"WorkAdvance: Helping Job Seekers Advance While Meeting Business Needs"

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Patrick Hart is the Social Innovation Fund sustainability coordinator for New York City Center for Economic Opportunity (CEO). In this capacity, he works with CEO staff and program coordinators to help CEO's five Social Innovation Fund (SIF) programs remain strong. He works to ensure that the Social Innovation Fund programs continue to spark program and policy change at the federal, state, and local level. Previously, he served as a policy analyst for the Massachusetts Department of Housing and Community Development, where his work focused on policy issues such as foreclosure, homelessness, transit-oriented development, and other issues. Hart holds a bachelor's degree from Swarthmore College and a master's in public policy from the Harvard Kennedy School.

Summary and Findings: There is a clear need for effective program models that not only connect low-income community residents with jobs, but also ensure that those jobs are well paying and lead to continued economic security for workers. WorkAdvance is a new sector-focused workforce development and career advancement program currently being implemented through the Center for Economic Opportunity by four providers in different cities. In each city, a nonprofit targets a specific industry that is projected to have substantial job opportunities. WorkAdvance research includes an ongoing randomized control trial study that will produce an overall impact analysis, as well as an implementation study.

Implications for Policy and Practice: This research will provide invaluable data for policymakers and providers to build a future foundation of reliable evidence-based and cost-effective pathways to employment. Given the strong evidence base underlying WorkAdvance, we expect this research to yield critical information about the benefits of workforce development strategies focused on both advancement and sectoral programming. While the program serves a variety of different sites, it is consistently serving low-income people and helping them connect with long-term sustainable employment. With stable employment being such a critical need for so many low-income Americans, the WorkAdvance model has the potential for replication in many communities. While the research will not be completed until 2016, this poster discusses the course of the research to date and discusses early results that could have potential implications for policy and practice.