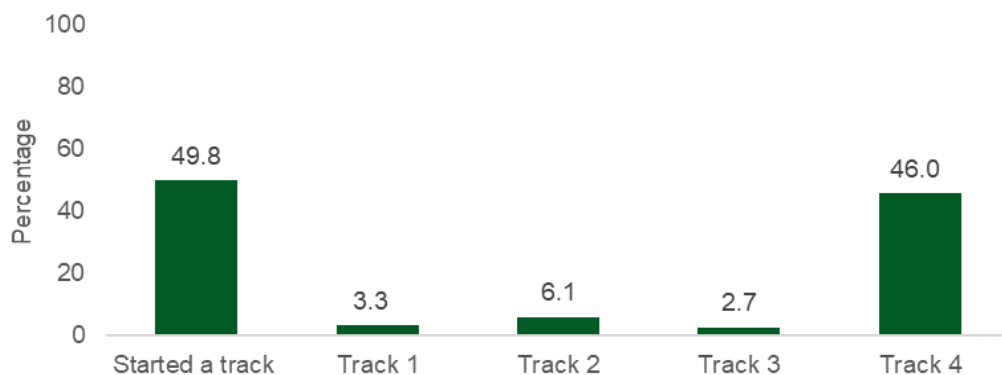
About half of all WONDER group members ultimately started at least one of the four tracks (Exhibit V.2), and 40 percent started an employment or training-related activity after they completed intake and assessments (Exhibit V.3). Because WONDER services were received through tracks, this section describes both overall participation in a track and participation in the types of activities that were offered

²⁶ The measure does not include case management and support services because individuals often engaged once to meet with an OS or get a support service but did not return for more meaningful activities and services.

across the tracks.²⁷ The activities and tracks should be viewed as separate sets of measures, as the same individuals are represented in each set.

Most of those who entered a track started Track 4 (46 percent; Exhibit V.2). Fewer individuals started Track 1 (3 percent), Track 2 (6 percent), or Track 3 (3 percent). Although DSS and providers had anticipated higher rates of participation in Tracks 1 through 3, the model always intended for most WONDER group members to receive services through Track 4.

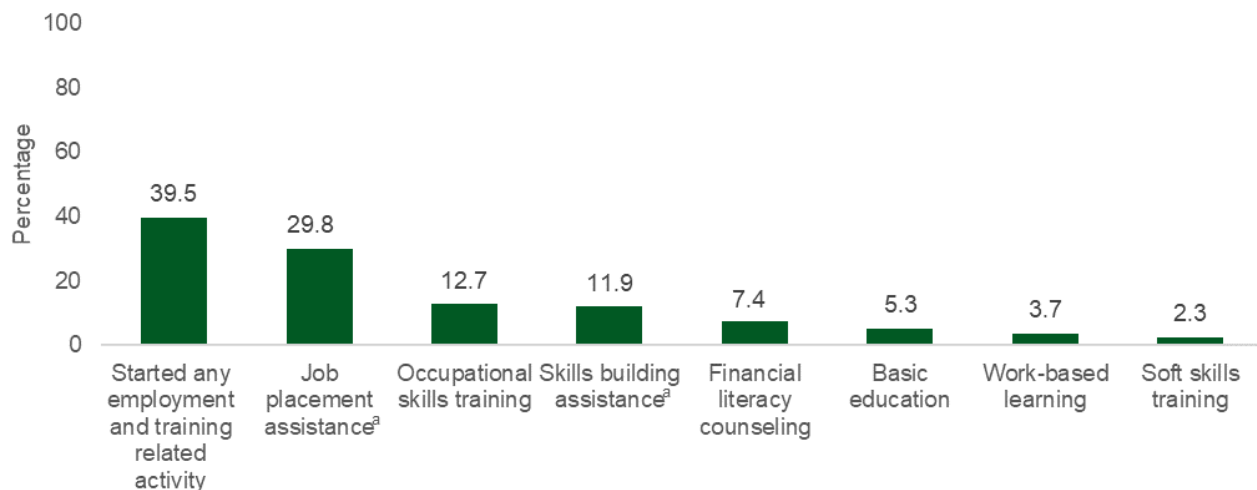
Exhibit V.2. Percentage of WONDER group members who started each track



Source: SNAP employment and training evaluation administrative service use data.

Note: Estimates are based on data from 3,391 WONDER group members. WONDER group members could have started multiple tracks.

Exhibit V.3. Percentage of WONDER group members who started an activity



Source: SNAP employment and training evaluation administrative service use data.

Note: Estimates are based on data from 3,391 WONDER group members.

^aIncludes only those participating in the activity as part of Track 4.

²⁷ For example, all tracks offered some type of occupational skills training, so anyone participating in a training under one of the four tracks would be included in the occupational skills training measure. Tracks 2 and 3 offered work-based learning (internships and subsidized employment), so individuals from those two tracks who participated in work-based learning would also be represented in the work-based learning activity.

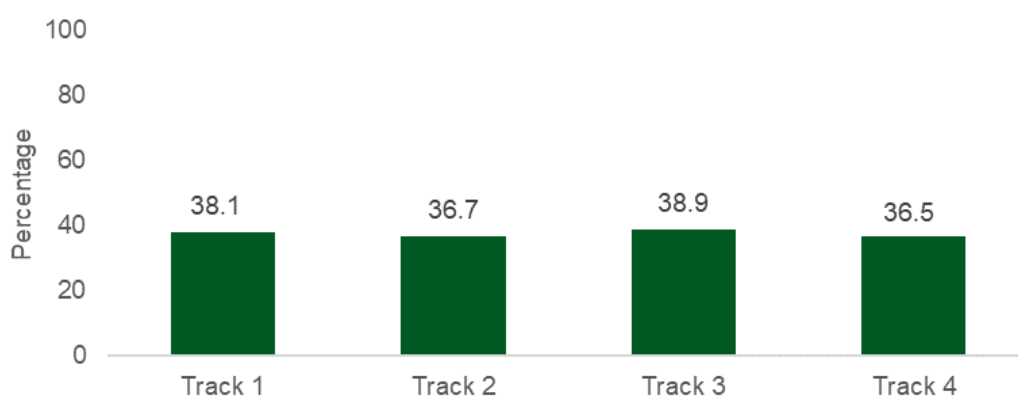
Among the activities available through the tracks, most individuals participated in job placement assistance (30 percent), occupational skills training (13 percent), and skills building assistance (12 percent; Exhibit V.3). WONDER group members participated in other activities, such as financial literacy counseling, basic education, work-based learning, and soft skills training at lower rates.

Among those who started a track, 41 percent completed it, while 68 percent of those who started activities completed at least one (Appendix D.3). The completion rates for each track were similar—37 to 39 percent (Exhibit V.4). However, completion rates by type of activity, among those who started it, varied. Most of those who started a work-based learning completed it (90 percent), whereas between 60 to 70 percent of those who started job placement assistance, basic education, occupational skills training, and soft skills training completed the activity (Exhibit V.5). Each track included several activities, so it is not surprising that WONDER group members completed a given activity at a higher rate than they completed the entire track.

Forty percent of WONDER group members participated in an activity, and most of those who started one completed it (68 percent). Work-based learning was most commonly completed among those who started.

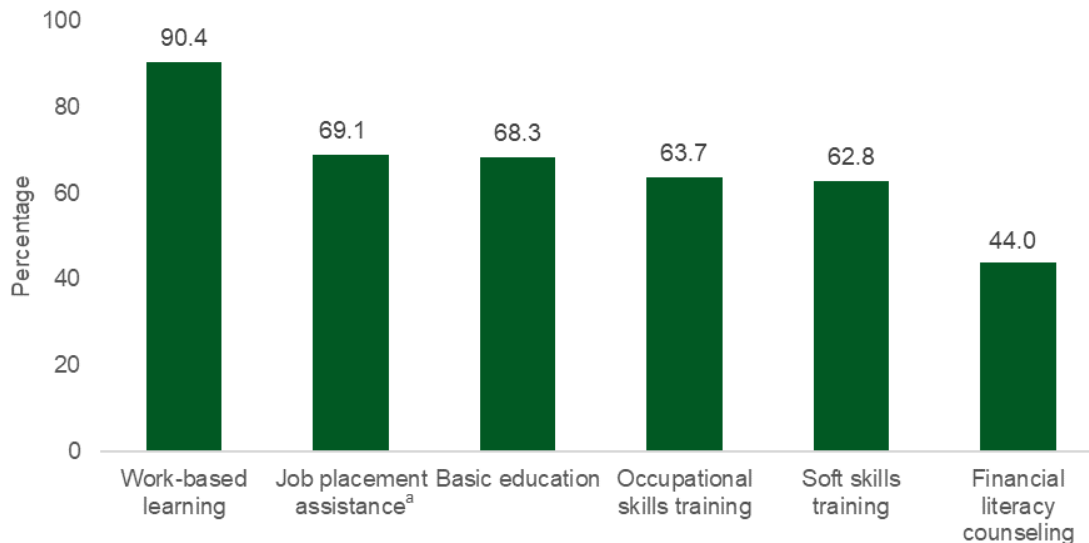
There were few differences in the characteristics of those who did and did not complete the most common activities; individuals who completed basic education were more likely than those who did not to be older than age 49 (11 percentage point difference), Black, non-Hispanic (22 percentage point difference), and have a high school diploma or equivalent (33 percentage point difference; Appendix Table D.13). In addition, those who completed job placement assistance were more likely than those who did not complete it to be Black, non-Hispanic (12 percentage point difference).

Exhibit V.4. Percentage of WONDER group members who completed a track, among those who started one



Source: SNAP employment and training evaluation administrative service use data.

Note: Estimates are based on data from 1,689 WONDER group members.

Exhibit V.5. Percentage of WONDER group members who completed an activity, among those who started one

Source: SNAP employment and training evaluation administrative service use data.

Note: Estimates are based on data from 1,339 WONDER group members. WONDER staff did not track completion rates for skills building assistance.

^aIncludes only those participating in the activity as part of Track 4.

Length and timing of engagement. On average, individuals in the WONDER group who started a track spent about four to five months (128–162 days) participating in it (Appendix Table D.5). Individuals who started an activity generally spent a shorter amount of time in specific activities—usually one to two months (33–66 days), but those who received financial literacy counseling spent about six months (182 days) in the activity, on average. Although most individuals who started an employment or training-related activity did so in the first quarter after random assignment (33 percent), 5 percent started activities in Quarters 2 and another 1 percent started in Quarter 3 (Appendix Table D.6). There was a similar trend for rates of completion, with the largest percentage of those who started an activity completing it in the first or second quarter.

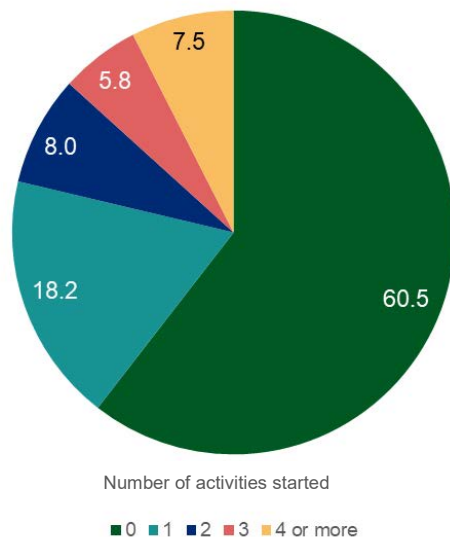
Number and order of activities. Most individuals in the WONDER group did not start any employment and training-related activities (61 percent; Exhibit V.6), but among those who started an activity, they most often started job placement assistance first (52 percent; Appendix Table D.5).²⁸ Smaller percentages of WONDER group members first started occupational skills training (18 percent), skills building assistance (13 percent), and financial literacy counseling (11 percent).

Eighteen percent of WONDER group members participated in just one activity (Exhibit V.6). Most of these participated in job placement assistance only (74 percent); 9 percent started occupational skills training only, 8 percent started financial counseling only, and 6 percent started skills building assistance only (Appendix Table D.5). Among individuals who started more than one activity, the most common combination was job placement assistance first, followed by skills building assistance, and ending with

²⁸ This activity was offered to individuals participating in Track 4.

additional job placement assistance (12 percent). Individuals who completed this sequence of activities spent, on average, 67 days in initial job placement assistance before starting skills building assistance, where they spent approximately 24 days before returning to job placement assistance. This suggests that WONDER group members invested time into searching for jobs before deciding to bolster their skills and then returned to their job search with the additional skills they obtained.

Exhibit V.6. Number of activities started by WONDER group members (percentage)



Source: SNAP employment and training evaluation administrative service use data.

Note: Estimates are based on data from 3,391 WONDER group members.

Earlier versus later enrollment. Because some services and WONDER policies changed over time, we analyzed whether there was a difference in start and completion rates of employment or training-related activities for those who were enrolled in the pilot earlier versus later. WONDER group members who enrolled later were less likely than those who enrolled earlier to start any activity (34 versus 46 percent), and less likely to complete any activity (23 versus 31 percent; Appendix Table D.4). Those who enrolled later were also less likely to start Track 1 (2 versus 5 percent) and Track 2 (4 percent versus 9 percent). Despite changes to improve access to Track 3 in 2017 and 2018, there were no significant differences in the start rates between the two groups.

B. Education, occupational skills training, and work-based learning

Among just education, occupational skills training, or work-based learning activities (excluding job placement assistance, skills building assistance, financial literacy counseling, and soft skills training), 15 percent of individuals started one of these activities, and 65 percent of those who started at least one completed it (Appendix Table D.7). Thus, only about one third of all individuals starting an employment or training-related activity participated in education, training, or work-based learning. This section describes the types of education and occupational skills training WONDER group members started and completed, as well as any degrees or certifications they earned. It also describes the types of work-based learning in which individuals participated and the average value of any subsidies employers received.

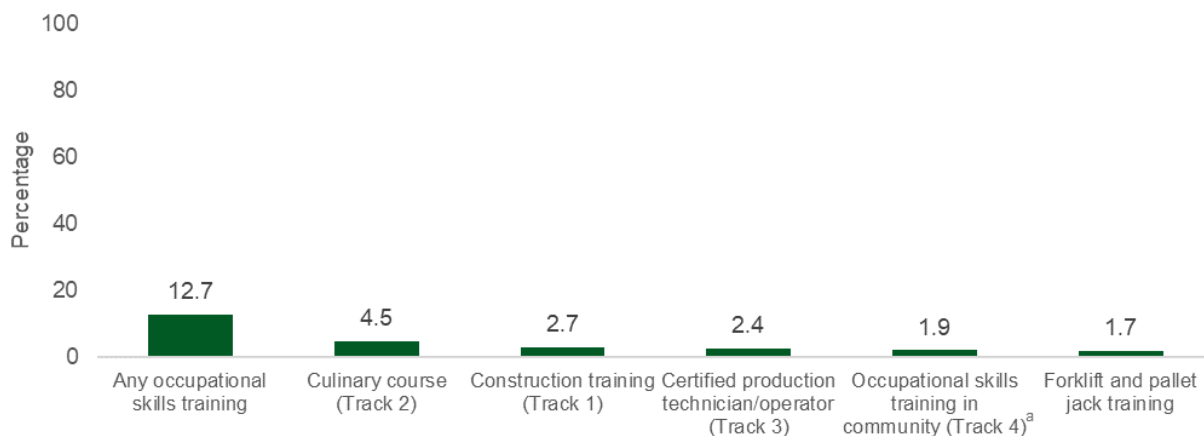
1. Education and occupational skills training

Although basic education was available to WONDER group members, few participated in education and only a small number of those started a GED class (less than 1 percent; Appendix Table D.7). None of those starting a GED class completed it or earn their GED or diploma.

Thirteen percent of WONDER group members started some type of occupational skills training (Exhibit V.7). The five most common types of training included training in culinary arts as part of Track 2 (5 percent) and construction as part of Track 1 (3 percent). Two percent of individuals started certified production technician/operator as part of Track 3, or occupational skills training available in the community under Track 4,²⁹ and forklift and pallet jack training. Among those who started each type of occupational skills training, the completion rate was highest for those starting training in flagging (100 percent), forklift and pallet jack (98 percent), construction (84 percent), certified production technician/operator (64 percent), and culinary arts (57 percent; Appendix Table D.7).

About 13 percent of WONDER group members started occupational skills training, and 7 percent earned a training credential or certification.

Exhibit V.7. Percentage of WONDER group members who started any occupational skills training and the five most common types of training



Source: SNAP employment and training evaluation administrative service use data.

Note: Estimates are based on data from 3,391 WONDER group members.

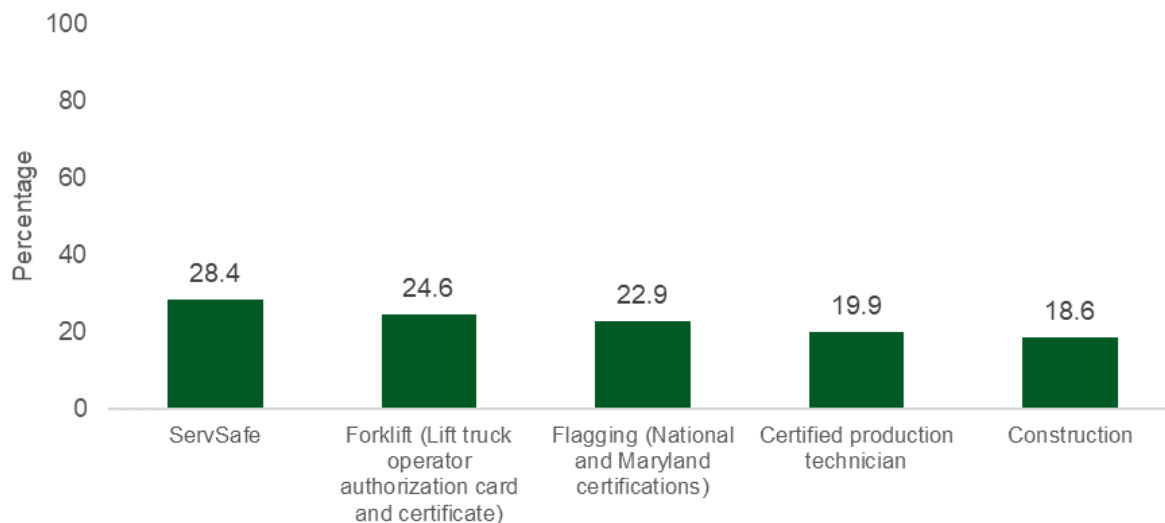
^a Individuals in Track 4 could enter occupational skills training programs offered in the community, but WONDER did not pay for these trainings. WONDER staff did not document the types of occupational skills training that individuals in Track 4 started or completed, nor were certifications documented, but most of these trainings resulted in a commercial driver's license or certified nursing assistant certification.

Most of the individuals who completed an occupational skills training program received a certification or credential (7 percent of all WONDER group members; Appendix Table D.6). Certificates were most commonly earned for food safety (ServSafe) as part of culinary arts in Track 2, fork lift operation (lift

²⁹ WONDER staff did not document the types of occupational skills training that individuals in Track 4 started or completed, but they monitored whether an individual started or completed a training program. Certifications were documented, and most of these trainings resulted in a commercial driver's license or certified nursing assistant.

truck operator authorization card and certificate), flagging (National and Maryland certifications), manufacturing (certified production technician) and construction (NCCER; Exhibit V.8). Most certifications and credentials were earned in the first and second quarters after random assignment (3 and 2 percent, respectively) a few certification were earned in each of the remaining quarters through Quarter 8 (Appendix Table D.6).

Exhibit V.8. Percentage of WONDER group members who earned the five most common credentials, among those who received a credential



Source: SNAP employment and training evaluation administrative service use data.

Note: Estimates are based on data from 237 WONDER group members.

2. Work-based learning

Four percent of WONDER group members participated in work-based learning, which were either culinary arts internships or subsidized employment at KraftHeinz (Exhibit V.9). Most of those who started work-based learning completed it (90 percent).

Most of the work-based learning opportunities were offered through the culinary arts program (71 percent). Individuals in the culinary program who had internships received an average of \$416 for the approximately two-week internship. Those who started employment at KraftHeinz as part of Track 3, 28 percent of those starting work-based learning or about 35 individuals, worked an average of 40 hours per week for 11 weeks. DSS paid KraftHeinz an average of \$879 in wage subsidies per person for the period in which individuals participated in subsidized employment.

Most work-based learning opportunities were internships in Track 2. Those in internships earned an average of \$416 for two weeks of employment.

Exhibit V.9. Percentage of WONDER group members who participated in work-based learning and average amount of subsidy received

Type of service	WONDER group
Started work-based learning (%)	3.7
Type of work-based learning, among those who started (%)	
Internship (culinary)	71.2
Subsidized employment (KraftHeinz)	28.0
Completed work-based learning (%)	3.3
Completed work-based learning, among those who started (%)	90.4
Average amount of subsidy per person, among those who started (\$)	
Internship (culinary)	416.00
Subsidized employment (KraftHeinz)	879.00
Average total number of hours per week spent in work-based learning, among those who started (hours)	
Internship (culinary)	NA
Subsidized employment (KraftHeinz)	40.3
Average number of weeks spent in work-based learning, among those who started (weeks)	
Internship (culinary)	2.0 ^a
Subsidized employment (KraftHeinz)	11.0
Sample size	3,391

Source: SNAP employment and training evaluation administrative service use data.

Note: NA indicates the grantee or provider were not able to provide the data.

^aThe data provided did not include the average time in an internship for the culinary arts track, but generally the internships were offered for two weeks. In the data, no one was paid for longer internships, but about 25 percent of the individuals were paid less than the \$450 offered for a two-week internship.

C. Support services

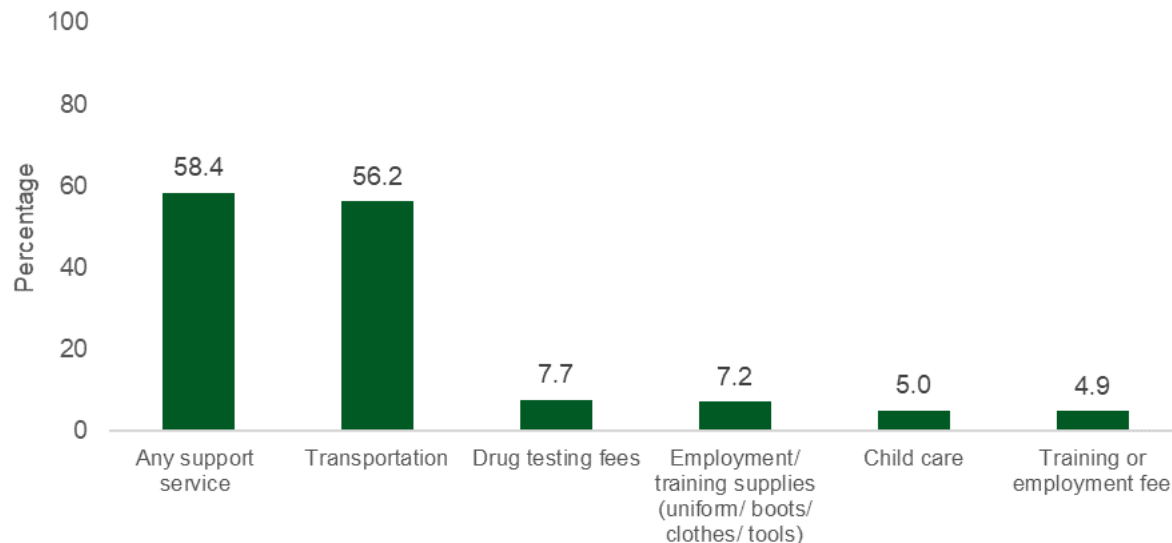
Many WONDER group members received at least one support service (58 percent; Exhibit V.10).

Transportation was the most common service provided; 56 percent of WONDER group members received it. Few individuals (less than 8 percent, each) received other types of supports such as assistance with the costs of drug testing fees for training or employment, employment or training supplies including uniforms, boots, and tools, child care, or training or employment fees. Most individuals started receiving support services within their first quarter after random assignment (54 percent), whereas 1 to 3 percent of individuals first received a support service in Quarters 2 through 4 (Appendix Table D.6).

Many WONDER group members received a support service, receiving a total of \$356, on average.

Individuals who received a support service received some type of support service in three months, on average (Appendix Table D.8).³⁰ Individuals received child care for four months, and transportation assistance and employment or training supplies for two months each. Drug testing fees, housing or auto repairs, and training or employment fees were received for an average of one month, meaning these were likely one-time payments.

Exhibit V.10. Percentage of WONDER group members who received any support services, by type



Source: SNAP employment and training evaluation administrative service use data.

Note: Estimates are based on data from 3,391 WONDER group members.

On average, WONDER group members who received support services each received a total of \$356 in support services payments (Exhibit V.11). The average total amount by each type of support service was largest for child care (\$2,869). The total average amounts for other support services were much lower than child care, ranging from \$34 (drug testing fees) to \$154 (employment or training supplies).

Exhibit V.11. Amount of support services received among those who received support services

Type of service	Average amount
Average total amount of support services paid per person (\$)	355.60
Child care	2,869.40
Employment/training supplies (uniform/boots/clothes/tools)	154.10
Transportation	67.40
Training or employment fee	61.70
Drug testing fees	33.90
Sample size	1,980

Source: SNAP employment and training evaluation administrative service use data.

Support services in relation to other measures. We assessed whether participation in WONDER and employment or training-related activities differed for those who did and did not receive a support service. On average, individuals who received a support service remained in WONDER for nearly three months (84 days) longer than those who did not (Appendix Table D.8). In addition, 87 percent of individuals who

³⁰ Individuals who received support services in more than one month did not necessarily receive them in consecutive months.

started an employment or training-related activity received a support service, compared with only 13 percent of individuals who did not start an activity. Most of the individuals who completed an activity received a support service (91 percent). Individuals who completed an employment or training-related activity received slightly more in support service payments than those who started but did not complete an activity (\$560 versus \$481). This difference likely reflects that those who completed an activity were in WONDER longer (resulting in more supports received).

Earlier versus later enrollment. Despite DSS offering new support services (housing and auto repairs) to WONDER group members in 2018, those who enrolled in the pilot later were less likely to receive a support service than those who enrolled earlier (54 percent versus 65 percent; Appendix Table D.4).

D. Case management

The WONDER model was designed to provide intensive case management by assigning an OS to each individual enrolled in the WONDER group. OSs were required to contact individuals at least once a week and meet face to face at least once a month. Those participating in Tracks 1 and 2 received additional case management from track-specific case managers, and those in Track 4 received employment support from job placement specialists. The data show that virtually all WONDER group members were in contact with their case manager, and they had an average of 36 separate contacts while in services (Exhibit V.12). This was equivalent to about eight contacts per month. The average number of contacts among those with contact in each quarter were generally consistent over time (ranging from 16 to 26 contacts each quarter; Appendix Table D.6). On average, across individuals with contacts, WONDER group members spent just over five hours (312 minutes) in contact with a case manager (Exhibit V.12). Most contacts were made by the telephone (42 percent) or electronically (26 percent), rather than in-person (18 percent).

Virtually all WONDER group members were in contact with their OS and had an average of 36 contacts while in the pilot, mostly by telephone.

Exhibit V.12. Amount and type of WONDER group members' contacts with outreach and job placement specialists

Contact	Amount and type of contact
WONDER members with any contact (%)	99.9
Average number of contacts per person (#)	35.5
Average number of contacts per person, among those with a contact (#)	35.6
Average number of contacts per person per month, among those with a contact (#)	8.1
Average total time for case management contact, among those with a contact (minutes) ^a	312.4
Among contacts, type of contact (%)	
In person	18.2
Telephone	42.1
Electronic (email, text, social media)	25.5
Mailed documents	14.0
Sample size	3,391

Source: SNAP employment and training evaluation administrative service use data.

Note: Data in this table represent all contacts that case managers documented between themselves and individuals in WONDER. Some of these included indirect communications (such as mailing documents to an individual), but even these contacts likely provided a needed service that helped the individual. We excluded some contacts, such as leaving a phone message or sending mass mailings, where applicable.

^aThe number of minutes represents the total amount of time each individual was in contact with an OS or job placement specialist among all contacts, averaged across all individuals who had a contact.

Earlier versus later enrollment. There was no difference in the percentage of individuals who had at least one contact with an OS among those who enrolled in the pilot later compared to those who enrolled earlier (Appendix Table D.4).

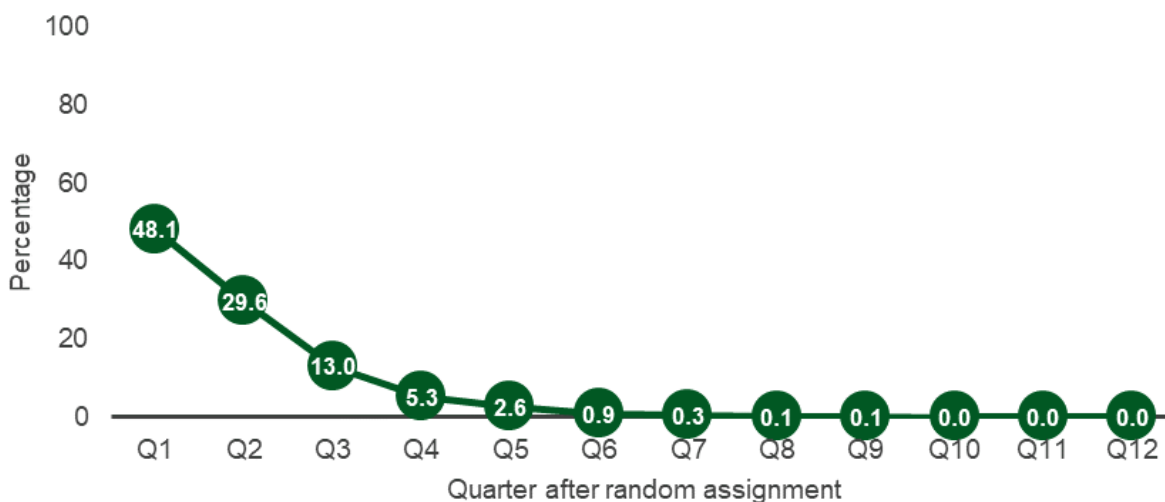
E. Extent and timing of WONDER exits

Nearly all of the WONDER group members (96 percent) exited the pilot within 12 months (four quarters) of random assignment (Exhibit V.13). All but a few of the remaining individuals exited within the second year. Almost half of the WONDER group left the pilot within their first three months and another 30 percent left between their third and sixth month. Among those who exited within 3 months, 42 percent received a support service; 57 percent of those who exited within 12 months received one (Appendix Table D.10). About 38 percent of WONDER group members first exited after they participated in an employment or training-related activity. Only 8 percent of WONDER group members who exited before the end of the pilot later re-entered WONDER.

Virtually all WONDER group members exited the pilot within their first year after random assignment; nearly half exited within their first three months.

There were several differences in the characteristics of those who left WONDER early (within Quarter 1) and those who left later (after Quarter 1). Those who exited earlier were more likely than those who exited later to be 18 to 49 years old (3 percentage point difference), male (6 percentage point difference), and White, non-Hispanic (3 percentage point difference; Appendix Table D.11).

Exhibit V.13. Percentage of WONDER group members who exited within each quarter



Source: SNAP employment and training evaluation administrative service use data.

Note: Estimates are based on data from 3,391 WONDER group members.

Most WONDER group members (62 percent) chose to leave the pilot without completing services (Exhibit V.14). Almost a third of the individuals exited after they completed services. The OSs tracked

losing SNAP as a reported reason for exit, which affected about 1 percent of individuals, but using SNAP administrative data we find that about 31 percent of WONDER group members exited SNAP in the month before, the month of, or the month after their exit from the pilot (Appendix Table D.10). This finding indicates that a higher percentage of WONDER group members may have exited because they became ineligible for SNAP than was reported to the OSs and could be a main cause of exits.

The OSs did not track exits due to finding employment, although this number may be reflected within the ‘completed the program’ exit reason. Alternatively, some of those who discontinued services may have found employment and did not tell their OS why they left. Using UI wage data, we examined the employment patterns around the time of exit from the pilot to better understand if those who exited became employed. About 46 percent were already employed at the time of exit (at least three months before exit), and 19 percent started employment around the time of exit (between two months before to two months after the exit date). Thirty-five percent did not become employed around the time of exit (Appendix Table D.10).

Exhibit V.14. Percentage of WONDER group members who exited, by reason

Exits	WONDER group
Discontinued services	61.5
Completed the program	31.1
Other	3.7
Moved out of State	1.7
Lost SNAP or started receiving TANF	1.0
Non-compliant with rules	0.9
Death	0.1
Sample size	3,391

Source: SNAP employment and training evaluation administrative service use data.

VI. Differences in Service Receipt for the WONDER and Control Groups

In this chapter we describe how WONDER and control group members differed in their receipt of services based on participation in WONDER, existing SNAP E&T activities, or other services and programs available in communities. Understanding differences in service receipt is important for interpreting findings about the impacts of WONDER on employment, earnings, and receipt of public assistance (discussed in Chapter VII). Impacts on these outcomes are unlikely to occur without a meaningful difference in the services received by the WONDER and control groups.

In presenting findings, we begin with a description of differences between the research groups in participation in job search training or assistance activities and education or training activities. We also examine differences in participation in specific components of education or training activities, including general job skills training, occupational skills training, education, and work-based learning activities.³¹ We then examine differences between the two groups in rates of completion, the amount of time spent in different activities, and receipt of case management and support services. (We discuss how these differences varied across a select number of subgroups in Appendix E.) Unless noted otherwise, participation in activities and receipt of services are measured over the 36-month period after random assignment.

A. Differences between research groups in participation in activities

Individuals in the WONDER group participated in activities at higher rates than individuals in the control group. About 63 percent of the WONDER group participated in a job search training or assistance activity or education or training activity compared to 53 percent of the control group (Exhibit VI.1). Relative to individuals in the control group, individuals in the WONDER group were more likely to participate in education or training activities (7 percentage point difference) and in job search training or assistance activities (16 percentage point difference) than the control group.

Relative to the control group, the WONDER group was more likely to participate in job search training activities or in education and training activities during the three years following random assignment.

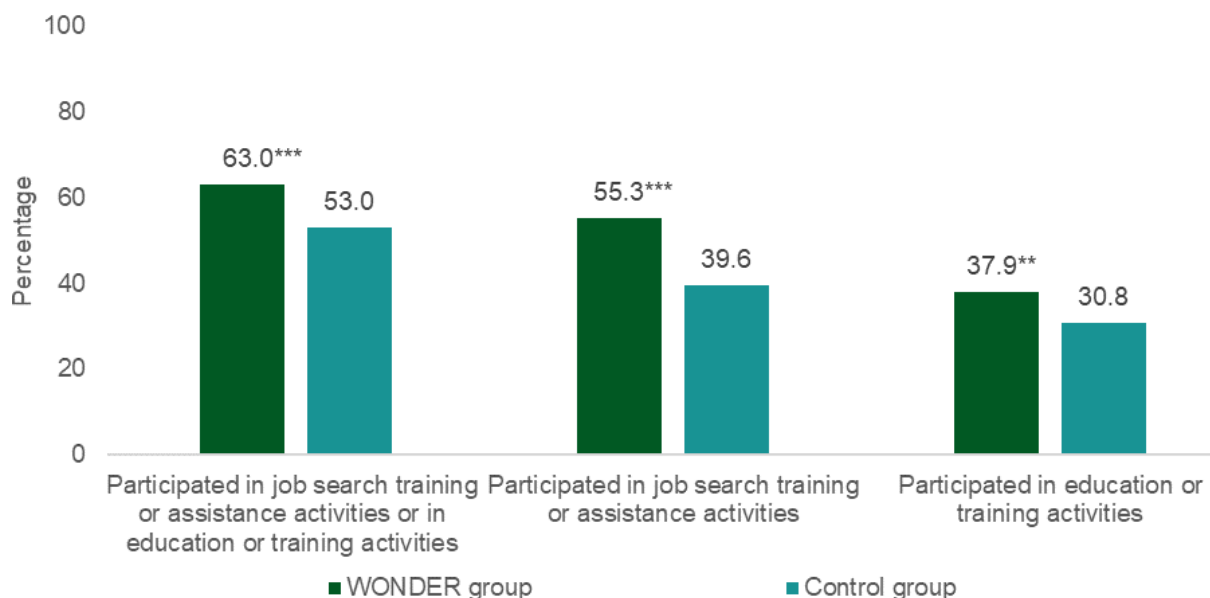
The WONDER group had significantly greater participation in activities than the control group during the first year, but those differences diminished in Years 2 and 3 (Exhibit VI.2). Although the WONDER group was more likely than the control group to participate in education or training activities in Year 1 (12 percentage point difference), the control group had greater participation in these activities by Year 3 (-3 percentage point difference). Notably, WONDER group participation in education or training activities

The difference between the WONDER group and control group in participation in activities during the three years likely reflected the larger difference in Year 1 than in Years 2 and 3.

³¹ The survey collected information on education or training activities or programs. For simplicity, we refer to them as “activities” in this chapter.

decreased between Years 1 to 3, while participation for the control group increased slightly during this same period. Similarly, the WONDER group only experienced greater participation in job search training or assistance activities in Year 1 (18 percentage point difference; Appendix table E.2). By Years 2 and 3, there was no difference in participation and less than one quarter of individuals in both groups were participating in job search training or assistance activities.

Exhibit VI.1. Participation in any WONDER, existing SNAP E&T, or community-offered services



Source: SNAP employment and training evaluation 12- and 36-month surveys, weighted data.

Note: Estimates cover the 36 months following random assignment. Estimates are based on data from 619 WONDER group members and 628 control group members.

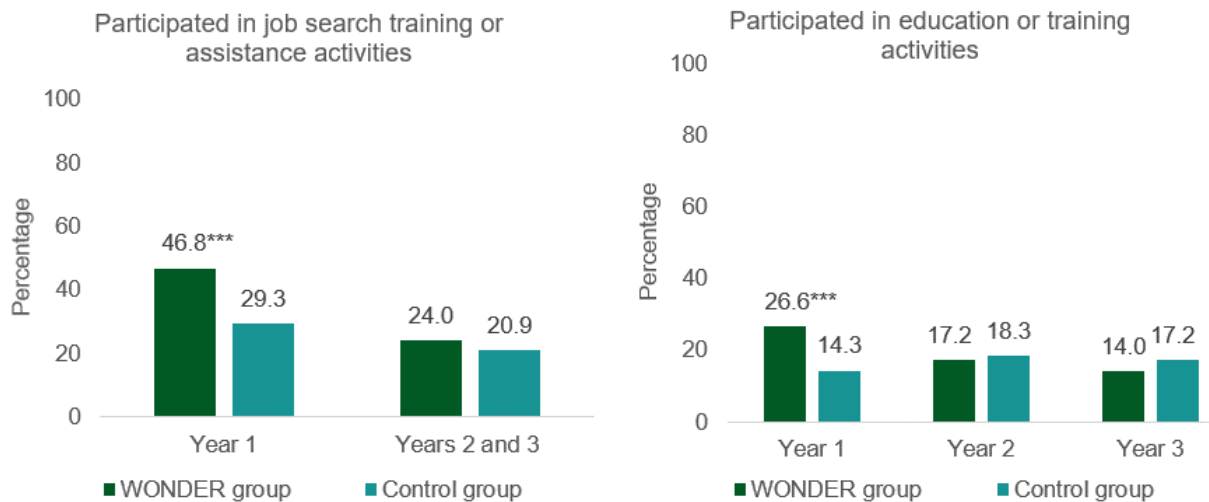
***/**/* Difference between WONDER group and control group is significantly different from zero at the 0.01/0.05/0.10 level, two-tailed test.

WONDER group members were more likely than control group members to participate in education or training activities before the pilot end date (9 percentage point difference; Appendix table E.2a), but the groups participated at similar rates after the pilot ended. The differences between the WONDER and control groups in rates of participation for individuals who were randomly assigned earlier in the pilot period were similar to those who were randomly assigned later in the period (Appendix table E.10).

The WONDER group had higher rates of participation than the control group in most activities, including general job skills training, occupational skills training, and work-based learning.

WONDER group members were more likely than control group members to start specific components of education or training activities (Exhibit VI.3). The largest differences between the WONDER group, relative to the control group, were for general job skills training (11 percentage point difference) and occupational skills training (5 percentage point difference). There was a small significant difference in work-based learning participation rates (1 percentage point) between the WONDER and control group, but no difference in rates of participation in education.

Exhibit VI.2. Time trends in participation in WONDER, existing SNAP E&T, or community-offered services

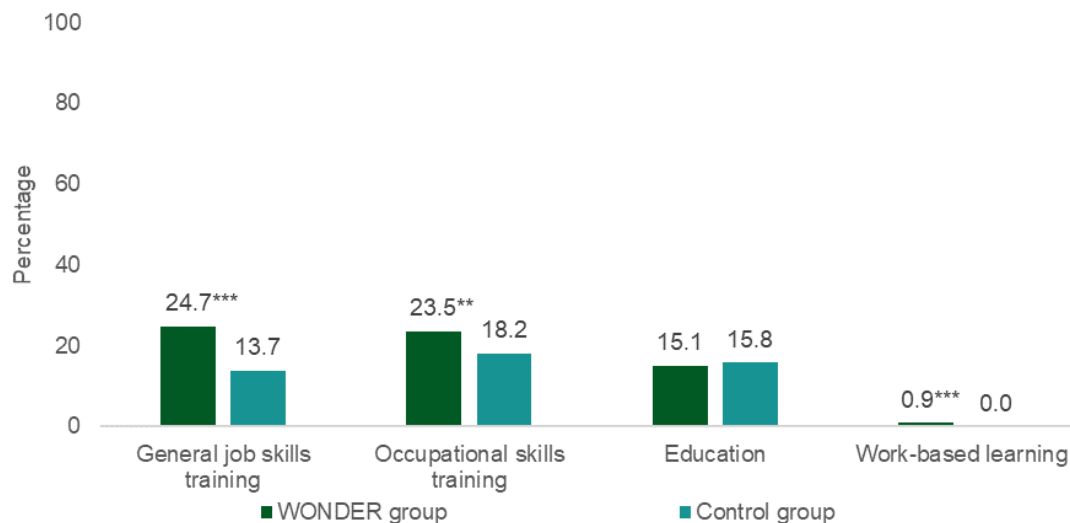


Source: SNAP employment and training evaluation 12- and 36-month surveys, weighted data.

Note: Estimates cover the 36 months following random assignment. Estimates are based on data from 619 WONDER group members and 628 control group members. The 12- and 36-month surveys collected the start and end dates for participation in education or training programs, but not for participation in job search training or assistance activities. As a result, annual estimates of participation in job search training and assistance activities cannot be estimated separately for Years 2 and 3 after random assignment.

***/**/* Difference between the WONDER group and control group is significantly different from zero at the 0.01/0.05/0.10 level, two-tailed test.

Exhibit VI.3 Participation in specific WONDER, existing SNAP E&T, or community-offered services



Source: SNAP employment and training evaluation 12- and 36-month surveys, weighted data.

Note: Estimates cover the 36 months following random assignment. Estimates are based on data from 619 WONDER group members and 628 control group members.

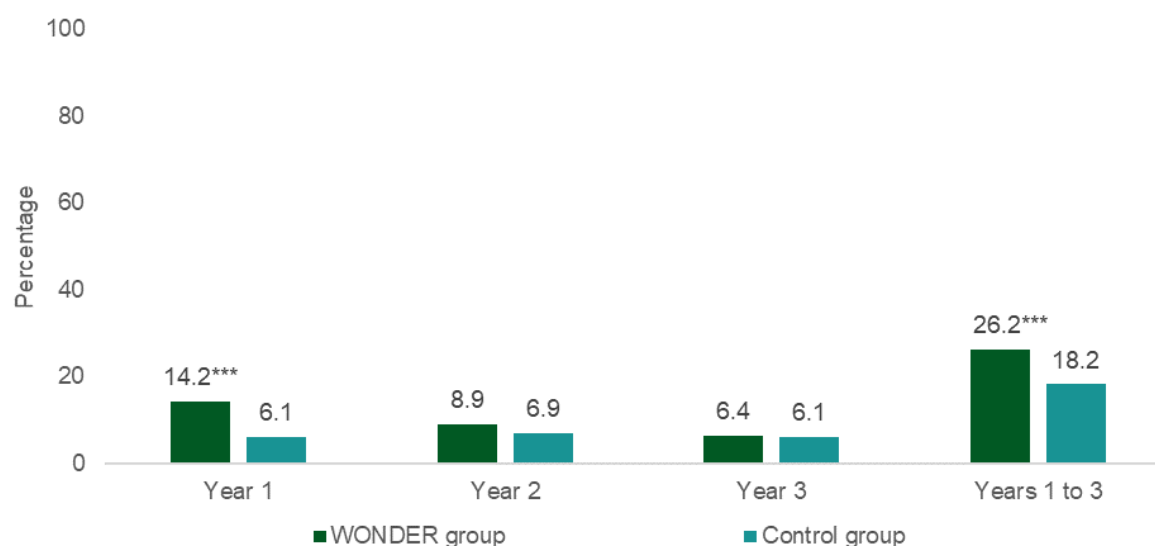
***/**/* Difference between WONDER group and control group is significantly different from zero at the 0.01/0.05/0.10 level, two-tailed test.

B. Differences between research groups in completion

In addition to starting most education and training activities at higher rates than control group members, WONDER group members also completed them at higher rates (Exhibit VI.4). Compared to control group members, WONDER group members were 8 percentage points more likely to complete any type of activity.

Differences between research groups in rates of completion were significant only in Year 1 (8 percentage point difference; Exhibit VI.4). Similarly, there was a difference in completion rates across research groups only for individuals randomly assigned earlier in the enrollment period (11 percentage point difference; Appendix table E.10). A smaller percentage of WONDER group members than control group members reported still participating in an activity as of the 36-month follow up survey (-5 percentage point difference). WONDER group members were less likely than control group members after 36 months to be in education (2 versus 7 percent) and occupational skills training (4 versus 6 percent).

Exhibit VI.4. Percentage of WONDER group members who completed education or training activities, by year after random assignment



Source: SNAP employment and training evaluation 12- and 36-month surveys, weighted data.

Note: Estimates cover the 36 months following random assignment. Estimates are based on data from 619 WONDER group members and 628 control group members.

***/**/* Difference between WONDER group and control group is significantly different from zero at the 0.01/0.05/0.10 level, two-tailed test.

Individuals in the WONDER group also were more likely than those in the control group to complete each type of activity, except education. WONDER group members had higher completion of occupational skills training (6 percentage point difference) and general job skills training (9 percentage point difference; Appendix Table E.3). There was a small significant difference in the rates of completion of work-based learning activities across research groups (less than one percentage point difference), partly reflecting the low percentages of individuals who started those activities.

Individuals in the WONDER and control groups each spent, on average, about 4 months in activities, but those in the WONDER group spent significantly more hours per week in activities (6 versus 3 hours; Appendix Table E.3). In each of the three years following random assignment, the WONDER group spent

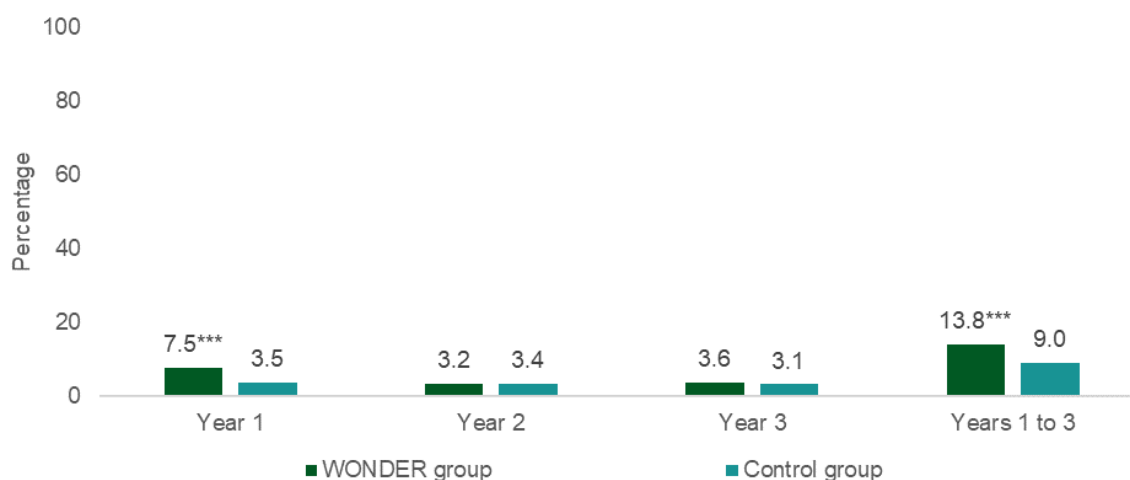
about 3 hours more than the control group per week in activities; however, the WONDER group went from spending about one month more in activities than the control group in Year 1 to about one month less in Year 3 (Appendix Table E.4).

Individuals in the WONDER group were also more likely than the control group to receive an occupational certificate or license (5 percentage point difference; Exhibit VI.5). There were significant differences in the percentage of individuals who received one in Year 1 following random assignment, but not in Years 2 or 3.

WONDER group members also were more likely than control group members to complete activities (during the first year) and earn an occupational certificate or license

WONDER group members were significantly more likely than the control group to receive an occupational certificate or license in the earlier enrollment period, but not in the later enrollment period.

Exhibit VI.5. Percentage of WONDER group members who received an occupational certificate or license, overall and by year



Source: SNAP employment and training evaluation 12- and 36-month surveys, weighted data.

Note: Estimates cover the 36 months following random assignment. Estimates are based on data from 426 WONDER group members and 362 control group members.

***/**/* Difference between research groups is significantly different from zero at the 0.01/0.05/0.10 level, two-tailed test.

C. Differences between research groups in receipt of case management and support services

WONDER group members were more likely than those in the control group to receive case management services including career counseling and one-on-one assistance from employment professionals or case managers (18 percentage point difference; Exhibit VI.6). The difference between the two groups was largest and statistically significant in the first year following random assignment (19 percentage point difference); it was positive but not statistically significant in the second and third years following random

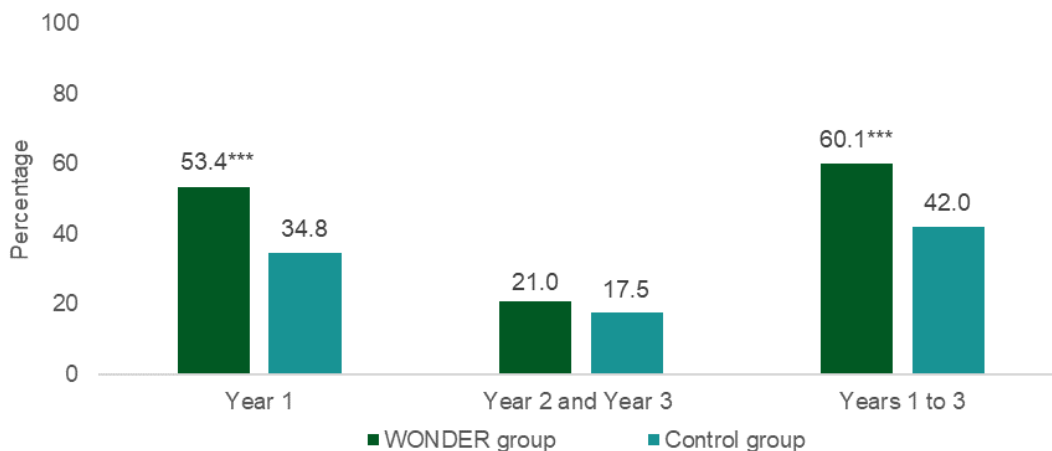
assignment. There were no statistical differences between research groups in receipt of case management for individuals who were randomly assigned in the earlier and later enrollment periods (Appendix Table E.10).

On average, WONDER group members also had over twice as many contacts with an employment professional or case manager relative to control group members (8 versus 3 contacts; Appendix Table E.6). Over two-thirds of case management contacts for WONDER and control group members occurred mostly in person, with the rest occurring mostly by phone or equally between in person and by phone. There were no statistical differences in mode of contact between the two groups for any year.

WONDER group members were more likely than control group members to receive case management and support services.

WONDER group members also were more likely than those in the control group to receive support services. About 68 percent of individuals in the WONDER group received a support service compared to 58 percent in the control group (Exhibit VI.7). The largest differences were for the receipt of transportation assistance (43 versus 32 percent), housing assistance (13 versus 8 percent), and clothes, uniforms, tools, or other supplies and equipment (9 versus 5 percent). There were no statistical differences in receipt of mental health or substance use counseling, child care assistance, and other support between the WONDER and control group.

Exhibit VI.6. Receipt of case management through WONDER, existing SNAP E&T, or community-offered activities, overall and by year

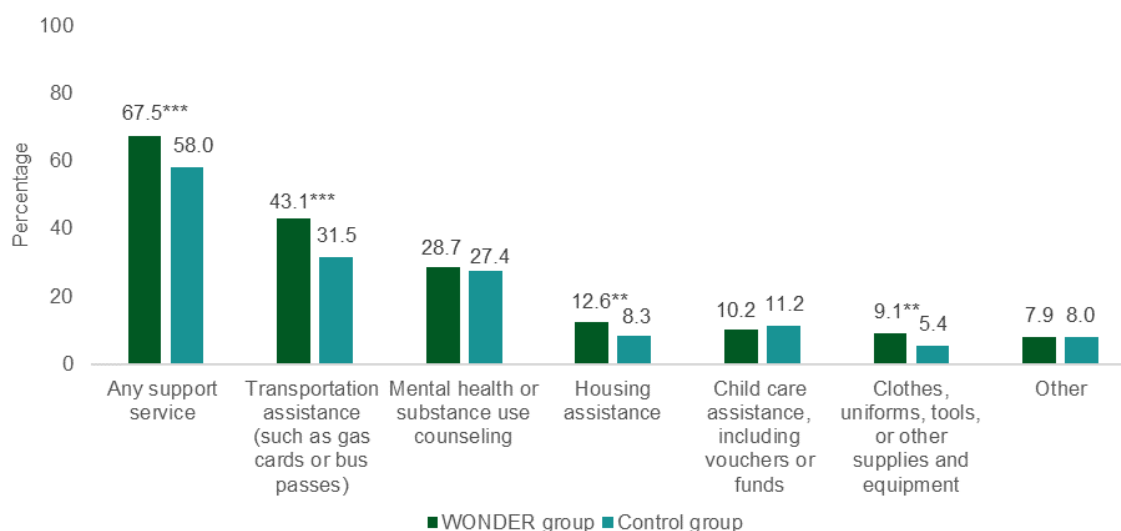


Source: SNAP employment and training evaluation 12- and 36-month surveys, weighted data.

Note: Estimates cover the 36 months following random assignment. Estimates are based on data from 619 WONDER group members and 628 control group members. The 12-month survey requested information about receipt of case management and support services between the date of random assignment and the date of the 12-month interview. The 36-month survey requested information about receipt of case management and support services between the date of the 12-month interview and the date of the 36-month interview. As a result, it is not possible to provide quarterly estimates in any year or to estimate receipt of assistance separately in Years 2 and 3.

***/**/* Difference between research groups is significantly different from zero at the 0.01/0.05/0.10 level, two-tailed test.

Exhibit VI.7. Receipt of support services through WONDER, existing SNAP E&T, or community-offered activities, overall and by type



Source: SNAP employment and training evaluation 12- and 36-month surveys, weighted data.

Note: Estimates cover the 36 months following random assignment. Estimates are based on data from 619 WONDER group members and 628 control group members. "Other" included assistance with payment of utilities such as electricity, phone, heat, or gas; food assistance; and assistance with medical care.

***/**/* Difference between research groups is significantly different from zero at the 0.01/0.05/0.10 level, two-tailed test.

Individuals in the WONDER group were more likely than those in the control group to receive support services in the first year following random assignment, but not in the second or third years. There was a difference of 14 percentage points in receipt of transportation assistance in the first year and -3 percentage points in the second and third year (Appendix table E.7). There was a difference between the WONDER and control groups in the percentage of individuals who received any support service for individuals who were randomly assigned earlier in the enrollment period (Appendix Table E.10).

VII. Impacts on employment, earnings, receipt of public assistance, and well-being

In this chapter, we examine whether the generally higher rates of engagement and service receipt among individuals in WONDER, as described in Chapter VI, translated into impacts on employment, earnings, receipt of public assistance, and key measures of well-being, including food security, health, well-being, and housing. We also examine whether impacts differed according to whether individuals started or completed WONDER activities. In Appendix F, we present information about how impacts on employment, earnings, receipt of public assistance, and food security varied across subgroups.

As described in Chapter II, we focus on impacts in the two-year period consisting of Years 2 and 3 after random assignment. We aim to balance any concerns about how the COVID-19 pandemic may have affected outcomes in Year 3 with measuring impacts on outcomes beyond Year 1 following random assignment after many individuals had time to participate in WONDER activities.

A. Impacts of WONDER on labor market outcomes

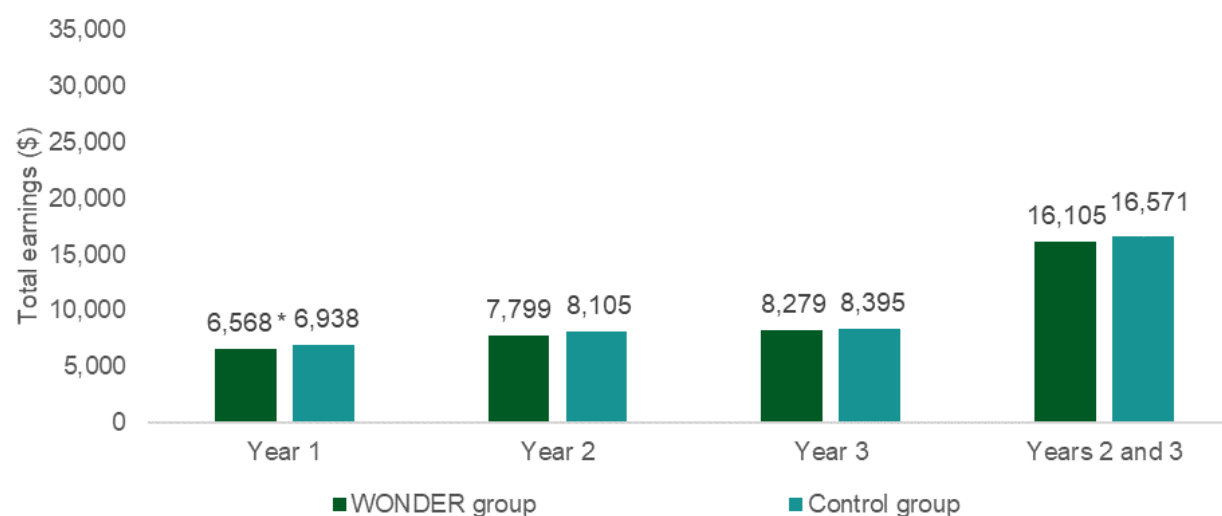
This section presents impacts on key labor market outcomes. Outcomes from both UI wage records and survey data were measured by year and quarter after random assignment. Some outcomes based on the survey data were measured at the time of the survey, approximately 36 months after random assignment.³²

1. Impacts on earnings, employment, and hours worked

Earnings. Based on both UI data and survey data, there were no impacts of WONDER on earnings for Years 2 and 3 combined, although differences did exist for individual years (Exhibits VII.1 and VII.2). The WONDER group earned less than the control group in Year 1 (based on UI and survey data; p -value = 0.092 based on UI data) and Year 2 (based on survey data only). In Year 3, the WONDER group continued to earn less than the control group, but differences were not statistically significant based on both data sources. Both research groups generally experienced increases in average earnings over time.

³² For survey-based outcomes, we defined the quarter after random assignment as the first three months after the month of random assignment. The months included in this quarter sometimes differ from the calendar quarter, which we used to define the first quarter after random assignment for outcomes based on UI wage records.

Exhibit VII.1. Total earnings based on UI wage records, by year

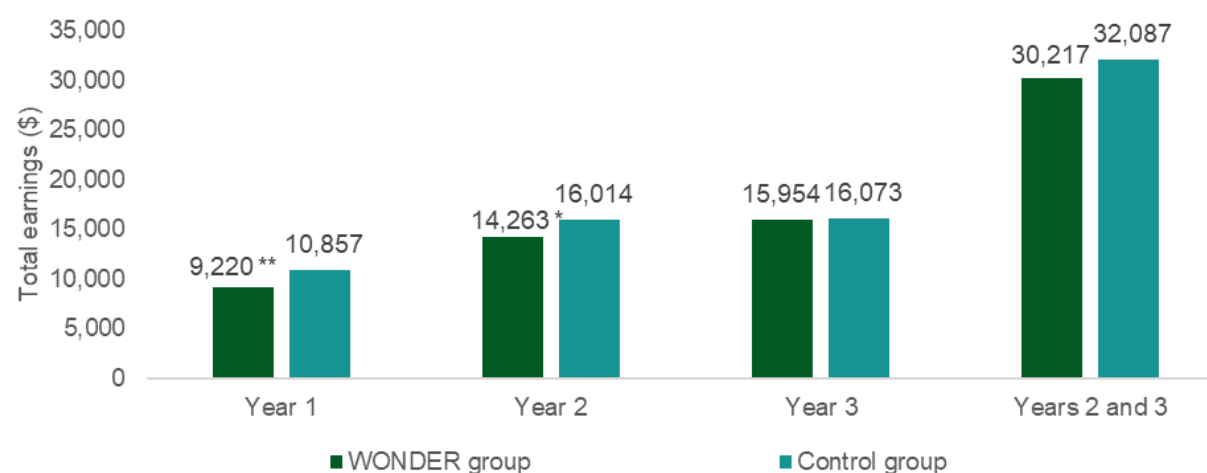


Source: SNAP employment and training evaluation UI wage records, weighted data.

Note: Estimates are based on data from 2,672 WONDER group members and 2,672 control group members.

***/**/* Difference between the WONDER group and control group is significantly different from zero at the 0.01/0.05/0.10 level, two-tailed test.

Exhibit VII.2. Total earnings based on survey data, by year



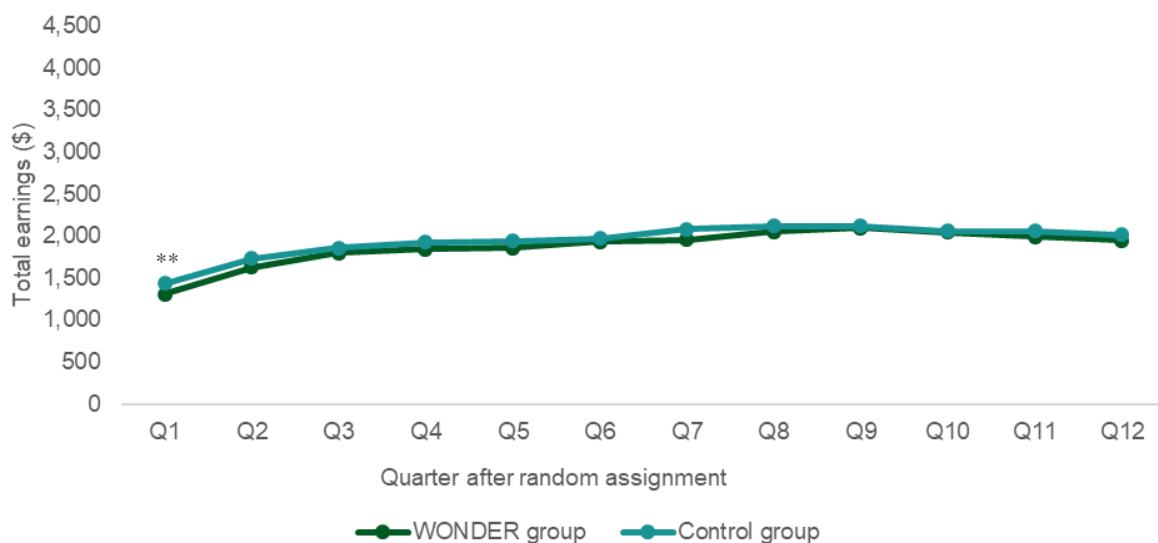
Source: SNAP employment and training evaluation 12- and 36-month surveys, weighted data.

Note: Estimates are based on data from 619 WONDER group members and 628 control group members.

***/**/* Difference between the WONDER group and control group is significantly different from zero at the 0.01/0.05/0.10 level, two-tailed test.

Based on both UI and survey data, WONDER group members earned less than control group members in Quarter 1 (Exhibits VII.3 and VII.4). In subsequent quarters, WONDER group members continued to earn less than control group members, but the differences were only significant according to survey data. The findings were similar for individuals who were randomly assigned earlier versus later in the enrollment period (Appendix Table F.19).

Exhibit VII.3. Total earnings based on UI wage records, by quarter

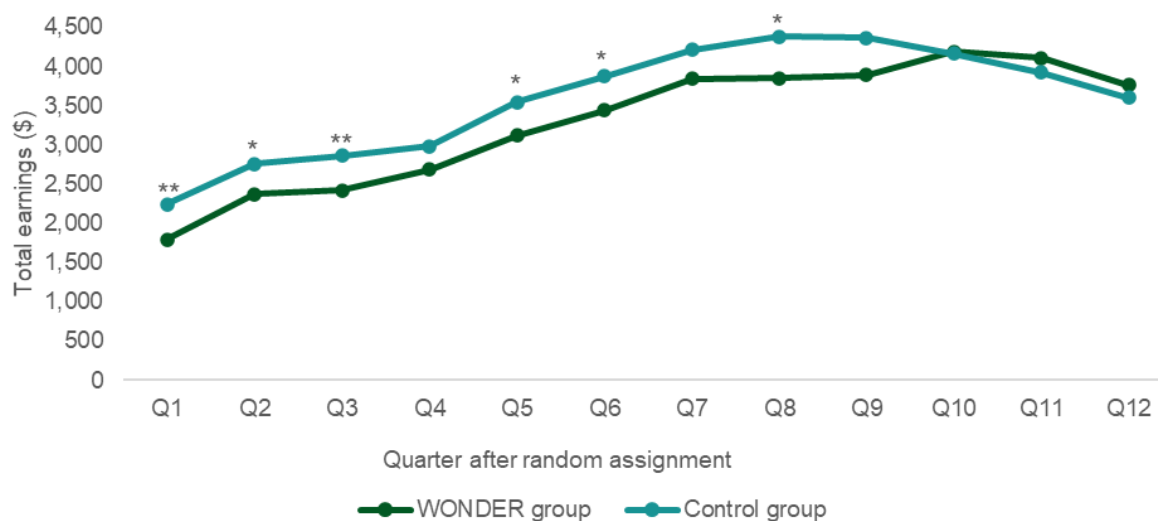


Source: SNAP employment and training evaluation UI wage records, weighted data.

Note: Estimates are based on data from 2,672 WONDER group members and 2,672 control group members.

***/**/* Difference between the WONDER group and control group is significantly different from zero at the 0.01/0.05/0.10 level, two-tailed test.

Exhibit VII.4. Total earnings based on survey data, by quarter



Source: SNAP employment and training evaluation 12- and 36-month surveys, weighted data.

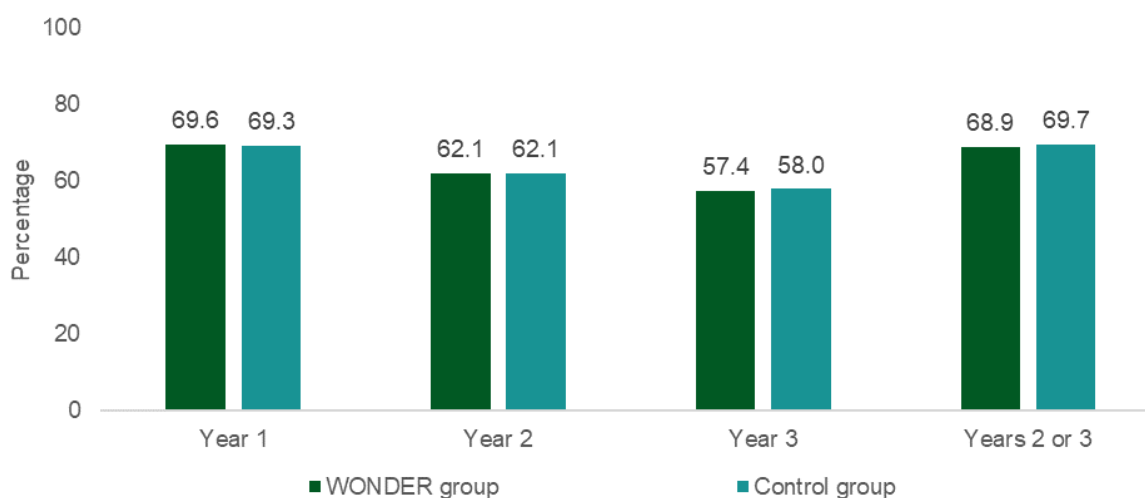
Note: Estimates are based on data from 619 WONDER group members and 628 control group members.

***/**/* Difference between the WONDER group and control group is significantly different from zero at the 0.01/0.05/0.10 level, two-tailed test.

Employment. Based on both UI and survey data, employment rates were similar for WONDER and control group members for Years 2 and 3 combined and in each year individually (Exhibits VII.5 and VII.6). There were also no quarterly impacts on employment in any quarter according to both UI and survey data (Appendix Table F.2 and F.4). Based on survey data, quarterly employment rates for each research group generally increased in Year 1 and began to decrease in Year 3 whereas based on UI data, quarterly employment rates decreased steadily across the three-year period. Separately examining impacts according to whether individuals were randomly assigned earlier or later in the enrollment period showed no impacts for either set of individuals (Appendix Table F.19).

WONDER had no effect on employment in the two-year period from Year 2 to 3 or in any individual year following random assignment. These findings were consistent across UI and survey data.

Exhibit VII.5. Employment rates based on UI wage records, by year



Source: SNAP employment and training evaluation UI wage records, weighted data.

Note: Estimates are based on data from 2,672 WONDER group members and 2,672 control group members.

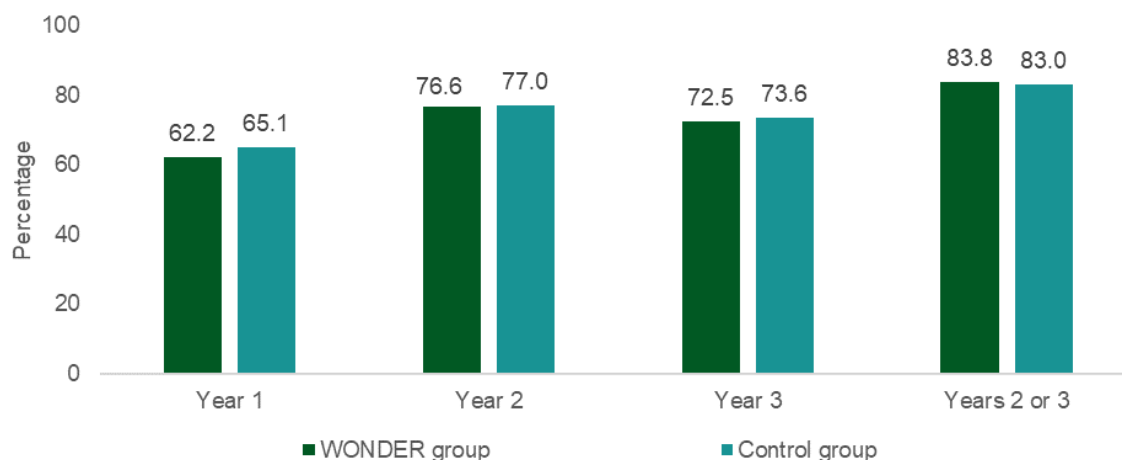
***/**/* Difference between the WONDER group and control group is significantly different from zero at the 0.01/0.05/0.10 level, two-tailed test.

Employment rates provide information about the percentage of individuals who were employed during a given time period, but do not describe the extent or duration of employment. To assess these employment characteristics, we examined the average number of quarters (UI data) and months (survey data) individuals were employed each year. Findings were generally similar to those for rates of employment. In Years 2 and 3 combined and in each year after random assignment, the WONDER group and control group worked a similar number of quarters and months (Appendix Tables F.2 and F.4). There were no statistically significant differences based on either data source.

Hours worked. Among all individuals randomly assigned, those in the WONDER group worked roughly the same number of hours per week as those in the control group (Appendix Table F.5). In Year 1 after random assignment, the WONDER group worked significantly fewer hours per week than the control group (14 versus 16 hours), but differences in subsequent years were smaller in magnitude and not

statistically significant. Both the WONDER and control groups increased their average number of hours worked over time; WONDER group members worked an average of 14 hours per week in Year 1 and increased to 21 hours per week in Year 3, while control group members worked an average of 16 hours per week in Year 1 and increased to 21 hours per week in Year 3.

Exhibit VII.6. Employment rates based on survey data, by year



Source: SNAP employment and training evaluation 12- and 36-month surveys, weighted data.

Note: Estimates are based on data from 619 WONDER group members and 628 control group members.

***/**/* Difference between the WONDER group and control group is significantly different from zero at the 0.01/0.05/0.10 level, two-tailed test.

2. Impacts on characteristics of current jobs

Exhibit VII.7 presents characteristics of jobs individuals held at the time of the 36-month survey.³³ This information was available only for individuals employed at the time of the 36-month survey (55 percent of the WONDER group and 54 percent of the control group). For this reason, the measures in Exhibit VII.7 are non-experimental and the results do not represent the causal effects of WONDER on job characteristics.

³³ The survey captured information about the jobs at which individuals were working at the time the survey was conducted (their “current job”). If individuals were working two or more jobs, they were asked to report on the one at which they worked the most hours.

Exhibit VII.7. Characteristics of current jobs among individuals employed at the time of the 36-month survey

Characteristic (%)	WONDER group	Control group	Difference
Employed at the time of the 36-month survey interview	54.5	53.7	0.8
Hours worked per week			
Less than 20	16.4	10.5	5.9**
21 to 34	21.5	21.8	-0.3
35 or more (employed full time)	61.9	67.6	-5.7
Average	35.4	35.8	-0.3
Weekly earnings			
\$1 to \$499	62.2	57.8	4.4
\$500 to \$999	29.3	39.2	-10.0***
\$1,000 to \$1,499	5.3	1.5	3.8**
\$1,500 to \$2,000	3.5	0.5	3.0**
\$2,000 and above	0.0	1.0	-1.0
Benefits available at job			
Any benefit	75.6	74.8	0.7
Health insurance or HMO/PPO plan	64.8	64.9	-0.1
Dental insurance	53.1	57.7	-4.6
Paid vacation	52.2	57.3	-5.0
Paid holidays	55.4	59.9	-4.5
Paid sick leave	36.5	48.3	-11.8***
Any paid time off	64.2	66.9	-2.7
Pension or retirement benefits	53.0	55.0	-2.0
Tuition assistance or reimbursement	23.8	33.6	-9.8***
Type of employment			
Regular full or part time	81.1	82.8	-1.6
Temporary or on call	8.8	5.8	3.0
Self-employed or independent contractor or consultant	7.1	5.5	1.6
Day laborer	2.9	5.9	-3.0*
Occupation			
Transportation and material moving	14.5	14.7	-0.1
Food preparation and serving	10.0	7.0	3.0
Office and administrative support	6.9	6.9	0.0
Sales	6.1	7.9	-1.9
Production	4.1	7.2	-3.0*
Personal care and service	6.1	3.8	2.3
Building and grounds cleaning and maintenance	3.6	3.8	-0.2
Management	5.0	5.0	0.0
Construction and extraction	4.1	5.0	-0.9
Health care support	3.2	3.1	0.1
Sample size	423	405	

Source: SNAP employment and training evaluation 36-month survey, weighted data.

***/**/* Difference between the WONDER group and control group is significantly different from zero at the 0.01/0.05/0.10 level, two-tailed test.

HMO = health maintenance organization; PPO = preferred provider organization

Among individuals who were employed at the time of the 36-month survey, WONDER group members and control group members held jobs with generally similar characteristics, although notable differences

existed. About two-thirds of individuals in both research groups were employed full time but employed WONDER group members were more likely to work fewer than 20 hours per week (16 versus 11 percent; Exhibit VII.7). Over 50 percent of employed individuals in both research groups earned less than \$500 per week, and the difference between research groups was not significant; control group members, however, were more likely to earn between \$500 and \$1,000 dollars per week (29 versus 39 percent). The majority of employed individuals in both research groups received at least one employer-offered benefit. Employed WONDER group members were less likely than employed control group members to receive paid sick leave (37 percent versus 48 percent) and tuition assistance or reimbursement (24 versus 34 percent) but received other benefits at similar rates. Most employed individuals in both research groups were regular status employees working full time or part time. Occupations were commonly related to transportation and material moving (such as conveyor operators and industrial truck and tractor operators), food preparation and serving, office and administrative support, and sales. With the exception of the WONDER group being less likely than the control group to be employed in production jobs (such as food processing, metal and plastic work, and textiles and apparel), the occupations were similar across research groups.

3. Impacts on changes in earnings and employment over time

The findings presented above describe employment, earnings, and hours worked in each quarter and year since random assignment. Although these findings allow us to assess changes in the average value of the outcomes over time across all WONDER or control group members, they obscure changes over time for each individual. In this section, we examine these types of changes or “dynamics” in employment, earnings, hours worked, and job characteristics.

As presented in Exhibit VII.5, based on UI data, employment rates were similar for the WONDER group and control group over time. Over the three-year period following random assignment, approximately 49 percent of each research group had one unemployment spell, while approximately 40 percent of each research group had two or more unemployment spells (Appendix Table F.20). The findings were generally similar for individuals who were employed at the time of random assignment than those who were not employed.

As presented in Exhibit VII.6, employment rates were also similar for the WONDER group and control group based on survey data. During the three-year period following random assignment, WONDER and control group members experienced job losses at similar rates (73 percent for both research groups; Appendix Table F.22).³⁴ They also experienced similar numbers of unemployment spells, with approximately 44 percent of individuals experiencing one unemployment spell during this period and 47 percent experiencing two or more spells. Among individuals not employed at the time of the 12-month survey interview, WONDER group members were more likely than control group members to be employed at the time of the 36-month interview (38 versus 31 percent), but differences were not statistically significant. Job retainment rates were also similar for the WONDER and control groups; 70 percent of WONDER group members and 67 percent of control group members who were employed at the time of the 12-month survey interview were also employed at the time of the 36-month survey interview.

³⁴ Because these estimates are based only on individuals who were employed at some point in the period and thus at risk of experiencing a job loss, they are not experimental impacts.

At the time of both the 12- and 36-month surveys, most employed individuals in both research groups worked a single job (Appendix Table F.23). About 46 percent of the WONDER group had one job at the time of the 12-month survey interview; 3 percent had two or more jobs. At the time of the 36-month survey interview, these percentages were 49 and 4 percent, respectively. For the control group, 47 percent had one job and 4 percent had two jobs or more at the time of the 12-month survey interview. At the time of the 36-month survey interview, these percentages were 46 and 4 percent, respectively.

Exhibit VII.7 shows that WONDER generally had no impacts on job characteristics around the time of the 36-month survey. There were also relatively few changes in the distributions of these characteristics from the 12-month to the 36-month survey (Appendix Table F.24). The earnings distributions between the WONDER and control groups was similar at the time of the 12-month interview, but at the time of the 36-month survey, the WONDER group was more likely than the control group to earn \$2,000 or more per week (1 versus 0 percent). WONDER and control group members received benefits at similar rates in both time periods.

The most common occupations at the time of the 12-month survey generally were similar to the most common ones at the time of the 36-month survey.

4. Conclusions

WONDER did not impact average earnings in the two-year period (Years 2 and 3) based on UI or survey data.³⁵ WONDER led to a decrease in earnings in select quarters following random assignment, but there were no differences when looking over the course of each year. Rates of employment were similar in the two-year period (Years 2 and 3) and in each year following random assignment based on UI and survey data. Hours worked per week were significantly lower for the WONDER group in Year 1, but there were no differences in subsequent years.

B. Impacts of WONDER on receipt of public assistance

This section presents findings on the impact of WONDER on the receipt of public assistance, as measured by SNAP administrative records and survey data. Most of the outcomes measuring receipt of SNAP, TANF, and Medicaid are based on the administrative data and were measured for each year and quarter after random assignment. Receipt of other forms of public assistance are based on survey data and capture receipt during Year 1 and during Years 2 and 3 combined after random assignment.

1. Impacts on SNAP participation

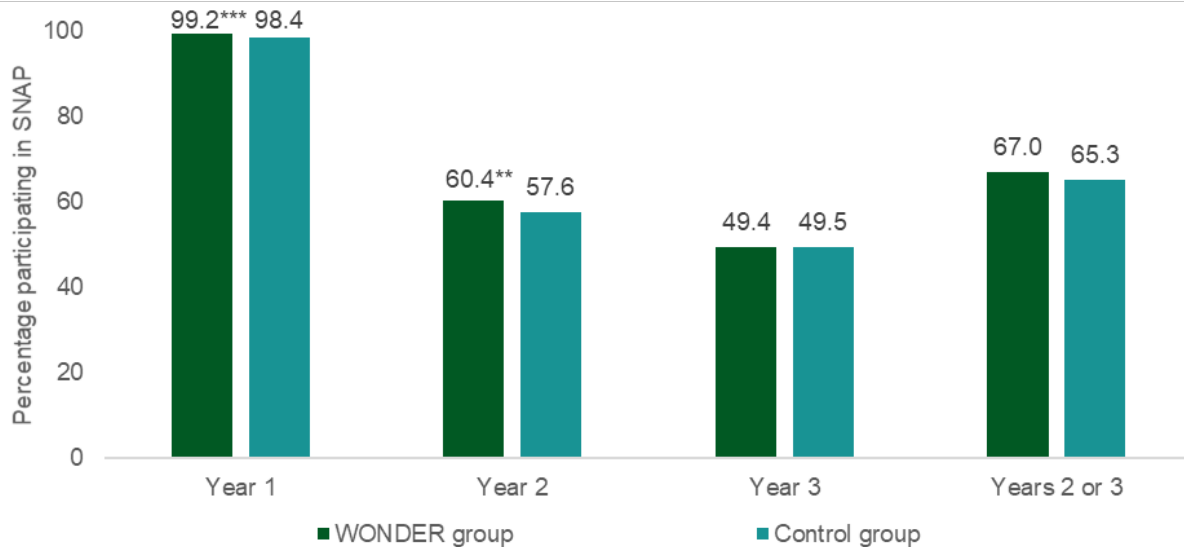
WONDER did not lead to a statistically significant change in the likelihood of participating in SNAP in the two-year period (Years 2 and 3) after random assignment. About 67 percent of WONDER group members and 65 percent of control group members participated in SNAP during this period (Exhibit VII.8). In Years 1 and 2 after random assignment, WONDER led to a statistically significant increase in SNAP participation, although impacts were smaller and insignificant in Year 3 and in Years 2 and 3

³⁵ The analyses for employment and earnings presented above measured outcomes over a three-year period and were based on individuals randomly assigned through September 2017 based on UI data and December 2017 based on survey data. The findings based on UI data for individuals randomly assigned through September 2017 were similar to those based on UI data for all individuals who were randomly assigned.

combined. Over time, SNAP participation decreased for both research groups from approximately 99 percent in Year 1 to approximately 50 percent in Year 3 (Exhibit VII.8). There were several significant differences across groups in SNAP participation rates in Quarters 1 through 7, but nearly the same percentage of individuals in each group participated in SNAP in other quarters (Appendix Table F.8). There were no significant impacts on SNAP participation for individuals who were randomly assigned earlier or later in the enrollment period (Appendix Table F.19).

WONDER did not affect SNAP participation in Years 2 and 3.

Exhibit VII.8. SNAP participation rates based on SNAP administrative data, overall and by year



Source: SNAP employment and training evaluation SNAP administrative data, weighted data.

Note: Estimates are based on data from 2,672 WONDER group members and 2,672 control group members.

***/**/* Difference between WONDER group and control group significantly different from zero at the 0.01/0.05/0.10 level, two-tailed test.

The impacts of WONDER on the average SNAP benefits received, both in absolute terms and as a percentage of the maximum benefit amount, were similar to those on SNAP participation rates. Average SNAP benefit amounts for the WONDER group were \$121 greater than those for the control group in Year 1 and \$58 greater in Year 2, but the differences were not statistically significant in Year 3 (Exhibit VII.9). Average SNAP benefit amounts were \$20 to \$52 higher for the WONDER group than for the control group in the first four quarters after random assignment but differences were smaller in Quarters 5 to 12 (Appendix Table F.9).

Looking at SNAP benefit amounts received as a percentage of the maximum possible benefit (based on SNAP unit size) provides a better comparison across SNAP units of different sizes than the nominal benefit amounts. There were similar findings for benefits received as a percentage of the maximum possible benefit. WONDER group members received, on average, 5 percentage points more of the maximum possible benefit compared to the control group in Year 1 (55 versus 50 percent) and 2 percentage points more in Year 2 (30 versus 28 percent) but differences between WONDER and control group members were smaller and not statistically significant in Year 3 (Exhibit VII.9). For all research groups, most of the decrease in the percentage of the maximum possible benefit received over time can be attributed to individuals exiting SNAP. For example, among the WONDER group, the percentage of the

maximum benefit amount received decreased by about 29 percentage points between Years 1 and 3. During this same period, the percentage of WONDER group members participating in SNAP decreased by about 50 percentage points (Appendix Table F.8).

Exhibit VII.9. Impacts on average monthly SNAP benefit amount based on SNAP administrative data, overall and by year

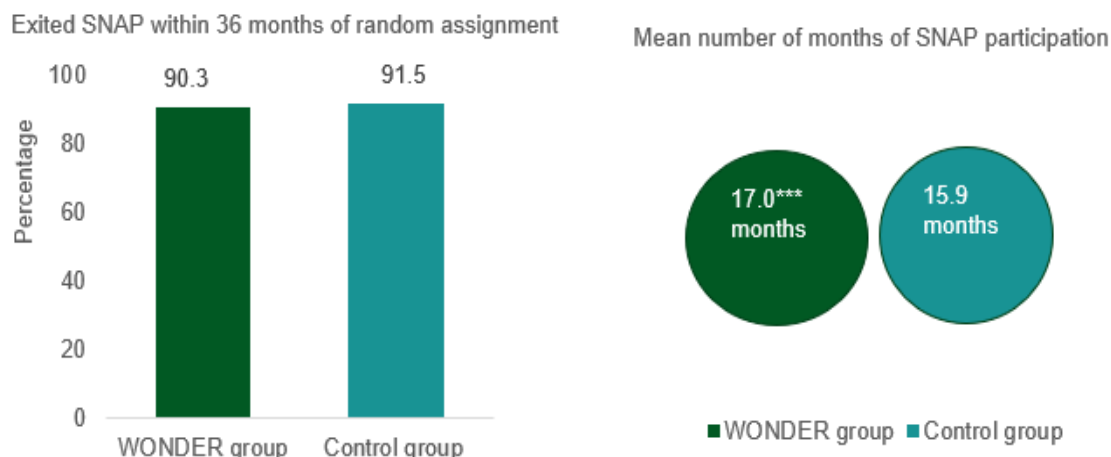
Average SNAP benefits	WONDER group	Control group	Difference
Average SNAP benefits received (\$)			
Year 1	1,727	1,605	121***
Year 2	1,036	978	58*
Year 3	957	898	59
Years 2 and 3	1,993	1,876	117*
Average monthly SNAP benefits received as a percentage of maximum benefit amount ^a			
Year 1	54.9	50.0	4.9***
Year 2	29.6	27.6	1.9**
Year 3	26.1	25.2	0.9
Years 2 and 3	27.9	26.5	1.4*
Sample Size	2,672	2,672	

Source: SNAP employment and training evaluation SNAP administrative data, weighted data.

^a Maximum household SNAP benefit amounts normalized by household size.

***/**/* Difference between the WONDER group and control group is significantly different from zero at the 0.01/0.05/0.10 level, two-tailed test.

On average, the WONDER group participated in SNAP for more months in the two-year period (Years 2 and 3) compared with the control group (9 versus 8 months; Appendix Table F.25) and more months in the three-year period (Years 1, 2, and 3) compared with the control group (17 versus 16 months; Exhibit VII.10). Despite differences in the average length of participation in Years 1 and 2, the length of participation was similar across research groups in Year 3. WONDER group members had similar likelihoods of exiting SNAP across the three years relative to control group members—approximately 90 percent of each group exited SNAP at some point during the three years after random assignment. Individuals who exited SNAP include those who left and did not re-enter SNAP in the period, as well as those who left and re-entered before the end of the period. Thus, even though approximately 9 percent of the WONDER group participated in SNAP for the full three years, SNAP participation in Quarter 12 was higher (37 percent; Appendix Table F.8), reflecting that individuals left and re-entered SNAP during the three-year period. The percentage of individuals who exited and then re-entered SNAP was similar for the WONDER and control groups (54 versus 56 percent), with about 27 percent of each group re-entering within 4 months of exit (Appendix Table F.25). These patterns of exiting and re-entering SNAP resulted in both research groups having a similar number of SNAP spells (a single spell consists of remaining on SNAP for the full three-year period or exiting and not re-entering). About 52 percent of the WONDER group had a single SNAP spell, 32 percent had two spells, and 16 percent had 3 or more spells. For the control group, these percentages were 50, 34, and 17 percent.

Exhibit VII.10. SNAP exit rates and mean number of months of SNAP participation based on SNAP administrative data

Source: SNAP employment and training evaluation SNAP administrative data, weighted data.

Note: Estimates are based on data from 2,672 WONDER group members and 2,672 control group members.

***/**/* Difference between the WONDER group and control group is significantly different from zero at the 0.01/0.05/0.10 level, two-tailed test.

2. Impacts on TANF and other forms of public assistance

Impacts on TANF participation were estimated using SNAP administrative data. A small percentage of each research group participated in TANF in each year (Appendix Table F.10). WONDER led to increased participation in TANF, relative to the control group, in Year 3 (2.2 versus 1.6 percent) but not Years 1 or 2 or in individual quarters. TANF benefit amounts were similar for WONDER and control group members across all years and quarters (Appendix Table F.10).

Using the survey data, we also estimated impacts of WONDER on receipt of other forms of public assistance including receipt of general assistance; UI; Supplemental Security Income (SSI); Section 8, Housing Choice Vouchers, or Public Housing Assistance; Medicaid; and the Supplemental Nutrition Program for Women, Infants, and Children (WIC).³⁶ There were no impacts on the receipt of these forms of public assistance in Year 1, in Years 2 and 3, or during the three-year period (Appendix Table F.11). The most commonly received benefit among both research groups was Medicaid (92 and 90 percent, respectively in Years 1 to 3).

3. Conclusions

WONDER generally did not affect SNAP participation. The difference between research groups was small but statistically significant in Year 1 and Year 2, but there were no statistical differences in Year 3. WONDER also led to an increase in SNAP benefit amounts in Year 1 and Year 2—both nominally and as a percentage of the maximum benefit amount—but not in Year 3. WONDER generally did not affect

³⁶ Because the 36-month survey requested information about receipt of public assistance benefits between the 12- and 36-month survey interviews, it was not possible to separately estimate receipt of public assistance in Years 2 and 3.

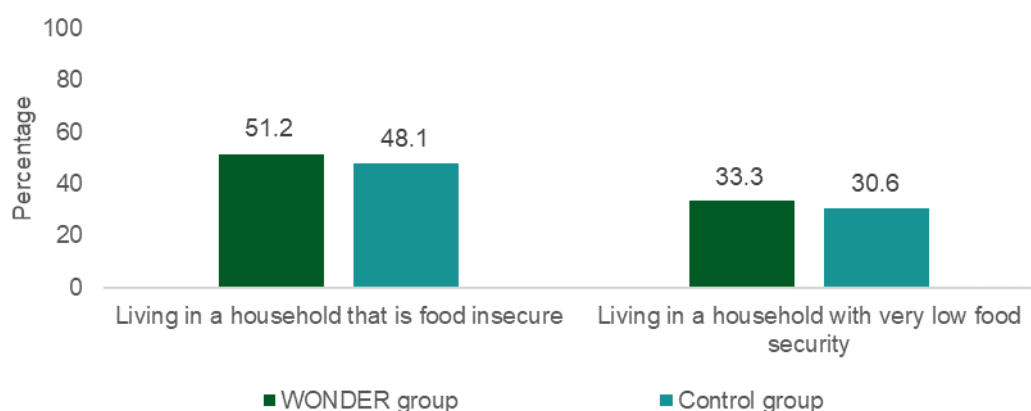
TANF participation; it had no effect on TANF in Year 1 or 2, but led to an increase in TANF participation in Year 3.

C. Impacts of WONDER on food security, health, well-being, and housing status

This section presents WONDER's impacts on food security, health, well-being, and housing status, as reported in the survey data. Most of these outcomes reflect individuals' circumstances at the time of the 36-month follow-up survey. An exception was food security status, which was reported based on the 30 days before the survey.³⁷

The WONDER and control groups had similar rates of food insecurity. About 51 percent of WONDER group members were food insecure compared to 48 percent of control group members (Exhibit VII.11). There were also no statistical differences in the rates of very low food security (a severe form of food insecurity; 33 versus 31 percent). There were no differences in impacts on food insecurity among individuals who were randomly assigned earlier versus later in the pilot (Appendix Table F.19).

Exhibit VII.11. Impacts on food security, based on 36-month survey data



Source: SNAP employment and training evaluation 36-month survey, weighted data.

Note: Estimates are based on data from 619 WONDER group members and 628 control group members.

***/**/* Difference between the WONDER group and control group is significantly different from zero at the 0.01/0.05/0.10 level, two-tailed test.

Among individuals who were food insecure at the time of the 12-month survey, those in the WONDER group were just as likely as those in the control group to be food insecure at the time of the 36-month survey (Appendix Table F.27). Around two-thirds of each research group was food insecure at both points in time. The percentage of individuals in the WONDER group that had very low food security at each point in time was greater than the percentage in the control group (58 versus 52 percent), but these

³⁷ Food security is having access at all times to enough food for an active, healthy life. Individuals who experienced food access limitations due to lack of money or other resources are said to be food insecure. Those who cannot afford enough to eat may experience a particularly severe form of food insecurity where at times one or more household member experiences reduced food intake and disrupted eating patterns referred to as very low food security. The outcomes of food insecurity and very low food security are based on responses to 10 questions about difficulty meeting basic food needs due to lack of money to be spent on food. Individuals who affirmed at least 3 out of 10 questions were classified as food insecure; those who affirmed at least 6 were classified as having very low food security.

differences were not statistically significant. Together, these findings suggest that both research groups experienced similar changes in food security status between the 12- and 36-month interviews.

There were few statistically significant differences between the WONDER group and the control group for other outcome measures related to health, well-being, and housing status (Appendix Table F.12). Approximately one-quarter each research group screened positively for depression. Both research groups had similar levels of health (31 percent of the WONDER group and 32 percent of the control group reported having very good or excellent health at the time of the survey), and self-esteem and self-efficacy scores. The majority of each research group owned or rented a home or apartment (55 versus 56 percent), although WONDER group members were more likely to be homeless compared to control group members (5 versus 3 percent).

D. Impacts of WONDER on employment, earnings, and SNAP participation among individuals who started or completed an employment or training related activity

The findings presented in Sections A, B, and C do not differentiate between individuals enrolled in the pilot who participated in activities and those who did not. In the evaluation literature, this approach is often called an “intention-to-treat” (ITT) analysis. Impact estimates based on an ITT analysis provide information about expected effects for all SNAP participants to whom pilot activities were offered. However, because some individuals did not engage in the pilot or start an activity, ITT findings mask how well individuals who actually participated may have fared. In this section, we present results of analyses that differentiate individuals in the WONDER group who did and did not engage in WONDER and participate in activities. This analysis, often referred to as a “treatment-on-the-treated” analysis, provides insights about how greater engagement in pilot activities may have translated into different participation experiences and, ultimately, into different impacts.³⁸

We assessed engagement in three ways:

1. Comparing individuals who started an activity to those who did not
2. Comparing individuals who started and completed a job search or job search training activity to those who started but did not complete an activity
3. Comparing individuals who started and completed an education or training activity to those who started but did not complete an activity^{39,40}

Earnings and employment. Based on UI and survey data, there were no impacts on earnings or employment for individuals who started an activity or for those who did not start one in the two-year

³⁸ Because individuals in WONDER chose whether to start an activity and/or complete one based on factors we could not necessarily observe, the findings presented in this section are nonexperimental. The results do not represent the causal effects of WONDER on outcomes.

³⁹ There are many ways to quantify the extent to which those enrolled in the pilot engaged in activities—for example, the number of workshops in which someone participated, the number of hours an individual spent in an occupational skills training program, or the number of basic education courses an individual completed over time. Our approach for measuring engagement in pilot activities balanced the objectives of contrasting groups with well-defined, policy-relevant differences in participation across pilots with limiting the number of groups so that each analysis group had a sufficient number of individuals to yield informative estimates.

⁴⁰ Due to small sample sizes by completion group, we could not assess impacts by activity completion status based on survey data. These analyses are based only on UI-data.

period (Years 2 and 3; Exhibit VII.12 and Appendix Tables F.13 and F.15). The same was true for individuals who completed education or training activities, completed job search or job search assistance activities, or started but did not complete an activity. For each of these groups, there were no impacts on earnings (Appendix Table F.14). Although there was a statistical difference in impacts on employment across completion groups, the impacts on employment for individuals who completed education or training activities or completed job search or job search assistance were not statistically significant.

Exhibit VII.12. Impacts on total earnings and annual employment rates in Years 2 and 3, based on UI wage records and survey data, by whether individuals started an employment or training-related activity

Outcome	Started an activity			Did not start an activity		
	WONDER group	Control group	Difference	WONDER group	Control group	Difference
Total earnings (\$)						
Based on UI data	18,819	19,084	-265	15,364	15,850	-486
Based on survey data	32,201	32,327	126	30,240	32,390	-2150
Employment rate (%)						
Based on UI data	71.7	72.6	-0.9	67.8	68.8	-1.0
Based on survey data	85.1	81.9	3.2	84.3	83.8	0.6

Source: SNAP employment and training evaluation UI wage records, weighted data. SNAP employment and training evaluation 36-month survey, weighted data.

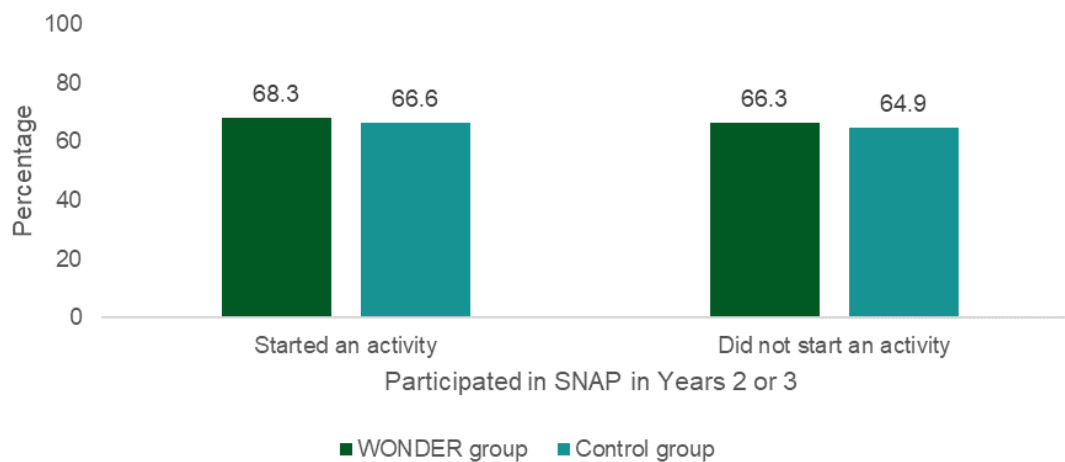
Note: Estimates based on survey data are from 157 WONDER group members and 160 control group members who started an activity; and 462 WONDER group members and 468 control group members who did not start one. Estimates based on UI data are from 540 WONDER group members and 556 control group members who started an activity; and 2,132 WONDER group members and 2,116 control group members who did not start one.

***/**/* Difference between the WONDER group and control group is significantly different from zero at the 0.01/0.05/0.10 level, two-tailed test.

^^^/^^/^ Significantly different from individuals who did not start an activity at the 0.01/0.05/0.10 level, two-tailed test.

SNAP participation. There were no impacts on SNAP participation in the two-year period (Years 2 and 3) for individuals who started an activity and those who did not start one (Exhibit VII.13). Among individuals who did not start an activity, there were impacts on average monthly SNAP benefits received, average monthly SNAP benefits received as a percentage of the maximum benefit amount, and the length of time spent participating in SNAP; there were no corresponding impacts for individuals who did start one (Appendix Table F.17). Differences in impacts across groups according to whether individuals started an activity were not statistically significant, however. There generally were no differences in impacts of WONDER on SNAP participation by whether individuals completed an education or training activity (Appendix Table F.18).

Exhibit VII.13. SNAP participation rates based on SNAP administrative data, by whether an individual started an activity



Source: SNAP employment and training evaluation SNAP administrative data, weighted data.

Note: Estimates are based on data from 540 WONDER group members and 556 control group members who started an activity; and 2,132 WONDER group members and 2,116 control group members who did not start one.

***/**/* Difference between the WONDER group and control group is significantly different from zero at the 0.01/0.05/0.10 level, two-tailed test.

^^^/^^/^ Significantly different from individuals who did not start an activity at the 0.01/0.05/0.10 level, two-tailed test.

VIII. Analysis of the costs and benefits of WONDER group and control group services

In this chapter, we build on the findings from the impact analysis by comparing the benefits that individuals received in dollar terms through changes in earnings and public assistance with the costs of the services provided. This cost-benefit analysis describes the extent to which the benefits exceeded the costs of providing services to the WONDER group when compared with the benefits and costs of providing services to the control group (referred to as the *net benefit*). The net benefit provides context for how well WONDER group outcomes (benefits) offset the costs of administering the services. We calculate the net benefits from the perspectives of the individuals enrolled in WONDER and of government and taxpayers. The benefit to society is the sum of the net benefits from the other two perspectives.

We first describe the costs of WONDER, including those for planning, recruiting, and delivering services. We then present the estimated costs of all services provided to WONDER group members through WONDER, existing SNAP E&T, and the community and the costs of all services provided to control group members through existing SNAP E&T and the community. We estimate the costs of all services because any benefits individuals experienced through increases in employment and earnings are the result of all of the services they received during the follow-up period, not just those offered through WONDER. We then present the findings from the cost-benefit analysis and estimate the net benefit of services provided to the WONDER group, compared with services provided to the control group. We conducted sensitivity analyses to test the robustness of our findings to changes in key assumptions and present those findings together with the cost-benefit analysis. All costs and the dollar values of benefits presented in this chapter have been adjusted to 2016 dollars, as this was the year that WONDER started providing services and individuals started accruing benefits.

A. Description of the costs of WONDER

This section provides detail on the total costs of WONDER services, the costs of WONDER services by type, and the average cost of services per individual.

1. Total costs of WONDER

FNS awarded DSS a grant of \$18,765,000 to develop and provide WONDER services. DSS and its partners and providers reported spending \$12,785,610 on planning, recruiting, and delivering WONDER

*WONDER cost a total of \$12,785,610
with service costs accounting for 71
percent of this amount.*

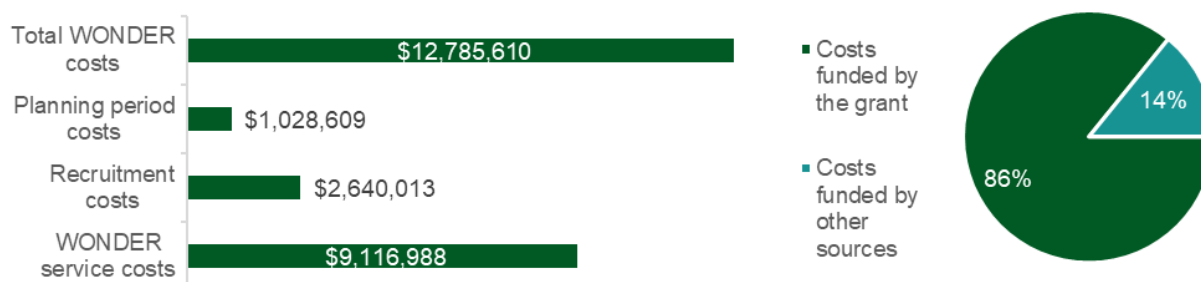
services (Exhibit VIII.1) ⁴¹. These costs included \$1,028,609 for planning (8 percent of total costs) and \$2,640,013 for recruitment (21 percent). WONDER service costs—for ongoing administration and delivering direct services—were \$9,116,988, which was 71 percent of total costs.⁴² Ongoing

⁴¹ The costs for planning and recruiting affected both WONDER and control group members, whereas the costs for operating WONDER services affected the WONDER group only.

⁴² Service costs included costs of both ongoing administration and delivering direct services and activities. Ongoing administration costs included time for staff meetings, supervision, and other activities. Direct service costs included time staff spent providing services and activities to individuals, including time for tasks such as writing case notes or
(continued)

administration, which included time for staff meetings, supervision, and other activities, cost \$6,794,082 (53 percent of total costs, not shown). Direct service costs represented the remaining \$2,322,906 (18 percent, not shown). The FNS grant funded 86 percent of total costs (or \$10,979,902) and 14 percent were leveraged from other sources (\$1,805,708).

Exhibit VIII.1. Summary of WONDER costs



Sources: SNAP employment and training evaluation actual reported costs by WONDER grantee, partners, and providers, 2015-2018; and SNAP employment and training evaluation survey of direct service provider time use, 2016-2018.

Notes: The planning period was considered to encompass the time between when DSS and their partners began designing WONDER (after grant award) and WONDER started enrolling individuals (April 2015 to January 2016). Quarterly workbooks reported the costs of the planning period, and recruitment and WONDER services following the start of WONDER. We estimated the breakdown of recruitment, WONDER direct service, and ongoing administration costs using data from a time-use survey of direct service provider staff. All costs are presented in 2016 dollars.

Appendix Table G.2. summarizes costs through December 2018 by cost category, including (1) staff costs (including volunteer time), (2) partner and provider direct service costs, (3) supply and equipment costs, and (4) overhead and operating costs. About 70 percent of all spending covered staff costs (\$9,034,973) for DSS and WONDER partners and providers. An additional \$2,581,272 was used for overhead and operating costs and \$801,732 covered direct service costs. The remaining costs (\$367,633) covered supply and equipment costs. The FNS grant covered almost all costs (86 percent). Funding from other sources was used primarily for staff costs, accounting for 14 percent of the total staff costs (\$1,259,389).

2. Costs of WONDER services, by type of service

Service costs accounted for the most WONDER expenditures. We estimated the costs of specific types of services offered through WONDER, including those of ongoing administration and direct services. The two largest service expenditures for WONDER services were for case management, which accounted for \$3,917,289 or 31 percent of total WONDER costs, and assessments, which accounted for \$1,512,417 or 12 percent of total WONDER costs (Exhibit VIII.2). Job readiness or life skills workshop and support services accounted for smaller shares of total WONDER costs — 10 and 9 percent of total WONDER costs, respectively.

recording administrative data, and direct costs for resources such as textbooks or support services. Both ongoing administration and direct service costs included the costs of staff, supplies and equipment, overhead, facilities, and indirect costs.

Exhibit VIII.2. Costs of WONDER services, by service type

	Total service costs	Percentage of total
Total costs	\$12,785,610	100.0
Planning period costs	\$1,028,609	8.1
Recruitment costs	\$2,640,013	20.7
WONDER service costs ^a	\$9,116,988	71.3
Assessments	\$1,512,417	11.8
Case management ^b	\$3,917,289	30.6
Job readiness or life skills workshop	\$1,277,651	10.0
Education	\$77,971	0.6
Occupational skills training	\$880,104	6.9
Support services	\$1,179,469	9.2
Work-based learning	\$14,670	0.1
Other direct service contracts ^c	\$257,417	2.0

Sources: SNAP employment and training evaluation actual reported costs by WONDER grantee, partners, and providers, 2015-2018; and SNAP employment and training evaluation survey of direct service provider time use, 2016-2018.

Notes: The estimated costs of case management, job readiness or life skills workshop, and assessments include costs for staff, supplies and equipment, and overhead and operating costs, which were allocated using the average percentage of time spent on these activities in the time-use survey. We assumed the reported costs of support services, other direct service contracts, work-based learning, occupational skills training, and education already include costs for staff, supplies and equipment, or overhead and operating costs. Other direct service contracts included a contract to support collection of case management and participation data. We assumed these costs were either built into those payments or the associated staff time and costs fell under case management. All costs are presented in 2016 dollars.

^a Total WONDER service costs include the costs of direct services and ongoing administration.

^b Case management included one-on-one meetings with WONDER group members and time spent on case notes or referrals.

^c Other direct service contracts for the WONDER group included a contract to support collection of case management and participation data. This is the actual cost reported for other direct service contract costs (which covered WONDER group services only).

3. Costs of WONDER services, per individual

WONDER group members each received different combinations of services through WONDER based on their needs and interests. As a result, the costs of serving each WONDER group member varied based on the number and types of services in which they participated. Exhibit VIII.3 describes the cost of WONDER services per individual. We separately present costs of operating WONDER from the costs of resources that were provided directly to WONDER group members—subsidized earnings provided to individuals for activities such as work-based learning; and support services provided to offset the costs of participation in WONDER, such as transportation or training supplies.⁴³

WONDER services cost an average of \$2,857 per individual.

⁴³ Operating costs include all service costs other than those provided directly to individuals through subsidized earnings or support services. These costs represent the time and resources required to deliver services.

The total estimated costs of WONDER services per individual ranged from \$168 to \$16,674, but averaged \$2,857 per WONDER group member. The majority of the funds covered the costs of operating WONDER (\$2,775). Costs for subsidized earnings and support services were \$1 and \$81, respectively, per WONDER group member.

Exhibit VIII.3. Costs of WONDER services per WONDER group member

Per individual costs of services	Mean
Total WONDER service costs	\$2,857
WONDER operating costs ^a	\$2,775
Subsidized earnings while in WONDER	\$1
Support services while in WONDER	\$81
Sample size	3,391

Sources: SNAP employment and training evaluation actual reported costs by WONDER grantee, partners, and providers, 2015-2018; SNAP employment and training evaluation administrative service use data

Notes: The cost of services per WONDER group member are the means of the individual-level estimates of the costs of services for each WONDER group member based on the services they received and the per individual costs by service type. The estimated mean costs per WONDER group member include all individuals who enrolled in WONDER, including those who disengaged soon after enrollment and those who participated in multiple services over a longer period. All costs are presented in 2016 dollars.

^a WONDER operating costs are the estimated cost of direct services including the ongoing administration cost. We included the costs of any supplies and equipment incurred during the planning period in this estimate because those materials directly benefitted WONDER group members once service delivery began. No other planning period or recruitment costs are included.

Cost per WONDER group member (WONDER services only): standard error 39.37; range \$168–\$16,674; confidence interval \$2,698–\$2,852.

B. Difference in costs of all services received by the WONDER and control group members

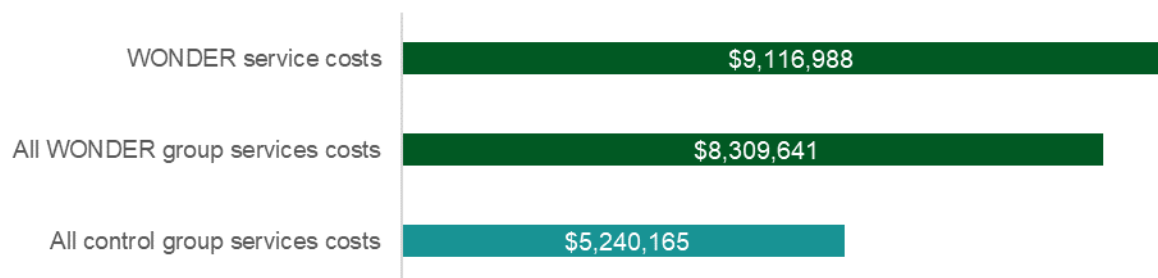
Whereas Section A describes the costs to DSS and their partners and providers for developing WONDER and providing services to WONDER group members, this section describes the costs of *all* services the WONDER group members received through WONDER, existing SNAP E&T, and the community during the WONDER service period. In the cost-benefit analysis, we use the difference in the average costs of all services WONDER and control group members received per individual through WONDER, existing SNAP E&T, or the community and compare these costs to benefits. We use these differences in costs because impacts of WONDER on individuals' outcomes such as earnings, were influenced by all services the sample members received during the 36-month follow up period not just those received by the WONDER group through WONDER. In this section, we present estimates of the total costs of all services WONDER and control group members received and examine service cost differentials overall, by service type, and per individual.

1. Total costs of all WONDER group and control group services

Based on data from the 12- and 36-month follow-up surveys, the estimated total cost of all WONDER group services was \$8,309,641, including costs for both direct services and ongoing administration (Exhibit VIII.4). This cost is about 9 percent lower than the cost of WONDER services alone (\$9,116,988). The difference between the costs of WONDER services presented in Section A and the costs presented for WONDER group members in this section could reflect the difference between

administrative records of service use and each individual's recollection of services they received during the follow-up period.

Exhibit VIII.4. Total costs of all WONDER group and control group services



Sources: SNAP employment and training evaluation actual reported costs by WONDER grantee, partners, and providers, 2015-2018; and SNAP employment and training evaluation survey of direct service provider time use, 2016-2018; WIA Gold Standard Evaluation cost estimates 2012; FNS-583 data 2018; SNAP employment and training evaluation 12- and 36-month surveys, weighted data.

Notes: The estimates were calculated as the product of the costs per WONDER group member for each type of direct service and the number of WONDER group members who received each type of direct service in the SNAP employment and training evaluation 12- and 36- month survey data. Control group cost estimates were calculated as the product of the WIA costs per individual for each type of direct service and the number of control group members who received each type of direct service in the SNAP employment and training evaluation 12- and 36- month survey data. All costs are presented in 2016 dollars.

The cost-benefit analysis assesses whether the enhanced WONDER services were effective enough to offset the difference in costs between the services the WONDER and control groups received. The services the control group received measure what services would have been available to the WONDER group members if WONDER were not in place. The control group only had access to services available through the existing SNAP E&T program or in the community. The estimated cost of all control group services received was \$5,240,165, including costs for direct services and ongoing administration (Exhibit VIII.4). This was about two-thirds of the cost of all WONDER group services.

2. Costs of all WONDER and control group services, by type of service

The difference between WONDER and control group costs of all services could reflect multiple factors, including how many services individuals received, how long the average individual spent in a given type of service or in services overall, or how much staff time or other resources those services required.

Exhibit VIII.5 presents estimated costs of key WONDER and control group services, by type of service.

- **All WONDER group services.** Job readiness or life skills workshop and support services were the largest expenditures among all of the services that WONDER group members received through WONDER, existing SNAP E&T, and the community. Job readiness or life skills workshop accounted for \$2,909,932 or 35 percent of total service costs, and support services accounted for \$1,949,005 or 24 percent of total service costs. Assessments and case management both represented 17 percent of total service costs.
- **All control group services.** Case management and education were the largest expenditures among all of the services that control group members received through existing SNAP E&T and the community. Case management accounted for \$2,117,745 or 40 percent of total service costs, and education accounted for \$1,827,461 or 35 percent of total service costs. Work-based learning, occupational

skills training, and job readiness or life skills workshop represented smaller shares of total service costs—16, 4, and 3 percent, respectively.

Education, one of the highest categories of costs for the control group (approaching \$2 million) was one of the lowest costs for the WONDER group (\$187,949). On the other hand, support services, one of the highest costs for the WONDER group (almost \$2 million) was one of the lowest costs for the control group (\$102,720).

Exhibit VIII.5. Costs for the WONDER and control groups, by service type

	All WONDER group services		All control group services	
	Total service costs	Percentage of total	Total service costs	Percentage of total
Total service costs ^a	\$8,309,641	100.0	\$5,240,165	100.0
Assessments				
Case management ^b	\$1,425,594	17.2	\$13,171	0.3
Job readiness or life skills workshop	\$1,393,435	16.8	\$2,117,745	40.4
Education	\$2,909,932	35.0	\$173,670	3.3
Occupational skills training	\$187,949	2.3	\$1,827,461	34.9
Support services	\$131,306	1.6	\$188,720	3.6
Work-based learning	\$1,949,005	23.5	\$102,720	2.0
Other direct service contracts ^c	\$55,002	0.7	--	--

Sources: SNAP employment and training evaluation actual reported costs by WONDER grantee, partners, and providers, 2015-2018; SNAP employment and training evaluation survey of direct service provider time use, 2016-2018; WIA Gold Standard Evaluation cost estimates 2012; FNS-583 data 2018; and SNAP employment and training evaluation 12- and 36-month surveys, weighted data.

Notes: Cost estimates by service type were calculated as the product of the costs per individual for each type of direct service and the number of WONDER or control group members who received each type of service according to survey data on participation. Hyphens indicate that there were no costs associated with the service type, according to the data on participation in services for this estimate, which came from the SNAP employment and training evaluation 12- and 36-month survey data. All costs are presented in 2016 dollars.

^a Total service costs include the costs of direct services and ongoing administration.

^b Case management includes one-on-one meetings with WONDER or control group members and time spent on case notes or referrals.

^c Other direct service contracts for the WONDER group included a contract to support collection of case management and participation data. This is the actual cost reported for other direct service contract costs (which covered WONDER group services only).

3. Costs of all WONDER and control group services per individual

WONDER and control group members each received different combinations of services, and the costs of serving each individual varied based on the number and types of services in which they participated. In addition to providing context on the costs required to provide these types of services to individuals, the per individual costs of all WONDER and control group services are the basis for the cost differentials used in the cost-benefit analysis.

Using data from the survey, Exhibit VIII.6 describes the cost of all services WONDER and control group members received during the WONDER service period, per individual. We present operating costs

separately from the costs of the resources provided directly to WONDER and control group members—subsidized earnings provided to individuals for activities such as work-based learning, and support services provided to offset the costs of participation in services, such as transportation or training supplies.

All services WONDER group members received through WONDER, existing SNAP E&T, and the community cost \$1,750 per individual, on average.

The costs of all services WONDER group members received (from WONDER, existing SNAP E&T, and the community) ranged from \$168 to \$7,002 but averaged \$1,750 per WONDER group member. The largest component of this cost was operating costs, which were \$1,657. The costs of subsidized earnings and support services accounted for a smaller share of the overall cost—\$3 and \$90, respectively.

Exhibit VIII.6. Costs of all services per WONDER and control group member

	All WONDER group services	All control group services
Total service costs	\$1,750	\$1,392
Operating costs ^a	\$1,657	\$1,121
Subsidized earnings while in services	\$3	\$240
Support services while in services	\$90	\$30
Sample size	3,393	3,402

Sources: SNAP employment and training evaluation actual reported costs by WONDER grantee, partners, and providers, 2015-2018; SNAP employment and training evaluation administrative service use data; WIA Gold Standard Evaluation cost estimates 2012; and SNAP employment and training evaluation 12- and 36-month surveys, weighted data.

Notes: The costs of services per WONDER and control group member are the means of the individual-level estimates of the costs of services for each WONDER and control group member based on the services they received and the per individual costs by service type. All costs are presented in 2016 dollars.

^a Operating costs are the estimated cost of direct services including the ongoing administration cost.

Cost of all WONDER services per WONDER group member: standard error \$49; range \$168–\$7,002; confidence interval \$1,562–\$1,753.

Cost of all control group services per control group member: standard error \$139; range \$0–\$28,350; confidence interval \$849–\$1,393.

The cost of all services control group members received ranged from \$0 to \$28,350 but averaged \$1,392 per control group member. Operating costs accounted for the largest share of this cost (\$1,121), and subsidized earnings and support services represented smaller shares (\$240 and \$30, respectively). The cost of all services per control group member was about 81 percent of the cost of all services per WONDER group member, on average.

All services control group members received through the community and existing SNAP E&T cost \$1,392 per individual, on average.

C. Cost-benefit analysis of WONDER group services

The purpose of the cost-benefit analysis is to estimate the benefits in dollar terms relative to the dollar costs of providing services. This section presents the findings of the cost-benefit analysis. We present results using the two sources of data on benefits used in the impact analysis: (1) UI wage records and (2)

36-month survey data.⁴⁴ The cost-benefit analysis uses a framework to present a comprehensive listing of WONDER group benefits and costs, relative to the control group, from multiple perspectives, including those of (1) individuals enrolled in WONDER, (2) government and taxpayers, and (3) society as a whole, which represents the sum of the other two perspectives. The primary cost-benefit finding from each perspective was the net benefit (the difference between total benefits and total costs). A positive net benefit means the benefits outweighed the costs, whereas a negative net benefit means the costs outweighed the benefits. In addition, we estimated the ratio of benefits to costs, which describes the return to society on each dollar invested. The benefit cost ratio is the quotient of the total benefit and the absolute value of the total costs. We also describe how our results differed according to changes in key assumptions for each of the cost-benefit accounting frameworks presented below.

1. Costs and benefits of all services for WONDER group members, based on UI wage records

The net benefit of services for the WONDER group compared to the control group was negative for both WONDER group members and government and taxpayers during the 36-month follow-up period (Exhibit VIII.7). This resulted in an overall negative net benefit to society. The benefit-cost ratio, or return on investment to society, was about -3.6. These results emerged because control group members reported receiving higher cumulative earnings and fringe benefits than WONDER group members. As a result, WONDER group members were also responsible for lower tax payments. Although the WONDER group had higher SNAP benefit receipt, on average, those benefits to individuals were a cost to government and taxpayers in the same amount.

*The net benefits of all services WONDER group members received were **negative** for all perspectives during the 36-month follow-up period (based on UI wage records).*

- **Society.** On average, all WONDER group services cost society \$1,363 more per individual than control group services per individual. This difference primarily reflects the control group accruing higher cumulative earnings (\$859) and fringe benefits (\$180) during the 36-month follow up period compared with the WONDER group.
- **WONDER group members.** On average, WONDER group members benefitted less than control group members by \$550. Although WONDER group members reported more in SNAP benefits (\$211) compared to the control group, these were offset by higher cumulative earnings and fringe benefits among control group members (by \$859 and \$180, respectively) compared with WONDER group members, according to UI wage records. As a result of the difference in earnings, WONDER group members also paid \$210 less in taxes than control group members did.

⁴⁴ We included impacts on cumulative earnings and SNAP and TANF benefit receipt in the cost-benefit analysis even if they were not statistically significant. These estimates are the best information we have on the qualitative differences in outcomes between the two groups. We noted statistically significant impacts where they were present in the exhibits.

Exhibit VIII.7 Benefits and costs associated with WONDER services or community-offered services, for the WONDER group compared to the control group, UI wage records

	Perspective		
	WONDER group members	Government and taxpayers	Society
Benefits (\$)			
Employment and earnings			
Earnings (UI wage records)	-859	0	-859
Fringe benefits	-180	0	-180
Tax payments	210	-210	0
Use of public benefits			
SNAP benefits	211***	-211	0
TANF benefits	8	-8	0
Reduced administration costs	0	-25	-25
Total benefits	-609	-455	-1,064
Costs (\$)			
Net operating costs ^a	0	-536	-536
Net subsidized earnings while in services ^b	0	238	238
Net support services while in services ^b	59	-59	0
Total costs	59	-358	-299
Net benefit (\$)	-550	-813	-1,363
Benefit-cost ratio			-3.57

Sources: SNAP employment and training evaluation UI wage records, weighted data; SNAP administrative data; SNAP employment and training evaluation actual reported costs by WONDER grantee, partners, and providers, 2015-2018; SNAP employment and training evaluation administrative service use data; WIA Gold Standard Evaluation cost estimates, 2012; and SNAP employment and training evaluation 12- and 36-month surveys, weighted data.

Notes: Earnings, SNAP benefits, and TANF benefits are the impact estimates presented in Chapter VII. The net benefit is the difference between total benefits and total costs. A negative net benefit is a net cost. The benefit-cost ratio is the quotient of the total benefits and the absolute value of total costs. A benefit-cost ratio greater than one represents greater benefits than costs; a number less than one suggests fewer benefits than costs. All benefits and costs are presented in 2016 dollars. The standard error of the cost per WONDER group member is \$39 and of the cost per control group member is \$139.

^a This estimate is the difference between WONDER and control group costs per individual. This value excluded planning period costs but included the costs of supplies and equipment incurred during the planning period that supported ongoing services once they started.

^b Subsidized earnings and support services directly benefit individuals while they are enrolled in services. We assumed the subsidized earnings benefitting individuals were reflected in the earnings impacts presented as the first row in the benefits section of the exhibit. All earnings presented in the first row in the benefits section of the exhibit are included in the fringe and tax estimates, though we do not know the extent to which subsidized earnings would have translated into these benefits in practice. These subsidized earnings are offset by the costs to government and taxpayers, which is represented in the second row of the costs section of the exhibit. We presented the support services as a benefit (positive transfer) to individuals under the third row of the cost section of the exhibit, and these support services are offset by the costs to government and taxpayers in the same row. Both subsidized earnings and support services are assumed to have a net neutral (zero) benefit to society because the benefits are offset by the costs.

***/**/* Difference in earnings between the WONDER group and control group significantly different from zero at the 0.01/0.05/0.10 level, two-tailed test.

- **Government and taxpayers.** Providing WONDER group services cost government and taxpayers \$813 more, on average, than providing control group services per individual. The costs of providing services (including WONDER, existing SNAP E&T, and community services) cost more than control group services by an average of \$358. Government and taxpayers experienced a higher cost for operating services and providing support services (of \$536 and \$59, respectively), but paid \$238 *less* in subsidized earnings costs compared to control group services. In addition, WONDER group members received higher SNAP benefits than control group members (\$211), which was a cost to government and taxpayers. WONDER group members also paid \$210 less in taxes, on average, than control group members, which serves as a cost to government and taxpayers.

We conducted sensitivity analyses to test the robustness of our findings based on UI wage records to changes in key assumptions, including (1) the values of benefits associated with increases in earnings, such as fringe benefits and taxes; (2) the values of costs and benefits when accounting for factors such as inflation and present value; (3) the assumption that subsidized earnings were reported to State UI agencies and are reflected in earnings impacts; and (4) the services WONDER group members received were primarily through WONDER and not from existing SNAP E&T and the community. These results were robust to changes in all of our key assumptions about benefits and costs from all perspectives (Appendix Tables G.10 – G.12). Because there were costs to both WONDER group members and the government and taxpayers, the net benefit to society was negative regardless of changes in assumptions, ranging from \$1,273 to \$2,479 per individual. The WONDER group services led to a negative net benefit for individuals based on changes to all assumptions related to fringe benefits, taxes, and discount rates. Estimated negative net benefits per individual ranged from \$150 to \$593. Assuming subsidized earnings were *not* included in UI wage records resulted in a negative net benefit of \$788 per individual, compared to a negative net benefit of \$550 under our main assumptions. WONDER group services also resulted in a negative net benefit to government and taxpayers regardless of changes to key assumptions, ranging from \$770 to \$1,920 per individual.

2. Costs and benefits of all services for WONDER group members, according to 36-month survey data

The findings based on 36-month follow-up survey data were similar to those based on UI wage records. The net benefits of all WONDER group services were negative for WONDER group members, government and taxpayers, and society during the follow-up period (Exhibit VIII.8). The benefit-cost ratio, or return on investment to society, was -12.6. The differential in cumulative earnings for the WONDER group relative to the control group was about three times larger according to the survey data than it was according to the UI data. This greater cost of participating in WONDER carried through to the overall negative net benefit for society.

*The net benefits of all services WONDER group members received were **negative** for all perspectives during the 36-month follow-up period, according to survey data.*

- **Society.** WONDER group services cost society \$4,073 more than control group services per individual. This estimated negative net benefit according to survey data was more than that according to UI wage records data primarily because of the difference in reported earnings and fringe benefits for WONDER group members (combined earnings were \$3,101 less for WONDER group members

than for control group members according to survey data, compared to \$859 less according to UI wage records).

Exhibit VIII.8. Benefits and costs associated with WONDER services or community-offered services, for the WONDER group compared to the control group, 36-month survey data

	Perspective		
	WONDER group members	Government and taxpayers	Society
Benefits (\$)			
Employment and earnings			
Earnings (survey data)	-3,101	0	-3,101
Fringe benefits	-648	0	-648
Tax payments	819	-819	0
Use of public benefits			
SNAP benefits	211***	-211	0
TANF benefits	8	-8	0
Reduced administration costs	0	-25	-25
Total benefits	-2,711	-1,063	-3,774
Costs (\$)			
Net operating costs ^a	0	-536	-536
Net subsidized earnings while in services ^b	0	238	238
Net support services while in services ^b	59	-59	0
Total costs	59	-358	-299
Net benefit (\$)	-2,651	-1,421	-4,073
Benefit-cost ratio			-12.64

Source: SNAP employment and training evaluation 12- and 36-month surveys, weighted data; SNAP administrative data; SNAP employment and training evaluation actual reported costs by WONDER grantee, partners, and providers, 2015-2018; SNAP employment and training evaluation administrative service use data; and WIA Gold Standard Evaluation cost estimates, 2012.

Notes: Earnings, SNAP benefits, and TANF benefits are the impact estimates presented in Chapter VII. The net benefit is the difference between total benefits and total costs. A negative net benefit is a net cost. The benefit-cost ratio is the quotient of the total benefits and the absolute value of the total costs. A benefit-cost ratio greater than one represents greater benefits than costs, and a number less than one suggests fewer benefits than costs. All benefits and costs are presented in 2016 dollars. The standard error of the cost per WONDER group member is \$39 and of the cost per control group member is \$139.

^a This estimate is the difference between WONDER and control group costs per individual. This value excluded planning period costs but included the costs of supplies and equipment incurred during the planning period that supported ongoing services once they started.

^b Subsidized earnings and support services directly benefit individuals while they are enrolled in services. We assumed the subsidized earnings benefitting individuals were reflected in the earnings impacts presented as the first row in the benefits section of the exhibit. All earnings presented in the first row in the benefits section of the exhibit are included in the fringe and tax estimates, though we do not know the extent to which subsidized earnings would have translated into these benefits in practice. These subsidized earnings are offset by the costs to government and taxpayers, which is represented in the second row of the costs section of the exhibit. We presented the support services as a benefit (positive transfer) to individuals under the third row of the cost section of the exhibit and these support services are offset by the costs to government and taxpayers in the same row. Both subsidized earnings and support services are assumed to have a net neutral (zero) benefit to society because the benefits are offset by the costs.

***/**/* Difference between WONDER group and control group significantly different from zero at the 0.01/0.05/0.10 level, two-tailed test.

- **WONDER group members.** According to survey data, WONDER group members received \$2,651 less in net benefits than control group members over the 36-month follow up period. The WONDER group had lower cumulative earnings and fringe benefits relative to the control group (by \$3,101 and \$648, respectively). We assumed any subsidized earnings received while participating in work-based learning activities were included in the \$3,101 difference in earnings. Although WONDER group members paid fewer taxes (by \$819) and received higher SNAP benefits (\$211), these benefits did not offset the difference in earnings relative to the control group.
- **Government and taxpayers.** Government and taxpayers experienced a cost of \$1,421 per individual for providing all WONDER group services, based on survey data. As a result of WONDER group members reporting lower cumulative earnings than control group members according the survey data, the government and taxpayers received \$819 less in tax payments, on average, over the 36-month follow up period. As presented above in the UI wage record findings, providing services cost government and taxpayers an average of \$358 more per WONDER group member, compared to control group members.

We conducted a similar set of sensitivity analyses to test our key assumptions based on survey data, including: (1) the values of benefits associated with increases in earnings, such as fringe benefits and taxes; (2) the values of costs and benefits when accounting for factors like inflation and present value; and (3) the services WONDER group members received were primarily through WONDER and not from existing SNAP E&T and the community. These results were robust to changes in our all of key assumptions about benefits and costs from all perspectives (Appendix Tables G.10–G.12). Because there were costs to both WONDER group members and the government and taxpayers, the net benefit to society was negative regardless of changes in assumptions, ranging from \$3,915 to \$5,188 per individual. Estimates of negative net benefits to WONDER group members ranged from \$2,496 to \$2,806. Government and taxpayers also experienced a negative net benefit for WONDER group services regardless of changes to key assumptions, ranging from \$1,266 to \$2,528.

IX. Conclusion

The goal of the 10 SNAP E&T pilots was to test innovative strategies to increase SNAP participants' employment and earnings, and reduce their need for public assistance benefits. Through its comprehensive data collection and rigorous experimental design, this evaluation assessed whether WONDER—the innovative SNAP E&T program Delaware designed and implemented statewide targeting new SNAP work registrants—was effective in achieving these goals.

Several interrelated analyses have been the basis of this final report. Findings from the implementation analysis describe the planning and implementation of the pilot, its services and operations, and the components that may be sustainable or replicable. Findings from the participation and impact analyses describe receipt of services, participation in activities, and impacts on individuals' outcomes for up to three years after enrollment. Finally, the cost-benefit analysis describes the costs of services and compares the benefits of receiving services to the costs of providing them. In this chapter, we summarize and discuss key findings from all of these analyses.

A. Summary of findings

DSS was able to coordinate with a few service providers in the community to create industry-specific training and subsidized employment programs in construction, culinary arts, and manufacturing. It also developed a service pathway that provided job placement and job readiness assistance. Although it exceeded its recruitment goals and enrolled many individuals in the pilot, it struggled to engage many of them, and few participated in occupational skills training and work-based learning through the industry-specific tracks. These issues led to small differences between research groups in participation in and completion of activities and, ultimately, no impact on earnings or receipt of public assistance. Because WONDER group members did not earn significantly more than control group members, the overall cost of implementing the pilot outweighed its benefits. We report these findings in detail below. Section C provides more context for the findings.

1. WONDER implementation

DSS created WONDER in response to research that identified service gaps in its existing SNAP E&T program. WONDER offered intensive case management and wraparound services while individuals participated in tracks that provided occupational skills training in growth industries with high-wage potential. Despite success in enrolling individuals in the pilot, staff found it challenging to engage individuals; WONDER group members often did not attend appointments for their assessments or the first appointment once referred to a track. In addition, individuals participated in the industry-specific tracks at lower rates than DSS and providers anticipated. Thus, most WONDER group members did not receive occupational skills training to move into higher-wage jobs as originally planned. Overall, DSS, provider, and WONDER staff agreed that more up-front planning and establishing clear communication among all organizations early and continuously could have allowed them to respond more quickly to the low referrals to tracks and improve service delivery.

2. Service receipt among WONDER group members

Only about 68 percent of WONDER group members returned after enrollment and received at least one service—that is, they were assessed, completed their ICP, or engaged in an employment or training-related activity. About half of all WONDER group members ultimately started at least one of the four

tracks, and 40 percent started an employment or training-related activity after they completed intake and assessments. Most of those who started a track participated in the job placement track (46 percent of all WONDER group members), with many fewer starting the construction track (3 percent), the culinary track (6 percent), or the manufacturing track (3 percent). Because most individuals were in the job placement track, the most frequently started activities were job placement assistance (30 percent of all group members) and skills building assistance (12 percent); 13 percent started occupational skills training. The completion rates for each track were similar—37 to 39 percent—but completion rates by type of activity among those who started it varied. Most of those who started work-based learning completed it (90 percent), whereas between 60 to 70 percent of those who started job placement assistance, basic education, occupational skills training, and soft skills training completed the activity.

Virtually all WONDER group members had at least one contact with a case manager, and 58 percent received a support service. Among those who received a support service, transportation assistance was the most common, with 56 percent of WONDER group members receiving it. On average, WONDER group members who received support services received \$356 in total support service payments.

Individuals spent an average of four to five months in WONDER. Nearly all of them exited WONDER within their first year (96 percent), with nearly half exiting within their first quarter. Most individuals chose to exit before completing services (62 percent), but nearly one-third of those in WONDER exited because they completed it.

3. Differences between WONDER and control groups in service receipt

The ability of WONDER to impact employment, earnings, and individuals' receipt of public assistance benefits depended in part on whether there were differences between the WONDER and control groups' receipt of services and participation in and completion of employment or training-related activities. Relative to the control group, the WONDER group was more likely to participate in job search training activities and in education or training activities during the three years following random assignment. According to the survey data, rates of participation in these activities were 16 and 7 percentage points higher, respectively, among the WONDER group relative to the control group. These findings were largely due to differences in Year 1 participation; there were no differences between groups in participation in activities in Years 2 and 3. The WONDER group also had higher rates of participation than the control group in most types of activities, including general job skills training, occupational skills training, and work-based learning; participation in education activities was similar across the WONDER and control groups.

WONDER group members were more likely than control group members to complete an activity. Overall, WONDER group members were 8 percentage points more likely than control group members to complete any type of education or training activity. Differences between research groups in rates of completion were present only in Year 1. Individuals in the WONDER and control groups each spent, on average, about four months in activities, but those in the WONDER group spent more hours per week in activities (six versus three hours). WONDER group members were more likely than those in the control group to receive an occupational certificate or license (5 percentage point difference).

The WONDER group also was more likely than the control group to receive case management (18 percentage point difference) and support services (10 percentage point difference). The largest difference between the two groups was observed for transportation assistance (12 percentage point difference).

4. Impacts of WONDER on individuals' outcomes

Findings from analyses of the two primary outcomes in the second and third year after random assignment show that WONDER did not lead to an increase in earnings in the two-year period (Years 2 and 3) following random assignment and generally did not affect rates of SNAP participation. Related analyses of employment found that WONDER had no impact on employment in Years 2 and 3 following random assignment, nor on the average amount of time individuals were employed in each year. There generally were no impacts on earnings or employment in the two-year period (Years 2 and 3) across subgroups defined by age, barriers to employment, employment history, presence of children in the household, and household income.

SNAP participation rates were higher for the WONDER group than the control group in Years 1 and 2 but this difference was smaller and not statistically significant in Year 3 and in Years 2 and 3 combined. WONDER also led to an increase in SNAP benefit amounts in Years 1 and 2—both nominally and as a percentage of the maximum benefit amount—but not in Year 3. Over time, SNAP participation decreased for both research groups, from approximately 99 percent in Year 1 to approximately 50 percent in Year 3. With few exceptions, these findings generally were consistent across subgroups. WONDER led to an increase in the average amount of SNAP benefits as a percentage of the maximum benefit in Years 2 and 3 for individuals who were employed in the 12 months before random assignment, but there was no impact for those not employed during that period. This finding was similar for individuals in households with children compared to those in households without children.

Changes to WONDER policies or procedures after the pilot began did not affect the likelihood of WONDER group members starting or completing activities. Analyses that compared impacts among individuals who were randomly assigned earlier versus later in the enrollment period showed no differences in the two-year period among WONDER group members who enrolled before or after changes were made to its policies and procedures. They included changes to the training provider for Track 3, the distribution of work for the OSs, and the amount and types of support services available.

5. WONDER costs and cost-benefit analyses

DSS and its partners and providers reported spending \$12,785,610 from April 2015 to December 2018 on the planning and implementation of WONDER (\$1,028,609 during the planning period, \$2,640,013 for recruitment, and \$9,116,988 for WONDER services). The FNS grant funded 86 percent of these costs; partners and providers leveraged other funding sources for the remaining 14 percent. The cost-benefit analysis compares the benefits individuals received through earnings and public assistance with the average costs of all services WONDER and control group members received per individual. The costs of all services WONDER group members received through WONDER, existing SNAP E&T services, or the community were about 9 percent lower than the costs of WONDER (\$8,309,641 or \$1,750 per individual, on average). The costs of all services control group members received through existing SNAP E&T and the community (\$5,240,165 or \$1,392 per individual, on average) were about 81 percent of the costs of all services WONDER group members received.

WONDER group benefits and costs relative to the control group are presented from multiple perspectives, including those of (1) individuals enrolled in WONDER, (2) government and taxpayers, and (3) society as a whole, which represents the sum of the other two perspectives. The net benefits of WONDER group services were negative for society during the 36-month follow-up period according to UI wage records and 36-month follow-up survey data (by \$1,363 and \$4,073, respectively). WONDER group services led

to a negative net benefit for individuals due to lower earnings while in services (\$550 and \$2,651, respectively). The services WONDER group members received resulted in a negative net benefit to government and taxpayers (\$813 and \$1,421, respectively) because the costs of the services were not offset by benefits through higher tax payments or lower SNAP and TANF benefits.

B. Placing findings in the context of the workforce evaluation literature

The study findings are consistent with the previous literature that has often found small or no labor market effects of employment and training programs for low-income populations offering similar services as WONDER. Comprehensive literature reviews are provided in Barnow and Smith (2015), Card et al. (2018), Vollmer et al. (2017), and Goger et al. (2020). This literature covers a range of employment and training activities and support services offered by both ongoing programs as well as grant programs similar to WONDER, using impact designs with rigorous control (or comparison) groups.

The literature suggests that programs serving low-income populations can typically engage individuals and increase their receipt of services relative to those received by the study control groups in their local areas. These differences can be large, especially for the receipt of occupational skills training and subsidized employment, translating into positive effects on the percentages of individuals who participate in training activities and the attainment of associated certificates and credentials. However, few of the studies have found that the programs lead to long-term increases in earnings or independence from public assistance (at least over the time period covered by the studies, which is typically less than four years).

There are notable exceptions, however, that show that the types of activities offered by WONDER (such as occupational skills training in high-demand industries) could be effective. McConnell et al. (2021) found using nationally representative samples from a randomized control trial that had access to WIOA intensive services—one-on-one staff assistance such as assessments, coaching, career counseling, and service referrals—increased earnings by about 15 percent over a three-year follow-up period and yielded benefits that exceeded costs from the perspective of society. This evaluation, however, found no earnings effects of WIOA-funded occupation skills training. Further, several reviews of the existing literature on the role of supportive services in employment and training programs suggest that low-income populations receiving supportive services, in combination with technical training and other ancillary services, such as case management, can have more positive employment and earnings outcomes compared to groups that do not receive such wraparound services (Davis et al. 2013; Gueron and Hamilton 2002; Maguire et al. 2010; U.S. Department of Labor, U.S. Department of Commerce, U.S. Department of Education, U.S. Department of Health and Human Services 2014). Another notable exception is the random assignment evaluation of STEP Forward (Walter et al. 2017) which found that the impacts of subsidized employment offered to the treatment group continued into the fourth year, well after the subsidies had ended. Similarly, Reed et al. (2012) found statistically significant positive impacts of registered apprenticeships, even nine years after program entry.

The literature also suggests that interventions that *combine* several strategies to help low-income individuals find and keep jobs appear more effective than any *single* strategy (Vollmer et al. 2017). Further, “meta-analyses”—that use regressions to combine and analyze impacts from different studies—find that total program effects are more than the sum of the effects of each of the program’s strategies. Thus, implementation and other factors that affect how well multiple components of a program are operationalized and delivered are crucial determinants of a program’s success. Relatedly, the literature has consistently found considerable diversity in program impacts across individuals (females and the long-term unemployed tend to experience larger benefits) and across labor market conditions (programs

are less likely to show positive effects during periods of economic growth), but the patterns are not always consistent across studies.

Overall, the observed increases in the rates of take-up and completion of WONDER activities and receipt of services, and the lack of earning impacts for WONDER fit within the broader related literature. Although comparing the findings in this evaluation to those in the literature is informative, it is important to consider that differences in target populations, local economies, and varied experiences in implementing activities and services available in a pilot or program make it challenging to form direct comparisons to other studies. The next section provides context for the evaluation findings from this perspective.

C. Discussion

Although WONDER did not lead to increased earnings or reduced participation in SNAP, it increased the percentages of individuals who received case management and support services relative to the control group, as well as the percentage of those who participated in employment or training-related activities. This accomplishment is notable, given the prevalence and extent of barriers WONDER group members faced—only 13 percent were employed at the time of random assignment, and nearly one-quarter of them did not have a high school diploma. The higher rates of receipt of case management and support services among WONDER group members, particularly transportation assistance, may have allowed some individuals to overcome barriers associated not only with starting employment or training-related activities, but also sustaining participation over time and ultimately completing those activities. These differences did not translate into impacts on individuals' earnings, however.

The lack of an impact may reflect that only 40 percent of WONDER group members started an employment or training-related activity, meaning nearly two-thirds of WONDER group members did not participate in a substantive activity. In addition, only about 10 percent of WONDER group members participated in industry-specific tracks. Although DSS always intended for most WONDER group members to receive services through the job placement track, both it and the providers had anticipated higher rates of participation in the other industry-specific tracks. The lower rates of engagement could have been due to several factors, including that (1) some tracks were not as mature as others and struggled to provide the promised services; (2) some individuals chose the job placement track because they needed employment immediately and were not interested in building their skills; (3) some individuals did not meet the criteria for a track (could not pass a drug test or did not meet the education-level requirements); and (4) some individuals thought the training options were limited and seemingly not well targeted to the labor market or the individual's interests. For example, some WONDER group members pointed out that the tracks were focused on more male-oriented industries and suggested that tracks focused on careers such as banking, customer service, and medical assisting would have been more attractive to some individuals.

Whatever the reason, most WONDER group members were referred to the job placement track, where they generally did not develop new skills. Job placement specialists mostly provided support in developing resumes, preparing for job interviews, and offering job leads. These activities were similar to those received by the control group (those referred to Career TEAM primarily received job placement support as well). WONDER group members likely were receiving more intensive case management and general support in obtaining jobs, but the percentage of them becoming employed, and the wages for those jobs, may not have been much different from what was available to the control group. In fact, the control group may have had access to a wider array of jobs openings, as Career TEAM had been

developing its relationships with employers for many years and had contracts with some employers, such as Amazon, whereas the job placement specialists were developing new employment leads for WONDER rather than starting from an existing employer network.

Looking across all types of activities, rates of participation and completion were only slightly higher among WONDER group members than among control group members. However, even those WONDER group members who started or completed activities did not have different impacts on outcomes compared to those who did not start or complete activities. These findings are surprising, as we expect the participation in and completion of activities to help connect individuals to meaningful employment. It is possible that some WONDER group members who participated in employment or training-related activities may have continued to face substantial barriers to employment and could have benefited from additional or more intensive case management and support services. Learning more about the barriers to starting and completing these activities would help administrators and providers identify which case management and support services could promote greater participation in employment or training-related activities. This information would enhance understanding of challenges faced by WONDER group members who participated in these activities, allowing program staff to adapt their content or delivery to achieve a greater impact.

When considering the overall findings from the WONDER pilot, there are a few additional factors that may have contributed to the results, including the following:

- **Earnings impacts might depend on the type of activities in which individuals participated.** Individuals in the WONDER group were offered a wide range of services and activities. Earnings impacts may not be apparent for all WONDER group members, but that finding does not mean specific activities, such as occupational skills training or work-based learning, were ineffective. For example, many WONDER group members valued the skills acquired in the culinary track (Track 2) and many who completed it found employment soon after obtaining their certification. However, due to the limited number of individuals who participated in each of the substantive, industry-specific tracks, we were not able to separately assess their effectiveness. Assessing the effectiveness of services and activities separately and in combination would help to identify promising practices for improving outcomes. Because some WONDER group members participated in multiple activities, isolating the effect of a single type of activity can be challenging. It would be helpful to classify individuals who received different sets of services into mutually exclusive and distinct groups. For each group, describing participation in activities and estimating impacts on outcomes would help to identify specific services and activities, or combinations of them, that increase earnings and improve outcomes most effectively.
- **The COVID-19 pandemic began during the 36-month follow-up survey period.** Outcomes measured in Year 3 for participants who were randomly assigned in the pilot between March 2017 and December 2017 could have been affected by the COVID-19 pandemic, which began to dramatically affect life in the United States in March 2020. However, there is no indication that the COVID-19 pandemic may have hindered our ability to identify impacts in Year 3. Earnings, employment rates, and SNAP participation rates generally were similar in Year 1 and Year 2. Although it is possible that impacts may have emerged in Year 3 in the absence of the pandemic, the pre-pandemic patterns of changes in outcomes over time do not provide much support for this conclusion. Nevertheless, the pandemic may have affected individuals' ability to participate in employment or training-related activities in Year 3 and also may have affected outcomes differently based on their occupation, if they were employed, or the occupation they were training to enter. It

would be useful to assess whether differences between research groups in participation in activities and impacts on earnings and employment in Year 3 differed based on these factors.

- **WONDER costs were higher than the financial benefits of the program, but this primarily reflects the absence of an impact on earnings.** The net benefit was negative for WONDER due to the differential costs of WONDER group services not being offset by the benefits accrued through earnings and fringe benefits during the 36-month follow-up period. When interpreting this finding, it is also important to consider that WONDER services were new and experimental. The purpose of the SNAP E&T pilot was to test new approaches to services. Even though we excluded the costs of planning and recruitment in considering the cost differential between WONDER and control group services, the costs of WONDER group services were likely higher for the three years of the pilot than they would have been if administered over a longer period of time. In addition, it is possible that some individuals realized benefits which do not appear in the cost-benefit analysis results – for example, increases in earnings that individuals earned after the observation period of 36-months, or unmeasured benefits such as changes in food security, health, or well-being.

Despite WONDER not leading to impacts on earnings or receipt of public assistance, SNAP E&T program administrators can learn from the recruitment approach it used. DSS developed a detailed outreach and recruitment process before the pilot began, focused on meeting SNAP participants where they were in the community. Staff viewed WONDER as “a mobile program.” The OSs traveled into the community and could do their work with individuals from anywhere (staff all had laptops, Wi-Fi, and cellphones). Some OSs were rarely in the WONDER office and worked primarily in the community. Although they did reach individuals by telephone or letters, much of their recruitment effort was focused on approaching people in the community—at their homes, SNAP offices, or libraries or other local organizations—and explaining what WONDER offered. Also, DSS found success in changing its recruitment model by designating a group of OSs to focus on recruiting and enrolling, and another group on case management. This change also allowed DSS to assign staff to roles based on their strengths, placing those who liked to interact with the public in the recruiter roles and those who were more hesitant to conduct outreach or preferred to work one on one with individuals in the case manager role. Playing to staff strengths allowed staff members to excel in their designated role and led to a dramatic increase in recruitment without a change to the types of recruitment activities being performed. It also provided the case managers the time needed to focus on meeting the needs of the individuals in the program, instead of splitting their time between recruitment and case management. As more SNAP E&T program administrators and providers look for ways to grow their programs, identifying staff who have skills and a preference for marketing the program, and giving them the flexibility to meet people where they are, may improve engagement.

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