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# Dual Impact:

## A Vision for Developing the Out-of-School Time Workforce

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# Introduction

Based on the latest data suggesting there are 20.4 million youth enrolled in after-school and summer programs, there are at least 2 million professionals working in formal out-of-school time (OST) programs nationwide (not including formal and informal child care staff, teachers, sports coaches, and others who also support young people in a variety of settings).<sup>1</sup>

OST staff have long been characterized as transient, with little pay and a lack of growth opportunities being blamed for high employee turnover and staffing shortages.<sup>2</sup> Without enough staff, we know young people's learning and enrichment experiences suffer. Lacking a full staff can cause activities to be removed from the schedule and, in some cases, programs are forced to limit enrollment, closing kids out of programs all together.

**Consider this:** You're mentoring a young adult, eager to secure their first job after high school. You describe two options to them:

**Option 1:** It's a part-time job, 15-20 hours per week, at minimum wage. To get promoted, you'll wait until one of two positions opens, but there will be at least ten other people waiting to apply. If you start working in June or September, you'll get great training, but if you start mid-year you might have to wing it for a while until the next training comes along. The work is high stakes as we aim to improve outcomes for kids.



**Option 2:** It's a part-time job, 15-20 hours per week. You'll start at minimum wage, and your rate steps up after you complete one year of employment. Trainings are offered year-round, and you will earn a badge, certification and college credits for them. Your supervisor will work with you to explore career pathways and set goals, and after two years of successful employment, a coach will help you identify next steps within the organization or elsewhere depending on your goal. The work is high stakes as we aim to improve outcomes for kids, **but this job will also kickstart your career.**



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<sup>1</sup> Afterschool Alliance. (2021). America After 3pm. Retrieved from <http://tinyurl.com/43tcwz6p>.

<sup>2</sup> Bevan, B., Moroney, D. & Brown, M. (2023). The power of us: How better understanding the youth fields workforce can help communities thrive. AfterSchool Matters, 37. <http://tinyurl.com/mr3adutt>

It's time to innovate our approach to OST staffing. Options 1 and 2 can both be descriptions of the same role, but clearly Option 2 has created intentional support and pathways for staff. By designing OST programs with a second social utility – a workforce development experience for junior OST staff – we can upskill a generation of youth workers while, we hypothesize, improving job quality and retaining staff for longer.

This paper provides a framework for redesigning part-time, entry-level<sup>3</sup> OST jobs as a workforce development program. As shown in our [interactive career mapping tool](#) and [career pathways infographic](#), OST roles can lead to many career opportunities within and beyond the OST sector. Restructuring entry-level jobs as part of an upskilling and workforce preparation experience will support junior staff to build strong foundational skills and inspire them to stay in the sector. It can also boost staff morale and performance for those folks who are planning to move on to an aligned career pathway outside of the sector. This approach acknowledges that managing large numbers of entry-level OST staff requires more resources than those currently invested to achieve both program and staff success.

## A Vision for an OST Workforce Development Model

While we recognize it will take time and resources, the following lays out a vision for an OST Workforce Development System.

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<sup>3</sup> In this paper, entry-level OST jobs refer to direct service roles such as Group Leader, Counselor, and Tutor – while we do not use the term “front-line staff”, this is often the category used for these titles.

# A Vision for an OST Staff Workforce Development System



## Focused on goal-aligned skill development

Training is competency-aligned and designed to build specific skills using an approach grounded in adult learning. Supervisors are trained to provide job-embedded coaching and effective feedback.

Skills are aligned to individual goals, ranging from content knowledge about OST and youth development to communication, critical thinking, and time management.



## Models an asset-based approach

Leadership practices and organizational policies reflect the values of positive youth development.

For staff, this means supervisors see the potential in everyone, take a holistic approach to staff support, and help staff develop protective factors such as:

- Emotional regulation
- Self-confidence
- Positive relationships



## Provides professional learning that leads to portable credentials



Trainings have a dual role of 1) building staff capacity to implement quality programs, and 2) connecting staff to credit-bearing opportunities such as a credential or college credit. Trainings that cannot be credit-bearing still have clear learning objectives, resulting in a badge and new skills for staff resumes.

## Uses an equity lens to support all staff

Managers are trained to understand accessibility and mental health, making accommodations as needed to the extent possible to support staff success. Barriers to maintaining employment, such as child care, are mitigated with referrals and wrap-around services.



## Trades staff turnover for staff graduation



At the end of a two-year commitment, staff would 'graduate' with a strong resume, credential(s), and clear career goals. There are options to stay at their organization, but staff who choose to move on are supported with career counseling and connections.

[www.changeimpact.net](http://www.changeimpact.net)

## Pilot: Working the Gap / Change Impact Fellowship

Launched in Summer 2024, Change Impact's gap year fellowship program provides a space to pilot the practices outlined in the vision with a group of 12 junior staff at six nonprofit organizations. In partnership with CUNY School of Professional Studies (SPS), Change Impact is offering a year-long fellowship in restorative practice for young adults ages 18–24 who have not yet enrolled in, or who started and left, college. Fellows work in a host organization, pushing into existing youth programs to deliver social/emotional learning and restorative activities. The fellowship is part of SPS's Working the Gap (WTG) initiative, which provides young adults with paid work experience to support youth mental health and community wellness. Given that the fellows are early in their careers, this program provides a ripe testing ground for the workforce development vision.



*"Through offering free college credit and paid training time, the fellowship has provided resources to support myself as a full human and opportunities to grow my skills and gain valuable work experience. The cohort aspect of the fellowship has also gifted me a strong and beautiful community network that has made me feel grounded, held, and inspired." – Isha Clarke, Fellow*

### The elements of the OST Workforce Development Vision being tested include:

**Goal-aligned professional learning and portable credentials:** Fellows set goals at the beginning of the program, which are reviewed by supervisors and coaches. Fellows receive intensive and immersive restorative practice professional learning while working in a youth development program. The program also provides 15 free college credits that stack into a CUNY bachelor's degree.



**Asset-based, equity-driven approach:** Supervisors receive training and modeling that builds their capacity to support junior staff, and fellows have access to three coaches who help troubleshoot barriers to continued employment. Accommodations are made as needed, and all trainings are designed to be accessible and inclusive.



**Time-limited experience, with a fellowship graduation:** After completing a one-year term, fellows will receive coaching and support to identify next steps, which may include staying with their host organization, matriculating into college, and/or seeking full-time employment in a new role.



## OST Workforce Development Model Key Components

Borrowing from best practices from the workforce development sector, the following outlines what this model could look like for OST organizations. This model is based on a two-year 'program' for staff.

Change Impact reviewed turnover data for 1,600 staff in our professional development programs, and found approximately **50% of staff were no longer working for the same organization by the end of a two-year period**. If we are able to keep the majority of staff for longer than two years, it would be a significant improvement. Therefore, this model is based on a two-year commitment from staff in their entry-level role, with extensions to stay with the organization beyond that term.



## **Component 1: Recruitment and Application**

Just like prospective staff apply for a job currently, they would apply to participate in the OST workforce development program at their organization or through an intermediary recruiting staff across multiple organizations. The job posting would include not only a traditional description and qualifications, but would also describe what the staff member will gain from the experience – coaching, skill development, credentials, and wrap-around support. Ideally, the program would eventually build a reputation for developing effective staff sought after by organizations, and as a career launching pad that qualified prospective staff are eager to join.

## **Component 2: Supervisors, Coaches, and Wrap-Around Support**

All staff will have a supervisor who is trained in coaching entry-level staff and giving effective feedback. In addition, staff will have access to coaches who do two things: 1) provide career counseling, goal-setting support, and curated professional development plans, and 2) troubleshoot barriers to successfully maintaining employment, providing referrals for services such as child care or counseling. As staff near the end of the program, coaches can help staff determine next steps and provide resume writing and interview preparation support. Coaches could be staff of the employer organization, or could be housed at an intermediary serving multiple organizations. This element of the system requires additional time and resources, which we believe will pay dividends in terms of reduced turnover, recruitment costs, and burnout.

## **Component 3: Skill-Based Professional Learning and Credentials/Credits**

Staff will receive comprehensive onboarding that prepares them for youth work. We recommend focusing on a core set of skills, such as child safety, inclusive spaces, positive behavior supports, and instruction basics. Staff will also receive paid in-service training that continues to build specific skills as well as content



knowledge (e.g., STEM, social/emotional learning). All training is sequenced and provides staff with opportunities to earn badges and/or certifications. To the extent possible, training should be offered in partnership with higher education partners to provide college credit.

## **Component 4: Incentives and Pay Increases**

Many entry-level jobs come with a structured schedule for pay increases. While OST budgets are often limited due to grants, contracts, or fee structures, providing a modest pay increase after 6–12 months of employment can be a tool to mitigate turnover. In fact, each entry-level employee that turns over costs an OST organization an estimated \$2,000, about half of which reflects advertising, background checks, and training expenses with the remainder in the cost of time spent on recruitment and onboarding.<sup>4</sup> This suggests these funds can cover the cost of a \$2/hour pay increase for 1,000 hours.

This model opens the door for OST organizations to explore workforce development grants to support employment and wrap-around services, which may open a new avenue for public and private funding.

## **Component 5: Evaluation and Continuous Improvement**

Finally, a workforce development approach to OST staffing would guide new methods of evaluating staff satisfaction, quality, and tenure. Organizations, intermediaries, and evaluators might explore the staffing conditions that lead to the most successful outcomes, not only for youth but for staff as well.

Organizations could monitor expenses and return on investment, both for their individual organizations and for their communities, as they support more young adults to gain and maintain successful employment.

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<sup>4</sup> This number was calculated using two methods based on an entry-level position of 17 hours/week at \$17/hour for 36 weeks. First, we used online turnover calculators from Bonusly and Adecco, which both produced ~\$2,000/staff member. Second, we calculated average expenses based on our knowledge of program budgets, accounting for supervisor, HR, and training time as well as recruitment and onboarding costs, which yielded the same result.

# Next Steps

We hope this paper inspires the OST community to adopt elements of this vision, or to pilot a full workforce development program. There is a need for investment from private philanthropy to provide seed funding to test and learn from these ideas, and from government funding to sustain promising practices over the long-term.

**In piloting this vision, we would aim to ask and answer a number of questions, including:**

- Does the workforce development model increase the time entry-level staff remain employed?
- What impact do coaching and wrap-around services have on staff satisfaction and longevity in their role?
- What amount of coaching is needed to have an impact?
- How might we better align staff training with credentials and credit?
- What are the benefits and challenges to centralizing recruitment and coaching under a single intermediary serving multiple organizations?
- What roles do staff 'graduates' move on to after the two-year employment period?

We welcome feedback on this concept as well as partnership ideas for how to advance this model in practice. We can be reached at [info@changeimpact.net](mailto:info@changeimpact.net).

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# About Change Impact

[Change Impact](#) is a capacity-building organization that has trained over 50,000 professionals, raised \$240 million in grants, and designed strategies for more than 125 partners. Change Impact is a certified minority- and woman-owned business (M/WBE).

In 2021, Change Impact launched [Change Up Learning](#), an equity-driven online training platform for youth work professionals and educators. Change Up Learning is approved by a number of states to provide required training for child care and after-school professionals, as well as teacher and social work continuing education credits. To learn more, email [info@changeimpact.net](mailto:info@changeimpact.net).

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