

Evaluation Summary:

The Skillman Foundation's Youth Development Direct Services Grantmaking

For nearly 25 years, the Skillman Foundation has been committed to funding youth development programming, and putting in place youth development systems infrastructure. In 2006, the Skillman Foundation launched the Skillman Good Neighborhoods (SGNs) Initiative, focusing its efforts on six Detroit neighborhoods. Youth development investments in these neighborhoods have centered on funding programs and on building coordinated systems of high-quality programs for youth. Since 2014, Skillman has intensified its system-building efforts by explicitly grounding its work with programs and partners in the Achieve-Connect-Thrive youth development framework and on codified program quality standards. Starting in 2015, the foundation and its partners have engaged in intentionally planning for citywide expansion of the youth development system. The most recent evaluation focuses on 2014 and 2015 implementation of Skillman's youth development strategy.

- Youth Development Fund (YDF).** The Skillman Foundation uses a competitive RFP process to fund high-quality youth development programs aligned with the Achieve-Connect-Thrive (ACT) framework in the six Skillman Good Neighborhoods.
- Re-Granting from the Youth Development Initiative (YDI) and the Partnership for Youth (PFY).** Two of Skillman's close partners Don Bosco Hall and Southwest Solutions lead youth development intermediary organizations, the YDI and PFY. (For more information on these intermediaries, see [full evaluation report](#) at www.skillman.org/GNI.) The YDI and PFY give smaller grants to grassroots ACT-aligned youth development organizations in the SGN neighborhoods they serve. These grants are designed to help to build the capacity of small organizations, and to fill service gaps.
- Youth Employment Grant.** A special focus of youth development is youth employment. Skillman funds City Connect, a youth development intermediary, to manage the infrastructure of the Grow Detroit's Young Talent (GDYT) program. This grant supports system-building, but also has a direct services aspect: (1) GDYT prepares youth for their jobs (through orientations on the program and on how to work with supervisors); and (2) employers provide an enriching job site experience to youth after being thoroughly vetted and prepared by City Connect.
- Credit Recovery Pilot.** As part of its effort to increase the graduation rate to 90% in spring 2017 (a key goal for the end of Skillman's 10-Year SGN Initiative), Skillman funded a pilot program beginning in the summer of 2015. Funded youth development providers partnered with high schools so that youth off track for graduation can make up missing credits and get back on track.

ACT Framework

Achieve: The skill sets necessary for youth to achieve academically with a specific focus on literacy and math proficiencies.

Connect: Skills that help students develop supportive relationships.

Thrive: Perseverance, self-efficacy, and the resilience necessary for youth to maintain the effort to succeed.

Number of Youth Served by Skillman-Funded Grantees

Funding Group	Timing	Number of Grants	Number of Youth Served
Youth Development Fund Cohort 1	Oct 2013-Sept 2014	15	9,834
Youth Development Fund Cohort 2	Jun 2014-May 2015	9	1,032 ¹
Re-Granting from Partnership for Youth	2014 & 2015	31	1,670
Re-Granting from Youth Development Initiative	2014 & 2015	21	1,422
Youth Employment (through City Connect)	Summer 2014	1	821
	Summer 2015	1	1035
Credit Recovery Pilot Program	Summer 2015	4	133

¹ Programs in cohort 2 serve many more youth than programs in cohort 1 for two reasons: (1) cohort 1 has 15 grantees, while cohort 2 has nine; and (2) cohort 1 programs each tended to serve more youth (the average for cohort 1 programs is 656; the average for cohort 2 is 130). See [full evaluation report](#) at www.skillman.org/GNI for more detailed information.

Program Quality

Program quality data are available for YDF programs, Youth Employment programs, and the Credit Recovery Pilot program. Each set of programs has a different type of quality data, but all three groups of programs show strong quality results.

The quality of six **YDF-funded programs** was measured in 2015 using a validated tool: the Weikert Center’s Youth Program Quality Assessment (YPQA). The YPQA scale ranges from 1 to 5, and assesses four domains (safe environment, supportive environment, interaction, and engagement). Scores for these programs are benchmarked against a national average provided by Weikert (a sample of 1,263 program sites).

Quality Domain	Average Score (1-5)	
	YDF Programs	National Sample
Safe Environment	4.6	4.3
Supportive Environment	4.5	3.8
Interaction	2.8	3.1
Engagement	2.4	2.6

The quality of the **Grow Detroit Young Talent (GDYT)** program was measured using two survey items:

- 93% of youth in the GDYT summer jobs were able to identify a trusted adult in the program, and
- 84% of employers and 94% of providers taking part in the GDYT program reported that the program was *good or excellent*.

The quality of the **Credit Recovery Pilot Programs** program was measured using one survey item:

- 94% of the students in reported that they would recommend the program to a friend.

Youth Outcomes

Outcome data are available for YDF programs, Youth Employment programs, and the Credit Recovery Pilot program.

The youth outcome data for **YDF-funded programs** suggest that the programs have made a difference for youth in a variety of ways – particularly *interest in learning, academic motivation, critical thinking, perseverance, and action orientation*.

Percentage of Youth Participants Reporting Improvement after Participating in Programs						
Achieve	Motivation	Interest in Learning	91%	Conn-ect	Strong Relationships with Peers	74%
		Academic Motivation	91%		Strong Relationships with Adults	72%
		Critical Thinking	88%	Thrive	Perseverance	89%
		School Bonding	55%		Action Orientation	86%
	Math/English	Confidence in Ability to Pass English Classes	78%		Assertiveness	82%
		Trying Hard in Reading and Writing	73%		Optimism	75%
		Confidence in Ability to Pass Math Classes	66%	Emotional Control	43%	
		Trying Hard in Math	57%	Trust	36%	

Outcome data for the **GDYT program** were collected using youth surveys that asked participants their beliefs about how much they had improved in employment skills and job search skills. Youth reported meaningful increases in employment skills (particularly for communication skills, working as a team, and problem-solving), and the job search skill of interviewing.

Percentage of Youth Reporting Gains in:

Employment Skills			
Skill	More Now	Much More Now	Total
Communicating with Others	43%	39%	82%
Working as a Team	39%	39%	78%
Problem-Solving	42%	35%	78%
Accepting Supervision	33%	37%	69%
Management and Organization	35%	30%	65%
Public Speaking	32%	31%	63%
Working with Computers	26%	20%	46%

Job Search Skills			
Skill	More Now	Much More Now	Total
Interviewing for a Job	36%	38%	74%
Writing a Resume	29%	32%	61%
Searching for Jobs	30%	28%	58%

Surveys also asked youth about their perceived improvement in academic skills and their future outlook. Youth do not report much movement in academic skills, but about three-quarters report an increased belief in their ability to reach higher education.

Academic Skills			
Skill	More Now	Much More Now	Total
Critical Thinking	37%	22%	59%
Reading and Writing	19%	17%	36%
Understanding Math	16%	13%	29%

Future Outlook			
Outlook Domain	More Now	Much More Now	Total
Belief in Ability to Reach Higher Education	30%	43%	73%
Aspiration for a Better Job	29%	43%	72%
Overall Confidence	34%	36%	70%
Confidence in Leadership Ability	25%	40%	65%
Belief in Ability to Stay in School	18%	38%	56%
Commitment to Stay in School	17%	32%	49%

Outcome measures for the **credit recovery programs** include credits earned and whether students have moved from *off track* to *on track* to graduate from high school:

- 98% of the students in credit recovery programs earned at least one credit, and
- 48% of participants are back on track to graduate.

Conclusion: Grants for Direct Services have Benefited Thousands of Youth

About 10,000 youth per year have participated in programs funded through the Youth Development Fund, and the programs funded through the YDA re-grants have collectively served about 1,500 youth per year. Data on program quality and youth outcomes are limited, but available data are encouraging. Programs seem to be typically well-delivered, and youth demonstrate some growth in academic confidence, making healthy connections with youth and adults, and experiencing more resiliency and feelings of self-efficacy.