

TRAINING AND EMPLOYMENT NOTICE	NO. 26-11
	DATE February 7, 2012

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FROM: JANE OATES /s/
 Assistant Secretary

SUBJECT: Release and Availability of Employment and Training Administration (ETA) Occasional Paper, *Process Evaluation and Outcomes Analysis: Twin Cities RISE! Performance-Based Training and Education Demonstration Project Final Report*

1. Purpose. To announce the release and availability of ETA Occasional Paper, *Process Evaluation and Outcomes Analysis: Twin Cities RISE! Performance-Based Training and Education Demonstration Project Final Report*.

2. Background. Between 2007 and 2010, ETA awarded three grants to Twin Cities RISE! (TCR!), an organization that provides employment readiness and training services in Minneapolis and St. Paul, Minnesota: (1) a Demonstration Grant for January 2007—January 2009 focused on developing a pathway for recently incarcerated individuals to enter TCR!’s core program through pre-release and post-release services; (2) a Continuation Grant for January 2009—December 2010, which sharpened the focus on the post-release services and their articulation with TCR!’s core; and (3) an Earmark Grant for January 2009—December 2010 to provide supportive services to selected “hard-to-employ” clients.

TCR!’s distinctive characteristics are its close involvement of local businesses and emphasis on preparing program participants for good jobs and career pathways, paying no less than \$20,000 a year. The program reports that successful completers spend about 15 months in it, and the key service elements are individual coaching and participation in Empowerment Training, a program of classes and group and individual sessions aimed at helping participants achieve cognitive and behavioral changes conducive to responsible living. Since TCR! adheres to a practice of

continuous improvement, the program evolved significantly over the course of the study, which is documented in the report.

The ETA grant-funded demonstration projects were launched to improve access to TCR! by strengthening two programs the organization offered: Awali Inside/Out, which delivers 24 classroom hours of Empowerment Training in prison, and Awali Place, a post-release program featuring transitional employment, soft skills training, and mentoring, as well as more time devoted to Empowerment Training. In contrast to the core program, which serves individuals with a high school diploma or equivalent, the two Awali programs provided services to individuals with lower educational attainment and multiple barriers to employment. While Awali Place, was initially intended to serve as a feeder program into TCR!'s core, it was discontinued as a separate component in 2008 at three of its four sites and was fully incorporated into the core program.

In August 2008, ETA contracted with Coffey Consulting to conduct a process and outcomes evaluation of the three ETA grants to TCR!. The process evaluation documented program procedures and services and identified key implementation lessons. Outcomes considered included program retention, job placement and quality.

3. Publication Description. The report contains an executive summary, an overview of TCR!, a summary of grant performance and outcomes, and a discussion of findings and implications. Information for the report came from three site visits that took place between September 2009 and December 2010 and included classroom observations as well as interviews with key informants. For the analysis of participant outcomes, the research team used aggregate data from the programs funded by the original Demonstration Grant and individual records for the Continuation and Earmark Grants. Data were most complete for the Earmark Grant.

4. Key Findings.

Process Evaluation

- TCR! has a business-led leadership and makes an effort to have half of its staff with a corporate background and another half from the education and nonprofit sectors.
- The organization places a strong emphasis on the professional development of its staff members.
- TCR! draws on multiple sources of funding, including governments and businesses, which purchase its Empowerment Training.
- TCR! recruits participants using a variety of means, particularly through face-to-face “street” outreach and referrals from current participants.
- Coaches follow TCR! participants through the program’s stages.
- Employer involvement in the program manifests itself in a variety of ways: an Employer Advisory Committee reviews its curriculum quarterly; Employer Services staff prepares participants for interviews and markets their skills and abilities to employers; and an internship program grew to 97 participants in 2010, most of which were placed in the nonprofit sector.
- TCR! benefits from a highly active volunteer effort, which grew to over 200 active volunteers, 45 of them regularly scheduled.

Outcome Evaluation

- TCR! enrolled more people than anticipated into the Demonstration and Continuation Grants. In particular, 828 participants completed Awali Inside/Out using the Demonstration Grant.
- However, the program did not meet all of its milestone goals. 17.7 percent of the Awali Inside/Out completers (73 individuals) entered Awali Place or the Core Program, as compared to a goal of 150 participants. Only 10 participants earned a GED in the program, and 29 increased basic skills by one or more grade levels.
- Similarly, the Continuation Grant enrolled 316 individuals in Awali Place or pre-program activities compared to a goal of 200. Only 78 of them achieved a positive outcome, and 27 continued into the core program, well below the target levels.
- The Earmark Grant served 119 participants, slightly more than the goal of 110. The program did not meet its goals on retention and job placement.

5. Inquiries. To view an abstract of this publication as well as to download the full report, visit the ETA Research Publication Database Web site at:

<http://wdr.doleta.gov/research/keyword.cfm>.