



projectlemonade

L+EARN INTERNSHIP PROGRAM

2023 Impact Summary Report

The L+EARN Internship Program supports youth in foster care as they prepare for work and adulthood by providing them with job experience, essential skill development, and community. The goal of the program is to provide a supportive environment where youth in foster care gain confidence and create a community to prepare themselves for the workplace and their transition to adulthood.

Project Lemonade partnered with Evaluation into Action LLC to assess the program's impact on participants in the areas of career readiness, personal development, and social connectedness. The evaluation methodologies included surveys¹ with interns, partners/volunteers, and alumni, as well as exit interviews² with interns at the conclusion of the program. This report presents the key findings of the evaluation from December 2022 to October 2023.

PROGRAM OVERVIEW

Project Lemonade's L+EARN Internship Program provides youth in foster care aging out of the system with a hands-on 12-week paid internship working at the Project Lemonade Store as well as ongoing support for intern alumni.

CURRENT INTERNS 3 months

- Financial support for basic needs
- Work experience in the Project Lemonade store
- Career and personal development skill-building workshops
- Social events to build community
- Career exploration and networking opportunities

ALUMNI INTERNS Optional ongoing engagement

- Employment option as a Level 2 Intern
- Leadership and advocacy opportunities
- Ongoing 1:1 outreach from staff to maintain program engagement and support
- Option to participate in most current intern activities

PROGRAM STRUCTURE All activities are led by staff and delivered in partnership with one or more of the following groups: Businesses, Nonprofits, Individual Volunteers, DHS/ILP Providers.

1 Alumni Survey (N = 21), Intern Survey (N = 5); Partner/Volunteer Survey (N = 31)

2 Intern Exit Interviews (Level 1: N = 5, Level 2: N = 1)

PROGRAM PARTICIPATION

December 2022–October 2023

Level 1 Interns*	7
Level 2 Interns*	1
Alumni	40
Partners/Volunteers	38
Program Staff	1

*Interns who completed at least 80% of the program

“Not only does Project Lemonade teach interns skills for working the front end and back end of a retail store, [but] the program also maintains contact with each intern helping them to guide the adult world and hooking them up with needed resources.”

—PROGRAM PARTNER

Activities interns found most helpful



working at the
Project Lemonade store



attending a
social function



participating in
a workshop

“I really enjoy meeting the shoppers and helping them find items that boost their confidence; [it] boosts my confidence as well.” —INTERN

friendly helpful kind
caring welcoming
amazing inclusive positive
supportive
generous committed hard working
community

RESULTS: IMPACT

Overall results demonstrated positive outcomes for program participants in three key areas: **career readiness**, **personal development**, and **community connections** (social capital).

Career Readiness refers to the process of preparing individuals to enter the workforce. This category encompasses items such as creating a resume, understanding effective interviewing techniques, building work experience, networking, and other activities related to being ready to find and secure a job.

OUTCOME. To improve career development skills used throughout the employment life cycle, from finding a job to maintaining employment.

Interns (4 of 5) reported improvements in their career development skills. They described learning retail store functions, gaining customer service experience, and increasing their understanding of workplace expectations while building work experience to add to their resumes. As one intern explained, “Working in the store has been the most useful for me because I can work on my customer management skills and work on time management.” Program partners and volunteers (83%) noted improvement in interns’ career development skills.

“I think the interns gain valuable work experience that gives them confidence to join the workforce and gain an understanding of workplace expectations.” — PROGRAM PARTNER

OUTCOME. Increase their understanding of how to find types of careers, employers in the community, and networking opportunities.

85% of partners and volunteers felt that interns’ understanding of how to network and explore career possibilities had improved or improved a lot. For example, job site visits were valuable for interns as they learned about future jobs and met employers in ways that were supportive and fun. As one intern shared, “I’m less scared to start working.”



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RESULTS: IMPACT (CONTINUED)

Personal Development is focused on self-improvement, designed to help youth build their self-esteem, confidence, and ultimately help them better understand themselves so they can see a path for their future.

OUTCOME. To inspire a sense of self, including self-confidence, self-esteem, and a positive view of the future.

The evaluation revealed significant growth in personal development for program participants. An intern explained how this program differed from others for youth in foster care because it didn't focus on past challenges, but on future possibilities. The activities taught them skills for life and kept them looking forward toward adulthood. Most partners/volunteers (96%) noted that interns' sense of self had improved or improved a lot. Interns (80%) felt these improvements as well. As one intern shared, "I feel confident in my career path."

OUTCOME. To improve life skills, such as communication, social interaction, working in a team, making decisions, and goal setting.

Throughout their internships, participants had opportunities to develop and practice essential life skills. Their increasing competency in various skill areas contributed to growth in self-esteem and self-confidence. Interns (80%) reported improvement in essential life skills as a result of their participation in the program, and most partners/volunteers (96%) agreed.

"I believe that the internship allows youth to get a glimpse into what the working industry is like. Many youth believe it's an easy transition into money, but in reality, youth learn to communicate, work with a team, and hold themselves to a professional level."

— PARTNER/VOLUNTEER

"I think Project Lemonade helped me see exactly where I want to go with my goals." — INTERN



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RESULTS: IMPACT (CONTINUED)

Community Connections (Social Capital) help youth build a sense of belonging. Research shows having this social capital helps individuals feel safe and supported, allowing them to flourish in adulthood. The social network resulting from these connections provides a foundation for ongoing support and assistance.

OUTCOME. To feel Project Lemonade is a safe and supportive space.

100% of alumni reported Project Lemonade is a safe and supportive space while four out of five interns also reflected this same sentiment. “I feel like there are adults that care,” shared one of this year’s interns. Another described how she appreciated the environment at Project Lemonade where she was able to acquire skills in a calm and low-stress setting. “Learning at my own pace has been helpful.”

OUTCOME. To improve their sense of belonging among their peers.

Interns reported an increase in their sense of belonging among their peers. One of the interns described the development of a sense of community at Project Lemonade: “It’s like a little family.” 95% of partners and volunteers also felt that interns’ sense of belonging among their peers had improved.

“Many of my youth have reported they feel a sense of community, support, and have ongoing natural support after leaving ODHS.” — PROGRAM PARTNER

OUTCOME. To develop a stable and lasting network of support.

100% of interns felt that Project Lemonade supported them to develop a stable and lasting network of support. Interns valued the relationships they built with staff, peers, and partners, and felt supported and inspired about their futures. Most interns plan to stay involved and strong alumni connection (86%) to the Project Lemonade community demonstrates a meaningful sense of safety, support, and belonging. As one intern shared, “I was able to meet encouraging adults that worked here at Project Lemonade that I know will always be here.”



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“I think you guys give the best opportunities to youth to become their best. You guys have truly made a big impact in my life. Thank you for everything you do.” — INTERN ALUMNUS

CONCLUSION

Project Lemonade’s L+EARN Internship Program made strong gains toward inspiring self-confidence in youth experiencing foster care and setting them on a positive path toward adulthood. The interns and alumni who participated in Project Lemonade’s internship program demonstrated positive progress in the areas of career readiness, personal development, and social capital as shown across key indicators. They developed and practiced essential life skills, built their knowledge of career opportunities and an understanding of employment expectations, and felt supported by a growing community made of program staff, fellow interns, alumni, partners, and volunteers.

Project Lemonade appreciates everyone who provided feedback on the L+EARN Internship Program. They plan to enhance the program’s career-readiness component by creating more customized career connections for interns, ensuring they learn about career paths that align closely to their interests. To continue building community and enhancing a sense of belonging, program staff will offer more social events for interns and alumni to connect in ways that are both fun and supportive.

