Beacon Workforce Study

Resource Development Associates
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ABSTRACT

Extended open-ended telephone interviews, an online survey, and both written and oral input from site directors inform this analysis of the workforce of San Francisco's citywide Youth Development program, the San Francisco Beacon Initiative. The data show that the field of Youth Development is emerging conceptually, even as administrators face a high turnover rate, patchy opportunities for professional development, and the funding challenges endemic to nonprofit work. According to workers, the substance of the daily work is highly satisfying and meaningful – more meaningful than most work they have done or ever hoped to do. But they don't stay in the profession for long because the pay is insufficient or incommensurate with their education, because they don't see a clear career ladder at the Beacon, and because, while gratifying, Youth Development work can be emotionally depleting for many. The study concludes with recommendations for the future of the Beacon Initiative and for the further establishment of Youth Development as a recognized professional field.

Acknowledgements

Executive Summary

Overview

The San Francisco Beacon Initiative, a citywide Youth Development program that serves the youth and communities at eight Beacon Centers in the City of San Francisco, contracted with Resource Development Associates in 2005 to conduct a workforce study in order to better understand the composition, needs and aspirations, and intended career paths of the Centers' staff. This study examined four dimensions of San Francisco's Beacon Initiative: recruitment; retention; training and professional development; and compensation practices and policies. Interview data combined with data from a closed-ended online survey and open-ended written questionnaires to inform this analysis.[1] Below is a discussion of the findings followed by recommendations.

The paradox of the highly satisfied youth worker who leaves his or her youth development job after less than two years is endemic to the field. Without better salary offerings, more consistent and reliable sources of funding, and more incremental and high-reaching career ladders within the centers where youth workers practice, the field will continue to see high turnover. But the study's key findings reveal the complexities behind this paradox.

> ➢   90% of Beacon workers surveyed are satisfied with their job
>
> ➢   65% of Beacon workers have been there 2 years or less

First of all, the satisfied worker is satisfied because, while Youth Development might be a new and burgeoning field, it serves an old and deep-rooted need: helping youth bridge the difficult transition between childhood and adulthood. Guiding, supporting and empowering youth are crucial activities to building a healthy and strong community. According to the survey 74% of Beacon workers consider themselves to be part of the community in which they serve. Only half of the workers have ever lived in the neighborhood, so the rest have that sense simply by virtue of the work they do in the community. The remarkably high level of satisfaction among Beacon workers shows that Youth Development work is intrinsically meaningful work.

Second, the youth worker tends to begin working in Youth Development when he or she is just coming out of school. In other words, youth workers are themselves *young*. The people who work at the Beacon Centers range in age from 19 to 63, but 28 is the mean age, and 23 is the most common (modal) age. As they get older and begin to experience a greater financial burden, higher pecuniary expectations and broader career ambitions, they move on. One director put it this way,

> "…probably when people get into mid-30s, most people age out of a job like this, think they have topped out at what they are doing – they are looking for more pay, higher level of work, other opportunities that might not be at a Beacon Center."

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[1] The study is based on four primary data sources: 1) a close-ended written survey distributed online to staff at all eight Beacon sites, 2) responses to an open-ended questionnaire collected from all eight Beacon site directors, 3) oral interviews conducted by phone with 12 current Beacon staff members, two current Beacon site directors and two former Beacon staff members, and 4) ancillary materials, including training manuals and other relevant written materials.

While part of what happens in this scenario would unquestionably be avoidable through improved wages, part of it may simply be a factor of the nature of Youth Development work. Because the work is taxing, a certain amount of turnover may be inevitable, even once career ladders, professional development and salary ranges are overhauled and improved, and accepting this may also be part of moving the profession forward.

Recruitment

The data show that the Beacon Initiative recruits a diverse staff that is highly reflective of the ethnic and gender composition of San Francisco. Local staff who represent and come from the surrounding community are more likely to join the Beacon through word-of-mouth recruitment and community networking than through traditional recruitment strategies. About half of the survey respondents were born in, raised in, or currently live in the neighborhood where their Beacon center is located. Traditional methods of recruitment, including online and print classified ads, yield more non-community members, but may enable directors to fill positions more efficiently than simply relying on community networking. Furthermore, staff coming from outside the community offer certain advantages, such as a greater level of objectivity, ethnic difference, and formal training. Directors explain that staff recruited from the community occasionally have boundary issues in cases where they are already personally acquainted with youth in the program, and while local recruits sometimes have shortcomings in terms of formal education and training, staff who are not from the community sometimes require training as well, to increase sensitivity and dispel misconceptions about the community.

Retention

Throughout the Beacon Initiative, job satisfaction generally appears to be high, while staff retention is low, which seems contradictory. Enigmatically, 82% of workers who "may leave" the job next year feel "satisfied" with their jobs. Distinguishing between intrinsic and extrinsic factors shows that job satisfaction is multidimensional and that worker longevity requires both intrinsic and extrinsic fulfillment.

Declarations of satisfaction among Beacon staff are at 90%, about as high as the national average (89% - Gallup 2004), but 40% of survey respondents are not sure if they will stay at their Beacon next year, over 65% of Beacon workers have worked there two years or less, and 33% of the Beacon staff surveyed plan to stay in the field of youth development for a total of five years or less. Beacon staff enjoy their jobs, they feel recognized, they like working with their co-workers, they feel valued for their work, they find the work challenging and rewarding, and they generally feel their workload is manageable. Overall, Beacon workers rate very high on motivational factors, finding the work intrinsically satisfying. Beacon workers generally feel satisfied with their level of responsibility and authority in the job – the exception to intrinsic satisfaction is job stress. Seventy-two percent (72%) find their work to be stressful – this is much higher than national findings where only 34% feel work is stressful (Gallup 2003). This is significantly associated ($p < .01$) with likelihood of leaving next year.

The data show workers to be somewhat dissatisfied on extrinsic factors. Less than 50% of staff surveyed feel the space at their Beacon center is adequate for working with groups or meeting privately with youth or parents. Over 90% surveyed work more time than they are scheduled. Over half (51%) are not satisfied with the health benefits of the job, and 43% are offered no fringe benefits at all (including health, vacation, sick time, retirement, and disability). Another factor which leads high worker turnover is low perceived job stability. Approximately 62% of Beacon staff have

a work assignment that is less than 12 months. The number of these staff and positions they hold vary from site to site, ranging from 5% to 80% of staff, and including program instructors, academic coaches, interns and safety and support.

Interviewing staff reveals that workers have needs around compensation and professional advancement. When these needs are being met, workers are inclined to stay longer. Because the Beacon Centers have limitations in these areas, many staff members express a desire to move on from their jobs within two or three years total. Workers who have roots in the community where the Beacon Center is located are more likely to express a commitment to stay at their Centers longer.

Finally, youth work is perceived, to some extent, and by some youth workers, as a profession for the young. The mode age of the Beacon Initiative worker sample was 23, and the mean age was 28. The taxing nature of the work, the relatively low salaries, the instability of some assignments and the fact that the work itself is with youth, contribute to the observed phenomenon of "aging-out" of Youth Development work.

Training and Professional Development

Training from Beacon site to Beacon site is not entirely consistent, as the lead agencies are all different, and all employ different training policies. All Beacon sites provide training to staff and most sites include some training in Youth Development principles, cultural competency and sensitivity, classroom management, and curriculum development. Only some include training in program management and staff supervision. According to the survey data, 91% of Beacon staff participate in professional development as part of their job.

About 50% of Beacon staff surveyed feel the training they receive meets their needs at least most of the time, and only about half of the staff believe that the training they receive may translate into opportunities for promotion. This is notable because while 63% of Beacon staff surveyed say they know they have opportunities for promotion at the Beacon, when asked if the professional development and training they receive provides them opportunities for promotion, only 52% respond affirmatively. Among those who do feel they have opportunities for promotion, most intend on staying at their jobs (69%). Among those who disagree, most indicate that they may leave (53%)(p<.05). Program coordinators are most likely to agree that they have opportunities for promotion, and Beacon teachers are most likely to disagree. The data imply that training and professional development, when not associated with actual opportunities for advancement, is not satisfying for workers, or helpful for retention.

There is cautious support for a certification program in Youth Development. The discussion around the professionalization of Youth Development includes arguments that a certification program will increase the status and compensation available to workers, and will provide standards and consistency among programs. It also raises concerns about maintaining diversity in the field, especially as seeking a Youth Development college degree may not yield an increase in income that would justify the financial expense, thereby dissuading the most financially challenged from the field. Three-quarters (75%) of staff surveyed feel a certification program would be help the Beacon retain staff, while 25% disagree. Most directors are inclined to support a certification program, but there is also trepidation. Some feel it might affect compensation in the long run, but that program quality won't be improved, and that diversity and creativity might suffer. Even though consistency would be a value, there is a desire that the programs be optional and designed with adequate Youth Development staff input.

Interviewees offered several concrete suggestions for training structure and topics.

Compensation

Compensation arises as an issue in all three of the other areas discussed above – recruitment and retention both suffer due to the low pay scale, and salary is one of the issues that drives the discussion around certification. The survey data show that salary increases might make a difference in retention – 92% of staff feel salary increases will help to retain more staff. According to the U.S. Census Bureau, the median income in San Francisco is $58K (2003), and 48% of the population possesses a bachelor's degree or higher. With the exception of one person at each site (the director), Beacon staff salaries do not exceed $45K, yet 61% of the staff possess a bachelor's degree or better. And half of the respondents who have a MA degree make under $20 an hour, or between $31K - $41K per annum.

Salaries for program managers across the Beacon sites do not exceed $45K, while salaries for site directors are generally in the arena of $60 - 65K. This significant jump in salary corresponds to a significant difference in professional development and formal training, and reveals a gap in professional development opportunities toward the upper-end of the Beacon Initiative structure. There are not enough incremental steps for Youth Development professionals to climb all the way up the career ladder to high-authority, high-salary positions. The results of this are not limited to retention problems, as the current directors tend to lack concrete lower-level Youth Development experience. The lack of Youth Development experience among site directors is partially due, of course, to the newness of the field. But the unmanageable chasm between the ultimate and penultimate positions at the Beacon Centers creates little chance of future directors to come up from the ranks.

Recommendations

The data from this study are drawn from one citywide program, but the analysis includes a number of recommendations that are not limited to the Beacon Initiative. Other Youth Development programs may be experiencing similar challenges as their programs mature and reflect an increasingly professionalized field.

Recruitment

- Recruitment must be creative, relying on online and community-based strategies as well as targeted efforts in Youth Development-related programs at universities and junior colleges.

- Diversity is not a euphemism for "people of color" – a diverse staff should be comprised of people from the community being served, as well as those from outside of that community.

Retention

- Partial year and part-time assignments should be avoided whenever possible.

- Filling vacancies should become a number one priority so that current staff are not overburdened by being understaffed.

- Personal time and vacation time should be honored and perhaps extended to avoid or postpone burnout.

Training and Professional Development

- A Certification program should be proposed to local community colleges.

- Training needs should be tailored to staff needs and correspond to recruitment practices, (i.e., in response to statements that community and non-community recruits have different training needs).

- Workers should be offered new challenges and corresponding training as their time progresses – ideally the evolution of duties should have a commensurate fiscal component.

- Career ladders must be better defined with position structure changed so that the gap leading up to site director is not quite so wide, so that staff don't have to leave just to get ahead, and so that people at the top are more experienced in Youth Development itself.

<u>Compensation</u>

- Funding streams need to be secured so that salaries can become commensurate to education, skill and competency levels.

- Efforts should be made to lobby city, county, state and national agencies so that Youth Development can become a part of public agendas and funding can become stable, and the workforce can stabilize as much as possible.

- Public Education should become a priority to raise awareness of Youth Development among agencies that address mental health, education, juvenile justice, violence prevention, substance abuse, etc.

Introduction

Overview

While there have always been adults who foster young people, encouraging their healthy movement into adulthood, Youth Development as a *profession* has emerged relatively recently. The field began in the late 1980s, in response to research demonstrating that a more holistic approach to youth programming was needed (Naughton 2003). Since then, the profession has developed considerably, supported by a growing body of research and publications that address effective practices and emerging theory. At the beginning of the current decade, the U.S. Department of Labor contributed to the professionalization of the field under the Youth Development Practitioner Apprenticeship Initiative and Youth Development Practitioner Apprenticeship Implementation Grants, which support apprentice programs for workers to become credentialed in Youth Development. Even with these developments, the field of Youth Development is still early in its progress toward professionalization. Core competencies and consistent requirements for credentialing have not yet been standardized or regulated. The current study considers the San Francisco Beacon Initiative[2] workforce, and sets out to examine four essential elements of work: 1) staff recruitment, 2) staff retention, 3) training and professional development, and 4) compensation. The literature tells us little about the people who do the work of Youth Development. How do they arrive at this type of work? Why do they stay, and why do they leave? What policies for staffing would ensure good Youth Development programming? Are there elements of training and professional development that should be replicated or rethought? Is the current compensation scale appropriate for the various levels of workers? All of these elements have a direct impact on workforce stability, which in turn affects program quality. The goal of this study is to identify the Beacon Initiative's assets as well as areas that can be improved, with the ultimate objectives of improving the delivery of services and helping to guide the development of Youth Development as a profession. At this early stage, there is a great potential for inquiry into Youth Development as an emerging profession. The challenges that confront the profession and its professionals are not very well understood, although they are important to understand if the field is going become established, develop positively, and serve the youth of today and tomorrow effectively.

Literature Review

The literature that exists on the subject of Youth Development tends to focus on programmatic best practices, identifying outcome measures, and psychosocial theories around youth. There is very little that delves into the Youth Development workforce as a subject of study. There is, however, a body of literature on another direct service field whose progression toward recognition as a bona-fide professional field bears some resemblance to Youth Development, and that is Early Child Development. The movement to professionalize that field also involved discussions about worker retention, recruitment, compensation, funding issues and professional development, and is the most relevant parallel profession to emerge in recent years.

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[2] In this study, the term Youth Development is most frequently used to characterize the Beacon program. It should be noted that this term can include, or overlap with, other terms frequently used to describe youth programs like the Beacons, including "after-school programs," or "out-of-school programs."

Marcy Whitebook and Laura Sakai found that high worker turnover was common among Early Childhood Development workers, especially those who were highly trained, earning low wages and working with less well-trained colleagues (Whitebook and Sakai 2003). They argue that the more common worker turnover was, the more unstable the workplace, leading to an even greater problem of low morale and high turnover. Further, they maintain that the level of wages typical of Early Childhood Development positions are generally going to be associated with high turnover, but that in the case of Early Childhood Development, as opposed to retail or other such lines of work, the low worker retention poses a serious problem for the quality of services and care that are experienced by the very young service recipients.

Among the solutions sought in Early Childhood Development was the establishment of a formal set of standards and requirements for workers, the idea being that if standards and training were raised and enforced consistently, workers would be more satisfied because their colleagues would be uniformly well trained, and wages would rise because perceptions of ECD workers would be elevated from unskilled labor to trained and skilled personnel (Whitebook 2003). Marcy Whitebook only alludes to precisely how increased training would translate to increased compensation:

> Perhaps the greatest barrier centers on whether higher standards will be tied to appropriately higher compensation levels. While standards and compensation are often discussed as separate topics, they are really interdependent, and publicly supported preschool offers an opportunity to confront both challenges hand in hand, so that professional development is directly tied to a coherent wage and career ladder, and an equitable compensation package is incorporated into a state's "price tag" of what a universal preschool system will truly cost. (Whitebook 2003)

Similar suggestions have been made in Youth Development, where discussions of a certification program in Youth Development are arising ever more frequently. Achieve Boston is a network of Youth Development programs in the Boston area, and they identify several steps to support extramural and afterschool program workers in their professional development. These steps are outlined in their Blueprint for Action found at www.achieveboston.org, and include setting up a credentialing program, and a "career lattice" that clearly outlines opportunities for training, promotion, and salary increases. The summary of recommendations for youth workforce professional development describes the lattice as follows:

> A system is established that defines the amount and kind of training, education, and experience required to work in specific roles, recommended salary ranges for these roles, and career pathways so that after-school and youth workers are able to chart a course for their careers. To accomplish this goal Achieve Boston will: build on current efforts to articulate a coordinated statewide career lattice that identifies knowledge, experience, and skills needed, as well as recommended levels of compensation, for each position or role within an afterschool or youth program. (Achieve Boston 2004)

Achieve Boston also suggests exploring "strategies to increase practitioner compensation, such as T.E.A.C.H.® or WAGE$, which tie training and education to increased salaries." Tying salary increases to training and education program participation could work, but is merely theoretical if there are not sufficient dollars behind both the training and the anticipated salary increases. Not surprisingly, when Whitebook and colleagues suggested the need for increased salaries among Early Childhood Development workers, they met with great resistance (Whitebook and Eichberg, unpublished). While the justifications for the increased salaries are well-argued, actual, concrete

strategies for raising adequate funds have been harder to come by.   Raising community involvement, collaboration and awareness are suggested as initial steps, following the establishment of standards and regulations that marked the beginning of Early Childhood Development as a cohesive professional field.

It is also worth noting that, in the arena of Early Childhood Development training and education, standards posed a challenge in terms of how newly trained workers would integrate with the old guard:

> A primary question is to what extent the existing early care and education workforce (or a segment of it) will participate in any newly configured system, and to what extent it will be necessary to recruit a largely new cohort of practitioners. The members of the current workforce are highly diverse in terms of educational background, ability, and commitment to the profession, but no universal preschool system is taking shape (or is likely to) without involving many of them. This is not to say that all members of the current workforce will be appropriate for the job, or that additional personnel will not also be needed, but it does suggest that if standards are raised, many who already work with young children will seek to upgrade their education and training in order to meet the new requirements. The more diverse a preschool system a state creates, therefore, the more complex it could be to get segments of the current workforce up to a new set of common standards for professional development. (Whitebook 2003)

This issue of diversity comes up in the discussion of Youth Development, as well, where ethnic and neighborhood representation appear to be just as valuable to staff and directors as formal education and training, affecting how recruitment and training policies and practices are designed.

The Early Childhood Development literature helps provide a context for where the discussion of Youth Development workers may lead. This literature points to compensation, formal and informal training, funding, and legitimacy as key battlefronts for many direct service providers. This inquiry recognizes that Youth Development is poised to begin a process that may not be dissimilar to the progress of Early Childhood Development, and asks what are the key battlefronts for the Beacon Initiative workforce?

Methodology

Theoretical Framework

For the purpose of this analysis, we use the conventional conceptualization that the value of work has two dimensions: _intrinsic_ and _extrinsic_. Work is _intrinsically_ valuable to the worker when it is interesting and challenging, when it presents opportunities to learn new things, make important contributions, and be creative, and when it involves a comfortable level of responsibility and autonomy. _Extrinsic_ value refers to factors outside of the job content itself, such as pay, job security, benefits, status in the wider community, social dimensions of the job, and a work schedule that allows for a balanced life.

Herzberg's Motivator-Hygiene Theory of Job Satisfaction (Herzberg and Mauser 1993) expands the intrinsic/extrinsic premise into an integrated theory of worker satisfaction. This theory proposes that job satisfaction does not run along a single continuum, but should be understood in terms of both _satisfaction_, and _dissatisfaction_.

In Herzberg's Theory, there are "motivator" needs and "hygiene" needs. "Motivator" needs represent a job-holder's essential desire for the workplace to be an enriching place. Motivational factors include: promotion opportunities, opportunities for personal growth, recognition, responsibility and achievement. These run parallel to the intrinsic value of a job and correlate positively with job satisfaction. "Hygiene" needs are of a more structural and extrinsic nature, and include: quality of supervision, pay, company policies, physical working conditions, relations with others and job security. When hygiene needs are not met, workers experience high levels of job dissatisfaction.

This theoretical framework offers great explanatory benefit to an exploration of the Beacon workforce for two primary reasons. The first is that this study means to consider one Youth Development program, which, while unique, is in certain ways representative of the emerging field of Youth Development. This study aims its lens at the emerging profession of Youth Development not simply to dissect the structure of the job in terms of wages and demands, but to listen closely to the testimony of the people who work with the youth on a day-to-day basis. This particular theoretical framework forces the researcher to paint with finer strokes, acknowledging that two seemingly contradictory phenomena can be simultaneously true. The second reason for using the Herzberg model is that early anecdotal information pointed to a potential incongruity between self-reported levels of satisfaction and willingness to stay at the job for long, demonstrating that a nuanced interpretation of the data would be required.

Research Methods

Because the research questions are complex and the subject relatively unexplored, this study takes a quantitative approach to create a structure around which a qualitative investigation can be built. The study is based on four primary data sources: 1) a closed-ended written survey distributed online to staff at all eight Beacon sites, 2) responses to an open-ended questionnaire collected from all eight Beacon site directors, 3) oral interviews conducted by phone with 12 current Beacon staff members, two current Beacon site directors and two former Beacon staff members, and 4) ancillary materials, including training manuals and other relevant written materials. Data from all four sources will guide the final report which examines four areas of the Beacon workforce that the study seeks to understand: staff recruitment, staff retention, training and professional development, and compensation.

The closed-ended questionnaires were distributed and collected among Beacon staff from all eight San Francisco sites. Eighty-four (n=84) Beacon workers completed the questionnaire, which covered questions on intrinsic and extrinsic job conditions, motivations, and personal background. The surveys were distributed and completed online, and were anonymous.

Site directors were also asked to fill out a questionnaire that detailed salary structure, worker longevity, and training and professional development practices. This instrument contained several open-ended questions soliciting director impressions on professional training, retention, recruitment and challenges of the work. Site directors were assured that they would not be named in the final report, and that their sites would not be singled out.

Additionally, telephone interviews were conducted with 16 members of the Beacon workforce, including two site directors and two former employees. These interviews were designed to investigate some of the questions that arose from survey results by giving staff members an opportunity to speak privately and at length about their experience with the Beacon and about their career paths. Beacon staff interviewees were randomly selected from a list of current employees

and are representative of the range of employee types and come from all eight Beacon sites. All people interviewed were assured that their identities would be held in confidence and that the content of their comments would not affect their jobs.

Key findings

Recruitment

As Youth Development programs expand, recruitment of quality staff becomes a key challenge. Ideally, staff should be committed to youth, have some experience and basic skills for working with youth, have familiarity and comfort with the surrounding community, and represent a diverse range of ethnic and socioeconomic groups. As with any search in Youth Development there are barriers to finding staff that meet all of the qualifications, particularly when pay scale is limited to a tight operating budget. This study begins by asking, how are Beacon staff recruited? And what do those recruitment policies produce? What are the best practices in recruitment that could be useful to both the Initiative leadership and to the larger field of Youth Development?

Currently there are no uniform staff recruitment policies across the eight Beacon sites. Rather, staff recruitment is the concern of Beacon site directors and sometimes the lead agencies that partner with the Beacon Initiative as sponsors for the individual Beacon Centers. Nevertheless, written surveys and interview data reveal that most Beacon sites employ the same types of methods to recruit staff. Directors have little comment on how recruitment might be improved, noting that local/community staff more often come from word-of-mouth and community networking, while traditional methods (i.e. classified ads) yield more non-community members, but that both types of staff offer great value to the Beacon.

Beacon directors generally assert that their staff are very qualified, but many directors believe that they may sometimes miss out on the most qualified candidates because salary offerings are low. Nevertheless, Beacon directors have succeeded as a whole in recruiting an ethnically diverse staff. The tables below provide a partial picture of the ethnic and gender breakdown of Beacon staff, San Francisco residents, and teachers, demonstrating that Beacon staff are very close to representative of the San Francisco populace.

The Beacon Centers have recruited a gender-balanced staff. The Beacon Centers are all located in schools, where the professionals tend to be overwhelmingly female. In California, the Department of Education reports that nearly three-quarters of teachers are female. But Beacon staff are more evenly divided between male and female, with only a slight female majority.

Gender	Beacon Staff	San Francisco Population	California Teachers
Male	44%	51%	28%
Female	56%	49%	72%

Among Beacon workers, African Americans are overrepresented, while they are underrepresented among district teachers. Latinos are underrepresented both among San Francisco Unified School

District teachers and Beacon staff, while whites are overrepresented among teachers and underrepresented among Beacon staff. Among Beacon staff, Asian/Pacific Islanders (API) are overrepresented, due, in part, to the fact that three of the Beacon Centers are located in predominantly Asian neighborhoods. The overrepresentation of API staff notwithstanding, three separate interviewees specifically name that Asian families and parents are not supportive of their adult children going into Youth Development work, either because they don't understand it, or because they feel social service work is not a legitimate or fiscally prudent career ambition, and that this is an obstacle in recruiting from the Asian community. While the 35% figure does not clearly bear this out, the issue is clouded by the cumbersome category of API which includes backgrounds as diverse and divergent as Cambodian, Japanese, Samoan and Filipino, to name just a few, and does not distinguish between, say, 5th generation and newly immigrated family backgrounds.

Ethnicity	Beacon Staff	San Francisco Population	School District Teachers
African American	16%	8%	5%
Latino	9%	14%	9%
Asian/Pacific Island	35%	31%	23%
White	31%	44%	52%
Other	8%	3%	10%

Beacon sites are located in eight very distinct San Francisco neighborhoods, each with its own ethnic and socioeconomic make-up. One Beacon Center is located in the heart of Bayview Hunter's Point, a low-income area with a traditionally African American population that is increasingly becoming home to Latino and Asian immigrant families as well. Another is in the diverse but largely Latino (both immigrant and US-born) and working-class Mission District, and another is in the fairly middle-class Asian Richmond District. In the multi-cultural landscape of San Francisco, linguistic and cultural competency sit right alongside computer and communication skills on the list of qualifications for the job. For this reason, staff recruitment necessitates creative approaches.

Directors and staff alike mention the popular online classified advertising website, Craigslist, as the most common way to find employees or jobs. Eleven of the 16 people interviewed identify it specifically as the way they found their job, would search for a candidate, or are currently searching for a new job. The current generation of job seekers generally turns to online sources first, but some site directors point out that the digital divide has not been adequately bridged to rely solely on online job listings to attract economically and ethnically diverse staff. Directors note that the candidates they find through Craigslist are often not from the community where the Beacon is located, and that staff not from the surrounding community sometimes require additional training when they arrive at the Beacon Center. In spite of their formal education, these recruits sometimes

lack knowledge of the specific community and may have misconceptions that need to be dispelled. Not being from the community can be, at the same time, an advantage in terms of objectivity. The staff who are not residents of the community are often from different ethnic and cultural backgrounds than the youth in the program, and the diversity these staff bring to the Beacon centers is seen as beneficial.

About 56% of the survey respondents were born in, raised in, or currently live in the neighborhood where their Beacon Center is located. Staff recruited from the surrounding community are seen by directors as a huge asset to the Beacon, especially because youth open up to them more readily. These local staff expressed more commitment than non-local staff to serving the community long-term and to staying at their jobs at the Beacon Center for longer. Directors emphasize that recruiting from the community is a very important method, and that it often relies on networking with other community-based organizations in the neighborhood, or asking current staff to spread the word among the people they know. One director makes the distinction, though, between relying on word-of-mouth and recruiting friends and family which "never works." Despite their clear value to the Beacon, these local/community staff occasionally have "boundary issues," according to a few site directors, especially where the surrounding community is tight-knit and local staff are personally acquainted with the youth in the program. Furthermore, staff recruited through community ties sometimes have shortcomings in terms of formal education and require specific training in Youth Development approaches.

Staff recruitment appears without exception to depend on mass media advertising and community networking alike. Each method is predominantly associated with a particular sort of worker, and each sort of worker presents training challenges. Diversity training must be available for all staff to learn how to work with people that are not from their own community, but is especially important for staff who come from outside of the community, and formalized technique training must be available for local/community staff, especially those with no previous experience or training. While directors had very little to offer as suggestions beyond the current recruiting practices, staff who were interviewed offered a few additional insights into better recruiting. Several mentioned that more recruitment should happen on college campuses, where students who are clearly interested in youth work and are "able to relate to youth" might be found. One interviewee suggested that recruiting for multiple part-time positions doesn't make sense, since those jobs have particularly high turnover rates, and that, when possible, part-time positions should be creatively merged to create full-time positions. Another staff member thought churches should be added to the community-based organizations where community-network recruiting takes place. Finally, several directors and staff members alike mentioned that the biggest obstacle to recruitment is low salary. As one staffer put it, "To recruit a diverse staff, one problem is money...Especially if you want to recruit people of color." This last challenge goes beyond changes to recruitment policy and is a recurrent theme in the interview and survey data collected for this study.

Retention

Once staff have been identified and hired, keeping them becomes the next challenge. Retaining staff for long-term commitments is important for a number of reasons: the process of searching for qualified candidates is time-consuming and takes away from the work with youth; when staff leave, remaining staff are left with a heavier work burden until they are replaced; there is always a learning curve that takes place and a period of adjustment before staff can be effective at their jobs; high turnover affects the morale of the staff who remain and, as Whitebook puts it, "turnover begets turnover" (Whitebook and Sakai 2003). Through conversations and the online survey, this

study asks, what does worker retention look like at the Beacon Centers? What factors influence the decision of a staff person to remain in a position, or to leave?

The primary consideration in regard to worker retention is worker satisfaction. Survey data show that overall, 90% of Beacon workers are satisfied with their jobs, which is nearly identical to the national average of 89% (Gallup: August 2004), suggesting that worker retention should be high. But it is not. The data indicate that most Beacon workers do not stay for extended periods:

- Two-thirds of Beacon staff surveyed have been at their jobs for two years or less.

- A third of the Beacon staff surveyed plan to stay in the field of Youth Development for a total of five years or less.

- Forty percent of Beacon staff surveyed are not sure if they will remain at their jobs next year.

Enigmatically, 82% of the workers who state that they may leave next year report right now that they feel "satisfied" with their jobs. So, what is evident among these 40% of workers whose plans for next year do not necessarily include staying at the Beacon is a level of dissatisfaction that cannot be simply understood as a lack of satisfaction. As suggested by Herzberg (Herzberg and Mauser 1993), job satisfaction is a complex concept, comprised of many dimensions of workplace structure and content. For example, Beacon staff responses below demonstrate that enjoying the work is not enough to produce job satisfaction. An impressive 60% of the surveyed staff strongly agree with the statement, "I enjoy working here," but that translates to only 36% who feel as strongly about the statement "I am *satisfied* with my job" (emphasis added).

	Strongly Agree	Agree	Disagree
I enjoy working here	60%	35%	5%
I am satisfied with my job	36%	54%	10%

Distinguishing between intrinsic and extrinsic or "motivational" and "hygiene" factors lends clarity to this picture. According to the Herzberg model, intrinsic or "motivational" factors are associated with "satisfaction," while the extrinsic or "hygiene" factors are associated with "dissatisfaction."

Survey responses indicate that overall, Beacon workers rate very high on motivational factors. Beacon staff enjoy their jobs; they feel recognized; they like working with their co-workers; they feel valued for their work; they find the work challenging and rewarding; and they generally feel their workload is manageable. In sum, they find the work intrinsically satisfying.

The exception to intrinsic satisfaction is job stress. Gallup's August 2003 Work and Education poll suggest that most Americans don't perceive workplace stress to be a huge problem in their own lives. Gallup asked employed adults (both full- and part-time employees) how satisfied they are with "the amount of on-the-job stress" in their jobs. Well over half of respondents said that they are "completely" (26%) or "somewhat" (36%) satisfied in this regard, while slightly more than a third said they are "somewhat" (23%) or "completely" (11%) dissatisfied. Although the measure is not directly parallel, Beacon staff responses to the question of workplace stress show a higher level

than these Gallup figures. According to the survey data, 72% of Beacon staff think work is stressful, while only 29% think it is not – and feelings of job stress are significantly associated (p<.05) with plans to leave the Beacon next year:

n=81	Find job stressful	Do not find job stressful	Total
May leave next year	47%	21%	40%
Will stay next year	53%	79%	60%
	100%	100%	100%

The table above shows that job stress is one of the factors contributing to the Beacon's high turnover. That said, the relationship between the two variables is not overwhelmingly strong, and it is clearly not the sole factor responsible for the high turnover. A small majority of the people who find the job stressful still intend to stay, and over 20% of those who do not find it stressful nevertheless may leave their job next year.

On dimensions defined by Herzberg's model as "hygiene factors," Beacon staff do not rate as high as they do on motivational factors, demonstrating that the work is not as satisfying extrinsically:

- Less than 50% of staff surveyed feel the space at their Beacon center is adequate for working with groups or meeting privately with youth or parents.

- Over 90% surveyed work more time than they are scheduled.

- Fifty-one percent (51%) of surveyed workers are not satisfied with the health benefits of the job.

- Forty-three percent (43%) are offered no fringe benefits at all (including health, vacation, sick time, retirement, and disability).

The final and most outstanding extrinsic factor that is dissatisfying to workers is salary. The number one reason indicated among those who think they might leave Beacon is that "the pay is too low," and 92% of workers surveyed agree that staff salaries should be increased to retain more staff. Interview data confirm that salary is the primary correlate to staff decisions to leave their Beacon jobs. Interviewees emphasize that in spite of the stress of the work and the "burn-out factor," they truly love their work. Some indicated that the sense of "community" and "family" at their Beacon Centers kept them there for as long as they have been, but that personal finances will eventually become more important. Most current and former staff interviewed stated that a significant increase in pay would make them stay at the Beacon longer than their current plans.

Using the Herzberg model as a lens, it appears that Beacon staff have high levels of satisfaction countered by equally high levels of dissatisfaction, which may lead to low incentives for staying at the job.

Beyond satisfaction and dissatisfaction, though, there may be an additional, more straightforward reason that staff turnover at the Beacon Centers is high. Approximately 62% of Beacon staff have a work assignment that is less than 12 months. The number of these staff and the positions they hold vary from site to site, ranging from 5% to 80% of staff, and including program instructors, academic coaches, interns and safety and support. Interviews with staff and directors show that when staff are employed for only part of the year, and forced to find other work, usually during the summer, they are not likely to return to the Beacon when their employment period would resume. Some directors have re-arranged schedules to all but eliminate the less than year-round positions, but as each Beacon Center looks to a different lead agency for fiscal management, many Beacon Centers are simply unable to operate without a high number of part-time and partial-year employees.

Finally, while several directors identify high staff turnover as problematic at their Beacon Centers, others maintain that they have been able to hold on to core staff for periods of several years because of the supportive environment that exists at their Centers. Survey data show that 13% of staff have been at the Beacon for between 6 and 10 years, a long tenure for nonprofit work, especially that which is low-paying and highly stressful. Interviews with some of these workers reveals that incremental professional growth over the years and a durable commitment to the work and to Youth Development principles have produced this longevity.

Training and Professional Development

Beacon staff receive training in Youth Development approaches and are presented with opportunities for professional development. As the field matures, the nature of the training and professional development becomes more critical, and it becomes important to know if staff is getting the right kind of training. Are they utilizing professional development to take advantage of opportunities for promotion within the Initiative? Would a certification program in Youth Development be a realistic or worthwhile option?

Each Beacon Center has its own training schedule. Although the Beacon Initiative is currently establishing more Initiative-wide training and professional development activities through its annual staff-run Beacon Academy, most of the job training Beacon employees get is determined by individual lead agencies, and is therefore inconsistent across Centers. Most Centers include some training in Youth Development principles, cultural competency and sensitivity, classroom management, and curriculum development. Only some include training in program management and staff supervision. Nearly all surveyed Beacon staff (91%) participate in professional development as part of their job.

Only about 50% of staff surveyed feel the training they receive meets their needs at least most of the time. The Beacon has recently established the Beacon Academy, designed to bring the staff of the entire Initiative together for staff-led training. In its fledgling form, the Beacon Academy is receiving little praise. In interviews staff were extremely attentive to the question of how training could be improved. They offered the following four concrete suggestions for how staff training should be designed:

1) Trainings should be responsive to the substance of program evaluations – When evaluations reveal weaknesses, this information should be used to develop training programs; when they reveal strengths, training for incoming staff should draw upon those strengths.

2) Trainings should be appropriate to staff levels of experience – The training and professional development needs of a worker who has been at the Beacon for one month are often different from those of a Beacon worker who has been there for five years. There are times, of course, when their training needs coincide, for example when new best practices emerge, but for the most part, different training should be offered for staff at different levels of experience.

3) Trainings should be more interactive, less reliant on presentation format – Their formal training tells Beacon staff that interactive learning is an effective pedagogical method, and yet some of the training and professional development available to them does not take advantage of this.

4) Trainings should be tailored to individual Beacon Centers – Staff recognize that the needs of individual communities in San Francisco are divergent. Some communities are dealing with serious violent crime and staggering peer incarceration rates, while others are troubled more by English language acquisition and sometimes traumatic immigration histories. Staff at the different Centers need training to help them deal with the specific issues that arise within these neighborhoods and communities.

5) There should be a training session that provides an overall orientation to the Beacon Initiative, how all of the centers and lead agencies fit together into an integrated Youth Development movement.

Interviewees also identified training in six specific areas that would be valuable to them:

Child abuse	mandated reporting , psychological first aid
Communication	communicating with parents, group facilitation, conflict resolution
Core competencies	youth leadership, staff management and supervision
Crisis	suicide prevention training, dealing with tragedy
Cultural diversity	TRIBES, gang awareness
Curriculum	curriculum planning, curriculum from a youth perspective

Professional development, however, no matter how responsive it is to staff input, will continue to be unsatisfactory to a large portion of the staff if it is not tied to actual opportunities for promotion. Sixty-three percent (63%) of Beacon staff surveyed say they know they have opportunities for promotion at the Beacon, but when asked if the professional development and training they receive provides them increased opportunities for promotion, only 52% respond affirmatively. The table below demonstrates that opportunity for promotion is a real issue for Beacon workers. Among those who do feel they have opportunities for promotion, most intend on staying at their jobs. Among those who disagree, most indicate that they may leave ($p < .05$).

n=81	Feel there is opportunity for promotion	Feel there is no opportunity for promotion	Total
May leave next year	31%	53%	40%
Will stay next year	69%	47%	60%
	100%	100%	100%

By job category, program coordinators are most likely to agree (69%) that they have opportunities for promotion, and Beacon teachers are most likely to disagree (54%) (p<.05).

Interviews revealed that concern around opportunities for promotion at the Beacon Centers nearly matches the concern around salary. One staff member began to explain that a higher salary would extend her tenure at the Beacon Center, but continued in another vein: "More importantly I need to be engaged in my work; I need to be able to have more creative solutions to professional growth…I'd like to be able to define a new position for myself." Several staff members mentioned that professional development is largely something they have to push for themselves, and that there are not many opportunities for promotion that are structured into the organization.

As mentioned earlier, the staff who have stayed at the Beacon long-term indicate that being given increasing responsibility in the passing years has allowed them to remain engaged in the work, but in interviews many staff indicate that the Beacon simply won't take them far enough to justify planning to stay beyond two or three years total. Many feel that they would love to stay in Youth Development, but that moving ahead in the field will require getting professional experience not available at the Beacon, or going back to school.

This brings us to the question of a certification program. The discussion around the professionalization of Youth Development includes arguments that a certification program will increase the status and compensation available to workers, and will provide standards and consistency among programs. This discussion also raises concerns about maintaining diversity in the field, especially as seeking a Youth Development college degree may not yield an increase in income that would justify the financial expense, thereby dissuading the most financially challenged from the field.

San Francisco Beacon staff and directors generally support the idea of a credentialing program in youth development, particularly at the junior college level. Interestingly, few interviewed staff would have opted for a Youth Development major had it been available in college, but they respond overwhelmingly and very affirmatively that a two-year credential program would be very positive for the development of the field, and would lend Youth Development external legitimacy. Interviewees are hopeful but not certain that a certification program would help to cement Youth Development in the minds of other social service and education professionals.

Among surveyed staff, 75% feel a certification program would help the Beacon retain staff, while 25% disagree. The trepidation around a certification program centers around concerns that

diversity and creativity might suffer. Some feel it might have a positive impact upon compensation in the long run, but that program quality won't be improved, and that a certification program would ensure consistency, which would be valuable, but that if programs are not designed with adequate staff input they will fail to improve how youth are served.

Compensation

Compensation has come up as an issue in all three of the other areas discussed above – recruitment and retention both suffer due to the low pay scale, and salary is one of the issues that drives the discussion around certification. The data on compensation generally say that increases are in order for a good portion of the Beacon positions, especially if worker longevity is seen as important, but how salaries can be increased is not clearly delineated by these data alone.

The survey data show a call for salary increases – 92% of staff feel salary increases will help to retain more staff. This perception is supported by data that show San Francisco Beacon employees to be underpaid for their education level. According to the U.S. Census Bureau, the median income in San Francisco is $58,000 a year (U.S. Census Bureau 2003), and 48% of the San Francisco population possesses a bachelor's degree or higher. With the exception of one person at each site (the director), Beacon staff salaries do not exceed $45,000, yet 61% of the staff possess a bachelor's degree or better. And half of the respondents who have a master's degree earn under $20 an hour, or between $31,000 - $41,000 per annum, substantially less than the median income for San Francisco residents. All interviewees working below the site director level indicate that they could earn more money elsewhere, and most intend to pursue that. Some are currently looking for other positions, while others anticipate doing so within a year or two.

Salaries for program managers across the Beacon sites do not exceed $45,000, while salaries for site directors are generally in the arena of $60-65,000 a year.[3] This very wide jump in salary corresponds to differences in professional development, formal training and other duties required by each Beacon Center's fiscal agent, but it serves as an indication that the career ladder at the Beacon is missing some rungs near the top. An entry-level Beacon employee can realistically anticipate upward movement in terms of both responsibility and wages, up to a point. Once he or she reaches program manager, there is no place to go but elsewhere for a promotion to the next level. This creates a two-fold problem. The first is that the rich institutional memory and the wealth of hands-on experience with direct service, management and Youth Development principles will be lost when that program manager reaches his or her responsibility and salary ceiling. The second is that very few site directors have come up through the ranks of the Beacon or even Youth Development work, because such a path is veritably impossible. This means that there is a vacuum of Youth Development experience at the top of the hierarchy, at least among some directors. The two directors who were interviewed indicate that they had little or no experience with Youth Development principles or services prior to coming to the Beacon.

Some staff make it clear that this lack is felt at the Centers, while others are more confident in Beacon Center leadership. One interviewee says, "All the Beacons seem to have weird director issues – they are not the core, the solid base that the Beacons need…I don't really understand what the role of the director is and what they are supposed to be doing. This is partly the structure and partly about who has filled the positions." By contrast, another staff member offers this: "[Our site director] is really on her game. She knows what her job is and knows strategically what she

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[3] These are mean values of salaries based upon reports from all eight site directors regarding staff pay-scales.

wants her next move to be…She is very committed to Youth Development and making sure it is reflected to the staff." It appears that while some site directors are adequately prepared in terms of Youth Development, others lack Youth Development experience. This is partially due, of course, to the newness of the field. But the unmanageable chasm between the ultimate and penultimate positions at the Beacon Centers does not bode well for the level of Youth Development expertise among future generations of site directors and other top level officials.

Directors say that increased compensation across the field might occur if there is more professionalization (i.e., a certification program and uniform national standards), but that increased compensation will require consistent funding sources, and real sustainability that enables positions to be long-term, stable, and well paid. Standards and credentials among workers in early childhood education emerged after research demonstrated that there were wide discrepancies in quality of care, staff levels of education, and compensation among various early childhood education centers, and that if the movement for universal preschool was to succeed, there had to be some standardization. This presents a parallel situation to what is currently being seen in the youth development workforce. Not only do youth workers lack standardized training and professional expectations, they are compensated well below the amounts they could command given their educational levels. Like the development of professional standards in early childhood education, perhaps the primary barrier to Youth Development centers around how standardization, certification, and professionalization will be tied to a realistic and supported career ladder and to livable wages.

Discussion

A clear problem for worker retention and consistency, and even recruitment, is the practice of employing workers on a part-time or partial-year basis. These workers have a clear incentive to leave their jobs for more stable work as soon as they can find it. This practice is, however, fiscally sensible for the lead agencies, and unlikely to change as long as these agencies rely on finite, grant-based funding sources to pay their staff. A certification program appears to be a good idea, with widespread support among directors and staff alike, but there is no guarantee that it will translate into more money. It is certainly not likely to have an immediate impact on salaries and funding, especially considering that Youth Development workers are already underpaid for their education levels. But credentialing will lend legitimacy to the field, which should grow support, and make Youth Development an integrated part of school districts, education departments, social service departments, and the like. With genuine public support Youth Development programs can become less dependent on the whims and trends of public and foundation funding and on the unstable short-term commitment grants they proffer. At that point, salaries may well go up.

The paradox of the highly satisfied youth worker who leaves his or her Youth Development job after two years is not initially encouraging to the field. Without better salary offerings, more consistent and reliable sources of funding, and more incremental and high-reaching career ladders within the centers where youth workers practice their trade, the field will continue to see high turnover. But, lest this discussion become a myopic discussion of the largest and most obvious problem (money), without saying anything else useful or substantive about the evolving shape of Youth Development, let's consider the upside.

First of all, the satisfied worker is satisfied because, while Youth Development might be a new and burgeoning field, it serves an old and deep-rooted need: helping youth bridge the murky waters between childhood and adulthood. Guiding, supporting and empowering youth are crucial activities

to building a healthy and strong community. According to the survey 74% of Beacon workers consider themselves to be part of the community in which they serve. Only half of the workers have ever lived in the neighborhood, so the rest have that sense simply by virtue of the work they do in the community. The remarkably high level of satisfaction among Beacon workers shows that Youth Development work is meaningful work. But not everyone at every social services agency and foundation may be aware of how profoundly meaningful this work is. These data on worker satisfaction serve as evidence to the importance of the work, which may, in turn, raise the awareness of agencies in a position to help to solve some of the problems that exist in the Youth Development field today.

Secondly, the youth worker tends to begin working in Youth Development when he or she is just coming out of school. In other words, youth workers are themselves young. The people who work at the Beacon Centers range in age from 19 to 63, but 28 is the mean age, and 23 is the most common (modal) age. As they get older and begin to experience a greater financial burden, higher pecuniary expectations and broader career ambitions, they move on. One director put it this way, "…probably when people get into mid-30s, most people age out of a job like this, think they have topped out at what they are doing – they are looking for more pay, higher level of work, other opportunities that might not be at a Beacon Center." While part of what happens in this scenario would unquestionably be avoidable through improved wages, part of it may simply be a factor of the nature of Youth Development work. The work requires high amounts of energy and an ability to relate to youth. Directors, concerned with the institutional instability caused by high turnover logically see increasing longevity and retention as a high priority. But some of the Youth Development workers interviewed indicate that for them this was simply a short-term occupation. Many mention a sort of "burnout" that has much more to do with the emotional drain of the job than the low compensation. A certain amount of turnover may be inevitable, even once career ladders, professional development and salary ranges are overhauled and improved, and accepting this may also be part of moving the profession forward.

Recommendations

The data from this study are on a single but far-reaching, city-wide program that already stands as a flagship to Youth Development programs across the country. This analysis, then, allows for a number of recommendations that should not only be considered for the Beacon Initiative, but for other Youth Development programs that are in their own adolescence, experiencing growing pains as they transform into components of an increasingly professionalized field.

Recruitment:

- Recruitment must be creative, relying on online and community-based strategies as well as targeted efforts in Youth Development-related programs at universities and junior colleges.

- Diversity is not a euphemism for "people of color" – a diverse staff should be comprised of people from the community being served, as well as those from outside of that community.

Retention

- Partial year and part-time assignments should be avoided whenever possible.

- Filling vacancies should become a number one priority so that current staff are not overburdened by being understaffed.

- Personal time and vacation time should be honored and perhaps extended to avoid or postpone burnout.

Training and Professional Development

- Certification program should be proposed to local community colleges.

- Training needs should be tailored to staff needs and correspond to recruitment practices, (i.e., in response to statements that community and non-community recruits have different training needs).

- Workers should be offered new challenges and corresponding training as their time progresses – ideally the evolution of duties should have a commensurate fiscal component

- Career ladders must be better defined with position structure changed so that the gap leading up to site director is not quite so wide, so that staff don't have to leave just to get ahead, and so that people at the top are more experienced in Youth Development itself.

Compensation

- Funding streams need to be secured so that salaries can become commensurate to education, skill and competency levels.

- Efforts should be made to lobby city, county, state and national agencies so that Youth Development can become a part of public agendas and funding can become stable and the workforce can stabilize as much as possible.

- Public Education should become a priority to raise awareness of Youth Development among agencies that address mental health, education, juvenile justice, violence prevention, substance abuse, etc.

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