RESEARCH REPORT

Employers, Young People, and Training and Support

Implementation Study of the Urban Alliance High School Internship Program

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Executive Summary

Headquartered in Washington, DC, Urban Alliance provides training, mentorship, and work experience to high school seniors from underresourced communities in Washington, DC, Baltimore, Northern Virginia, Chicago, and Detroit. The program serves young people before they become disconnected from school and work, with the goal of helping them successfully transition to higher education or employment after graduation.

To evaluate its High School Internship Program in Washington, DC, and Baltimore, Urban Alliance commissioned the Urban Institute to conduct a randomized controlled trial impact and process evaluation beginning in 2012. That evaluation found positive impacts on high school graduation and soft skills attainment for those who completed the program, and on college attendance for young men and college enrollment for middle-GPA students, specifically.

In 2016, Urban Alliance commissioned the Urban Institute to conduct a second impact and process evaluation of its High School Internship Program, expanding the scope to include Chicago and Northern Virginia. The evaluation does not include the Detroit program, which launched after the study began.

This report presents findings from the process evaluation based on analyses of program observations; conversations with young people, program staff, job mentors, and school counselors; and program data. It presents baseline information about Urban Alliance and the young people participating in its High School Internship Program in Washington, DC, Baltimore, Chicago, and Northern Virginia in the 2016–17 and 2017–18 school years. This report is the first in a series of three. Interim and final reports will describe the program's impacts on students' educational attainment and economic self-sufficiency and skill development.

What Is the Program Model?

- *Goals*: Urban Alliance's organizational goals center around "empowering economically-disadvantaged youth to aspire, work, and succeed." The High School Internship Program is designed to accomplish this goal through workplace skills training, exposure to professional work and mentorship, support from dedicated case managers, and continued access to resources and support for program alumni.

- *Target students*: the High School Internship Program targets high school seniors at schools in neighborhoods with historically limited access to economic opportunity and with an academic

schedule that allows for early school dismissal. The program aims to serve "middle-of-the-road" students, with GPAs between 2.0 and 3.0, but it does not restrict eligibility to this group.

■ *Program components*: the program's key elements are skills training, direct work experience, mentorship and coaching, and alumni services.

Who Are the Young People in the Study?

The study sample included 1,435 young people who applied to the Urban Alliance program and agreed to participate in the evaluation.

■ *Demographic characteristics:* on average, students were almost 18 years old at the time of application. Two-thirds of Urban Alliance applicants were female and 77 percent were non-Hispanic Black.

■ *Work experience*: across all regions, 41 percent of students had previous work experience. Students who worked before applying to the program had an average of 9.2 months' experience. Their most common positions were in food service, child care or camp counseling, and retail.

■ *Educational background*: the average GPA of an Urban Alliance intern was 3.0, but this varied by region. Baltimore had the lowest average GPA at 2.8, and Chicago had the highest at 3.1. Three-quarters of students did not have an immediate family member who had attended college. Eighty six percent of applicants were absent ten or fewer days in the past school year.

■ *Neighborhood characteristics*: Urban Alliance applicants typically resided in neighborhoods with high poverty levels. Across all regions, almost half of applicants lived in a neighborhood where at least a quarter of residents lived below the federal poverty level. Applicants' neighborhoods also had higher rates of unemployment than their broader regions and higher concentrations of people of color.

■ *School characteristics*: the schools Urban Alliance targeted for recruitment differed by region. Urban Alliance recruited more heavily from a smaller number of schools in Northern Virginia, while, reflecting the nature of schools in the region, the DC region had the highest share of charter schools. Average reading and math proficiency levels of applicants' schools were below the state median in each region.

How Is the Program Implemented?

- *Recruitment and application*: Urban Alliance staff worked closely with school staff in selected districts to recruit students in the target population: underserved students doing moderately well academically who had flexibility in their schedules. Recruitment involved securing permission from school administrators to operate in the school; collaborating with counselors, teachers, and other staff to identify eligible students; publicizing the program; working with students to fill out the application and necessary paperwork; and keeping students engaged until pre-work began.

- *Skills training*: Urban Alliance staff held mandatory training sessions for participating seniors, beginning in the fall and running through late July. In the fall, students began with "pre-work" trainings before starting their internships. Pre-work was designed to prepare young people to work in an office setting and focused on soft skills, such as professional communication and teamwork, and hard skills, such as using Microsoft Office. Once internships began in late fall or early winter, students were required to attend weekly workshops. Workshop topics focused on life skills and post–high school planning, in addition to lessons on workplace soft skills. The Urban Alliance program ended with a public speaking challenge, during which students gave presentations on their internships and post–high school plans to a panel of volunteer judges.

- *Internship*: Urban Alliance staff placed students in paid internships, taking into consideration the students' interests, skills, and personal situations (such as home and school locations) as much as possible. Urban Alliance aimed to place interns in professional environments, most often in office settings. Some employers interviewed interns to ensure they were a good fit for their work environment. Interns worked at their internships after school Monday through Thursday. After graduating, interns worked full days Monday through Thursday in the summer through the end of the program.

- *Job partners:* Urban Alliance had a predominantly relationship-based model of job partner recruitment, with staff working to build and maintain relationships with partners each year. Program coordinators worked to address any job partners' concerns and ensure mentors felt supported. Employer retention was high: more than 80 percent of job partners were retained year-over-year, and more than eight in ten job mentors surveyed indicated they were likely interested in having an Urban Alliance intern in the future. Eight in ten employers reported that their organizations hosted interns for an average of three to four years.

- *Internship value to young people:* interns had opportunities to gain hard skills for their specific industries and soft skills that could boost their comfort and performance in any office setting. All young people participating in Urban Alliance internships earned money and gained experience in an office work setting. During the 2016–17 and 2017–18 program years, students who were placed at an internship worked an average of 361 hours and earned an average of $4,122 during the internship.

- *Internship value to employers:* most mentors decided to employ an intern through Urban Alliance mainly to help young people in the community, but many others also participated in the program to boost their organization's image and fill gaps in staffing.

- *Mentorship:* the program model called for young people to be assigned job mentors or supervisors at their internship site. These job site employees were responsible for arranging work for the interns and training them to complete assigned tasks. Urban Alliance also encouraged mentors to share their career perspectives and connect interns to networks within their organizations. Job mentors provided feedback to Urban Alliance on interns' work performance and could reach out to the program if issues with interns arose.

- *Coaching and case management:* program coordinators were Urban Alliance's frontline staff who interacted most extensively with young people. They planned and ran training workshops and supported a caseload of students. Program coordinators tracked youth performance indicators, which they used to target support, coaching, and any corrective actions as needed, as well as to award merit-based hourly wage increases. All young people were expected to check in with their program coordinator at least weekly. Program coordinators met with each young person one-on-one a few times throughout the program year to provide post–high school planning support.

- *Alumni services:* Urban Alliance has gradually expanded its capacity to support young people after they complete the High School Internship Program. The alumni support role shifted from program coordinators, who previously provided informal support, toward a more formalized program component operated by a national alumni director and full-time alumni services directors in each region beginning in the 2016–17 program year. Alumni services staff offered support to prevent college attrition and connect alumni to employment, as well as professional development opportunities such as resume editing and interview practice.

- *Program funding and costs:* the High School Internship Program was funded through a mix of fees from organizations employing interns, philanthropic foundations, and government grants and contracts. Interns were either fully funded by the job partner, partially funded by the job

partner and by philanthropic dollars, or fully funded by philanthropic dollars. Roughly 65 percent of internship sites paid a fee for each intern placed at their organization. Urban Alliance set expected full fee rates at amounts that it determined each region could absorb.

What Do We Know About Attrition in the Program?

- *Why attrition matters***:** youth participation affected resource planning and Urban Alliance's relationships with schools. Also, young people may benefit less when they complete only part of the Urban Alliance program.

- *When students exited the program***:** among young people who applied to the program, 23 percent did not show up for pre-work training. Urban Alliance did not consider program applicants who never showed up to pre-work as having been officially part of the program. (They will still be included in our impact assessment of the program, which uses a randomized controlled trial— RCT—approach.) Of those considered part of the program (i.e., having started pre-work), 26 percent did not complete pre-work. Only 4 percent who completed pre-work were not placed at a job site. The majority of those placed in an internship completed the program (76 percent). Among all applicants offered access to Urban Alliance, 41 percent completed the program. Among those who attended pre-work, 54 percent completed the program. Among those who completed pre-work, 73 percent completed the program.

- *How attrition varied by youth demographics***:** young people with a family structure other than a single-parent (living with their mother or father) or two-parent family were 13 percentage points less likely to complete the program, conditional on completing pre-work, than young people with a two-parent family structure. Young people living in neighborhoods with high poverty levels were less likely to complete the program than those living in neighborhoods with low poverty levels, controlling for other factors.

- *Factors contributing to attrition***:** our process evaluation and interviews revealed many reasons why young people might have exited the program:

  » School schedules conflicted with Urban Alliance programming.
  » After-school commitments, especially athletics, were demanding of students' time.
  » Urban Alliance competed with other employers that may offer higher wages or more hours.
  » Urban Alliance did not pay young people for pre-work.

» The location of workshops was an obstacle for some students with transportation challenges.

» Poor job performance and low levels of engagement at work could lead to termination of young people from their internships (though the bar for termination is high).

» Urban Alliance did not always have the right sites to match students' interests.

» The internship commitment and environment could be a culture shock for young people compared with their experiences in high school.

■ *Preventing attrition*: although Urban Alliance expected some degree of attrition each year, the program was especially interested in curbing attrition among young people who progressed farther along in the program. Staff members suggested several ways to reduce attrition, including offering course credit for the program, developing open lines of communication with school partners, and building strong relationships with young people early on.

What Are the Organization's Plans for Growth and Change?

■ *Expanding to a new region*: Urban Alliance opened in DC in 1996; it expanded to Baltimore in 2008, Chicago in 2012, and Northern Virginia in 2013. The program expanded to Detroit during this study; Urban Alliance began enrolling young people in Detroit for the 2018–19 school year.

■ *Adding youth programming*: for many years, Urban Alliance staff considered ways to serve young people before they reached their senior year of high school, because those students may have already missed opportunities for college enrollment or living-wage careers. Urban Alliance first began working with young people before the start of their senior year in Washington, DC, but it has expanded that work in recent years to include high school sophomores and juniors in some other regions. Moving forward, Urban Alliance plans to adjust its training curriculum to make it more age-appropriate for sophomores and juniors and to potentially incorporate a work experience element for seniors—for example in the areas of construction, land surveying, and hospitality.

How Can Urban Alliance Improve Its Internship Program?

Urban Alliance has been proactive in using internal and external data and evaluations to improve its practices and has made substantial improvements to its High School Internship Program based on these efforts. This implementation study revealed several areas for further consideration:

- *Targeting:* though Urban Alliance officially targeted middle-of-the-road high school students—with GPAs between 2.0 and 3.0—for the internship program, the actual population served varied greatly in academic performance and soft-skills ability. The program can consider how to more narrowly focus recruitment on the target population, as serving a consistent population is important for reproducing program impacts at scale.

- *Curriculum:* Urban Alliance has invested substantial resources in updating the training curriculum to be more accessible and engaging to young people. Still, further refinements may be needed to help young people concentrate, as many did not believe that all the training sessions were helpful.

- *Standardization:* the national team tried to introduce standard teaching practices and training content through revamped curriculum, but content delivery varied somewhat by region. It was unclear whether these variations reflected local needs. Delivering a standard program model across regions may help reproduce positive outcomes.

- *Mentorship:* Urban Alliance has made strides in improving its development of job mentors, but it should continue to prioritize expanding mentor screening, training, and engagement. The organization should focus on ensuring job mentors are committed to serving in a youth development role and not simply as a work supervisor.

- *Program coordinator support:* program coordinators have many responsibilities that take time away from direct work with students, limiting program coordinators' ability to steer young people toward success. Extra attention could be provided by conducting more one-on-one sessions with young people during trainings, especially early in the program.

- *Post–high school planning:* Urban Alliance has broadened its view of what constitutes post–high school success, in line with the reality that many young people do not desire or are not prepared to matriculate and graduate from a four-year college immediately after high school. However, young people not on the immediate college trajectory will likely need additional support. This may include increasing connections to further training programs or apprenticeships that would prepare them for permanent employment.

- *Alumni services:* Urban Alliance has invested heavily in alumni services, including developing more connections between alumni and local employers and expanding a program of alumni mentorship in a few regions. These efforts showed promise, but they may still need to become more robust to connect young people with jobs that pay a living wage and have career pathways.

Introduction

Young people require effective support to achieve post–high school success. Such support comes from many sources—family, friends, mentors, and schools. Some young people can access help from nonprofits that work alongside these other supports. Urban Alliance, a nonprofit based in Washington, DC, is a growing multicity model. The organization has offered a High School Internship Program that provided young people with intensive supports to aid their post–high school transition to education and employment, including professional internships, mentorship from an adult professional, coaching from trained program staff, college and career skills training, and ongoing support for program alumni. In addition to its Washington, DC, location, Urban Alliance operated this program in Baltimore, Chicago, Detroit, and Northern Virginia.

Although factors vary across these regions, students in each region face substantial barriers to success in their post–high school transition. These young people may face poor employment prospects and limited opportunities to improve their employability.

Urban Alliance was founded and began operating in Washington, DC, in 1996, expanding to Baltimore in 2008, Chicago in 2012, Northern Virginia in 2013, and Detroit in 2018. To evaluate its High School Internship Program in Washington, DC, and Baltimore, Urban Alliance commissioned the Urban Institute to conduct a randomized controlled trial (RCT) impact and process evaluation beginning in 2012, with funding from the Corporation for National and Community Service's Social Innovation Fund (Theodos et al. 2014; 2016; 2017). The Social Innovation Fund evaluation found positive impacts on high school graduation and college attendance for male students and also on college enrollment for students with middle GPAs (between 2.0 and 3.0). Effects were not as strong or not present for young women.

In 2016, Urban Alliance commissioned the Urban Institute to conduct a second impact and process evaluation of its High School Internship Program, expanding the scope to include Chicago and Northern Virginia. This evaluation was funded through an Investing in Innovation Fund (i3) grant from the US Department of Education for scaling the High School Internship Program. We examine two cohorts participating in the program during the 2016–17 and 2017–18 school years. The evaluation does not include the Detroit region, which launched after this study began. This report presents findings from the process evaluation based on analyses of program observations; conversations with young people, program staff, job mentors, and school counselors; surveys of young people, job mentors, and school

counselors; and program data. Although the program model has remained mostly consistent since the Social Innovation Fund evaluation, this report highlights areas of change.

This report also provides baseline information about young people participating in this study and is the first in a series of three reports on the longer impact evaluation. Interim and final reports will describe program impacts on young people related to educational attainment and economic self-sufficiency. We begin with a review of relevant literature on supporting postsecondary paths for young people from disadvantaged backgrounds; then we describe the program model, followed by our findings on program implementation, and conclude with implications for practice.

Overview of Programs and Supports for Young People

Employment among young people in their late teens and early twenties has been falling over the past few decades. Although much of this decline has been driven by higher secondary and postsecondary school attendance (Abraham and Kearney 2018), a significant number of young people remain disconnected from both employment and school. About 10 percent of men and 13 percent of women ages 20 to 24 were not employed, seeking employment, or in school in 2018 (Loprest, Spaulding, and Nightingale 2019). The share of young people both not working and not enrolled in school varies by race and ethnicity. Reflecting historical and contemporary barriers, rates are higher among Black young people and Hispanic young people than among white young people.

Although college attendance has seen an upward trend in recent decades, many young people from underresourced communities do not enroll in or complete postsecondary education. Among recent high school completers, 69 percent of white, non-Hispanic young people enrolled in college within 12 months of graduation, compared with 65 percent of Hispanic young people and 61 percent of Black young people (Ma, Pender, and Welch 2016). College enrollment also varied considerably by income: 83 percent of recent high school completers ages 16 to 24 from families with high incomes were enrolled in college, versus 65 percent of those completers from families with low incomes (Snyder, de Brey, and Dillow 2019).

Young people from underresourced communities face barriers to employment and postsecondary education influenced by broader societal inequities. Discrimination permeates systems—including the education, workforce, housing, and criminal legal systems, among others—that influence educational and employment outcomes for young people of color (Pager and Shepherd 2008). Young people from underresourced neighborhoods may have limited access to people who can help them find employment (Spaulding 2005). Discriminatory hiring practices have led to inequities whereby Black and Hispanic job applicants are less likely to be interviewed or get a job offer than equally qualified white job applicants (Pager, Western, and Bonikowski 2009). Numerous factors also influence differences in educational outcomes, including lower expectations from teachers, higher prevalence of disciplinary action, and higher likelihood of assignment to special education tracks (Harry and Klinger 2014; Boser, Wilhelm, and Hanna 2014; US Department of Education 2014).

These disparities in employment and education outcomes can have far-reaching consequences for young people and their families. A wealth of national statistics highlights the consequences that lower rates of college entrance and completion have for the lifetime earnings and economic stability of disadvantaged young people. Indeed, median earnings of those with a bachelor's degree were $24,600 (67 percent) higher than the earnings of high school graduates in 2015 (Ma, Pender, and Welch 2016). Disconnection among young people from both school and employment is correlated with numerous negative outcomes, including criminal activity, substance abuse, depression, and diminished future labor-market outcomes (Loprest, Spaulding, and Nightingale 2019). These outcomes can be compounded by structural conditions, inequities, discrimination, and other challenges. Young people living in neighborhoods with low incomes have higher rates of mental and physical health problems than young people from middle-income backgrounds (Leventhal and Brooks-Gunn 2003). Risk factors such as poverty, family instability, and limited community and school resources are associated with lower educational attainment, higher engagement in delinquent behaviors, and worse health outcomes (Fernandes-Alcantara 2018).

Various programs and supports aim to improve both college access and completion and employment opportunities for young people of disadvantaged backgrounds. These programs vary in the young people they serve, including high school students and graduates, dropouts, and those with experience in the juvenile justice or child welfare systems. They also vary in their purpose. Many have a work-based learning focus that complements learning in the classroom with on-the-job training and adult mentoring; provides skills, connections, and work experience; and contributes to youth development (Lerman 2016; Linked Learning 2012).[1] Some supports are provided directly by high schools, and others are facilitated by high schools but delivered through private organizations or social service departments. Other programs exist outside of the high school context entirely.

Evaluations of these programs are mixed, often failing to show positive long-term outcomes, although many studies have only tracked outcomes in the short term. Additionally, major federal evaluations of youth employment programs have focused on programs geared toward disconnected young people rather than young people still in traditional high school settings. The following literature review contextualizes the Urban Alliance High School Internship Program by describing the current evidence on the impacts of work experience; supports provided in high school; work-based learning; job training programs for young people; and outside programs providing case management, mentoring, and college access and readiness programming.

Work Experience

Research on the effects of employment—outside of a structured program—on youth outcomes shows a mixed relationship with later-life outcomes. Research suggests that employment during the school year for a modest number of hours a week either has small positive effects or no effects on educational outcomes, whereas working for more hours may have negative impacts (Monahan, Lee, and Steinberg 2011; Rothstein 2007). One longitudinal study, following young people through high school into early adulthood, found that employment during high school can contribute to positive psychosocial development (Mortimer 2003). Most research on employment's effect on youth outcomes has excluded employment during the summer. Youth employment has also shown positive correlation with future job quality (Ross et al. 2018). And prior work experience has also been a significant factor considered by employers when hiring young people (Harrington et al. 2013).

Similarly, a lack of employment opportunities also contributes to later-life outcomes. Unemployment at a young age is associated with lower earnings and a greater chance of unemployment in the future (Mroz and Savage 2006). Young people both not working and not enrolled in school face a higher risk of lower future earnings, worse health outcomes, involvement with the criminal justice system, and lower educational attainment (Lewis and Gluskin 2018). Young people of color, as well as young people from low-income backgrounds, have lower access to early work opportunities and are more likely to be disconnected from work and school than their white peers with higher incomes (Lewis and Gluskin 2018; Spievack and Sick 2019). Research from an international context suggests that long-term unemployment among young people with a lower socioeconomic status has particularly harmful effects on their professional support network (Bolíbar, Verd, and Barranco 2019).

Work-Based Learning

Various work-based learning programs serve young people—some that have been shown to improve academic and other outcomes (Treskon 2016). Some programs engage young people while they are in high school, and others engage those who have already graduated.

Programs for High School and Younger Students

Evaluations of programs that combine an internship with other academic or social supports are mixed. An evaluation of After School Matters, a nonprofit organization that offers high school students paid work experiences similar to apprenticeships, found no effect on job skills or academic performance,

although there were improvements related to positive youth development (Hirsch et al. 2011). The Philadelphia-based Summer Career Exploration Program, which provides high school students with private sector employment, pre-employment training, and mentoring opportunities, similarly found no effects on high school graduation or college enrollment, although participants were more likely to enroll in a college preparatory or specialized academic program (McClanahan, Sipe, and Smith 2004). An analysis of National Longitudinal Survey of Youth 1997 data found that participating in work-placed learning in high school—defined broadly to include cooperative education, internships, apprenticeships, or mentorship programs—was associated with higher job quality at age 29 (Ross et al. 2018). Work-based learning programs in high school can also help expand students' professional networks (Rosenbaum et al. 1999).

Beyond their impact on academic outcomes, work-based learning programs have also been shown to decrease delinquent behaviors. An evaluation of one Boston summer youth employment program, targeting young people ages 14 to 24, found soft-skill development and reduced violence and drug use among participants, using entry and follow-up surveys of program participants and a comparison group (Sum, Trubskyy, and McHugh 2013). One randomized controlled trial evaluation found that a Chicago summer youth job program led to reductions in violent-crime arrests (Davis and Heller 2017).

These programs also offer participants the opportunity to expand their professional networks, both with staff running the programs and through work. Employment services targeted to young people often recognize this population may lack the professional networks to search for employment opportunities and connect with employers (Kluve et al. 2019). Professional networks reduce the risk of unemployment among young people (Hällsten, Edling, and Rydgren 2017; O'Regan 1993), and contacts young people develop through relatives and school are associated with higher future earnings (Rosenbaum et al. 1999). Employment programs that help young people develop social networks are helpful in supporting young men of color, in particular in accessing employment (Bird and Bryant 2014).

Programs for Post–High School Young People

Urban Alliance prepares underserved seniors in high school for future success. Because Urban Alliance provides ongoing support once students have graduated from high school, we review other programs that support young people after high school. A randomized controlled trial evaluation of New York City's Center for Economic Opportunity youth literacy program found that students with a paid summer internship to complement their literacy, math, and job skills education attended more class hours and saw higher letter grades in math than students who did not have an internship (NYC Center for

Economic Opportunity 2011). A random assignment evaluation of Youth Corps, a federally funded program that provides both paid jobs for young people ages 18 to 24 and academic support for those needing GED certification, did not find educational attainment or employment impacts in an 18-month follow-up survey, although program participants were more likely to report planning to complete at least some college (Price et al. 2011). Year Up, a training program for economically disadvantaged young adults ages 18 to 24 with a high school diploma or equivalent, provides technical and professional skills, college credit, internships, and mentoring opportunities. A recent evaluation of early program impacts found higher earnings for the treatment group—attributed more to higher average wages and hours worked than to higher group employment rates—and a higher college enrollment rate in the first follow-up year, which then dropped below that of the control group in the second year (Fein and Hamadyk 2018). A randomized controlled trial evaluation of YouthBuild, a construction and vocational training program that provides academic services, counseling, youth development, and additional supports, found increased receipt of high school equivalency credentials, college enrollment, and survey-reported employment (Miller et al. 2018).

Job Training Programs

Programs offering youth job training without direct job experience have had some success in employment and academic outcomes, although results again are mixed. Job Corps, a federally funded program that provides vocational training, counseling, academic support, and often residential living, was found to have positive short-term effects on earnings, employment, education, and crime. However, those effects largely disappeared for the sample (young people ages 16 to 24 at the time of application) five to ten years afterwards (Schochet, Burghardt, and McConnell 2006). No lasting impacts on earnings or employment were found in a replication evaluation of a San Jose training program for high school dropouts, called the Center for Employment Training, although infidelity to the program model may have been a contributing factor (Miller et al. 2005). A more promising job training program evaluation is that of the National Guard Youth ChalleNGe, a program that provides short-term job and life skills training in a quasimilitary environment with follow-up mentoring. After three years, program participants had a higher employment rate, higher earnings, and were more likely to obtain college credits or a high school diploma or GED than the comparison group (Millenky et al. 2011).

Sectoral programs, which provide short-term training in professional occupations such as health care, IT, and financial services, have seen some success. One randomized controlled trial evaluation that tested three separate sectoral programs found positive impacts on earnings across all three, including

for a subgroup analysis focusing solely on young adults, although impacts varied by program (Maguire et al. 2010). An evaluation of a similar sectoral program demonstration, attempting to understand whether such programs could be effectively implemented by organizations without much previous experience, found smaller but still positive impacts on earnings (Hendra et al. 2016). Another randomized controlled trial evaluation of a San Antonio sectoral program providing additional support for adults with low incomes in existing health care occupation college programs also found positive impacts on earnings, although impacts were not positive for those ages 18 to 24 (Elliott and Roder 2017).

High School Opportunities and Supports

High schools offer numerous opportunities and supports aimed at connecting young people with postsecondary education and careers, which can prove beneficial.

Career Academies and Magnet Schools

Students participating in career academies—occupationally themed schools within high schools—have been shown more likely than non–career academy students to exhibit positive school performance, have higher levels of interpersonal support from peers and teachers, have higher future earnings and employment, and graduate and attend a postsecondary institution (Crain et al. 1999; Kemple 2008; Maxwell and Rubin 1997). Studies of career magnet schools, which specialize in a particular career theme, have revealed lower dropout rates and increased student investment in school (Katz et al. 1995), although their impact on academic achievement is mixed, as achievement varies by student characteristics, subject, and whether the magnet school is a middle school or high school (Ballou, Goldring, and Liu 2006; Cobb, Bifulco, and Bell 2009).

Dual Enrollment and Career and Technical Education (CTE)

Dual-enrollment programs allow high school students to take college or university courses at the same time as their traditional coursework. CTE programs prepare students for a particular career path, often offering both academic and career-focused courses and providing work experience opportunities. These programs similarly show mixed results in academic and postsecondary outcomes. One study based on high schools from selected Florida counties found that dual enrollment overall did not significantly affect high school graduation rates, college enrollment, or college completion, although significant impacts did emerge when considering specific dual-enrollment subject areas separately

rather than dual enrollment as a whole (Speroni 2012). A study of CTE programs found that community college students who had participated in high school CTE programs were either just as or more likely to achieve relevant academic outcomes when compared with students who had taken general curriculum courses in high school. Relative to students who had participated in college preparatory programs, community college students who had participated in CTE programs were less likely to transfer to four-year colleges but more likely to earn an associate's degree or similar certificate (Dietrich, Lichtenberger, and Kamalludeen 2016).

High School Counseling and Other Supports

Urban Alliance offers programming to its young people to help them navigate the transition to post–high school settings, particularly to college. High schools also provide programming tied to college access. High school counselors who provide college readiness counseling have been shown to promote college access, particularly for students who have traditionally been underrepresented at the college level, although research has also shown that school counselors as a group would benefit from additional training in college readiness preparation (Gilfillan 2018).

Coaching, Case Management, and Mentoring

Beyond job training programs or similar programming, coaching, case management, and mentoring programs offer another approach to serving at-risk young people, that has seen some success. One such mentoring program is Big Brothers Big Sisters. One study of the program found initial academic improvements, which then disappeared after 15 months (Herrera et al. 2011). Another study found that length of tenure in the program influenced outcomes, so young people enrolled in the program for more than 12 months had significant gains in self-worth, scholastic competence, relationships with parents, and other outcomes (Grossman and Rhodes 2002). Treatment group young people in a specialized Big Brothers Big Sisters program for children of incarcerated parents had higher self-esteem and stronger social connections, although they did not exhibit higher academic competence (US Department of Justice 2011).

The Latin American Youth Center's Promoter Pathway program serves immigrant young people with low incomes and young people of color in DC and Maryland. The program provides them with a "promoter," who provides mentorship, coaching, and case management, to encourage academic success, employment success, and healthy behaviors among young people. A randomized controlled trial evaluation revealed positive impacts in some areas, such as higher rates of school attendance and

higher housing stability. However, the evaluation found no impacts for high school diploma attainment, employment outcomes, or perceptions of self-efficacy as measured through perceived control over what happens in one's life (Theodos et al. 2016).

College Access and Readiness

Dedicated college access and readiness programs have also seen mixed results. A study of Upward Bound, a federally funded program providing instruction, tutoring, and counseling, found no overall effect on high school graduation or college enrollment, although educational outcomes were more pronounced for students with initially low educational expectations (Myers et al. 2004). A random assignment evaluation of the Quantum Opportunities Project, which offered case management, academic support, developmental activities, and community service, showed no positive impacts, although poor implementation of the program model and low participation were contributing factors (Schirm et al. 2006). A meta-analysis of 14 college access program evaluations found higher graduation rates and college enrollment for program participants, although the impact on graduation rates was no longer statistically significant when only the experimental evaluations were considered (Harvill et al. 2012).

Equivalency-to-college bridge programs exist to help young people connect to postsecondary education. These programs, often conducted at college campuses, provide additional supports to students seeking high school equivalency credentials and also include college preparation. An evaluation of one such program at LaGuardia Community College revealed higher rates of GED completion as well as college entry among participants when compared with students enrolled in a traditional GED course (Martin and Broadus 2013). Similar concurrent-enrollment programs exist that allow students to pursue high school equivalency credentials while also taking college courses, expediting the acquisition of postsecondary credentials. However, limited research exists that suggests the effectiveness of these programs in improving outcomes.

Soft skills. Soft skills such as self-regulation, professionalism, goal setting, and oral communication are linked with employment outcomes like job performance, wages, and attendance (Kautz and Moore 2018). Few studies, however, have centered soft skills as an outcome in rigorous evaluation. One study that did was of the Opportunity Works intervention, which provides young people at risk of becoming disconnected with support and resources to complete high school and bridge to their first year of college or career. The study found no significant difference in the share of participants with goals to graduate from a two- or four-year college between participants and a matched comparison group

(Anderson et al. 2019). The gap in evidence about soft skills could exist because of a lack of reliable and low-burden measures of soft skills for this population.

Urban Alliance

Overall, evidence suggests that programs offering underserved young people jobs, job training, career-focused education, mentoring, or college readiness activities—or some combination of these—may be effective in helping them achieve better outcomes. Urban Alliance, a national youth development nonprofit, aims to help underserved high school seniors through professional internships, job skills training, mentoring opportunities, and additional supports. Our previous randomized controlled trial evaluation of Urban Alliance, funded by the Social Innovation Fund, found some impacts for subgroups, particularly for males, across some areas but not others. Participation in Urban Alliance's internship program increased the probability of high school graduation and college attendance and enrollment, as well as comfort levels with soft skills, for males in the treatment group. The program also had initial positive and significant impacts on comfort with soft and hard skills for all young people in the treatment group, although these impacts diminished by the second year, in part because of young people in the control group "catching up" and later learning the same soft and hard skills. For all the young people in the treatment group, we did not find statistically significant impacts three years after program completion on high school achievement, college attendance and persistence at college, employment, earnings, and savings, nor measures of college readiness, except for comfort levels with FAFSA.

The current study is a replication and expansion study, continuing to examine the initial two regions of Washington, DC, and Baltimore, and including the newer regions of Chicago and Northern Virginia. Replication studies are important given evidence about the challenges with reproducing positive program effects in other contexts (Makel and Plucker 2014)

Urban Alliance High School Internship Program Model

Urban Alliance's organizational goals center around "empowering economically-disadvantaged youth to aspire, work, and succeed."[2] The High School Internship Program is designed to accomplish this through workplace skills training, exposure to professional work and mentorship, support from dedicated case managers, and continued access to resources and support for program alumni. The following section describes the program logic model and how program components were expected to function under that model.

Logic Model

Urban Alliance first developed a full logic model for its flagship High School Internship Program in 2007 and has made refinements over time (Winkler, Theodos, and Gross 2009). Figure 1 details the program's key activities, along with expected outputs and outcomes from each activity. This model reflects organizational expectations during the 2016–17 and 2017–18 school years, when the cohorts examined in this evaluation participated in the program.

Target Population and Recruitment

Urban Alliance targeted the flagship High School Internship Program to high school seniors in selected public and public charter schools the program identified as having a large share of students at risk of disconnection. The program targeted "middle-of-the-road" students, with GPAs between 2.0 and 3.0, but did not restrict eligibility to this group. Participants also needed to have enough course credits to qualify for an early-release schedule, giving them enough time to take on an internship in the afternoon.

In Chicago, Northern Virginia, and Baltimore, the program had a formal relationship with the local school system and students could receive high school course credit for participation. In Northern Virginia, the program also had a relationship with the local community college, and students earned college credit for taking part in the program. In Baltimore, students in the 2016–17 academic year had the opportunity to receive credit at the University of Baltimore. In Washington, DC, students did not

earn credit. School counselors and other school staff in each region identified students as a good fit and referred them to the program.

Programs in each region aimed to start recruitment in the spring of students' junior year and continue into the fall of their senior year.

Urban Alliance High School Internship Program Logic Model

Urban Alliance High School Internship Program Logic Model

Activities → **Program Outputs** → **Outcomes**

1) Skills Training
Interns receive training in professional soft skills, financial literacy, and post-secondary planning before internship placement through pre-work and after internship placement during Friday workshop.
2) Direct Work Experience
Interns are placed in internships to practice their skills and gain access and exposure to professional networks.
3) Mentorship
Interns are paired with job-site mentors who supervise and provide feedback on work tasks, help establish professional networks, and advise on professional development and growth.
4) Case Management
Program Coordinators guide interns' transition into work, liaise between the mentor and intern, oversee post-high school planning, and resolve development issues as needed.
5) Alumni Services
Alumni Services teams continue to provide support to both disconnected and connected alumni.

Skills Training
- 90% of interns placed in internships will receive 30 hours of pre-work training.
- Regions maintain 75% workshop attendance rate.
Internship Experience
- 75% of interns placed in internships complete the program.
- 75% of interns placed at beginning of program achieve 500 hours of internship experience.
- Interns in regions work 80% of hours budgeted each month.
- 80% of interns receive two or more skill set evaluations.
Mentorship
- 75% of interns report high mentor engagement in quarterly surveys.
Case Management
- PCs produce weekly tracking notes on each intern.
- 95% of alumni complete post-high school plan, including FAFSA, personal statement, resume, and college applications.
Alumni Services
- ASD contacts 70% of NSC call list.
- ASD provides services for 75% of confirmed disconnected alumni.

Short-Term Program Outcomes
- 75% of placed interns show growth on professional skills assessment.
- 85% of graduating cohort immediately connect to a sufficiency pathway (college, career training, living-wage employment).

Post-Program and Long-Term Outcomes
- 75% of alumni are "connected" one year post-program.
- 75% of alumni who enroll in college persist into their second year.
- 50% of disconnected alumni are reconnected by alumni service.
- 70% of students who enter 4-year colleges graduate within 6 years of entry.
- 70% of students who enter 2-year colleges graduate within 3 years of entry.

6) Employer Support
Urban Alliance Program Coordinators support employers and job-site mentors, ensuring a rewarding and impactful internship experience.

Employer Outputs
- Employers report increased diversity, improved culture, and staff management training opportunities.

Employer ROI Outcomes
- 80% job-site retention rate

Source: Urban Alliance.
Notes: ASD = alumni services department; FAFSA = Free Application for Federal Student Aid; NSC = National Student Clearinghouse; PC = program coordinators; ROI = return on investment. Outputs and outcomes for interns are targets among interns placed at job sites, and those for alumni are targets among interns who complete an internship.

Program Components

The four core components of Urban Alliance internship program model are skills training, direct work experience, mentorship and coaching, and alumni services.

Skills Training

The program model calls for mandatory training sessions for participating seniors, beginning in the fall and running through late July. This began with "pre-work" trainings before students started their internships. These were held after school during the fall of students' senior year. Pre-work was designed to prepare young people for work in a professional setting and focused on soft skills, such as communication and teamwork, and hard skills, including using Microsoft Office. Under the model, young people received preparation before interviewing for internships and attended sessions on post–high school education and employment opportunities.

Once internships began in late fall or early winter, interns were required to attend workshops each Friday afternoon. Workshop topics focused on life skills and post–high school planning, though they also continued to provide lessons on workplace skills. Friday workshops were extended to half-day sessions after the school year ended. Some workshop time was used to prepare young people to give a presentation during the Public Speaking Challenge event at the end of the program. Each young person prepared a slide deck about their internship experiences and post–high school plans and presented it before a panel of volunteer judges.

Direct Work Experience

According to the program model, Urban Alliance staff placed students in paid internships, taking into consideration the students' interests, skills, and personal situations (such as home and school location) as much as possible. Urban Alliance aimed to place interns in office settings. Some employers interviewed one or more interns to ensure they were a good fit for their work environment. Interns worked at their internships after school Monday through Thursday. After graduating, interns worked full days Monday through Thursday in the summer through the end of the program. Interns filled out time sheets. Most students were paid by Urban Alliance, while some employers paid students directly.

Mentorship

The program model calls for young people to be assigned job mentors or supervisors at their internship site. These organization employees were responsible for helping to grow the interns' professional skills, by assigning tasks and providing feedback. Urban Alliance also encouraged mentors to share their career perspectives and connections to resources and networks within their organizations. Job mentors provided feedback to Urban Alliance on interns' performance at work and could reach out to the program at any time if issues arose.

Coaching and Case Management

The program model included program coordinators, who were the frontline staff at Urban Alliance interacting most extensively with young people. Program coordinators planned and ran training workshops and carried a caseload of students who were assigned to their workshop group and to whom they provided dedicated support. Program coordinators tracked youth performance indicators, which they used to target support and enforce program requirements, as well as award merit-based hourly wage increases to young people. All young people were expected to check in with their program coordinator at least weekly and let them know if they had to arrive late or miss work or a training session. Program coordinators met one-on-one with each young person two-to-three times a year to provide post–high school planning support.

Program coordinators kept in contact with employers about their interns' performance and worked through any challenges that arose. Three times during the internship, program coordinators arranged site visits to the workplaces of all interns on their caseloads to meet with the interns and mentors. Young people could be terminated from the program after failing to meet goals for improvement.

Alumni Services

Under the program model, Urban Alliance continued to support program alumni. Urban Alliance has gradually increased its capacity to support young people after they complete the High School Internship Program and has expanded alumni services. The alumni support role shifted from program coordinators, who previously provided informal support, toward a more formalized program component operated by a national alumni services director and full-time alumni services directors in each region beginning in the 2016–17 program year. Alumni services staff offered support to prevent college attrition and connect alumni to employment. Each regional office had a space where alumni could access employment and education information and resources.

Data and Approach

This report is the first product from our implementation and randomized controlled trial evaluation of the Urban Alliance High School Internship Program. This evaluation follows a similar design to that employed in the first Urban Institute evaluation of the High School Internship Program, though it expands the analysis to four regions, including Northern Virginia and Chicago, whereas the first evaluation examined only Washington, DC, and Baltimore. Because of sample size limitations, we combined data from the 2016–17 and 2017–18 program years for analysis.

In each region, more young people were interested in participating in the internship program than there were internship slots available. To fairly decide who could participate, young people were randomly assigned the opportunity to participate in the program. Those who applied and were deemed eligible were randomly assigned to either the treatment or control group. Those assigned to the treatment group were invited to enroll in the program and begin pre-work.

The randomized controlled trial evaluation will examine high school completion, employment, earnings, college enrollment, college persistence, and skill outcomes by comparing those assigned to the treatment and control groups. This implementation report examines only those assigned to the treatment group, especially those who elected to participate in the program. Specifically, in this report we examine the following questions:

- Were the key components of the Urban Alliance High School Internship Program model implemented with fidelity?

- Did implementation fidelity vary across the four regions?

- What were the barriers to and facilitators of implementation?

- Did the intensity of service receipt differ according to participant characteristics, such as gender and GPA?

- Did service receipt match program targets?

- If service receipt targets were not achieved, what accounted for the shortfall?

To answer these questions, we collected quantitative and qualitative data from various sources, detailed in appendix A. During the 2016–17 and 2017–18 program years, researchers completed 71 in-depth interviews with Urban Alliance staff, young people who did not complete the program, school staff involved in the program, and job mentors. We also facilitated 13 focus groups with participating

young people. These conversations covered a range of topics about program planning and implementation. To obtain a wider perspective than possible for the limited interviews and focus groups, we also administered surveys to 134 young people, 299 job mentors (249 unique job mentors across both years), and 94 school counselors on similar topics. The team completed structured observations of 27 pre-work and workshop training sessions, two mentor orientation sessions, and 12 job sites. Researchers also gathered printed program materials, including mentor and youth training materials, and obtained official audited financial records.

Urban Alliance Applicants

This section outlines the characteristics of the 1,435 young people who applied to the Urban Alliance program and consented to be part of the evaluation. Although the young people span two cohorts (2016–17 and 2017–18 school years), the tables in this section do not present findings by cohort because there were not notable differences between student characteristics across the two years. However, the tables present differences by region, as the student profiles differ across this dimension.

Student age was consistent and as expected across all regions. On average, students were almost 18 years old at the time of application, which was generally at the end of their junior year or early in their senior year (table 1).

Although Urban Alliance does not target recruitment by gender, two-thirds of Urban Alliance applicants were female. Multiple Urban Alliance staff noted in interviews that recruiting male students is an ongoing challenge. One staff member in Chicago speculated that this discrepancy may be caused by the eligibility requirements, as fewer male students were on track to graduate and have a schedule that would permit early release in some districts. The male high school graduation rate in Chicago (82 percent) was indeed lower than the rate in Northern Virginia (89 percent) and DC (86 percent) but equivalent to the rate in Baltimore (82 percent). The female high school graduate rate was 93 percent in Washington, DC, 91 percent in Northern Virginia, 88 percent in Chicago, and 87 percent in Baltimore. This interviewee also wondered whether males had greater interest in working in hands-on occupations, as opposed to the office environment in which many Urban Alliance interns work. A broader research literature finds that males are more likely to take nontraditional career and technical courses (Fluhr et al. 2017; Hanks, McGrew, and Zessoules 2018; Leu and Arbeit 2020) and work in those fields (Kell, Roohr, and Fishtein 2020). An Urban Alliance interviewee also speculated whether the makeup of staff conducting recruitment affected this discrepancy (88 percent of staff in Chicago were women at the time of the interview). A final note is that this and other program applicant attributes were largely consistent with applicants participating in the Social Innovation Fund study (Theodos et al. 2014).

The majority of Urban Alliance applicants reported they were non-Hispanic Black (77 percent). Chicago and Northern Virginia also had large shares of applicants reporting they were Hispanic (32 percent and 45 percent, respectively). In Northern Virginia, 13 percent of applicants reported they were Asian. These trends reflect the demographic differences in schools between the regions (table 1).

Students largely did not live in two-parent homes (73 percent). Across all regions, 43 percent of young people lived with only their mother and 25 percent lived with a grandparent or other guardian. These figures vary slightly across regions, with Northern Virginia applicants less commonly living with their mother as sole guardian and more commonly living in two-parent households. Around five percent of students had a child in their care at the time of application. About one in ten applicants had experienced an out-of-home spell for four or more months. The majority of these spells were during high school or at or after the age fourteen. Almost one in two families received public benefits.

The average self-reported GPA of an Urban Alliance intern was 3.0, but this varied by region. Baltimore had the lowest average GPA at 2.8 and Chicago had the highest at 3.1 (table 1). Urban Alliance staff noted in interviews that this variation by region could be partly explained by higher or lower overall GPAs in some districts or schools compared with others. In general, these average GPAs align with the type of student Urban Alliance strives to target. Fourteen percent of students were absent more than ten days in the past school year. The DC region had the highest share of charter schools (see table 1).

Across all regions, 41 percent of students had previous work experience. This figure was slightly higher in Baltimore, where almost one in two applicants had previous work experience. Students with work experience before applying to the program had worked 9.2 months on average, and the most common positions were in food service, child care or camp counselor roles, and retail jobs. Many young people had previously participated in summer youth employment programs.

Roughly a third of Urban Alliance applicants would be first in their family to attend college. Half of applicants had a parent who had attended college.

TABLE 1
Demographic and Academic Characteristics of Urban Alliance Applicants

	All regions	Baltimore	Chicago	Northern Virginia	Washington, DC
Demographic characteristics					
Age (at start of pre-work)	18	18	18	18	18
Female (%)	68	64	71	63	69
Race or ethnicity (%)					
Asian non-Hispanic	2	2	2	13	0
Black non-Hispanic	77	92	64	34	93
Latino	19	3	32	45	8
White non-Hispanic	2	3	1	7	0
Other race non-Hispanic	0	0	0	1	0
Family					
Living arrangement (%)					

	All regions	Baltimore	Chicago	Northern Virginia	Washington, DC
Mom only	44	50	36	26	53
Two parents	27	25	33	44	17
Other relative or guardian	25	21	28	22	25
Dad only	5	5	4	8	5
Has a child in his or her care (%)	5	2	6	4	6
Family receives public benefits (%)	42	54	45	25	36
Out-of-home spell (4 months or more) (%)	12	18	8	15	11
Out-of-home spell before age 14, for those with out-of-home spells	38	45	27	47	32
Out-of-home spell after age 14, for those with out-of-home spells	63	55	73	53	68
Parent attended college (%)	48	47	50	50	48
Sibling has attended college, but not parent (%)	18	17	20	11	19
Would be first in family to attend college (%)	34	37	31	39	33
Academic experiences					
GPA	3.0	2.8	3.1	3.1	3.0
Attends charter school (%)	18	12	22	0	23
Days absent in past year (%)					
0–5 days absent	66	62	64	64	72
6–10 days absent	21	23	24	18	18
11–15 days absent	7	7	8	9	5
More than 15 days absent	7	9	5	10	5
Work history					
Previous work experience (%)	41	49	31	40	46
Previous months worked, for those with past jobs	9	8	9	18	8
Number of young people	**1,213**	**288**	**418**	**114**	**393**

Source: Urban Alliance program data.

Notes: This table does not include 222 young people who did not consent to sharing their application data or for whom application data was incomplete or missing.

Urban Alliance applicants typically resided in neighborhoods with high poverty levels (table 2). Across all regions, almost one in two applicants lived in a neighborhood with 25 percent or more of residents below the federal poverty level. Although the poverty rates were lower overall in Northern Virginia compared with other regions, very few applicants lived in neighborhoods with low poverty levels (light blue shading in appendix B). Applicants' neighborhoods also had high rates of unemployment: the average unemployment rate in an Urban Alliance applicant's neighborhood was 14 percent. This figure is as high as 18 percent in Chicago, compared with a 6 percent unemployment rate

in the city of Chicago in the fourth quarter of 2016. Applicants' neighborhoods also typically had higher concentrations of residents of color (appendix B).

TABLE 2

Characteristics of Urban Alliance Applicants' Neighborhood

	All regions	Baltimore	Chicago	Northern Virginia	Washington, DC
Neighborhood economic characteristics					
Share under the poverty level (mean)	25	27	27	14	25
Less than 10%	12	7	9	34	11
10%–25%	41	40	41	55	38
25%–40%	33	38	32	10	39
More than 40%	14	15	18	1	13
Share unemployed (mean)	14	13	18	5	14
Less than 5%	13	7	6	56	12
5%–10%	25	25	19	44	26
10%–20%	38	54	38	0	36
More than 20%	25	14	38	1	26
Neighborhood demographic characteristics					
Share of color (mean)	85	86	90	61	88
Less than 25%	1	3	1	2	1
25%–50%	6	6	4	24	3
50%–75%	16	14	8	52	13
More than 75%	77	78	86	23	83
Number of young people	**1,209**	**289**	**415**	**115**	**390**

Sources: Urban Alliance program data; American Community Survey 2013–17 five-year estimates.
Notes: This table does not include data for 226 young people who did not consent to sharing application data or whose addresses were missing or could not be geocoded.

The schools Urban Alliance targeted for recruitment differed by region. For example, they recruited more heavily from a smaller number of schools in Northern Virginia—five—with an average of 31 Urban alliance applicants per school (table 3).

School performance, as measured by standardized tests, varied somewhat across the regions. Average school proficiency levels ranged from a low of 7 percent in math in Washington, DC, and 17 percent in reading in Baltimore to a high of 62 percent and 81 percent, respectively, in Northern Virginia. Given that school performance assessments varied across states, we also ranked every school's average scores in the state and calculated where the average Urban Alliance student's school was on that ranking, from 0 to 100. These rankings ranged from a low of the 23rd and 24th percentile in Baltimore for math and reading to a high of 49 and 51 percent, respectively, in Washington, DC. Overall, average school proficiency levels in reading and math were below the state median in each region. We

also examined whether student body demographics in each region aligned and found that they closely aligned with Urban Alliance applicant demographics.

Urban Alliance Applicants' School Characteristics

	All regions	Baltimore	Chicago	Northern Virginia	Washington, DC
School size and attendees					
Number of high schools young people attended	80	19	34	5	22
Average number of Urban alliance applicants attending school	18	17	15	31	20
Average size of student body	1,252	641	1,564	3,131	720
Assessments (%)					
Average proficient in math (school %)	22	36	13	62	7
Average proficient in reading (school %)	24	17	15	81	18
Average school state rank percentile, math proficiency	34	23	29	40	49
Average school state rank percentile, reading proficiency	32	24	25	30	51
Demographics of student body (%)					
Asian non-Hispanic	2	0	2	7	1
Black non-Hispanic	69	91	59	23	81
Hispanic	22	4	35	39	15
White non-Hispanic	6	4	3	28	2
Other race/ethnicity non-Hispanic	1	1	1	4	1
Observations (young people)	1,424	331	500	155	438

Sources: Urban Alliance program application forms for school attended, Education Data Explorer (Version 0.6.0), Urban Institute, Center on Education Data and Policy, accessed December 2019, https://educationdata.urban.org/data-explorer/. National Center for Education Statistic data from 2016 for student body demographic information, US Department of Education's EDFacts data from 2016 for math and reading proficiency.

Notes: Figures include applicants assigned to the treatment and control groups. Average school state rank percentiles are calculated by ranking school math and reading proficiency levels for all schools in the state from 1–100, from low to high. Urban Alliance applicants attended 82 high schools; data could not be accessed for two schools (11 young people attended these two schools).

Program Implementation

This section presents results from our process study on the implementation of the Urban Alliance's internship program, organized by key components identified in the organization's logic model: recruitment and application, skills training, internship experience, mentorship, coaching, program alumni and alumni services, and overall program fidelity.

Recruitment and Application

This subsection systematically examines recruitment and application as observed in each of the four study sites. This is the first step in the program, which first entails defining the target population, devising a method to identify that population, and then recruiting that population.

Urban Alliance worked closely with staff at schools within targeted districts to recruit students. Recruitment consisted of first securing permission from school administrators to operate in the school and then collaborating with counselors, teachers, and other staff to identify eligible students within the target population, publicizing the program, working with students to fill out the application and receive all necessary paperwork, and engaging students until pre-work began. This process mostly took place in the spring semester of the students' junior year to facilitate senior-year scheduling around program commitments, although final recruitment efforts often extended into early fall of students' senior year.

Program coordinators followed the Urban Alliance model in targeting young people for the Internship Program. In practice, program coordinators looked specifically for three elements when recruiting students: a GPA between 2.0 and 3.0, flexibility in their schedule senior year to accommodate internship hours, and on-track graduation status. However, some students were admitted with GPAs under the threshold because, in the words of one program coordinator, "GPA doesn't always tell the whole story," as students could be a good fit for a professional workplace but academically struggling. Conversely, students with GPAs much higher than 3.0 were often admitted: 43 percent of students who were admitted reported GPAs of 3.0 or higher in their Urban Alliance applications. Urban Alliance staff from all regions gave similar descriptions of the eligibility criteria.

School counselors' application of the eligibility criteria did not always align with the target population that Urban Alliance staff described. In a survey of school counselors, respondents ranked an interest in college and having enough credits for early release as the most important eligibility criteria. School counselors did not prioritize the GPA guidelines or the on-track graduation status requirement.

This may have affected the pool of students recruited to the program, because Urban Alliance partially relied on counselors to identify and refer appropriate students. Despite these inconsistencies, program staff reported they were generally successful at reaching their target population.

By design, the methods used for recruitment varied across regions and also across schools in each region. Program staff would often follow the advice of counselors at each school, using a host of recruitment methods that included setting up tables in the lunch room, visiting classes, presenting to groups of students that counselors assembled, speaking to individual students that counselors referred, bringing in program alumni to speak, and discussing the program with parents at PTA meetings. To reduce burden on students and encourage them to submit applications, program coordinators offered various options for filling out an application, including bringing paper applications to schools and helping students fill them out in person, holding recruitment sessions in computer labs to fill out the web-based version, or encouraging students to fill it out on their own time.

The extent to which Urban Alliance staff engaged with school staff and students was central to recruitment success. Although the majority of counselors surveyed reported having spoken with Urban Alliance less than once a month, an Urban Alliance program coordinator described trying to have a "more visible role at the schools" by maintaining ongoing communication and spreading word about the program among students "so that Urban Alliance is at the forefront of their minds and not just some random program that comes in once a year." In regions where the Urban Alliance program had more of an established reputation, staff reported that recruitment had gotten easier as the visibility of the program increased.

Even when students were aware of the program and eligible to apply, applications did not always make it back to Urban Alliance. School counselors explained that, even if early release was possible, "kids started to fall off [of the application process] when they couldn't participate in their sport." Other young people did not return the application materials, which require a parent signature, or chose to participate in other internship programs offered either through their school or other external organizations. Some students expressed uncertainty about the content of the training sessions and internship or were concerned that Urban Alliance would not pay them for the pre-work.

The context of each region and the depth of history with the Urban Alliance program influenced the recruitment process. Important factors included the number of years Urban Alliance had been operating in the area, the relationship between the program and schools, the recruitment methods that counselors recommended, and the presence of similar programs. For example, the recruitment process in newer regions like Northern Virginia was focused partly on establishing strong connections in the

schools. Recruiting in Chicago must be completed much earlier, as the Chicago Public Schools emphasized having students' schedules arranged by the beginning of senior year and because other similar youth employment programs competed for student participation. However, across all regions, the recruitment process was intensive and adapted to fit the context of each school and region.

Skills Training: Pre-work and Workshops

This subsection describes the format of pre-work and workshop training sessions; the nature of the sessions and trainers' style; the content trainers covered in the sessions; the methods used to convey training topics; and the public speaking challenge at the end of the program.

Format

Pre-work trainings began before the youth internships and were typically held after school four days a week, usually lasting one to two hours over a period of three to six weeks. The length of pre-work varied by site and program year. In the 2016–17 school year, DC and Chicago had longer pre-work schedules: five weeks of instruction followed by interviews with young people and job matching for another one and a half weeks. The Baltimore pre-work schedule was four and a half weeks of instruction followed by meetings with program coordinators. In Northern Virginia, pre-work was three and a half weeks of instruction followed by one and a half weeks of interviews with young people and job matching. The pre-work schedules in the 2017–18 school year were more similar across sites than in the 2016–17 school year. Baltimore had five and a half weeks of instruction, and the other three sites all had four and a half weeks of instruction. The process of interviewing young people and job matching was longer in Chicago in the 2017–18 school year than it was for other sites.

Workshop trainings, which started once internships began, occurred on Friday afternoons, lasting one to two hours during the school year and half a day once the school year ended. Across regions, Urban Alliance typically held pre-work and workshop training sessions in classrooms at local universities or high schools. Rooms were organized as either a typical classroom setting, with rows of chairs facing the front, or as a computer lab for sessions involving computer work. Urban Alliance often scheduled sessions concurrently across several rooms, typically with one to two trainers per room for 15 to 25 young people. Urban Alliance staff, such as the program director—who oversees program coordinators in the regions—or a program coordinator, other trained staff, or outside trainers with expertise in a certain subject area, such as financial literacy, joined the sessions. Training sessions that

required additional space, such as events for all young people to listen and engage with panelists or guest speakers, were held in larger conference rooms. Generally, rooms were comfortable with sufficient seating and lighting, conducive to a learning environment.

Focus groups with young people revealed several impressions about the format of training sessions. Some young people commented that the pre-work curriculum was too long, advocating for a reduction to two or three weeks. Others mentioned that the length of pre-work was inconsistent across young people, such that some had a full six weeks of pre-work while others got to complete it in as little as two weeks, for example if they started the program late. Pre-work attendance data confirmed that there was variance in the number of pre-work days across young people by site and year.

Transportation to pre-work and workshops was difficult for some young people but not for others. In Chicago, young people could take buses or trains to pre-work and were given prepaid transportation cards with funding taken out of their internship checks. In DC and Baltimore, young people could travel to Urban Alliance activities for free using city travel programs. In Northern Virginia, some schools offered young people free bus passes, and Urban Alliance encouraged those eligible to use them. Across sites, some young people traveled for 20 to 30 minutes to get to trainings while others traveled for 45 minutes or more. Lastly, we heard in the focus groups that some young people were not fully aware of the requirements around training before joining and were surprised by the time commitment of pre-work in particular.

Style

Observations of both pre-work and workshop training sessions revealed that Urban Alliance trainers struck a balance between using a serious tone when instructing and also communicating informally with young people and establishing rapport. Trainers were intentional in creating a relaxed learning environment for young people, such as by discussing favorite musical artists at the beginning of sessions and playing pop music during group exercises and breaks. Program coordinators modeled professional attire for young people during Friday workshops by dressing in business casual or business professional clothing.

Trainers, especially those who had been with Urban Alliance for a few years, demonstrated a strong command of the content, smoothly transitioning from one topic to the next and engaging with young people. Newer trainers were less confident in answering questions specific to the Urban Alliance program but still appeared to have control of general themes in the content. Trainers responded to and resolved logistical issues as they arose in real time. For example, during one session on financial aid and

completing the FAFSA documentation, it became apparent that many students had already completed the necessary forms; trainers quickly identified those students and split them out into a different session. In another session, the trainer gauged that an instructional video on Excel was moving too quickly for students, so they offered to email the video to students so they could move at their own pace. When such issues came up or when trainers felt that young people needed additional time to grasp content, trainers were flexible in adjusting assignment deadlines.

Program coordinators set expectations for young people in training sessions. One region would often start sessions by repeating ground rules of not speaking over each other and putting cell phones away. Trainers also attempted to encourage participation throughout the sessions, asking young people to respond to questions or volunteer opinions and using group activities to stimulate interest. However, observations of training sessions revealed that maintaining youth interest in the training content was difficult. During some of our observations, young people often appeared low energy, although they were still largely paying attention and generally more engaged during group exercises. On the other hand, young people had high levels of engagement during some training sessions, actively participating when youth input was solicited. When young people would talk among themselves during sessions or appear disengaged, trainers would often politely ask them to stop or reengage them in the session. Lateness was an issue for many sessions, although at times trainers appeared already aware that some young people would be late.

Focus groups with young people revealed their impressions of trainers and the session style. Young people commented that trainers work hard to provide useful content and keep them engaged. One young person appreciated trainers trying to understand where they came from as teenagers, and another also appreciated the way trainers would respond to questions during the sessions.

Content and Applicability

Urban Alliance devoted significant time and effort to developing training content and disseminating curricula consistently across regions. The chief program officer and Urban Alliance curricular staff determined a central curriculum for pre-work and workshops, which they separated into modules. They also created a program calendar scheduling the general order of content. Program directors in each region used these documents as a framework when creating their region's pre-work and workshop calendars. See figure 2 for a sample pre-work schedule.

FIGURE 2
Sample Pre-Work Schedule

Pre-Work Schedule

Week 1

Monday: Getting to Know You + Appropriateness and Policy

Tuesday: First Impressions

Wednesday: Punctuality

Thursday: Appropriate Attire

Friday: Financial Literacy—Junior Achievement

Regions had some discretion in modifying the curricula; for example, they could add workshops or adjust the order. Program leadership recently contracted with curriculum specialists to refine and standardize training content and teaching methods across the four regions, implementing the updated curriculum for the first time during the 2017–18 school year. Training topics remained largely the same as in previous years. Urban Alliance considered several years of formal and informal feedback from interns, staff, and employers while designing the new curriculum. One primary goal of curriculum refinement was to make training content more engaging, using technology, student-led activities, and kinesthetic components. In the curriculum refinement, Urban Alliance also sought to set objectives for all training.

Training sessions covered diverse topics relevant to youth internships, the workplace, and post–high school plans. Sessions covered behavior in a workplace setting, reinforcing effective communication and listening skills, how to react to and provide feedback, communication through email and social media, workplace etiquette, and professional attire. Other soft skills covered included various "pillars" of customer service (being courteous, professional, and efficient), phone skills, and effective conversation starters. Sessions also explored self-advocating and describing oneself professionally through networking, interviews, résumés and cover letters, professional biographies, and LinkedIn. Sessions also emphasized familiarity with technical skills useful for the internships at many workplaces, including practice with Microsoft programs (Word, Excel, and PowerPoint) and general computer familiarity. Other sessions focused on post–high school plans, helping young people develop personalized "A," "B," and "C" plans for college and complete the FAFSA documentation. Program coordinators also circulated a list of scholarships for additional financial aid and had representatives

from various post–high school programs visit and describe resources available to college students. Lastly, sessions covered general life skills, including financial literacy and budgeting (and also completing bank account applications), time management, and task management.

All sites covered all or nearly all curriculum topic areas, especially focusing on ethics and etiquette, professional attire, basic Microsoft Office, interview skills, financial aid and college readiness, interview preparation, and financial management. Sites also offered region-specific sessions, as well as sessions featuring a guest speaker covering a topic outside of the core curriculum, such as mental health.

Given how the program year aligns with the college application cycle, staff reported they could not engage with students as much as they might like in some ways. As an Urban Alliance staff member reflected, the post–high school content was constrained in that "by the time it gets to workshop time around October or November, there's a limited window to apply to certain schools."

Urban Alliance staff recognized some overlap between their content and traditional high school curricula. Where there was overlap, Urban Alliance staff saw value in reinforcement, such as asking to see students' completed FAFSA documentation.

Young people had mixed responses to the training content. The most common response was that some content, such as college applications, choosing schools, résumés, and professional attire, repeated material from high school or other sources. Others thought pre-work could be shortened by dropping some content related to school and focusing more on content directly applicable to work. Some young people mentioned having post–high school goals that did not involve college and felt these goals didn't have a place within the Urban Alliance programming. Recently, Urban Alliance has begun to add more programming for students around alternative pathways and postsecondary employment opportunities.

Young people had positive responses as well. Some saw value in the redundancy, reflecting that it was helpful to review the content and delve a bit deeper. Others reflected that their peers were at different familiarity levels and had different learning paces. Young people responded positively to content such as time management, sending follow-up emails after interviews, coming to meetings prepared, and interview preparation. Others appreciated that Urban Alliance "went deep on the content," contrasting it with how in students are taught in high school about what is important without actionable steps for getting there.

I think the soft-skill training, how to communicate, how to make eye contact, how to write an email, how to dress. I mean, all those conversations need to be had, and they're not being had in school. I think that's where Urban Alliance is filling the gap.
—Mentor, Chicago

The connection of training to the internship experience was usually logical, although trainers did not always explicitly state that connection in training sessions. Job mentors, while not directly observing them, generally reviewed the trainings positively, noting that interns were prepared. As one job mentor said, "What I love about Urban Alliance is they do so much of the professional coaching for you…I get to do the fun stuff, which is the bonding and the sharing about your life and coaching." Across both program years, more than 90 percent of mentors in a job mentor survey indicated that pre-work trainings and weekly workshops were either very important or somewhat important in improving intern performance at work.

However, across both cohort years, about half of mentors thought Urban Alliance should provide additional support or training for interns. Among the most frequently selected additional trainings were professional etiquette training, training with Microsoft Office and other computer skills, and training around interpersonal communication skills in an office setting.

Methods

Trainers used various teaching methods to convey session content. Methods mostly involved lecturing and group discussion, small group activities, and role-playing exercises. Methods used varied with training content. For example, a session on Microsoft Excel started with an instructional video, followed by young people doing subsequent handouts on their own as trainers circled to answer questions. Other content relied on group exercises; for example, in one session the trainer discussed networking and professional small talk and then had young people pair off and practice professional conversations. In another session on ethical situations in the workplace, the trainer had young people move to opposite sides of the room depending on whether they thought a particular situation was ethical or unethical, and then had them defend their positions. In other sessions, trainers used PowerPoint to convey session content but had young people ask questions throughout. Some sessions had panelists respond to questions from program coordinators and other staff, and then from young people.

Urban Alliance staff saw training activities as a way to quickly gauge whether young people grasped the intended content. Trainers were intentional in adding technological components to training sessions to engage young people both visually and auditorily. Trainers were also intentional with adding kinesthetic components to workshops, an addition that young people indicated was helpful in maintaining their interest and participation. Across sites, the strategies trainers used to present content varied in some ways, but topic areas covered did not vary as much.

Public Speaking Challenge

The internship program ended with a public speaking challenge, during which young people gave presentations to a panel of volunteer judges describing their internships and post–high school plans. They were expected to dress professionally for the public speaking challenge and give rehearsed presentations. Urban Alliance gave interns who met preset goals and expectations a $100 completion bonus. Interns worked on PowerPoint presentations toward the end of the program and developed their public speaking skills in pre-work and in workshops.

Several job mentors commented on how the challenge was helpful in encouraging young people to develop their public speaking skills. One mentor described how her intern enjoyed speaking in front of people she knew but was uncomfortable speaking in front of people she was unfamiliar with. The mentor used the public speaking challenge as an opportunity to coach the intern. Some young people thought the public speaking challenge was less challenging than it should be. One intern expected it to be more of a competition but instead perceived it as Urban Alliance just giving interns $100 at the end of the program. Urban Alliance staff, including senior regional leadership, reported struggling to determine how much to emphasize the public speaking challenge given competing priorities.

Internship Experience

This subsection describes how Urban Alliance matched young people to job sites; what the internship experience was like for young people; the nature of communication between Urban Alliance staff and job sites; the efforts Urban Alliance made to attract and retain employer partners; and employer and intern outlooks on the internship program's value.

Matching Young People to Job Sites

Urban Alliance staff asked young people to list their preferred internship settings and attempted to place interns at job sites that aligned with their career interests. Program staff considered youth interests, transportation needs, and how the intern and mentor might work together when matching young people with employers. One staff member noted an "all hands on deck" effort "to get to know the students to see what best matches for them for their internship." Staff tried to get to know both the employer and mentor to make a good match.

Several factors, however, constrained their ability to do so. Staff had a limited pool of employers each year, and their first priority was to place all young people in an internship regardless of the employer type. Further, some young people who joined later in the year had a lower chance of matching with a preferred internship site because fewer job sites remained. Staff decided not to place a young person in an environment where they seemed likely to struggle, even if he or she expressed interest in getting experience with that employer type. Staff matched interns who displayed relatively weak professional etiquette or other soft skills during pre-work with experienced youth mentors, who they believed would use their experience to best support the interns and invest more time in ensuring that the interns grew in their internships.

Employer preferences also played a role in the matching process. Program staff solicited input from employers through questionnaires about what they were looking for in interns to help with matching. Also, some mentors interviewed interns and selected one who seemed the best fit for their workplace. A staff member in a regional leadership position clarified that Urban Alliance only arranges this if partners feel that interviewing prospective interns is necessary. In these cases, job partners may have selected interns with desired skill sets over others who expressed interest in in that career field.

Additionally, staff considered commute times between interns' schools, homes, and prospective internship sites to try to minimize interns' travel burden. This factor was most significant in Chicago, the largest region, and in Baltimore, where public transportation can be slow and unreliable. A staff member in Baltimore explained that "we have this rule that it should take less than an hour for a student to go from school to work, and then an hour to go from work to home."

After Urban Alliance matched interns to job sites, each region held a fall kickoff event for Urban Alliance staff, interns, and job mentors. Urban Alliance typically invited parents as well, and program staff presented them with an overview of the program and expectations for interns. Young people had the chance to meet their mentor, if present, and to network with other mentors and young people. This

event typically coincided with a mentor orientation session, introducing mentors to the program and Urban Alliance's expectations for young people and mentors.

Young people who completed pre-work training generally began internships in October or November, although slightly more than a third started later—sometimes as late as February or March. Reasons for late internship start dates included insufficient job placement slots available to place all interns immediately following pre-work and the inability of some young people to arrange an early-release schedule until the second semester of their senior year.

Internship Experience

Urban Alliance placed young people at a diverse set of job partners, including corporate, government, and nonprofit organizations. Private companies hosted nearly half of all interns (48 percent), followed by nonprofits (34 percent) and the government (17 percent) (table 4). The most common employer types were somewhat region specific. Federal and university settings dominated in Northern Virginia. Baltimore and Chicago placed many interns in hotels and banks, though Chicago also partnered with a growing number of technology companies. The Washington, DC, program had a mix of federal, corporate, and nonprofit job partners.

During the implementation study period, most interns worked in an office setting, though these varied greatly—from a human resources office in a hotel basement to an open-concept office of a technology company headquarters housed in a skyscraper to a call center in an animal shelter. Although Urban Alliance trained young people on professional attire to prepare them for formal work settings, some interns noted that many environments had casual dress codes.

All young people participating in internships through Urban Alliance earned money and gained experience in an office work setting. During the 2016–17 and 2017–18 program years, interns that were placed at an internship worked an average of 361 hours, earning $4,122 with a starting hourly wage of $10.79 on average. Interns that completed the program worked an average of 425 hours, earning an average of $4,774 over the course of the internship, with a starting hourly wage of $10.81 on average. Interns could earn performance-based raises of up to $1 an hour twice during the program year. Beginning in the 2017–18 program year, young people could earn a pre-work bonus for pre-work performance and attendance. Young people also had the opportunity to earn a $100 bonus for receiving a high performance score at the end-of-year public speaking challenge. Young people who completed pre-work but were waiting to begin an internship received $100 per two-week pay period before their internships began. Young people had the opportunity to open a checking and/or savings account. Urban

Alliance typically paid them through direct deposit unless there was a problem processing the direct deposit.

Interns had opportunities to gain the hard skills needed to work in their specific industry and soft skills that helped increase comfort and performance in any professional setting. The extent to which young people bolstered these skills during their internship depended not only on individual aptitude, but also on the opportunities that mentors and staff provided.

Interns often spent considerable time doing entry-level clerical work, with some branching out to other tasks more than others (table 4). Young people and mentors both indicated through surveys that filing and data entry were the tasks that interns completed most frequently. However, many young people and mentors noted that interns' tasks were often organization specific, such as tutoring children at an education nonprofit or developing graphics using design software at a technology company. A few mentors said in interviews that they gave young people increased responsibilities as they proved themselves to be competent over the course of the internship. In contrast, several mentors mentioned that their interns' limited professional soft or hard skills related to writing or using the Microsoft Office Suite reduced the tasks that staff could assign them.

TABLE 4

Mentor Reported Organizational and Task Descriptions

	N	*%*
Organization type (*N* = 292)		
Private company	141	48
Nonprofit organization	101	34
Government agency	50	17
Tasks your intern performed on a typical day (select all that apply) (*N* = 280)		
Data entry	201	72
Filing	168	60
Research	162	58
Delivering/preparing mail and packages	113	40
Event planning and preparation	104	37
Greeting customers or clients	91	33
Answering phones	79	28
Writing	87	31
Other	117	42

Source: Job mentor survey.

Some mentors we interviewed described making a concerted effort to expose interns to their area of professional interest; examples included assigning an intern a side project on a topic of interest and setting up meetings with employees within the company who may have insights on their planned career field. For example, one mentor explained that her intern was "really interested in communications, so

we made sure to set up a meeting with our communications director, so…that we could really make sure she gets a chance to talk to someone who's a little farther in their career about it, and maybe what their path was to get there."

Some staff, young people, and mentors we spoke with mentioned that interns did not always have enough assigned tasks to fill their time. A few staff members and interns said low workload negatively affected job satisfaction, with one intern saying, "I did really nothing and [sat] down all day." But others noted that down time allowed interns the flexibility to complete personal tasks. An intern said, "I have a lot of free time at work so I can do homework and stuff, so I'm never behind on homework or schoolwork." Urban Alliance also encouraged mentors to direct young people toward post–high school planning activities when they lacked other assigned tasks, including college and financial aid applications, as well as résumés and LinkedIn profiles. Toward the end of the year, some mentors mentioned that their interns spent time working on their public speaking challenge presentation. Some mentors reported helping their interns with these external activities.

Communication with Job Sites

Program coordinators were the primary liaisons between Urban Alliance and staff at job partners. Program coordinators sent weekly email newsletters to mentors with information about Urban Alliance programming, school events that may have affected interns' work schedules, and other information relevant to mentors. Two to three times yearly, program coordinators visited all job sites of interns on their caseloads. During these visits, they met with each intern and mentor to check on progress, advise mentors on how to oversee interns, and resolve any challenges that arose. Most mentors we interviewed who did not experience major performance issues with their interns reported little contact with program coordinators beyond these visits and felt that additional communication was not needed. Mentors reported a range of contact frequency with Urban Alliance, with the median being monthly (table 5).

Program coordinators' communication with job sites became critical when interns did not perform satisfactorily on the job. In interviews, mentors and program coordinators reported communicating more frequently via email and phone when these challenges arose, up to multiple times a week. Program coordinators also described visiting job sites to meet with mentors and interns and reach a resolution. Program coordinators reported that mentors typically reached out to them when issues arose, though some said at times they initiated contact to discuss problems. One program coordinator said, "I feel like I'm often putting out fires." Punctuality and attendance were common performance issues that program

coordinators tried to resolve. This often involved determining whether the intern had a barrier to consistent attendance, such as transportation problems, in which case the program coordinator may have tried to work with the intern on a schedule adjustment. In some cases, interns did not communicate sufficiently with their mentor when they had a conflict and had to miss work. In these cases, program coordinators encouraged young people to be more communicative about their schedules. Unprofessional attire and inappropriate etiquette were other intern performance issues that mentors leaned on program coordinators to help them resolve.

In cases when unacceptable job performance persisted, program coordinators developed a work contract with the intern. This agreement detailed Urban Alliance's expectations and lasted for a probationary period of several weeks. If a young person violated the terms of the agreement during this period, he or she would be terminated from the program. Urban Alliance took many steps to prevent termination of its students. Across young people from the 2017–18 program year, Urban Alliance or their jobsite terminated about 13 percent of them at some point after placement at an internship.

In interviews, most mentors who experienced performance issues with their interns felt that program coordinators played an important role in helping them resolve the problem, or, when necessary, helping them terminate the young people as smoothly as possible. One noted that, thanks to help from the intern's program coordinator, "when we did have an intern that wasn't successful, that was a painless process, trying to exit."

Some mentors suggested ways that communication from program staff could be more helpful, though most were satisfied with the roles that staff played. Nearly seven in ten mentors surveyed indicated that their interactions with program staff had been very helpful (table 5). Some mentors said that they would like to have more communication from Urban Alliance about what interns were doing during pre-work and workshop trainings to align internship tasks with training content. One mentor mentioned that Urban Alliance may have shared information about trainings in mentor newsletters but suggested that mentors may not be reading those emails and there may be a better way to communicate that information.

TABLE 5

Mentor-Reported Interaction with Program Staff

	N	*%*
How often did you have contact with Urban Alliance program staff? (*N* = 269)		
Never	4	2
Less than twice a year	15	6
2–4 times a year	52	19
Monthly	81	30
2–3 times a month	64	24
1–2 times a week	41	15
Daily	12	5
How helpful was the interaction with program staff? (*N* = 270)		
Very helpful	186	69
Somewhat helpful	74	27
Not helpful	10	4

Source: Job mentor survey.

Attracting and Retaining Job Sites

Urban Alliance had a relationship-based model of job partner recruitment. Each region had an executive director who was primarily responsible for building relationships with job partners. Regional executive directors did this in several ways, such as through networking and speaking at community events that local employers attended. Urban Alliance regions also hosted events for executives and invited employers to the public speaking challenge to showcase the interns' achievements. There was a national advisory board, as well as an advisory board in each region, and board members often had connections to local employers whom they convinced to take interns. National leadership and board members helped cultivate relationships with large corporate job partners across multiple regions.

Employer retention was high. More than 80 percent of job partners were retained year-over-year. Reflecting this stability, more than eight in ten job mentors surveyed indicated they were likely interested in having an Urban Alliance intern again in the future and reported that their organizations hosted interns for an average of three to four years.

Conversely, several factors led some employers to end their partnership with the program. In Chicago, staff reported that the large number of internship programs in the city competing for employer partners led some employers to end their relationship and partner with a different organization that may have required less commitment. In some cases, employer partners experienced a change in finances or organizational priorities and chose not to continue funding internships.

Urban Alliance staff worked hard to maintain job partners each year. Program coordinators played a crucial role in building and maintaining relationships with job sites. Program coordinators worked to address concerns that job partners had with interns and ensure that mentors felt supported. Across different levels in the organization, staff articulated that ensuring a mentor has a good experience often makes it more likely the employer will continue working with the program in the future. If job partners had a difficult experience with an intern, program staff often tried to make accommodations to encourage them to take future interns, for instance by arranging for the mentor to interview interns before accepting them. National and regional leadership communicated frequently with executives at partner organizations to maintain their commitment. Urban Alliance staff emphasized in interviews that having executive leadership at job partners invested in the program was critical for retention.

Urban Alliance staff expressed clear ideas about what made a good job partner but also mentioned that flexibility is needed to serve their targeted number of young people and achieve financial sustainability. National and regional leadership said that the ideal job partner had leadership who understood the program and was committed to developing young people. They also felt that job partners who could serve numerous young people across multiple departments over time were important for a sustainable program. Program coordinators emphasized the importance of matching young people with mentors who were willing to take on a nurturing, guiding role that extended beyond that of a supervisor. However, one national leader said that Urban Alliance "can make anything work" when it comes to job partners, and others noted the need to accept all job sites who were willing to host young people and provide donations to support program operations.

Youth Outlook on Internships

Most young people reported feeling that the internship experience was valuable to them, though they described diverse experiences and shared some common critiques.

Young people had mixed views about how relevant their internship was to their future career. About half of those surveyed said their internship was somewhat relevant to their future career, with slightly more than one-third saying it was very relevant and only 13 percent saying it was not relevant at all (table 6). Most young people said they had not gotten an internship in a field they had indicated interest in, and some of them expressed disappointment. One young person mentioned that, after waiting a long time to get placed in an internship, Urban Alliance staff "got my hopes up because they gave me a position," but "it was the last option that I wanted to do," which was a letdown. Some interns wished that during recruitment the program had been clearer that they would not necessarily get to

choose an internship site, though many others said they understood that from the start. Further, in several cases, interns described enjoying an internship in an unexpected field. One intern explained, "I ended up working with kids, which is fine, but it wasn't what I chose…I'm not good with kids. I can grow and work with kids. I feel like I could grow." Interns who were placed at a job site in their interest area were generally enthusiastic about the opportunity, including one intern placed at a law firm who said, "It's really helpful…I think it'll help me decide what I'm going to do in college, if I want to follow through with what I've been passionate about or not."

Most interns we spoke with felt that their internship gave them a useful opportunity to gain more professionalism. Above other skills, young people we spoke with toward the end of the program year most often described feeling pleased that their internship helped them become better communicators. One intern explained, "I struggled a lot with that, especially the first month or something because I wouldn't ask any questions. I also, I think this was just my fault, but I just didn't really say hi to people and then I realized, oh, that's rude. And then I learned. And my mentor told me to ask more questions…That really helped."

Several interns also said they viewed getting experience in an office setting as valuable. One mentioned that internships were necessary to get a job because "nobody really wants to hire you without experience." Another said, "it's definitely worth it because it looks good on my resume." Some interns said they were grateful for the program because internships are difficult to access in high school, with one stating, "they place us in a job that we could probably never get into" outside of Urban Alliance. Some also described having good networking opportunities and meeting professionals who could help them get a job in the future.

Most interns were also happy with the daily tasks they were asked to perform during their internship, but some described challenges and frustrations (table 6). Although nearly two-thirds of surveyed young people indicated they were very satisfied with the mix of tasks they had been assigned, in focus groups, some described the tasks they had to perform as boring or repetitive. A few mentioned encountering difficult coworkers who did not explain tasks clearly. Conversely, many others said they did tasks that were fun, helpful, or both. One intern placed at an organization specializing in booking public speakers said, "[interning] helped me learn about current events…because we work with different speakers from all around the world." Several interns mentioned they got professional experience using Microsoft Office, which would be useful in future jobs.

TABLE 6

Interns' Satisfaction with Internship Content

	N	%
Satisfaction with the mix of assigned tasks (*N* = 134)		
Very satisfied	87	65
Somewhat satisfied	40	30
Somewhat dissatisfied	7	5
Very dissatisfied	0	0
Internship's relevance to future career (*N* = 134)		
Very relevant	48	36
Somewhat relevant	69	52
Not relevant at all	17	13

Source: Spring 2017 and 2018 in-program intern surveys.

Employer Outlook on the Internships

Most mentors we received feedback from saw the internship program as potentially valuable to young people and in many cases felt that they or their organization benefited from taking on interns. That said, some described challenging experiences with interns they did not expect when entering the program. Mentors also had different expectations for what value the interns would give to their employer. See table 7 for more detail on mentor feedback.

Job partners generally viewed their partnership with Urban Alliance as an opportunity to help young people, though they sometimes saw doing so as directly beneficial to their organization. Nearly 80 percent of mentors surveyed indicated that their organization decided to employ an intern through Urban Alliance mainly to help young people in the community. An additional 7 percent did so mainly to fulfill corporate responsibility needs or boost their organization's image, while 9 percent did so mainly because their organization was understaffed.

Most mentors we spoke with felt that the internship experience had benefited their interns. Most described their interns positively and reported seeing improvements in their performance over the course of the internship. More than three-quarters of mentors indicated that their intern displayed motivation to learn on the job. Roughly nine in ten reported seeing at least some improvement in their intern's skills or in their attitude toward work, confidence, or motivation.

Some mentors we spoke with had substantial complaints about their interns, though only a minority viewed these challenges as unacceptable or unexpected when working with young people. Some mentors ultimately felt the need to terminate interns because of poor performance. In most cases, mentors saw this as a part of an effort to help young people from underresourced communities, some of

whom will face challenges performing satisfactorily in an office setting. A smaller share saw this as a poor reflection on the Urban Alliance screening process and felt that the program should only place young people in internships who can meet minimum standards of professional conduct. One mentor who felt that an intern's lack of communication about scheduling conflicts that affected job attendance was unacceptable said, "If...I've set aside all this work for them to do and it's time sensitive" and the intern does not show up to work "it really throws me for a loop."

Mentors also had differing expectations as to whether the main purpose of the internship was to benefit the intern or employer. Most indicated that they took on interns mainly to help develop them professionally and were understanding when they lacked skills that employers expect of employees or college or graduate interns. For instance, a mentor mentioned that an intern "had barely ever used a computer before coming to us," so the mentor's team had "been working with him to get him comfortable with that" before giving the intern other tasks. This mentor felt that developing the intern's basic skills in this way was an expected part of the process, because "we fully understand that this is partially a volunteer opportunity." Others felt that Urban Alliance should do a better job of screening interns to ensure they are able to complete assignments, including one mentor who said that her intern had "extremely poor writing and English skills" and that "those skills needed to be much more advanced" for that office environment, which required writing.

Mentors generally felt that the Urban Alliance trainings provided young people with useful preparation for their internships, but some offered suggestions for improvement. More than nine in ten mentors indicated that pre-work and workshop trainings were important for improving interns' work performance, though they were split roughly evenly as to whether the program should provide additional training or support. In interviews and surveys, mentors often mentioned Microsoft Excel and writing as areas where Urban Alliance should add more training.

A few mentors whose interns had not started their internship until late winter or early spring noted that the intern would have gotten more out of the experience if they had been placed sooner.

TABLE 7

Mentor Outlook on Interns

	N	%
Main reason the organization decided to employ an Urban Alliance intern (*N* = 286)		
Help young people in the community	226	79
Organization was understaffed	27	9
Fulfill corporate social responsibility needs or boost image	21	7
Other	12	4
Intern's motivation to learn on the job and pursue new learning opportunities (*N* = 269)		
Very good	118	44
Good	91	34
Fair	41	15
Poor	15	6
Very poor	4	2
Improvement seen in intern's skills over the course of the internship (*N* = 265)		
Major improvement	115	43
Some improvement	131	49
Limited improvement	19	7
Improvement seen in intern's attitude toward work, confidence, or motivation (*N* = 270)		
Major improvement	125	46
Some improvement	119	44
Limited improvement	26	10
Importance of program activities, for example, pre-work training and weekly workshops, in improving your intern's performance at work (*N* = 266)		
Very important	141	53
Somewhat important	107	40
Not important	18	7
Whether Urban Alliance should add any support or training for interns (*N* = 269)		
Yes	130	48
No	139	52

Source: Job mentor survey.

Mentorship

Each employer that hosted an Urban Alliance intern identified one primary mentor for each intern who was tasked with supervising the intern's work and serving as a supportive adult figure. Urban Alliance staff articulated that they viewed a strong mentor as critical for helping young people get the most out of their time in the program. Feedback from staff, interns, and mentors made it clear that mentors fell along a spectrum in terms of how much they supported interns. This was attributed to several factors, including a mentor's personal motivation, outlook on the role, and preparation they received from Urban Alliance.

It's crazy. We went on an outing last week, and he was just, like, "That was one of the best days ever," and I was, like, "Shut up, dude. You're going to make me cry." It was…nice to know that…it's clearly making an impact.
—Mentor, Chicago

Mentor Role and Expectations

Urban Alliance staff identified the mentor role as a key component of the model to help young people succeed after high school. Staff believed that mentors ideally should go beyond assigning interns tasks and supervising their performance. They stated that mentors should have the patience and conflict management skills to work through challenges that often arise when employing a young person unfamiliar with office settings and should take time to develop a trusting relationship and discuss the intern's post–high school plans. Committed mentors often shared insight with their interns about how to start a professional career and looked for opportunities to connect interns with other staff in their professional network who may have useful information to share. Staff also underscored the importance of mentors providing interns with meaningful work, which involved making it clear to the intern how his or her efforts were benefiting a larger team.

Mentors came to the role for different reasons and had different levels of experience working with young people. The largest share of job mentors we surveyed indicated the main reason their organization selected them to be a mentor was because they volunteered to help underserved young people, but almost as many responded that they were either asked or told to do so (table 8). Conversations with mentors suggested that those who did not volunteer may have been less committed to the role. Some mentors had years of experience overseeing interns or supervising young people, while others had no experience before Urban Alliance.

TABLE 8

Mentor Reflections on Their Selection

	N	%
What was the main reason you were selected by your organization to act as a job mentor for an intern? (*N* = 281)		
Asked or told	100	36
Volunteered because staff support was needed	24	9
Volunteered to help underserved young people	118	42
Volunteered to help my career development	3	1
Volunteered to improve my mentoring skills	12	4
Other	24	9

Source: Job mentor survey.

Some mentors took an approach to mentoring that closely aligned with what Urban Alliance viewed as ideal. Others did not. Most mentors we spoke with said that they were focused on going beyond a supervisory relationship with the interns. When discussing her intern, one mentor said, "We're really invested in their personal success and growth. I just talked to [intern] about her college, where she's getting accepted to, what her plan is. I think we view our role as a mentor as a very holistic role, and it's not just a supervisor." A small number of mentors described taking a solely supervisory approach, and Urban Alliance staff at different levels suggested many mentors did not fully buy into providing the mentorship role the program envisioned.

Recognizing there was room to improve mentors' understanding of the program's expectations for their role, Urban Alliance staff have tried in recent years to focus more on mentor development. Each region has worked to make the mentor orientation session more robust. Whereas in the past these sessions focused mostly on introducing mentors to the main elements of the Urban Alliance program and the logistical aspects of the mentor role—for example, what interns' schedules will look like and how to sign off on time sheets—the updated orientations include additional information about youth development principles and what being an effective mentor looks like. One region invited a guest speaker from an organization focused on youth mentorship to introduce best practices. The regional programs have also started to host events for mentors throughout the year, including in-person trainings, happy hours, and webinars.

Still, staff commented that there was room for additional improvements in the art of mentoring and in preparing mentors to fulfill the program's expectations. Several program coordinators and program directors said they wished that Urban Alliance could screen mentors to ensure they were committed to the role. They generally recognized that attracting job partners often had to take precedence over screening for mentor quality but emphasized that ensuring mentor commitment was vital to setting up

young people for a meaningful internship experience. One regional leader suggested developing a more extensive training curriculum for mentors.

Additionally, while mentors who attended the orientation sessions generally found them helpful, some offered suggestions for how to help mentors better support young people. One suggested providing additional guidance on how to plan task assignments for interns and said that creating an online venue for mentors to share ideas with each other would be helpful. Some mentors noted that they were unable to attend the orientation, either because they were not the intern's original mentor or because of a scheduling conflict. A few of these mentors felt that conversations with program coordinators in place of the orientation did not adequately prepare them for the role.

Mentor-Intern Relationship

Feedback we received from mentors and interns through conversations and surveys suggests that most interns had positive relationships with their mentors, though the nature of these relationships varied substantially.

Mentors were typically in regular contact with interns, though what that looked like varied. Most surveyed interns (nearly 60 percent) reported that they spoke with their mentor at least once a day. A majority of both mentors and interns reported that they discussed both work tasks and the intern's career and education. In interviews and focus groups, mentors and interns described supervision structures that varied according to the nature of the workplace. Some mentors described meeting with their interns throughout the day because they needed to provide consistent guidance on tasks, while others said that they fit in meetings around an irregular schedule. Some held informal meetings at the intern's desk, while others had regularly scheduled supervision sessions in the mentor's office. Some interns also had relationships with multiple staff members who provided mentorship or assigned tasks.

Interns expressed mixed views on their relationships with their mentors. Most young people reported in surveys that their mentors were interested in what they did and that they looked forward to meeting with their mentor. Most young people also said their mentors had time to devote to mentoring and that their mentors motivated them to do well at work. More than eight in ten young people predicted that they would keep in touch with their mentor after their internship ended. On the other hand, most interns wished that their mentors knew them better and less than half indicated that they would feel very comfortable telling their mentor about a mistake they made at work.

These mixed reviews reflected the diverse relationships the mentors and interns described having with one another during our interviews and focus groups. Some interns reported having close, casual relationships with their mentors, including one who explained, "My mentor, he was real cool…he has a great, positive attitude…sometimes I might crack a few jokes here and there because he's positive." Some mentors described similar experiences, including one who said, "I think my role as a mentor is being friendly but not being friends…it's not like we're just a straight business, but we can have fun here." Others said that their relationships were more formal. One mentor in this category described weekly meetings with her interns, where "I really sat down and laid out what their work was going to be, what the expectations were for working here, and then what projects I needed to be communicated on. I would have them send recaps at the end of the week to me on where they were." Some young people mentioned they had changed mentors during their internship because their original mentor left or decided to transition out of the role; a few described a more distant relationship with their newer mentor.

Coaching: Program Coordinators

Coaching and Youth Support

Program coordinators supported each participating young person in their caseload throughout the program year to aid their successful completion of the program and post–high school transition.

This support took many forms and varied according to each participant's needs. Young people and program coordinators reported a two-way relationship, where both parties contacted one another as issues arose. Most program coordinators reported checking in with young people on their caseloads at least once a week in addition to their in-person training sessions. If a young person was not struggling, program coordinators often reached out to ask them about how internships were going or to connect them with scholarship opportunities. Beyond this, contacts varied widely. Young people reported reaching out to their program coordinator from as much as every day to as little as once a month. Both program coordinators and young people usually texted to communicate because young people were generally most comfortable communicating this way, though some also used email regularly.

Program coordinators all reported being in contact with young people on their caseloads after work hours, though some set firmer boundaries than others. Most had an informal cutoff time during the week when they would no longer respond, including one who said, "I usually stop responding to text messages by around 7:30, 8:00 p.m.," and another who said, "My cutoff is 9:00 p.m." Both program

coordinators noted that they receive calls and texts after this hour and on weekends but usually only respond during those times in emergencies. Others had looser boundaries, including one who confessed, "I really tried to work hard with those boundaries and not responding to text messages over the weekend or phone calls," but "I've been starting to respond to them over the weekend because then I have a lot of stuff to do during the week, and I'm, like…this is a quick response."

Program coordinators had a consensus that some young people needed more support than others, so the best way to approach the job was to focus most contact on those who needed greater support to get through the program. One contended, "there are students in our program who are going to be successful with or without our program," but "for the students who really need this program," individual attention is more beneficial. Another explained, "most students I talk to every week," but students like the one whose "parent is rarely at home and he has to oversee his little brother and he has attendance issues at school. For him, it's every day I'm talking to him via text because he needed that accountability and I think he needs someone to notice if he's there or not there." These personal challenges often led to frequent contact between young people and program coordinators. A different program coordinator recalled, "I had an intern talk to me about her health situation and abuse" and they worked with the student to get her the help she needed so she could concentrate on school and Urban Alliance program.

Most frequently, young people were in contact with their program coordinators because of scheduling or other logistical concerns. Students often contacted their program coordinators when they planned to miss or be late to work or training, with one intern explaining that competing activities at school were a reason for contact: "Recently my prom and stuff was coming up. I needed to know if I made my 24 hours in that week I was working, would I still get paid for it instead of doing it over the two weeks because I knew I wasn't going to be into work the next week." Program coordinators checked up on students who missed work or training without first contacting them to avoid future attendance issues and stress the importance of attendance. Additionally, a program coordinator noted, "I will often times text [young people] and remind them of things. If there's something going on at work that I know about and I know that is important, I'll send them a text reminder."

Several job mentors described how much they appreciated having a program coordinator available to help address issues that arose with interns. One mentor who took on an intern who Urban Alliance terminated from the program for unprofessional conduct at work reflected, "It was hard because you could tell how much Urban Alliance really wants to keep that intern and try their hardest to invest in them," but when it became clear that the intern would not be able to meet expectations, the program coordinator "was definitely behind us, and she came onsite for when we exited [the intern] and had a follow-up meeting with him after and handled all that. Couldn't ask for anything more." A few other

mentors mentioned it was nice not to have be a disciplinarian or explain basic rules of professionalism, knowing that the program coordinator would play that role.

At times, program coordinators were in contact with school staff to work through challenges young people had balancing their Urban Alliance commitments with academic and other school obligations. Urban Alliance staff often encouraged young people to fulfill their school commitments first to ensure they were on track to graduate before engaging in Urban Alliance activities. In a few cases, they decided after consulting with school staff that a young person was struggling too much in school to continue in the internship program. A few school staff members reported checking in with program coordinators throughout the school year on students' performance, including in-person visits, and finding this helpful, though others did not report having significant contact.

Post–High School Planning

The dedicated in-person time program coordinators had with young people on their caseloads was during one-on-one sessions—training sessions reserved for individual check-ins focused on post–high school planning. Regional teams scheduled two or three sessions throughout the program year, assigning short blocks of time (typically 30 minutes) for each young person to meet with their program coordinator. During these sessions, program coordinators asked questions on topics such as where the intern had been accepted to college and the status of their financial aid applications. Once internships started, some sessions included check-ins on how internships were going and preparations for program coordinators' job site visits. Some sessions lasted longer than others; for example, in instances where young people had particularly close relationships with their program coordinators or where they needed more help with post–high school planning.

Staff felt that these sessions were essential for providing tailored post–high school planning and other support to young people. Several program coordinators described finding most of the personal information they knew about young people on their caseloads during these sessions. One program coordinator asserted, "It's just impossible for me otherwise without a one-on-one to really get to know my students and really get an idea of where they're going." This program coordinator gave the example of learning in a one-on-one session that a young person was a DACA (Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals) recipient and consequently had restricted access to financial aid. Having this information allowed the program coordinator to seek out useful resources for this student.

Still, a few staff members noted limitations in their ability to steer young people toward post–high school success. A program coordinator said that Urban Alliance staff are "in a tough predicament with

the students" because they do not meet one-on-one with them until well into the fall semester of their senior year, and this means that, in many cases, "They've already applied to college, but they haven't heard back. We don't really have the chance to inform them and guide them through the application process." Urban Alliance has tried to address this by adding additional post–high school planning material to the pre-work curriculum. Moreover, despite limitations, the program has had some success in steering students' trajectories, including one student who related, "I was going through some things at the end of my 12th grade year, and I haven't really applied to any colleges, but after I talked with [a program coordinator] about staying on the right track, I applied and got accepted into [a local community college], and I got a scholarship—won two scholarships."

Program Coordinator Role

Program coordinators were often early career professionals interested in making a difference for young people. All new program coordinators needed to have a bachelor's degree and several entered the role with a master's degree. A few program coordinators had degrees in social work, while several had degrees in education. Although a few started their positions as new college graduates, most had some prior work experience. The most common previous professional experiences included K–12 education and roles at other nonprofits serving young people and communities. Program coordinators typically were attracted to the job because it provided opportunities to work directly with young people to help them succeed.

Given their diverse backgrounds, program coordinators tended to excel in different aspects of the role. A program director described the diverse strengths among the local program coordinators, explaining, "Some people are really great at certain aspects of the job, and some people are great at other aspects of the job…we have one program coordinator who's really good at connecting with young people. Our young people go to her for questions. They reach out. They trust her. Some program coordinators are really good at that student management piece. Other program coordinators are amazing at the company relationship piece." Another program director noted that having trained social workers and teachers as program coordinators brought valuable resources to the team.

Overall, supervisory staff spoke highly of their program coordinators. One program director stated that program coordinators' "dedication to the students and them being successful" is their biggest strength. An executive director in one region said that the region's program coordinators "have a very clear passion for young people and always go above and beyond for them," in addition to supporting their colleagues.

Most young people also expressed appreciation for their program coordinators. While a few felt that their program coordinators checked in on them more than necessary or gave them assignments without enough notice, most described them as supportive and helpful. Young people commonly described their program coordinators as "nice" and "considerate." Several said they felt comfortable discussing personal problems with their program coordinator, and many mentioned constructive advice or resources they had received from them. For instance, one intern who had applied for a college scholarship explained, "[my program coordinator] came to me to talk to me about the scholarship opportunity and help me through the process of it."

Although staff generally described program coordinators as dedicated and broadly competent, many felt that they were not always prepared for the wide array of tasks involved. A few staff members in different roles mentioned that program coordinators were not trained as well as they could be in specific areas relevant to their role supporting young people, including post–high school planning and trauma-informed care. Though Urban Alliance provided limited professional development dollars and some internal training in these areas, several staff members did not think preparation went far enough. One program coordinator mentioned having to draw on the "different experience and different expertise" of colleagues from previous jobs "as things come up with the [young people]," but there were times when the team could have used additional training to prepare them to deal with challenges.

Some supervisory staff members identified time management as an area for improvement among their program coordinators, but coordinators expressed how difficult it could be to manage their time because they had to juggle multiple responsibilities. Several described the challenge of wearing many hats at once, including spending time recruiting young people and maintaining relationships with job sites on top of their work with current interns. Program coordinators nearly universally felt that their caseloads were too large to deliver the depth of one-on-one support they wanted to provide, leaving many feeling overextended as they tried to help everyone. Urban Alliance aims for caseloads of about 30, but at times staffing shortages have pushed that number higher. One program coordinator said, "[With a smaller caseload,] I think I would be able to arrange for a lot more just one-on-one time" with the young people and that smaller class sizes at workshops would make it easier to keep them engaged.

Program coordinator workload appeared to be the primary factor negatively affecting job satisfaction and retention. Several program coordinators across regions mentioned being overworked and undersupported, and they often connected this to turnover. A program coordinator asserted, "I think the role is exhausting. I see why there's a lot of turnover for us as [program coordinators]." Another maintained, "I don't believe we're adequately compensated for what we're doing," noting, "We'll schedule calls [with youth] on weekends. They'll call us after hours. We tell them not to. Work

doesn't end for us. For work not to end for us and to be paid $40,000 a year is very difficult to sustain and maintain." A third program coordinator felt that they were not sufficiently invested in, saying about leadership, "they don't really pour in to staff." Staff at all levels acknowledged that program coordinators only stayed in the role for two-to-three years on average.

Program coordinator turnover, both across and within years, was high but also varied by site (table 9). The distribution of new versus returning staff serving in a program coordinator role was about the same across program years, with slightly more new staff than staff who had been with Urban Alliance in the previous year. Chicago in the 2016–17 program year and DC in the 2017–18 program year had particularly high shares of new program coordinators.

Of the 14 program coordinators in 2016–17, nine completed a full program year and five did not. Of the 20 program coordinators in 2017–18, only seven completed a full program year and 13 did not. In cases when a program coordinator left in the middle of a program year, a program manager or director would often step in and serve in that role.

TABLE 9
Program Coordinator Turnover

	Turnover across years		
	Returning from previous year	**New**	**Total**
2016–17	**5**	**9**	**14**
Baltimore	0	2	2
Chicago	1	3	4
Washington, DC	3	3	6
Northern Virginia	1	1	2
2017–18	**8**	**12**	**20**
Baltimore	1	1	2
Chicago	3	3	6
Washington, DC	2	6	8
Northern Virginia	2	2	4

Source: Urban Alliance program data.
Notes: Includes program managers and directors who served in a program coordinator role because a coordinator left during the middle of a program year. We break them out separately when displaying turnover within years.

This high turnover rate made maintaining program quality more difficult. A program director said that turnover among program coordinators was "difficult from a relationship perspective for our company. Some of our partners have been hosting students for five years now, but they've maybe had a new [program coordinator] every couple of years. It's hard to maintain the relationship when you have a new person." Some young people also described having had multiple program coordinators because of turnover during the program year and not feeling like they had time to forge new relationships with

each coordinator. Further, a program coordinator noted that when staff in the position have left, they took a lot of knowledge about their role and the young people they supported with them that was not documented. Some amount of turnover is expected of course. For example, the Nonprofit HR 2019 Talent Management Retention Practices Survey found that among 350 organizations surveyed, the total average turnover for organizations that tracked that data was 21.3 percent (Nonprofit HR 2019). Turnover among staff serving in the program coordinator capacity appears to be higher than industry standards.

Post–High School Plans and Alumni Services

Each cohort graduating from the program included young people with plans to follow various post–high school trajectories. Most involved heading to college. Reflecting Urban Alliance's priority of ensuring that each alumnus has a post–high school plan, nearly all young people responding to our survey indicated they had a plan for what they would do in the fall after high school graduation. Slightly more than half (53 percent) reported that they planned to enroll in a four-year college, and around one-third (31 percent) planned to enroll in a two-year college (table 10). Smaller shares indicated that they planned to complete a technical training program, enter the workforce directly, or join the military. In a survey of Urban Alliance interns, about half of young people surveyed indicated that participation in the internship program had affected their post–high school plans.

TABLE 10

Intern Reported Post–High School Plans

	N	*%*
Main plans for the fall (*N* = 130)		
A four-year college	69	53
A two-year college	40	31
Working (but not more school)	8	6
A technical training program	6	5
Not sure	4	3
Military	2	2

Source: Spring in-program intern survey.

Although most young people reported planning to enter college after high school, several national and regional staff members acknowledged that college persistence is lower than they would like. Program leadership discussed reevaluating what constitutes a successful pathway after high school in light of young people dropping out of college (Theodos et al. 2017). One national staffer explained that, over the past three-to-four years, Urban Alliance has redefined what success is for their graduates,

determining "that it's not always the traditional track of the four-year, and sometimes that's not even the best track for our students, especially nowadays, with the job market and with the expense of college." Efforts to expose young people to noncollege options during training sessions, including vocational training programs and military service, reflect this evolution. Expansions in alumni services also reflect this changed understanding of what success could look like.

We definitely focus a lot on the one- and two-year-out alumni, and looking at the students that are not connected to a pathway, and trying to work with them and provide service to get them onto some sort of pathway that will lead to a more successful future. Something whether it's college, whether it's a program, or whether it's employment.
—Alumni team member

Urban Alliance has significantly expanded its alumni services over the past several years, further investing in its mission to put young people on a path toward self-sufficiency. To be considered an alumnus and have alumni services available, young people were generally required to have completed all the main program components, including pre-work and workshop trainings, the internship, and the public speaking challenge. However, in rare instances staff may opt to designate young people as alumni who have completed most of their internship but must leave early because of conflicts with college enrollment or other post–high school activities.

Urban Alliance has provided alumni services since 2010, though for much of this time support was inconsistent and often informal. Alumni who graduated in 2017 and earlier typically kept in contact with the program mostly through their former program coordinators. Contact usually consisted of informal conversations about career planning, ad-hoc links to resources, emotional support in challenging times, networking opportunities, and a resource room where alumni could access job search and educational materials.

Over the past few years, the organization has substantially expanded its alumni services staff and formally shifted responsibilities for serving alumni from program coordinators to the alumni services team. The Washington, DC, region has employed full-time alumni staff off and on since 2010, and Baltimore has done the same since 2008. Chicago hired a full-time alumni director in 2013 to support its first cohort of alumni, with Northern Virginia following suit in 2016. For the first time during the 2016–

2017 school year, all four regions had a full-time alumni director and Urban Alliance hired a national director to oversee the regional directors. Alumni directors formally introduced alumni services during pre-work. Program coordinators identified young people without plans for employment or education after high school, and alumni directors pulled them out of Friday workshops and provided one-on-one post–high school planning support. Further, program coordinators referred alumni formerly on their caseloads to their regional alumni director for support, though program coordinators may keep in touch with young people informally as well.

Alumni directors focused most of their attention on preventing and resolving disconnection among recent alumni. They pulled data from the National Student Clearinghouse on college enrollment twice yearly and called students whose names did not appear as enrolled in the database, with the goal of supporting entry into either work or an educational program. Alumni directors also sent a monthly alumni newsletter that highlighted alumni achievements and included links to professional resources and information about ways to stay engaged with Urban Alliance.

Coinciding with the Urban Alliance's expanded definition of post-college success, the alumni team has shaped the services they provide to reflect the fact that being a full-time, four-year college student is not preferred or possible for many young people who graduate from the program. One Baltimore program staff member remarked, "We don't work with too many kids in Baltimore that have, I mean, honestly, the luxury of being full-time college students. Oftentimes, they are in school in some capacity, but they are also looking for work to balance it." In many other cases, students dropped out of school before attaining a degree and need employment options. Young people who contacted alumni services were most often looking for work. In response to this need, alumni team members have prioritized increasing job placement capacity through developing knowledge of and relationships with employers.

Regional alumni directors have also worked to create opportunities for ongoing professional development and community building among alumni. These include opportunities to volunteer with the program, such as participating on alumni panels about their successes post–high school and helping with the public speaking challenge. Urban Alliance has offered paid positions assisting the program to a small number of alumni as well. Alumni directors have planned an expanded calendar of events to foster community and create a professional network among alumni, seeking feedback from alumni to shape event content that is relevant to them. Alumni can stop by their regional Urban Alliance office to obtain resources and supports around professional opportunities, including help with job search, interview preparation, study skills, and time management. Alumni of the 2016–17 program year met with Urban Alliance alumni services for various reasons, primarily involving job search assistance and professional

development (table 11). About the same number of visits had been initiated by Urban Alliance staff as by alumni themselves.

Alumni Services for the 2016–17 Cohort

Visits to alumni services	
Share of 2016–17 alumni that visited alumni services	39%
Total number of visits	86
Average number of visits per young person	1.4
Median number of visits per young person	1.0
Top reasons for visit (*N* = 86)	
Career panel	10%
Interview preparation	9%
Part-time job search	9%
Resume assistance	9%
Business plan	8%
Credit 101 information	8%
Financial aid or scholarship search assistance	8%
Full-time job search	7%
Source of contact for visit (*N* = 86)	
Urban Alliance event follow-up with alumni	45%
Initiated by alum	42%
Other	13%

Source: Urban Alliance program data.

Notes: Average and median number of visits per young person are out of the alumni that visited alumni services, not out of all 2016–17 Urban Alliance alumni.

Staff were available to help alumni navigate challenges that may impede their post–high school success. For instance, a regional alumni director said that when alumni "have issues of transportation getting to work, if they need a ride somewhere to register their car, it doesn't matter what it is, I'd rather that they call us first to see if we can assist them. They will do that. Slowly but surely that's what I've been seeing, is when they freak out, are in a panic and they're not sure what to do, they will call me." Alumni directors described fielding calls from alumni experiencing a wide variety of challenges, from challenges finding housing or child care to unmet emotional needs, that were threatening their success with school or work. The alumni services staff referred young people to services they could not provide, such as mental health counseling and housing assistance.

The regions have formalized and expanded some of this support by offering alumni summer internship programs. In summer 2017, Urban Alliance facilitated alumni internships for roughly 50 post–high school young people in Chicago and the same number in DC, with smaller programs of 10 to 15 interns in the other two regions. Alumni directors and regional leaders developed partnerships with

local employers who hosted alumni interns. Alumni directors reached out to potential summer interns each winter.

The alumni services team has plans to further expand and refine services. A first step is to engage with more alumni. To do so, Urban Alliance must have up-to-date contact information. Maintaining up-to-date contact information is challenging because alumni often do not proactively communicate with Urban Alliance that their information has changed. Staff often search online for updated information. As of mid-2018, the team was working with Urban Alliance's data specialists at the national office to improve the system for tracking this information. The data specialists were also working on developing a process in the Salesforce data system for program coordinators to flag students for outreach before they graduate. During the 2017–18 school year, the Northern Virginia region piloted a program to encourage interns to update their LinkedIn profiles and use the website, with the hope that the alumni support team would be able to keep in touch with them on that platform after the program's end. Urban Alliance is also working on streamlining a collection of post–high school planning data so that they will be consistent and contain the information the alumni team needs to best serve young people. Finally, program staff planned to digitize students' exit plans, which staff intended to use to track alumni starting with the class of 2017–18.

Alumni directors were working to expand and streamline the alumni post–high school summer internship programs. They were working to add more internship slots. The DC region was designing a capstone project, as well as workshops and a required interview. The Baltimore region was developing relationships with corporations interested in creating employment pipelines for alumni who participate in summer internships. One program leader in Baltimore explained the team's approach to engaging these employers: "How can we be a solution to HR for you? Here's the young person who's been vetted. They've gone through our program. How can we get them into your workplace and meet those entry-level needs?"

The alumni teams began building out alumni advisory boards during the 2017–18 school year, with the first alumni cohort set to participate after graduating in 2018. Program staff recommended a small number of interns who had demonstrated leadership potential to apply. Young people who were accepted participated in meetings (both virtual and in-person) to assist with program operations, including communications and event planning, and will continue to do so as alumni. The goal of the alumni advisory boards is to foster leadership and independence among participating alumni and to strengthen alumni services through more alumni involvement in planning.

Regional teams have also had the flexibility to develop innovative and tailored ways to serve their alumni's needs. For instance, many graduates of the DC internship program go away to college, meaning they are likely to interact less with the program in person. To accommodate this, the alumni team places greater emphasis on online communication. The Baltimore team piloted Graduate Pathfinder Services (GPS) with 2017 graduates. This program enlisted professionals in the community to serve as mentors for alumni. These supportive adults checked in on alumni at least monthly, typically via text message or email, for the first year after high school and offered encouragement and help with resolving challenges. The former Baltimore alumni services director, who created the program, explained that for some alumni "things can kind of go awry and I was finding that I wasn't really hearing about those things until, often, it was too late for me to do a lot." She asserted that GPS will help free up her time to provide services as the alumni community grows. Northern Virginia planned to begin implementing GPS for 2019 graduates.

Program Fidelity

We examined the extent to which service receipt for young people who successfully completed the Urban Alliance High School Internship Program matched program targets. We include a table in appendix C that defines those program targets, spanning skill training, direct work experience, mentoring and case management, and alumni services. We found that Urban Alliance met the program targets with the exception of workshop training attendance and the share of interns reporting high mentor engagement.

Program Take-Up and Persistence

In this section, we describe attrition rates for young people in the Urban Alliance High School Internship Program and various reasons for attrition. This issue is important for Urban Alliance—as it impinges on resource planning and affects relationships with schools—and for young people who may benefit less when they complete only part of the Urban Alliance program.

The Urban Alliance model allowed young people to enroll themselves in the program. Urban Alliance expected varying levels of attrition during pre-work, although the extent varies by region. There was also attrition at other stages of Urban Alliance programming, including after completion of pre-work but before job placement, and after job placement during the internship (tables 12 and 13).

Program Attrition, by Region and Cohort

Stage in program	All	2016–17 (all sites)	2017–18 (all sites)	Baltimore (both cohorts)	Chicago (both cohorts)	Northern Virginia (both cohorts)	Washington, DC (both cohorts)
Application accepted (*N*)	862	356	506	235	256	86	285
Attended pre-work	660	287	373	180	176	73	231
Completed pre-work (*N*)	487	221	266	118	139	66	164
Placed at a job (*N*)	467	215	252	115	137	63	152
Completed program (*N*)	354	156	198	81	106	52	115

Source: Urban Alliance program data.
Note: "Completed program" is defined as having been classified as an alumnus in the Urban Alliance program data.

Among those offered access to the program, 23 percent did not show up for pre-work training. Urban Alliance does not consider program applicants who never showed up to pre-work as having been part of the program, leaving 660 program participants. Of those who started pre-work, 26 percent did not complete pre-work. Only 4 percent who completed pre-work were not placed at a jobsite, and most of those who were placed (76 percent) completed the program. Among applicants offered access to Urban Alliance, 41 percent completed the program (table 14). This finding was remarkably consistent with our analysis of the 2011–12 and 2012–13 Urban Alliance cohorts, where 41 percent of interns completed the program as well (Theodos et al. 2014).

TABLE 13

Share That Progress to the Next Stage in the Program, by Region and Cohort

Stage in program	All	2016–17 (all sites)	2017–18 (all sites)	Baltimore (both cohorts)	Chicago (both cohorts)	Northern Virginia (both cohorts)	Washington, DC (both cohorts)
Attended pre-work (of applicants) (%)	77	81	74	77	69	85	81
Completed pre-work (of those who attended) (%)	74	77	71	66	79	90	71
Placed at a job (of those completing pre-work) (%)	96	97	95	97	99	95	93
Completed program (of those placed at a job) (%)	76	73	79	70	77	83	76

Source: Urban Alliance program data.
Note: "Completed program" is defined as having been classified as an alumnus in the Urban Alliance program data.

There were modest differences across the two cohorts and four regions, both in terms of attrition and program participation (table 14). The 2016–17 program year had higher completion rates than the 2017–18 program year. More notable differences emerged across sites, with Baltimore's completion rate somewhat lower and Northern Virginia—the region most integrated with the local schools—achieving the highest completion rate. The average young person attending pre-work completed 70 percent of pre-work sessions. Chicago and Northern Virginia had higher pre-work attendance rates than Baltimore and Washington, DC, as did the 2016–17 program year compared with the 2017–18 program year. The average young person who completed pre-work and was placed at a jobsite attended 77 percent of workshops, with above-average workshop attendance in Chicago and Northern Virginia and below-average workshop attendance in Washington, DC. Among those placed in internships, young people worked an average of 361 hours, with more hours in Chicago and Washington, DC, and fewer hours in Baltimore and Northern Virginia.

TABLE 14

Program Participation, by Region and Cohort

	All	2016–17 (all sites)	2017–18 (all sites)	Baltimore (both cohorts)	Chicago (both cohorts)	Northern Virginia (both cohorts)	Washington, DC (both cohorts)
Program participation (all)							
Did not attend any pre-work (%)	23	19	26	23	31	15	19
Attended pre-work (%)	77	81	74	77	69	85	81
Completed pre-work (%)	56	62	53	50	54	77	58
Placed at a job (%)	54	60	50	49	54	73	53
Completed internship (%)	41	44	39	34	41	60	40
Number of young people	862	356	506	235	256	86	285
Program participation (of those attending pre-work)							
Completed pre-work (%)	74	77	71	66	79	90	71
Placed at a job (%)	71	75	68	64	78	86	66
Completed internship (%)	54	54	53	45	60	71	50
Number of young people	660	287	373	180	176	73	231
Pre-work (of those attending)							
Average number of pre-work days attended	15	14	15	12	19	15	13
Average percent of pre-work completed (%)	70	75	66	62	84	80	63
Workshops (of those attending)							
Average number of workshops attended	17	18	17	16	19	22	15
Average percent of workshops attended (%)	77	79	75	76	81	80	73
Average caseload	21	21	21	21	22	17	21
Internships (of those placed)							
Average total hours worked	361	353	370	337	384	340	368
Average hours worked a month during school year	40	41	40	40	42	35	41
Average hours worked a month during summer	75	74	77	76	76	72	75

Source: Urban Alliance program data.

Notes: Young people typically start internships toward the end of October or beginning of November. Most young people in Baltimore in the 2016–17 program year started their internships in December.

We estimated predictive models[3] that related baseline characteristics of young people to the likelihood that they would complete each stage of the program: attending pre-work, completing pre-work, and completing the internship (table 15). We include site-level results in appendix D. The

probability of attending pre-work was 12 percentage points higher for students with GPAs of 3.0 to 4.0 than for those with GPAs below 2.0. Program year 2016–17 was associated with a higher rate of showing up to pre-work and completing pre-work, conditional on attending pre-work, than program year 2017–18.

Program completion did not vary by gender or by parenting. Young people with a family structure other than a single-parent or two-parent family were 13 percentage points less likely to complete the program, conditional on completing pre-work, than young people from a two-parent family structure. Young people who had previous work experience were 7 percentage points less likely to complete the program, conditional on completing pre-work, than young people without prior work experience.

We found that an increase in the caseload of a young person's program coordinator by 10 young people increased the probability of completing the program, conditional on completing pre-work, by 1 percentage point. The direction of this finding was the opposite of what we had found in our analysis of the 2011–12 and 2012–13 Urban Alliance cohorts, which found a higher caseload to be negatively associated with program completion (Theodos et al. 2017). We do not know the exact cause for this difference. Possible explanations include more young people being assigned to the strongest program coordinators and young people least likely to complete the program having program coordinators with smaller caseloads.

The probability of completing an internship was negatively associated with neighborhood poverty rates. That is, those living in neighborhoods with high poverty levels were less likely to complete the program than those living in neighborhoods with low poverty levels, controlling for other factors.

Young people from Northern Virginia were 24 percentage points more likely to complete the program than young people from Baltimore. Young people in Chicago, Northern Virginia, and Washington, DC, were also more likely to successfully complete pre-work, conditional on attending, but only Northern Virginia had higher program completion rates.

TABLE 15

Probability of Program Attendance and Completion

Variable	Probability of attending pre-work	Probability of completing pre-work	Probability of completing the program	
	Unconditional	Conditional on attending pre-work	Conditional on completing pre-work	Unconditional
Female	-0.040	0.034	-0.019	-0.025
	(0.033)	(0.037)	(0.044)	(0.038)
Single-parent family	0.055	-0.008	0.005	0.044
	(0.036)	(0.045)	(0.053)	(0.043)
Other family structure	0.015	0.0004	-0.126**	-0.049
	(0.040)	(0.052)	(0.057)	(0.050)
Student is a parent	-0.028	0.036	0.015	0.060
	(0.067)	(0.086)	(0.102)	(0.083)
Previously held a job	0.012	0.050	-0.067*	-0.009
	(0.031)	(0.037)	(0.040)	(0.036)
Poverty in neighborhood (%)	-0.029	-0.204	-0.107	-0.307**
	(0.117)	(0.137)	(0.170)	(0.141)
GPA: 3.0 to 4.0	0.116*	0.065	0.091	0.188**
	(0.064)	(0.095)	(0.102)	(0.089)
GPA: 2.0 to <3.0	0.074	0.003	-0.028	0.060
	(0.064)	(0.096)	(0.102)	(0.091)
2016–17 cohort	0.046	0.111***	-0.073*	0.068*
	(0.032)	(0.038)	(0.043)	(0.037)
Chicago	-0.075*	0.167***	0.027	0.081*
	(0.039)	(0.049)	(0.057)	(0.049)
Northern Virginia	0.078	0.392***	0.156**	0.240***
	(0.065)	(0.099)	(0.077)	(0.067)
Washington, DC	0.017	0.077*	0.052	0.042
	(0.040)	(0.043)	(0.051)	(0.045)
Caseload			0.014***	
			(0.003)	
Observations (*n*)	777	609	433	777

Sources: Urban Alliance program application forms; Urban Alliance program data.
Notes: Estimates are marginal effects from a logit regression. Standard errors are given in parentheses. "Completing the program" is defined as having been classified as an alumnus in the Urban Alliance program data. The reference group for "GPA 3.0 to 4.0" and "GPA 2.0 to <3.0" was GPA <2.0. The reference group for the sites is Baltimore. The reference group for "single-parent family" and "other family structure" is two-parent family. * $p < 0.1$ ** $p < 0.05$ *** $p < 0.01$

Our process evaluation revealed many reasons why young people exited the program. Some factors apply to attrition across all stages of Urban Alliance programming, while others are more relevant at a specific stage of the program year. We review the reasons below.

School schedules in some cases conflicted with Urban Alliance programming. Young people typically applied to the program as high school juniors and may not have known their senior year

academic schedules and potential conflicts at the time of application. Young people may find out about changes to their academic schedules at different times throughout their senior year. This could be an issue during pre-work but also later in the program. Program attrition imposed burdens on schools as well. One school counselor described how it can be challenging to accommodate student schedules for the internships: "We're too big of a school to be changing schedules for kids that get internships. If we don't know about the internships at least a week before school starts, their schedule is staying the way it is."

Academics also contributed to attrition across various stages of the program. Students sometimes needed to take additional classes during their senior year to meet graduation requirements. One school staff member mentioned this was the case for a few Urban Alliance interns at one school and that the additional classes resulted in fewer hours at their internships, which led to diminished motivation for completing the program. Additionally, senior year could be a difficult time for students as they make decisions about what they will do after high school. One noncompleting intern mentioned leaving the internship because school was getting more stressful: "I just felt like it was either I could work and then not really care about college or any of that. Or I could just focus on the school." An Urban Alliance staff member also acknowledged the importance of academics: "At the end of the day, we're always gonna side with the student completing school requirements and graduating."

After-school commitments also contributed to attrition. Athletics was a particularly demanding school commitment, especially during the fall semester. As one school staff member said, "Sometimes for kids it's a put-off that they can't be in their sports," and for students that could win scholarships for their athletic ability, "athletics will always win over Urban Alliance."

Another factor was the **overall time commitment** required to participate in the program. Young people acknowledged in one focus group that accepted students they knew who ultimately decided not to participate in the program did so primarily because of the time commitment: "Because a lot of people they thought it was going to be okay, but then when you realize it actually is a commitment to come here. We're teenagers. We have friends. Things happen even during the week…so a lot of people didn't want to stick to that commitment."

An Urban Alliance executive director explained how many young people used the wages they earned to support their families and that **Urban Alliance competes with other local employers** that may offer higher wages or more hours. As one Urban Alliance staff member described, some students left "because they do the math in their head and somehow they come up with the fact that it's not enough money because they're only working after school." As the executive director said, "a lot of [young

people] who do leave the program on their own, it's because they don't have the luxury of thinking long-term success at this point."

The fact that Urban Alliance **did not pay young people for pre-work** was cited by students and staff as a contributing factor to attrition during pre-work, especially considering that an internship placement was not guaranteed. As one Urban Alliance staff member described, "I understand that the incentive is an opportunity to be in the program and to get paid, but if you think about the way that the brain works as a [young person], sometimes they need instant gratification, they need instant incentives." Pre-work can also be demanding for young people. Indeed, one Urban Alliance staffer commented that a handful of students left the program after realizing the actual time commitment of pre-work. Young people who had not completed pre-work mentioned other reasons for leaving the program, including not meeting requirements for attire and not understanding the program requirements and length of pre-work, particularly when applying for the program.

There was also attrition among students who successfully completed pre-work, because of the internship placement process. One school staff member explained how one high-performing student dropped out of Urban Alliance because she **never received an internship placement**. The school staff member also said that for some students, "if they don't get an immediate placement," they "lose motivation and they'll drop off."

Workshop location was an obstacle for some students given transportation difficulties. In DC, for example, the program held workshops in Northwest DC for the 2016–17 program year, which was difficult for young people living in Southeast DC. Urban Alliance had two workshop locations in the 2017–18 program year to address this. Transportation costs can also be an issue. In Chicago, young people paid for their own transportation to pre-work, which was a financial burden for some. As a solution, Urban Alliance staff in Chicago decided to loan young people prepaid transportation cards and then deduct the amount spent on transportation from future wages for young people who were hired for an internship.

Forty-one percent of all applicants offered access to the program completed the program. **Poor job performance** and low levels of engagement at work can lead to termination of young people, but the bar for termination is high. A few young people were asked to leave the program during pre-work as well. As one job mentor from Chicago described, "We took exiting the intern very seriously, and it was a hard decision for us, but we ultimately decided that it's a disservice to them to allow poor performance and poor behavior and not upholding the standards of Urban Alliance and our own company values." Another job mentor described how interns not performing well were put on a work employment plan,

and that "worst-case scenario, if someone doesn't show improvement, eventually we will terminate someone from a job site." As one Urban Alliance staffer summarized, "I think if a young person is not engaged at work, they will not make it through the program and there's only so much a program coordinator or program director can do to make a case to an employer."

A related factor was the **adequacy of matching young people to job sites**. As one Urban Alliance staff member described, Urban Alliance didn't always have the right sites for young people, and "being placed in a field that you're not interested in and having to work there 12 hours a week after school and then the workshop on Friday" is a big ask. Another Urban Alliance staff member commented that "a lot of what I think we do need to rely on is how seriously is an employer going to take this and what are we doing to ensure that the mentors and their decisionmakers have a good understanding of what the purpose of our program is and how can young people be successful in our program." Other Urban Alliance staff members also mentioned the importance of having employers who are flexible with scheduling to accommodate interns' needs, such as when they need to reduce the number of days at their internships to focus on academics.

As one Urban Alliance staff member described, the **internship commitment and environment can be a culture shock** for young people compared with their high school experiences: "Now they're placed into an environment—a lot of our companies are big companies, banks, law firms, fortune 500, where it's just the culture of here's your assignments, do the work, once you're done then there's more work…Do this on a timely basis and not waste time. It's very different than what many of our students have been experiencing in school for the last three years in high school." The time commitment also contributed to drop-off during the summer. Some Urban Alliance staff described how a handful of students would stop participating at the end of their senior year after seeing their friends graduate from high school and take a break during the summer.

Preventing Attrition

Attrition posed challenges for Urban Alliance and its participants. The program had to add one or two more rounds of pre-work in some regions for late-enrolled young people, who had been admitted to compensate for drop-off. Attrition affected the participants' high school academic schedules. School counselors reported it was much harder for a young person to start a class two months after a semester had already begun.

Although Urban Alliance expected some degree of attrition each year, the program was especially interested in curbing attrition among young people who progressed farther along in the program. This process evaluation revealed several ideas for how to reduce attrition. One Urban Alliance staff member mentioned how offering course credit for the program was one way to reduce attrition. As the staff member said, "I think getting a grade—and also, attendance as well, because I know in the other—if you're not in a class, then kids treat it as an after-school program, versus a during-the-school program." The staff person also thought close partnerships with schools in the district were important for engaging with young people experiencing difficulties early on. Urban Alliance staff also felt that having strong relationships with young people was important for reducing attrition. As one Urban Alliance program coordinator asserted, if young people "don't think that we care about them doing well in the program…they'd be more likely to leave." Another Urban Alliance staff member echoed this sentiment: "I think that's the most essential thing in helping our youth to succeed and complete the program, just being able to have that relationship, them knowing that you're there for them, and you're there in their corner, and that you have their best interests in mind."

Program Funding and Costs

Urban Alliance leadership felt that the organization established a sustainable funding model for the High School Internship Program. The program was funded through a mix of payments from organizations employing interns, philanthropic foundations, and government grants and contracts. The approach was centrally coordinated from the national office. The organization's chief executive officer led the effort to cultivate relationships with national funders. Regional executive directors built relationships with funders at the local level. Executive directors worked with the national development team to plan around fundraising needs, tracking funding secured each year and anticipated gaps. A national leader noted that Urban Alliance is "in a unique situation, where we know by the end of the fiscal year what our expenses are going to be. So at the end of December we know how many students we're going to have, how many staff we're going to have, and what our gap is going to be moving forward." This helped leadership be proactive and strategic in closing funding gaps. Urban Alliance enjoyed the support of several multiyear grants at the regional and national levels that contribute to ongoing solvency. Moreover, the program benefited from being able to count on roughly 80 percent of employers returning year-over-year, and many employers contributed a substantial amount of secured funding in the form of payments to interns.

Interns were either fully funded by the job partner, partially funded by the job partner and by philanthropic dollars, or fully funded by philanthropic dollars. Urban Alliance raised philanthropic dollars to fund placements at nonprofits that could not afford the intern payment and has supplemented these dollars with funding from public sector grants. Historically, the national team has committed to raising funds to place 25 interns at nonprofits in DC, but they are looking to make this more equitable across regions. In the other regions, executive directors must secure funding for nonprofit placements before placing interns at those sites. In some cases, placements were funded by traditional or corporate philanthropy through gifts to Urban Alliance, while in other cases, placements were funded through the Urban Alliance budget.

Urban Alliance categorizes internship sites as paid, unpaid-matched, or as unpaid-unmatched. Roughly 44 percent of interns worked at internship sites that had paid: their internships were paid either in part or in full by the internship site itself. Almost all (95 percent) interns at paid internship sites were fully funded by the organizations themselves; the average contribution amount per intern at these internship sites was $11,995. Slightly more than half of interns (52 percent) worked at internship sites that Urban Alliance categorizes as unpaid-matched, where the internship site itself did not pay and Urban Alliance identified funding through a foundation or an individual donor. The remaining 5 percent

of interns were at unpaid-unmatched internship sites, where funding came directly from the Urban Alliance's budget. Larger nonprofits, including universities and hospitals, along with for-profit businesses, were generally expected to contribute a set payment, though this payment varied by region and was somewhat flexible. Urban Alliance has increasingly been asking smaller nonprofits to pay what they can to support the program, though only a small number offered a contribution in the years we observed.

The organization set expected full payment rates at amounts that it determined each region could absorb. The general cost per intern is $15,000, but this payment amount fluctuated based on the minimum wage levels. Across both the 2016–17 and 2017–18 school years, full payment amounts were $10,000 to $12,500 in Baltimore, $12,5000 to $15,000 in Chicago, $10,000 to $12,500 in Northern Virginia, and $12,500 to $15,000 in DC. A few large employers that have taken on multiple interns for many years have continued to pay $10,000, though Urban Alliance is working to raise their payments to a more sustainable amount while preserving these valuable relationships. Urban Alliance leaders negotiated the payment amount with prospective employers at times, though they were usually unable to accept payments below $10,000 from employers that fully funded their interns because doing so made covering costs too difficult. One notable exception to this was if a regional program had more participating young people than agreed-upon internship slots and an employer offered to take on interns later in the program year than students would typically start.

Organizational Growth and Change

Over the past decade, Urban Alliance has steadily expanded its programming, including scaling to serve new regions. The program, which began in DC in 1996, first expanded to Baltimore in 2008, Chicago in 2012, and Northern Virginia in 2013.

Since this randomized evaluation began, Urban Alliance recently expanded its High School Internship Program to Montgomery County, Maryland. This expansion came about in the 2017–18 program year, after the local public school system agreed to partner and Urban Alliance obtained additional grant funding. The Montgomery County program served about 30 young people annually and had a dedicated program coordinator who recruited and worked with young people in the county, though the program operated under the leadership of Washington, DC, program staff.

A larger expansion is under way as well. Urban Alliance received funding through an Investing in Innovation (i3) grant from the US Department of Education to expand its flagship program to a fifth region. Urban Alliance went through a thorough site selection process to identify a city that would be a good fit. As one senior national leader noted, "All of our other expansions had come about by requests from somebody whether it was the mayor's office or the school districts or a funder. This was the first time we could be proactive."

After exploring multiple jurisdictions, national leadership ultimately identified Detroit as the best new region. The leadership team found an "anchor employer" through connections to an existing job partner's senior leadership that was willing to employ at least 30 interns annually in the first two years to start the new region on strong footing. The City of Detroit was about the size they were looking for—between the populations of Chicago and Baltimore. The team believed that a city this size could absorb 70 or more interns, which Urban Alliance has determined is the minimum sustainable size at which they can implement the high school internship model. They also believed that a larger metropolitan area would be logistically challenging and involve too much competition for employers and young people.

The main challenge Urban Alliance anticipates in operating the Detroit program is the lack of public transportation in the city. The program plans to lean on the strength of their anchor partner, which is aware of transportation barriers in Detroit and willing to help young people work around this challenge. One staff member described the anchor partner as "a once-in-a-lifetime relationship and partnership" because of the commitment the company has shown. Additionally, the school system in Detroit has expressed willingness to work with the program and is allowing Urban Alliance to contract buses to transport participants to trainings.

Urban Alliance began enrolling young people in Detroit for the 2018–19 school year. Several funders covered the start-up costs. Urban Alliance planned to scale the program over the first several years of operation.

In addition to expanding the flagship program's reach, Urban Alliance has added various other youth programming to its portfolio. It previously operated small internship programs for young people in foster care in Baltimore and Washington, DC. However, the organization stopped working with young people in foster care after determining this population needed more long-term and wraparound supports than Urban Alliance could provide to achieve positive employment outcomes.

For many years, staff had considered ways to serve young people before they reach their senior year of high school, when they may have already missed opportunities to set themselves up for success. Urban Alliance first began working with young people before the start of their senior year in Washington, DC, with the support of the World Bank, which has consistently taken on a group of rising high school juniors and seniors for a six-week summer internship experience.

Urban Alliance received funding to launch a pilot in the 2016–17 school year serving 30 high school juniors in Fairfax County, Virginia. These students received three hours of basic workforce readiness skills training weekly and were paid for their time. Urban Alliance has continued to implement the program in Fairfax County and replicated the model in Chicago beginning in the 2017–18 school year, serving 60 juniors and 100 sophomores. In partnership with local food access charity Martha's Table, the Washington, DC, region implemented a similar program serving 50 juniors and 70 sophomores beginning in the 2018–19 school year. Trainings were relatively light touch with sophomores and became more intensive as students progressed through high school. Many younger students transitioned into the High School Internship Program when they reached their senior year. Staff believed that these young people benefited from their earlier exposure to workforce skills. Moving forward, Urban Alliance plans to adjust the training curriculum for sophomores and juniors to make it more age appropriate and potentially incorporate a work experience element.

Urban Alliance has also operated a workforce training program at Suitland High School in Prince George's County, Maryland, first piloted in the 2014–15 school year. Initially, the program served only seniors, but beginning in the 2017–18 year they began serving sophomores and juniors, adopting a similar curriculum to the sophomore and junior programs in other regions.

Another program adaptation is in Baltimore, where Urban Alliance has operated two programs since 2017. Urban Alliance Baltimore's Career and Technical Education (CTE) High School Internship Program, in partnership with the Baltimore City Public Schools 21st Century School Buildings Program,

connects young people enrolled in vocational training to five-to-six-month internships in the construction industry, mentorship, and professional soft skills training. In partnership with the Maryland Society of Surveyors and the Mayor's Office of Employment Development, Urban Alliance also manages the Future Surveyors Program, which provides young people enrolled in vocational courses with summer internships in the land surveying industry, professional soft skills training, and mentorship. Both programs are ongoing in Baltimore and have not been expanded to other sites.

The Urban Alliance program in Chicago announced a formal partnership with the Obama Foundation in March 2018 and renamed their Chicago program the Obama Youth Jobs Corps to reflect this partnership. Urban Alliance and Obama Foundation staff work jointly on fundraising and bringing new employers on board. This partnership has heightened Urban Alliance's visibility in Chicago and staff believe that it will help increase the scale of their programming in the city. As part of its scaling efforts, the Chicago team was planning to train Chicago school teachers to implement the Urban Alliance curriculum to expand its reach.

Looking forward, Urban Alliance leaders hope to continue to improve programming and serve more young people. Several senior staff members noted that expanding to an additional city, while possible, is unlikely in the near future. Rather, the organization is focusing its resources on deepening relationships with job partners and mentors, strengthening workforce training curricula, and reaching more young people with trainings.

Implications for Practice

Helping put young people on the path to success as they transition to adulthood can be challenging. Few organizations have a proven track record of doing so effectively, but Urban Alliance is one of these groups. Their model, combining mentorship, work and life skills training, and paid work experience, demonstrated some success during the initial impact study in delivering the supports young people need.

Rigorous impact studies are rare in the youth development field and replication impact studies are rarer still. Understandably, well-meaning nonprofits may be hesitant to expose themselves to the possibility that an impact evaluation will not find evidence of positive program outcomes. This possibility remains real with replication studies, which in numerous cases have not found the same outcomes as the original study (Miller et al. 2005). Urban Alliance should be commended for taking on this replication study, which gives the organization an opportunity to validate the positive impacts of its flagship High School Internship Program found in the first study. It also has the opportunity to gain further insight into regional variation in impacts and how these may relate to fidelity in model implementation.

Further, Urban Alliance has been proactive in using both internal and external data and evaluation to improve its practices and has substantial programming improvements to show for these efforts. In response to recommendations from the first external evaluation, Urban Alliance leadership convened an Evaluation Advisory Council, which included evaluation and performance management experts, to examine the study's implications. This kicked off efforts to improve specific elements of the program model, including mentor training and the youth training curriculum. The organization has also undertaken an ongoing effort to examine how program elements combine to influence social-emotional learning for young people and pinpoint areas for change, including engaging with external working groups on social-emotional learning, workforce intermediaries, and K–12 education.

Additionally, Urban Alliance has invested in an expanded evaluation team housed at their national office, which coordinates ongoing data collection on program outcomes. The evaluation team also solicited ongoing formalized feedback on various aspects of the program from young people, program staff, and employers. The organization has devoted resources to using this information for continuous improvement, holding quarterly staff retreats to examine performance and identify priority activities tied to improvement areas. Changes implemented in response to these efforts have included curriculum updates and an effort to secure more STEM-focused internships opportunities for young people.

Despite these considerable successes, the implementation study detailed here revealed several areas for further consideration. First, although Urban Alliance officially targets middle-of-the-road high school students—with GPAs between 2.0 and 3.0—for the internship program, the actual population served varies greatly in academic performance. It may be worth considering how to more narrowly focus recruitment on the stated target population, because serving a consistent group is important for aligning the population served to the services that program provides. This may make it more likely that the young people who would most benefit from the program can access it.

Recruiting within a narrow target population may be difficult because meeting recruiting targets is often a challenge under current practices. This makes it important for the organization to continue working to identify the barriers young people face to successful program completion and developing solutions to alleviate those barriers. Options to consider may include more intensive training on professionalism for these students, more one-on-one guidance from program coordinators, and matching highly devoted mentors to students who need extra support. Conversely, higher performing students may need lighter-touch supports and training.

The training curriculum is another area where the organization has made real improvements but where continued room for refinement exists. Urban Alliance has invested substantial resources in updating the curriculum to be more accessible and engaging for young people. Still, young people who committed to spending significant time in training after school often struggled to concentrate and seemed restless during trainings. Many young people did not believe all the trainings were helpful. Urban Alliance should work to make the curriculum even more engaging; this is particularly important because expanding the training curriculum's reach to more young people is a key organizational goal in coming years. Fortunately, Urban Alliance plans to continue refining its curriculum. This should involve experimentation to identify effective improvements. For example, because some mentors identified computer skills as a weakness for their interns, Urban Alliance might consider piloting a more intensive computer proficiency module during the summer before the program year.

Standardizing the curriculum implementation across regions is an additional area for consideration. Delivering a standard program model across implementing regions may aid in reproducing positive outcomes (Breitenstein et al. 2010). Through its curriculum revamping, the national team has tried to introduce standard teaching practices and training content. However, training content delivery continues to vary by region, and it is unclear to what extent sites truly need different approaches.

Also, the mentorship component of the program could be made even stronger. Evidence suggests that having supportive adults regularly involved in young people's lives can make a positive

impact(Southwick et al. 2007). The dual-support aspect of the Urban Alliance program model, with both program coordinators and job mentors providing one-on-one oversight and mentoring to young people, makes it stand out for the depth of attention young people receive. Still, the quality of this support varies according to the quality of young people's relationships with job mentors and mentors' dispositions toward the role. Urban Alliance has made great strides in improving its development of job mentors, but it should continue to prioritize expanding mentor screening, training, and engagement. In doing so, the organization should focus on ensuring that job mentors are committed to serving in a youth development role and not simply as a work supervisor. Doing so will require setting clear and consistent expectations of job sites, mentors, and young people during the internship. Though doing so involves considerable communication, the effort should lessen the incidence of mentor dissatisfaction and lead to mentors better preparing interns for the professional world, and perhaps help retain mentors and employers. Learning from behaviorally informed experimentation with mentor training and mentor communication in the 2019–20 program year will be instructive.[4]

Intensifying the support program coordinators provide would likely also make it more effective. Program caseload size, combined with competing responsibilities that take time away from coordinators' direct work with young people, limits their ability to steer young people toward success; this is particularly true for young people who are struggling. Ideally, Urban Alliance would reduce caseload sizes. Alternatively, the program can consider having program coordinators conduct more one-on-one sessions with young people during trainings, especially early on in the program when fewer have established post–high school plans. More one-on-one time would likely be valuable enough for young people to justify reducing training time in the larger group. Additional support and training for program coordinators may be needed when addressing challenging or unusual needs that young people may bring.

Finally, Urban Alliance should continue to align its High School Internship Program model more closely with its goal to prepare young people for self-sufficiency after high school. The organization has made important moves to widen its view of what constitutes post–high school success, in line with the reality that many young people the program serves are likely to lack the academic preparation or financial security to successfully complete a four-year college degree immediately following high school. In line with this evolution in thinking, the program has introduced exposure to alternative pathways for young people into the training curriculum.

Yet, the support the program offered may not be sufficient to put young people who entered the program less well prepared on a path toward success. The internship program functioned as an introduction to the working world but did not provide guaranteed pathways to further training

programs or apprenticeships that would prepare young people for permanent employment. Therefore, young people who are not college bound may continue to need a large degree of support after high school to stay on track, and those who are college bound may need robust assistance to remain there.

The organization has invested heavily in alumni services, including developing more connections for alumni to local employers and expanding a program of alumni mentorship in a few regions. These efforts show promise, but it is unclear to what degree they have connected young people with jobs that have career pathways or helped them remain in or return to college. The organization should continue to invest in connecting alumni to living-wage jobs with career pathways, with particular attention to supporting young people who are not college bound or who matriculate and later drop out.

Since the first impact evaluation, Urban Alliance has continued to make efforts toward continuous improvement and has expanded its program to additional regions. Upcoming interim and final impact evaluation reports from this evaluation will provide evidence of how an updated and expanded program is affecting youth outcomes.

Appendix A. Data Sources

Interviews

In spring 2017, we interviewed four members of Urban Alliance's national leadership, one program manager, one site's executive director, alumni directors in each of the four regions, and 10 program coordinators. We were able to interview every staff member directly involved in administering the High School Internship Program during the 2016–17 school year.

In winter and spring 2018, we conducted additional interviews with a smaller subset of staff across the four regions and the national leadership. These included three members of the national leadership, three program directors, one program manager, two employment outreach directors, three alumni directors, and three program coordinators. For our second round of interviews, we prioritized discussions with staff involved in aspects of the High School Internship Program that were evolving, including alumni services, employer outreach, and the training curriculum, as well as staff who worked directly with the young people.

Interview topics varied based on the respondent's role but typically included general work responsibilities, experiences interacting with program participants, program goals, views on different program components, perceived challenges for the program, and recommendations for future change. Interviews with junior- and mid-level staff lasted 45 minutes to 1 hour. Interviews with leadership lasted 1 hour to 90 minutes. We conducted all interviews over the phone, except for one interview with a member of the national leadership team, which was in person. Staff did not receive compensation.

In addition to the staff interviews, we conducted two interviews with school counselors in spring 2017 and an additional two in winter 2018 to gain the high school's perspective on the recruitment process and the value and challenges of the Urban Alliance program. Our questions focused on school culture around college preparation, mechanics of the recruitment process, reasons for program completion and attrition, and challenges involved in youth participation. We conducted school counselor interviews over the phone; interviews lasted roughly 20–30 minutes. School counselors did not receive compensation. We randomly selected counselors to interview from a list obtained from Urban Alliance.

In the final two months of the 2016–17 program year, we conducted seven interviews with job mentors to gain employer perspectives on the Urban Alliance program and its interns. We conducted an additional eight interviews in spring 2018. Questions focused on job mentors' motivations for taking on

an intern, the internship content, their experiences working with Urban Alliance staff, and what value they saw in the program for the interns. In the first year, we interviewed job mentors in Chicago over the phone while interviews with job mentors in the other three regions were in person. We conducted all interviews in the second year in-person during job site visits. These interviews lasted 30 to 45 minutes. Mentors did not receive compensation. We interviewed mentors after randomly selecting internship sites to visit from among the sites where all interns were ages 18 or older. We leveraged the preexisting relationships of program coordinators with the mentors of interns on their caseloads to assist us in arranging visits to the regions.

Finally, we conducted six interviews with young people who started the Urban Alliance program but did not finish in spring 2017 and an additional three in winter 2017. While program completers were engaged in focus groups, we interviewed program noncompleters individually because they were difficult to convene. Questions focused on why the young people applied for the program, their impressions of the program, why they left the program, and their future plans. We conducted interviews with these young people over the phone; interviews lasted 10 to 20 minutes. We sent these interviewees a $25 Amazon gift card via email in appreciation for their time. We selected noncompleters to interview randomly from among all noncompleters ages 18 or older at that point and sent them email invitations to participate.

Focus Groups

We conducted five focus groups with young people participating in the Urban Alliance program during the 2016–17 program year and eight in the 2017–18 program year. In 2016–17, these included one focus group each in Washington, DC, and Baltimore in the fall (at the end of pre-work training but before internships started), and one each in Washington, DC, Baltimore, and Northern Virginia at the end of the program (when participants were on the verge of completing their internships and becoming program alumni). In 2017–18, we conducted one focus group in each region in the fall and another in the final three months of the program. Three to ten young people participated in each focus group. We randomly selected young people to participate from among those older than age 18 at that point.

In the pre-work focus groups, discussions focused on youth motivations for applying for the program, their views on pre-work, expectations for their internships, and goals following high school graduation. In the end-of-program focus groups, discussions focused on experiences with their internships, views on the value of pre-work and workshops, the role of the program coordinators in

their experiences, and plans for the future. Focus groups lasted 40 to 50 minutes. We gave young people $25 Target gift cards as a token of our appreciation.

Observations

We observed 13 training sessions for young people in Washington, DC, Baltimore, and Northern Virginia during the 2016–17 school year and 14 during the 2017–18 school year. These included 6 pre-work training sessions and 7 Friday workshop training sessions during the first year and 11 pre-work training sessions and 3 Friday workshop training sessions during the second year. We recorded notes using an observation guide on multiple aspects of each training session, including the logistical features of the session, the training content, staff quality, youth engagement, and the applicability of the training to internships and future college and career preparedness. We selected trainings to attend based on the training topic's relevance to the Urban Alliance program's core goals (i.e., work and college readiness).

Additionally, we observed mentor orientation sessions in two regions in fall 2017 to learn more about efforts to provide enhanced guidance to mentors.

We conducted observations at four internship sites in Washington, DC, and Northern Virginia in spring 2017 and 2018, including two in each region in 2018. Before beginning each observation, we obtained consent from all interns who were present. We took detailed notes at 15-minute intervals using an observation form over the course of two hours, noting the internship setting, internship content, quality of youth engagement and mentor involvement, and applicability of Urban Alliance training to the internship.

Surveys

We invited all school counselors (56) to complete an online Qualtrics survey in spring 2017 and 36 completed it (64 percent response). In spring 2018, we invited 85 and 58 completed the survey (68 percent response). School counselors did not receive compensation. The counselor survey asked about school culture around college and career preparation, the process of recruiting and enrolling young people in Urban Alliance program, their perspectives on program attrition and completion, and their views on the program's value for their students.

We invited all job mentors (257) to complete the mentor Qualtrics survey in the summer after the 2016–17 school year and 123 completed it (47 percent response). We invited all 230 mentors from the

2017–18 school year to complete the survey and 175 did so (76 percent response). Job mentors did not receive compensation. The job mentor survey asked about their personal motivation for becoming a mentor and why their organization became involved, the experience of their intern(s), their experiences working with Urban Alliance staff, and suggestions for program improvement. Mentors did not receive compensation.

During both school years, we administered job experience surveys to interns who were age 18 in the final two months of the program at each site's Friday workshops. In summer 2017, a total of 70 young people took the survey out of 281 placed in an internship (25 percent response). In summer 2018, a total of 64 young people completed the survey out of 252 placed in an internship (25 percent response). The spring in-program intern survey asked about tasks involved in their internship, interactions with their mentor, and their future plans. We sent young people $5 Amazon gift cards via email or phone (according to their preference indicated in the survey) as a token of appreciation for completion.

Program Data

We received program data from Urban Alliance on the two intern cohorts included in this study (2016–17 and 2017–18 years). These data included Urban Alliance application data, daily attendance for pre-work and workshops, internship placement information, number of hours worked at internships, information on post–high school plans (including colleges applied and accepted to), youth payment information, interaction with alumni services, information on Urban Alliance program costs, and the length of time Urban Alliance staff had a young person on their caseload.

Secondary Data

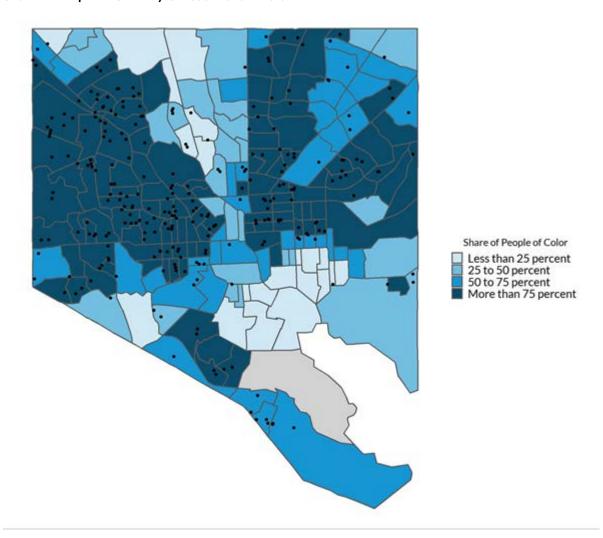We used the American Community Survey, National Center for Education Statistics, and US Department of Education EDFacts data to understand the characteristics of Urban Alliance applicants' neighborhoods and high schools. The American Community Survey 2013–17 five-year estimates of neighborhood demographics and socioeconomic status were combined with participants' addresses as entered on the Urban Alliance program application. Neighborhood attributes were missing for 185 young people who did not consent to sharing their application data (but did consent to participating in the study). We accessed data from the National Center for Educational Statistics and the US Department of Education EDFacts dataset, both from 2016, through the Urban Institute Urban Data

Explorer. We matched these data with applicant high school names to analyze characteristics of Urban Alliance applicants' high schools. High school data could not be accessed for eleven students who were attending two schools (Cornerstone in Washington, DC, and Muchin College Prep in Chicago).
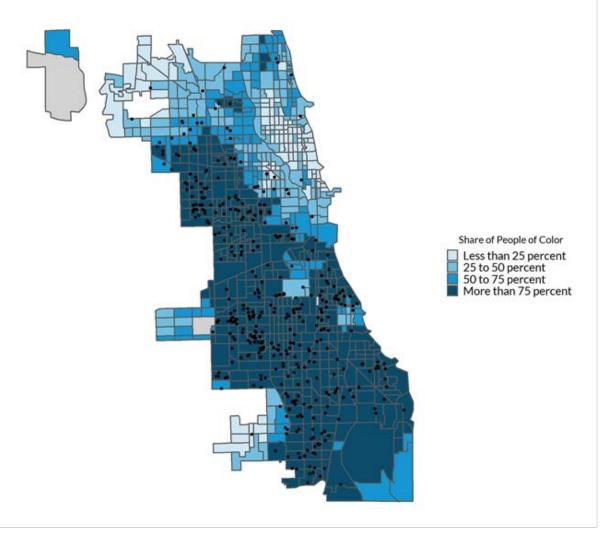
Appendix B. Urban Alliance Applicants' Neighborhoods
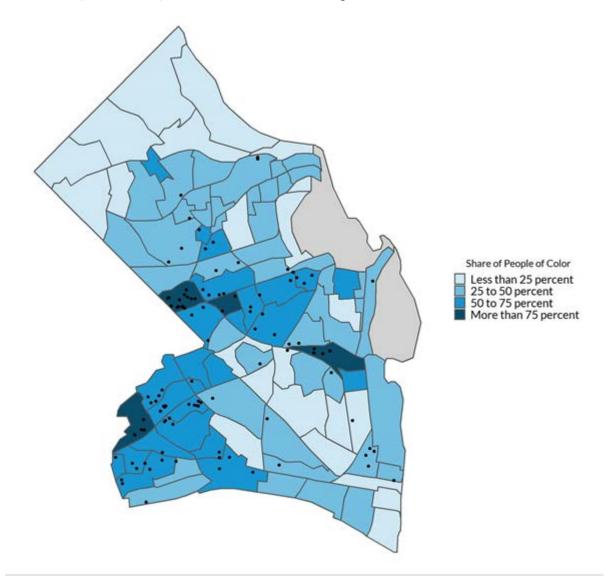
Share of People of Color by Census Tract in Baltimore

Sources: Urban Alliance program data; American Community Survey 2013–17 five-year estimates.

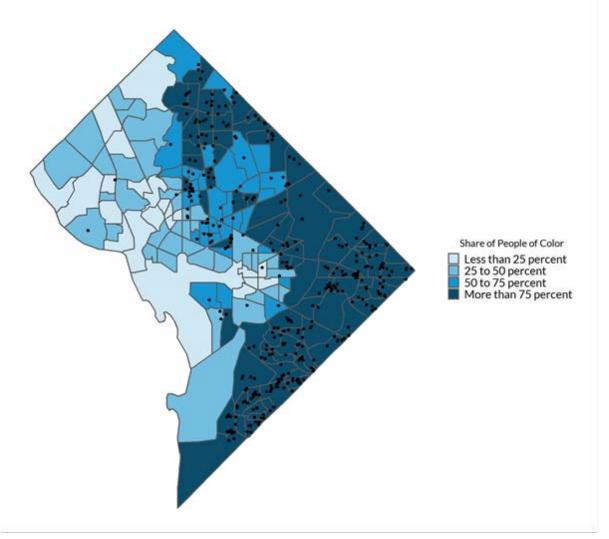**Share of People of Color by Census Tract in Chicago**

Sources: Urban Alliance program data; American Community Survey 2013–17 five-year estimates.

FIGURE B.3

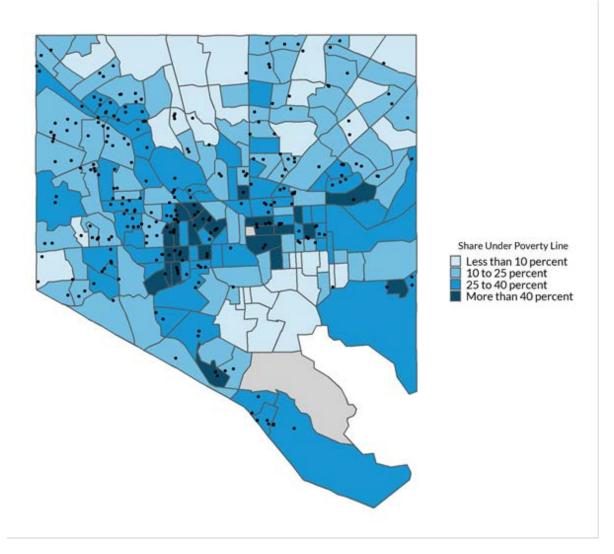**Share of People of Color by Census Tract in Northern Virginia**

Share of People of Color
Less than 25 percent
25 to 50 percent
50 to 75 percent
More than 75 percent

Sources: Urban Alliance program data; American Community Survey 2013–17 five-year estimates.

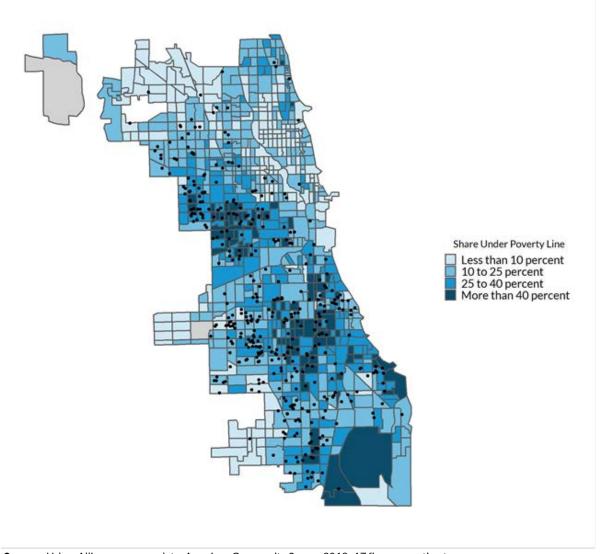**Share of People of Color by Census Tract in Washington, DC**

Sources: Urban Alliance program data; American Community Survey 2013–17 five-year estimates.

Share of People under the Federal Poverty Level by Census Tract in Baltimore

Share Under Poverty Line
- Less than 10 percent
- 10 to 25 percent
- 25 to 40 percent
- More than 40 percent

Sources: Urban Alliance program data; American Community Survey 2013–17 five-year estimates.

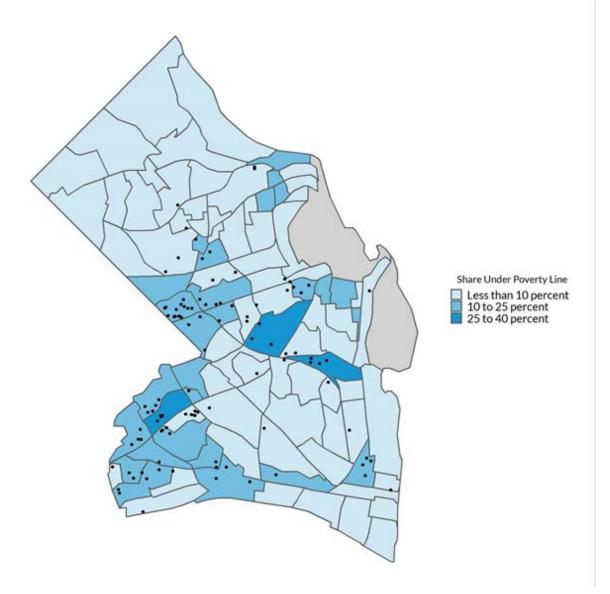**Share of People under the Federal Poverty Level by Census Tract in Chicago**

Share Under Poverty Line
- Less than 10 percent
- 10 to 25 percent
- 25 to 40 percent
- More than 40 percent

Sources: Urban Alliance program data; American Community Survey 2013–17 five-year estimates.

Share of People under the Federal Poverty Level by Census Tract in Northern Virginia

Share Under Poverty Line

Less than 10 percent
10 to 25 percent
25 to 40 percent

Sources: Urban Alliance program data; American Community Survey 2013–17 five-year estimates.

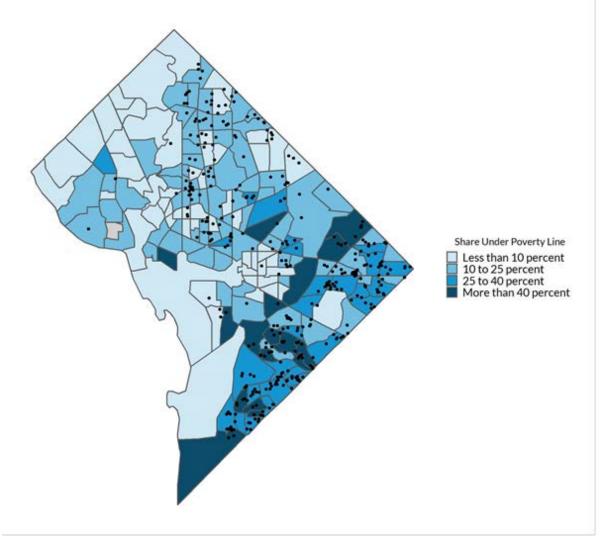**Share of People under the Federal Poverty Level by Census Tract in Washington, DC**

Sources: Urban Alliance program data; American Community Survey 2013–17 five-year estimates.

Appendix C. Program Fidelity

Urban Alliance Program Fidelity

Indicators	Definition	Fidelity measure	Result
Skills training			
Pre-work training	3–6 weeks of daily 2-hour training	At least 75 percent of interns receive at least 20 hours of pre-work	91 percent
Workshop training	About 9 months of 2-hour training	At least 75 percent of interns attend at least 80 percent of workshops	59 percent
All indicators	Satisfy both skill training indicators	At least 75 percent of interns satisfy both indicators	55 percent
Direct work experience			
Total internship hours worked	Work at professional internship	At least 75 percent of interns work at least 350 hours	75 percent
Mentoring/case management			
Job mentoring	Jobsite mentors supervising and advising young people	At least 75 percent of interns report high mentor engagement on average across quarterly surveys	68 percent
Post–high school planning	Post–high school planning sessions with young people	At least 90 percent of interns complete a post–high school plan	98 percent
All indicators	Satisfy both	Share of interns satisfying both	67 percent
Alumni services			
Alumni services provision	Alumni services to program alumni disconnected from both work and school	At least 50 percent of disconnected alumni are provided with alumni services	81 percent

Source: Urban Alliance program data.

Appendix D. Site-Level Predictive Models

Probability of Program Attendance and Completion, Baltimore Only

Variable	Probability of attending pre-work	Probability of completing pre-work	Probability of completing the program	
		Conditional on attending pre-work	**Conditional on completing pre-work**	
	Unconditional			**Unconditional**
Female	-0.026	0.082	-0.017	0.019
	(0.053)	(0.074)	(0.089)	(0.066)
Single-parent family	-0.043	-0.103	-0.138	-0.153*
	(0.068)	(0.098)	(0.116)	(0.081)
Other family structure	-0.121	-0.030	-0.130	-0.167*
	(0.074)	(0.121)	(0.139)	(0.098)
Student is a parent	-0.069	-0.141	-0.173	-0.252
	(0.118)	(0.183)	(0.234)	(0.216)
Previously held a job	0.064	0.052	-0.078	0.014
	(0.050)	(0.072)	(0.082)	(0.063)
Poverty in neighborhood (%)	-0.003	-0.132	0.004	-0.053
	(0.209)	(0.294)	(0.354)	(0.254)
GPA: 3.0 to 4.0	0.206**	0.183	0.141	0.245
	(0.096)	(0.182)	(0.232)	(0.162)
GPA: 2.0 to <3.0	0.121	0.088	-0.149	-0.016
	(0.097)	(0.186)	(0.230)	(0.169)
2016–17 cohort	0.261***	0.185**	0.012	0.233***
	(0.048)	(0.072)	(0.095)	(0.061)
Caseload			0.011	
			(0.008)	
Observations (n)	206	167	109	206

Sources: Urban Alliance program application forms; Urban Alliance program data.

Notes: Estimates are marginal effects from a logit regression. Standard errors are given in parentheses. "Completing the program" is defined as having been classified as an alumnus in the Urban Alliance program data. The reference group for "GPA 3.0 to 4.0" and "GPA 2.0 to <3.0" was GPA <2.0. The reference group for "single-parent family" and other "family structure" is two-parent family. * $p < 0.1$ ** $p < 0.05$ *** $p < 0.01$

Probability of Program Attendance and Completion, Chicago Only

Variable	Probability of attending pre-work	Probability of completing pre-work	Probability of completing the program	
	Unconditional	Conditional on attending pre-work	Conditional on completing pre-work	Unconditional
Female	-0.074	-0.044	-0.074	-0.119*
	(0.069)	(0.073)	(0.084)	(0.069)
Single–parent family	-0.086	0.056	0.078	-0.0002
	(0.072)	(0.082)	(0.097)	(0.076)
Other family structure	0.011	-0.001	-0.110	-0.090
	(0.084)	(0.086)	(0.094)	(0.086)
Student is a parent	-0.011		0.018	0.108
	(0.152)		(0.192)	(0.164)
Previously held a job	0.061	0.083	0.013	0.066
	(0.068)	(0.076)	(0.078)	(0.070)
Poverty in neighborhood (%)	-0.295	-0.509**	-0.155	-0.519**
	(0.229)	(0.234)	(0.314)	(0.243)
GPA: 3.0 to 4.0	0.077	-0.058	0.018	0.003
	(0.121)	(0.143)	(0.125)	(0.127)
GPA: 2.0 to <3.0	0.004	-0.079	0.127	-0.011
	(0.119)	(0.143)	(0.129)	(0.127)
2016–17 cohort	0.104	-0.135*	-0.257***	-0.152*
	(0.077)	(0.075)	(0.087)	(0.081)
Caseload			0.010	
			(0.007)	
Observations (n)	222	148	121	222

Sources: Urban Alliance program application forms; Urban Alliance program data.

Notes: Estimates are marginal effects from a logit regression. Standard errors are given in parentheses. "Completing the program" is defined as having been classified as an alumnus in the Urban Alliance program data. The reference group for "GPA 3.0 to 4.0" and "GPA 2.0 to <3.0" was GPA <2.0. "Student is a parent" was omitted from the model measuring the probability of completing pre-work conditional on attending pre-work. The reference group for "single-parent family" and other "family structure" is two-parent family. * $p < 0.1$ ** $p < 0.05$ *** $p < 0.01$

Probability of Program Attendance and Completion, Washington, DC Only

Variable	Probability of attending pre-work	Probability of completing pre-work	Probability of completing the program	
	Unconditional	Conditional on attending pre-work	Conditional on completing pre-work	Unconditional
Female	-0.068	0.042	0.083	0.038
	(0.055)	(0.068)	(0.077)	(0.068)
Single–parent family	0.123**	0.009	-0.037	0.128*
	(0.053)	(0.084)	(0.117)	(0.075)
Other family structure	0.078	0.006	-0.196	-0.014
	(0.061)	(0.094)	(0.121)	(0.089)
Student is a parent	-0.074	0.025	0.130	0.137
	(0.090)	(0.128)	(0.185)	(0.120)
Previously held a job	-0.004	0.086	-0.041	0.047
	(0.047)	(0.064)	(0.071)	(0.060)
Poverty in neighborhood (%)	0.324	-0.101	-0.259	-0.255
	(0.200)	(0.247)	(0.301)	(0.247)
GPA: 3.0 to 4.0	0.002	0.037	-2.078	0.233
	(0.173)	(0.250)	(242.3)	(0.274)
GPA: 2.0 to <3.0	0.010	-0.037	-2.124	0.188
	(0.176)	(0.253)	(242.3)	(0.277)
2016–17 cohort	-0.153***	0.234***	0.052	0.157***
	(0.045)	(0.065)	(0.073)	(0.057)
Caseload			0.010*	
			(0.005)	
Observations (n)	276	225	146	276

Sources: Urban Alliance program application forms; Urban Alliance program data.

Notes: Estimates are marginal effects from a logit regression. Standard errors are given in parentheses. "Completing the program" is defined as having been classified as an alumnus in the Urban Alliance program data. The reference group for "GPA 3.0 to 4.0" and "GPA 2.0 to <3.0" was GPA <2.0. The reference group for "single-parent family" and "other family structure" is two-parent family. * $p < 0.1$ ** $p < 0.05$ *** $p < 0.01$

TABLE D.4
Probability of Program Attendance and Completion, Northern Virginia Only

Variable	Probability of attending pre-work	Probability of completing pre-work	Probability of completing the program	
	Unconditional	Conditional on attending pre-work	Conditional on completing pre-work	Unconditional
Female	0.007	0.031	-0.170*	-0.212**
	(0.083)	(0.067)	(0.090)	(0.100)
Single-parent family	0.183	0.036	0.121	0.209**
	(0.112)	(0.076)	(0.090)	(0.103)
Other family structure	0.052	-0.001	-0.060	0.041
	(0.090)	(0.081)	(0.098)	(0.119)
Previously held a job	-0.161**	-0.043	-0.063	-0.337***
	(0.076)	(0.066)	(0.060)	(0.075)
Poverty in neighborhood (%)	0.071	0.205	-1.046	-0.642
	(0.486)	(0.486)	(0.660)	(0.537)
GPA: 3.0 to 4.0	0.134	-0.810	-0.897	-0.072
	(0.158)	(130.4)	(244.2)	(0.234)
GPA: 2.0 to <3.0	0.031	-0.789	-0.982	-0.285
	(0.163)	(130.4)	(244.2)	(0.238)
2016–17 cohort	0.085	-0.013	-0.122	-0.197**
	(0.080)	(0.070)	(0.120)	(0.096)
Caseload			0.019**	
			(0.009)	
Observations (n)	72	62	56	72

Sources: Urban Alliance program application forms; Urban Alliance program data.

Notes: Estimates are marginal effects from a logit regression. Standard errors are given in parentheses. "Completing the program" is defined as having been classified as an alumnus in the Urban Alliance program data. The reference group for "GPA 3.0 to 4.0" and "GPA 2.0 to <3.0" was GPA <2.0. "Student is a parent" was omitted from all models for NOVA. The reference group for "single-parent family" and "other family structure" is two-parent family. * $p < 0.1$ ** $p < 0.05$ *** $p < 0.01$

Notes

1   Deborah Kobes, Charlotte Cahill, and Kyle Hartung, "Work-Based Learning Framework," JFF, May 7, 2018,
    https://www.jff.org/resources/work-based-learning-framework/; "Components of Comprehensive Work-Based
    Learning (WBL) Programs," *Work-Based Learning (WBL) Tool Kit*, US Department of Education, accessed June 1,
    2020, https://cte.ed.gov/wbltoolkit/.

2   "About Us," The Urban Alliance Foundation, accessed February 27, 2019, https://theurbanalliance.org/about-
    us/.

3   We ran the predictive models both using a random-effects model at the high school level and without a random-
    effects specification. The estimates for the two approaches were similar, and we report on marginal effects for
    the model without a random-effects specification in this report.

4   With support from the Annie E. Casey Foundation, the Urban Institute is supporting this experimentation by
    reviewing behavioral intervention literature, suggesting program modifications, helping Urban Alliance design
    and incorporate these new or revised elements, and documenting the process in a forthcoming learning brief.

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