



projectlemonade

L+EARN INTERNSHIP PROGRAM

Impact Summary Report

FISCAL YEAR 2023-2024

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 July 1, 2023, to June 30, 2024.

¹ Alumni Survey (N = 29), Intern Survey (N = 12), Partner/Volunteer Survey (N = 22)

² Intern Exit Interviews (Level 1: N = 12, Level 2: N = 1)



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

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

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
- Financial support for basic needs

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.

PROGRAM PARTICIPATION

July 1, 2023–June 30, 2024

Level 1 Interns	13
Level 2 Interns	2
Alumni	40
Partners/Volunteers	34
Program Staff	1



A word cloud featuring various positive adjectives and nouns. The most prominent words are 'supportive', 'helpful', 'family', 'caring', and 'inclusive'. Other visible words include 'fun', 'safe', 'passionate', 'positive', 'kind', 'amazing', 'friendly', 'dedicated', 'loving', 'welcoming', 'inspiring', 'home', 'diverse', 'chill', and 'open'.

Activities interns found most helpful



visiting a local
business



working at the
Project Lemonade store



receiving financial
support for basic needs



"All the people I got to meet, and I just liked seeing all of the excitement when a kid got their favorite stuffed animal or a cool backpack and they just glowed, which was really enjoying to see." – Intern

ACTIVITY SNAPSHOT

July 1, 2023–June 30, 2024



\$13,259

Total Basic Needs Funding
to Stabilize Youth
Transitioning to Adulthood

2,345

Total Hours Interns
Worked at the Project
Lemonade Store

16

Career
Workshops

14

Community-Building
and Social Events

9

Businesses
Visited

8

Personal Development
Activities

4

Guest Speakers with
Lived Foster Care Experience

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. By age 25, 25%–50% of teens and young adults who age out of foster care are unemployed.³ Career readiness programs help youth gain skills, experiences, and networks to overcome barriers to employment. 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 from these three cohorts noted that the most valuable parts of the internship in preparing them for future careers included work experience in a retail environment, exposure to types of jobs that may be available to them, and resume development support. As a result of participating in the internship program, 83% of interns felt they improved or improved a lot in their career development skills. Program partners and volunteers also observed strong growth in this area as 100% who responded to the survey felt that interns' career development skills had improved or improved a lot as a result of their participation.

"It is an amazing soft touch first job experience to support youth and young adults in gaining job experience, creating openings for engagement, advocacy, and peer support." — DHS Staff



A Level 2 intern expressed a sense of accomplishment as she reached the end of the internship and offered, "The type of skills I learned, the type of things I did for Project Lemonade, definitely have boosted my resume."

83% of interns felt they improved in their career development skills

³ Source: *Employment and Youth with Foster Care Experience: Understanding Barriers and Supporting Success*. June 2022. Children Now. <https://files.eric.ed.gov/fulltext/ED622198.pdf>

RESULTS: IMPACT (CONTINUED)

Career Readiness (CONTINUED)

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

“I think the impact on interns is huge. They walk away with the skills and confidence to find other opportunities in fields that interest them.”

— Volunteer

The vast majority (88%) of the intern alumni stated they understood how to find a job as a result of participating in the internship program. The program offered them an introduction to various employers in the community. “Before I started the internship, I didn’t have any idea what type of career I wanted to do. But after being at this internship and meeting other people who had stable jobs helped me realize the type of career path I’d like to get into,” shared one of the interns.

88% of intern alumni stated they understood how to find a job as a result of participating in the internship program.



RESULTS: IMPACT (CONTINUED)

Personal Development is focused on self-improvement, designed to help youth build their self-esteem, confidence, and ultimately help them understand themselves better 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 internship program offered activities to promote personal growth, which resulted in strong outcomes in this area. The alumni survey showed that 88% of intern alumni felt better or much better about their future. One of the program alumni shared, “More than that, they helped me to know and understand myself.” Interns (75%) felt their sense of self had improved or improved a lot. “I definitely have a lot more confidence and feel a lot more social,” shared one intern. Program partners and volunteers shared this opinion, with 100% stating that interns’ sense of self had improved.

“Working here at the time I came into care was really helpful and definitely helped with my mental space and growing as an individual.”

— Intern

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

Nearly all interns (84%) expressed improvement in their life skills, revealing in exit interviews that the areas of most growth included communication, teamwork, and goal setting. “When I started working here, I [began to] have more goals, such as starting school again and paying back my debt,” an intern commented. 100% of partners and volunteers said interns’ essential life skills had improved or improved a lot. One of the program partners explained, “[I] love that the program gives interns a sense of responsibility before entering the working world.”

88% of intern alumni felt better or much better about their future

75% of interns felt their sense of self had improved

84% of interns expressed improvement in their life skills



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.

When asked directly for their opinion, 92% of interns felt that Project Lemonade is a safe or very safe and supportive space. When elaborating on these feelings, one intern said, “I feel welcome,” while another commented, “I liked the people around. It just feels like warm energy from everybody.” 100% of partners and volunteers echoed the viewpoint that Project Lemonade is a safe or very safe and supportive space for its interns and 92% of intern alumni felt that Project Lemonade was a place to turn to if they needed support.

“[It] provides them work experience in a safe setting that is flexible with them as they adjust to workplace expectations, which increases their chances of attaining jobs in the future and being successful in those roles.” — Board Member

92% of interns felt that Project Lemonade is a safe and supportive space

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

Evaluation results suggest that the internship program helped improve participants’ sense of belonging, with 75% of interns reporting improvement in this area. As one intern expressed, “I feel like I’ve made a lot of

friends through the internship, and we all work really well together.” Another explained, “I feel stronger working in an environment with other people rather than by myself.”

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

Interns and intern alumni felt strongly that Project Lemonade is a stable and lasting network of support. In sharing their opinions, 100% of interns responded that Project Lemonade helped them to develop this support network while 96% of intern alumni agreed. As one intern stated, “Having you guys is wonderful ... you guys are here for support and comfort.” A program volunteer offered a similar opinion on one of the long-term benefits of the internship program: “I also think many of the interns walk away knowing they have a place to come back to if they need future support which provides these young people with such a valuable piece of stability.”

“I have a support system that I feel is going to last me a lifetime with PL staff and even the volunteers.” — Intern Alumnus

100% of interns responded that Project Lemonade helped them to develop a support network

“You guys seriously have made the biggest impact in my life I’ve got to carry into adulthood.” — Intern Alumnus

100% of this year’s interns stated that they would recommend this program to others



CONCLUSION

The 2023-24 L+EARN Internship program demonstrated strong results toward fulfilling the goal of helping youth experiencing foster care to prepare for adulthood and the workplace. Interns made strong gains in their career development skills and essential life skills, while increasing their self-esteem and understanding that Project Lemonade will remain a safe place for them to turn to for support. The value of the program to these youth is affirmed by 100% of this year’s interns stating that they would recommend this program to others.

Project Lemonade appreciates all the program participants and stakeholders who took the time to provide their open and honest feedback that is so valuable to understanding the impact of the internship program and guiding its growth. Future plans include incorporating more team-building activities into the program, expanding partnerships with local businesses and organizations who can offer jobs to their alumni, and continuing to implement a diversity, equity, and inclusion plan which includes bringing in more workshop presenters from underrepresented groups and those who have lived experience with foster care.

“Everyone at Project Lemonade had such positive and supportive attitudes. They are all amazing and [I] loved working with them!” — Intern



This report was prepared by
Evaluation into Action

www.evaluationintoaction.com