



TeensWork Alachua: 2023

Year 2 Evaluation Results

Children's Trust of Alachua County

Bonnie L. Wagner, M.S.

Research, Planning, and Evaluation Coordinator

October 2023

Purpose Statement

This report evaluates Year 2 of TeensWork Alachua – a summer youth employment program – funded by the Children's Trust of Alachua County.

The purpose of this report is to provide a compilation of results and insight on performance, successes, and to highlight opportunities for improvement and enhancing impact. The primary audience for this report is the Children's Trust staff, providers, the Trust Board, and partners who help support the implementation of services. After gaining insights from results presented, the objective is to take actions to strengthen services and outcomes for children and youth.

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Executive Summary

TeensWork Alachua was introduced to promote a positive outlet for youth to explore and develop career aspirations and professional connections while simultaneously deterring youth from delinquent activity and negative influences.

The primary purpose of this report is to compile results, provide insight into performance, successes, and areas for improvement. Findings are highlighted below:

Performance and Results:

- 62 work sites.
- 215 teens hired.
- 8 hours of training received (on average).
- 28,745 hours of work clocked.
- \$1,471 earned (on average).
- 134 hours worked (on average).
- 8 support contacts from job coaches (on average).

Key Successes:

- Increased the number and geographic distribution of work sites.
- 90% of teens worked 100+ hours; an increase from 67% in 2022.
- Teens report very high levels of satisfaction with the program.
- 98% of teens report they gained valuable work experience, preparation for future jobs, and skills that will benefit them in the future.
- 97% of employers agreed teens gained valuable skills.

Areas for Improvement:

- Start earlier and provide more training for teens and employers.
- Facilitate interview opportunities.
- Increase job coach support for teens and employers.
- Refine career readiness and financial literacy assessment and ensure participant awareness of the purpose of assessments to limit social desirability bias.

This report is respectfully submitted with the intention of driving improvements and better services to propel teens to excel in their future.

Introduction

In December 2021, the Children’s Trust of Alachua County facilitated a competitive procurement process to identify qualified organizations to recruit and support employers and teens (14-18yrs) to provide training and job experience to explore career options, build work readiness, skills, and ability to thrive in future employment. Two local organizations were funded to collaboratively carry out this mission: Goodwill Industries of North Florida and Minority Business Listing.

Why is youth employment important?

Benefits of summer youth employment programs are well-documented. Youth employment programs expose youth to meaningful employment experiences and supportive adult relationships. Research demonstrates a variety of positive outcomes, including improved self-esteem and confidence, skill and knowledge development, high school graduation rates, reduced criminal behavior and teen pregnancies among participants (Heller, 2021; Sachdev, 2011). Programs help youth develop job skills, gain an understanding of work norms and culture, career pathways, professional connections and financial literacy through training and one-on-one support received through job coaches and worksite supervisors.

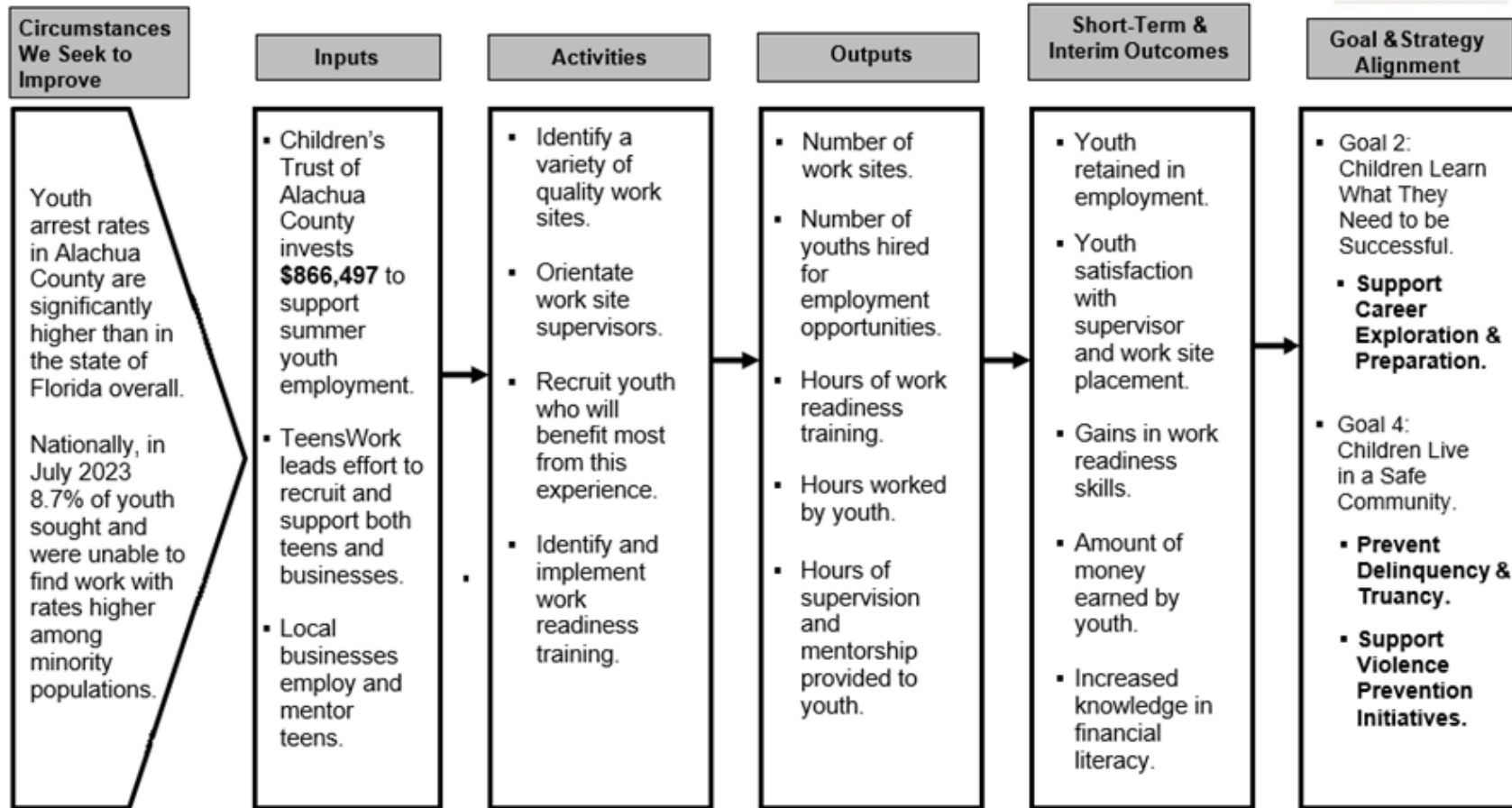
Businesses receive support to receive, manage, and pay youth workers. Businesses learn and can benefit from a young person’s perspective and ideas in the workplace setting. Businesses also have an important opportunity to help cultivate talent, give back to their community, and promote readiness in their future workforce.

In July 2023, the unemployment rate among young people stood at 8.7% percent (Bureau of Labor Statistics, 2023). Unemployment is defined by those actively seeking, but unable to find work. While there are obvious financial hardships associated unemployment, negative psychological impact of unemployment have been demonstrated (Belle & Bullock, N.D.) and may be particularly profound for youth who are developing their identity, sense

of worth, and fit in society. Without legitimate opportunities to contribute, teens may be more likely to pursue illegitimate options. Several randomized experimental studies confirm summer youth employment programs reduce criminal justice involvement youth who participate compared to those who did not (Heller, 2021).

Rates of violent crime in Alachua County are a significant community concern and have consistently surpassed the state of Florida (Florida Department of Health, 2022). Also, youth arrest rates in Alachua County substantially outpace the state of Florida (20.5 versus 11.4 youth arrested per 1,000). Relative to the unemployment among all individuals' rates among young people is more than twice as high (8.7% vs. (3.5%). Obtaining one's first job is a significant milestone to adulthood and teens face challenges in obtaining jobs. TeensWork is designed to help support the connection between youth and employers to create a building block for transitioning into a future career and adulthood.

TeensWork Logic Model

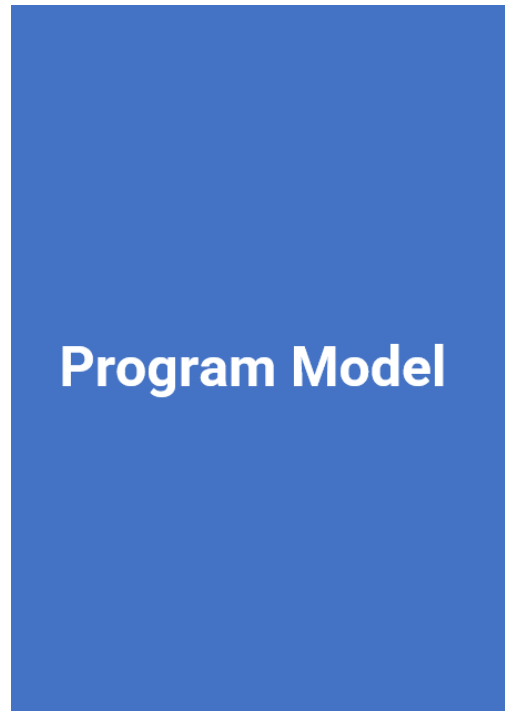


Youth arrest rates in Alachua County outpace the state of Florida (20.5 versus 11.4 youth arrested per 1,000).

Data Source: Florida Department of Juvenile Justice – Delinquency Profile 2022

What is TeensWork Alachua?

Program Design:



6 - 8 weeks of employment



Up to 25 hrs per week



10 hrs of work readiness training
(inclusive of financial literacy)



Job coach support and mentoring



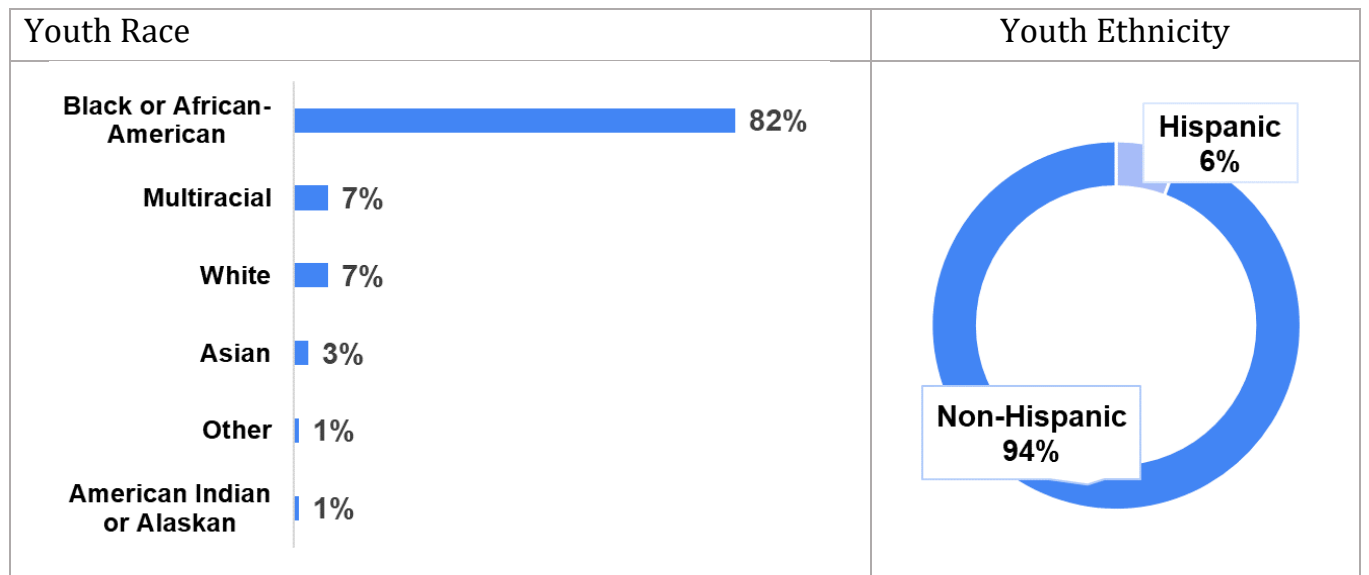
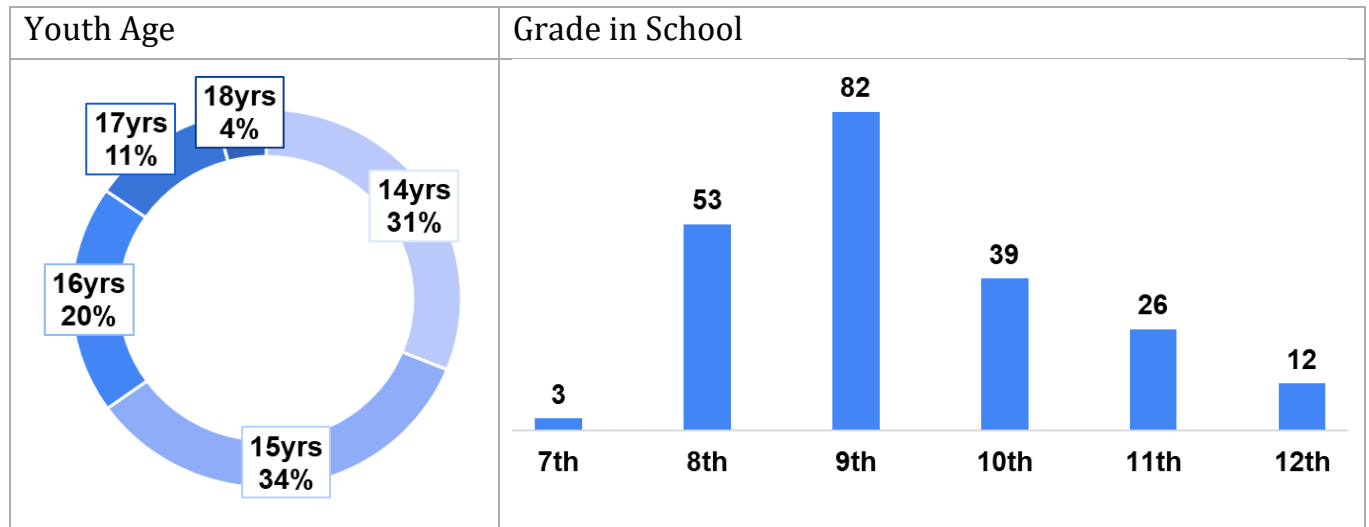
Establish a bank account and setup
direct deposit

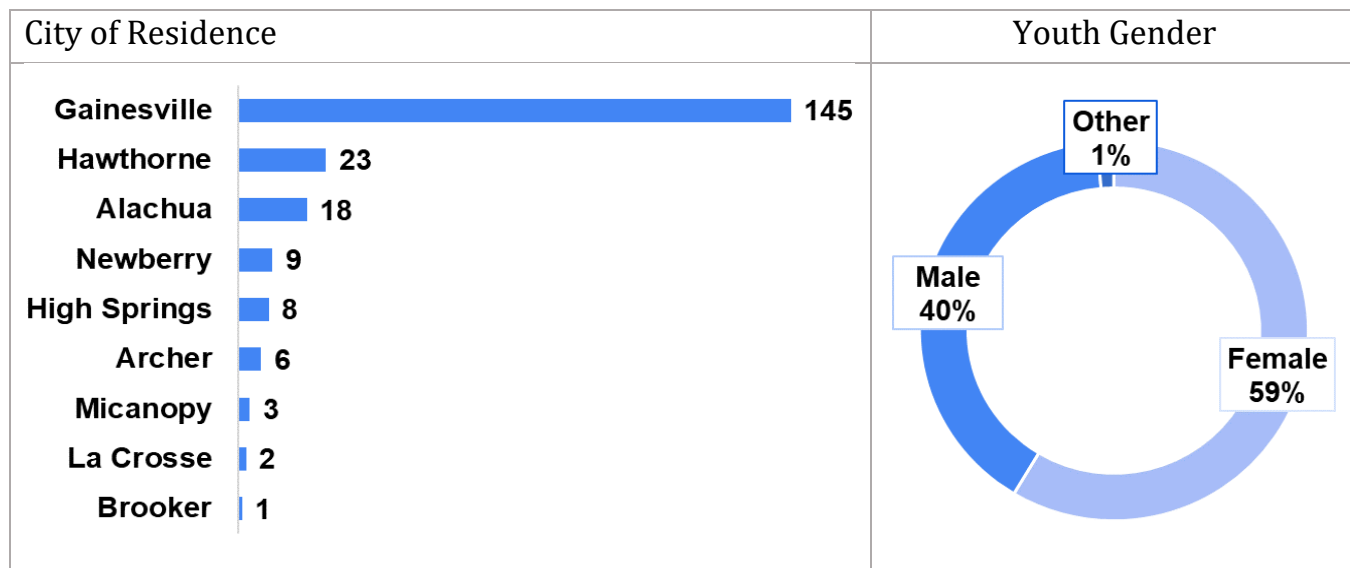
TeensWork recruited both teens and employers to participate in a 6–8-week summer employment experience for up to 25 hours per week. Prior to being placed at a work site, all youth are required to attend 8 hours of work readiness training. An additional 2 hours of training were to be completed over the course of the summer. Topics covered during the training included: career readiness, college and career pathways, workplace culture, resume writing, interview skills and mock interviews, adding value to the workplace, and financial literacy. Youth and employers are paired with a job coach to assist in the employment process, provide support, and be a liaison between the youth and employer. All teens were provided with the opportunity to establish a non-custodial bank account with VyStar Credit Union.

Key Questions:

Who was served?

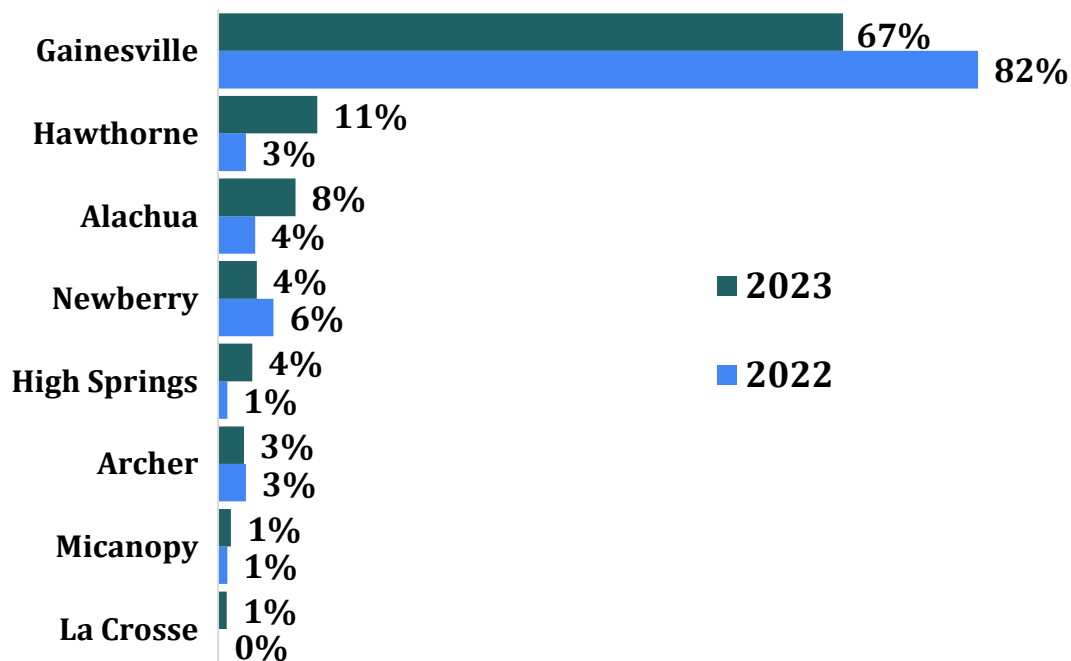
A total of 215 teens were hired for TeensWork employment opportunities. The average age of youth who participated in TeensWork is 15.2 years old. Nearly two thirds of youth were 14 or 15 years old (65%). Twenty-six percent of youth were middle schoolers in the 2022-2023 school year and 74% high school students, with highest participation among 9th graders. Most teens in the program were Black or African American (82%). Six percent of youth were Hispanic. More than half of participants were female (59%).





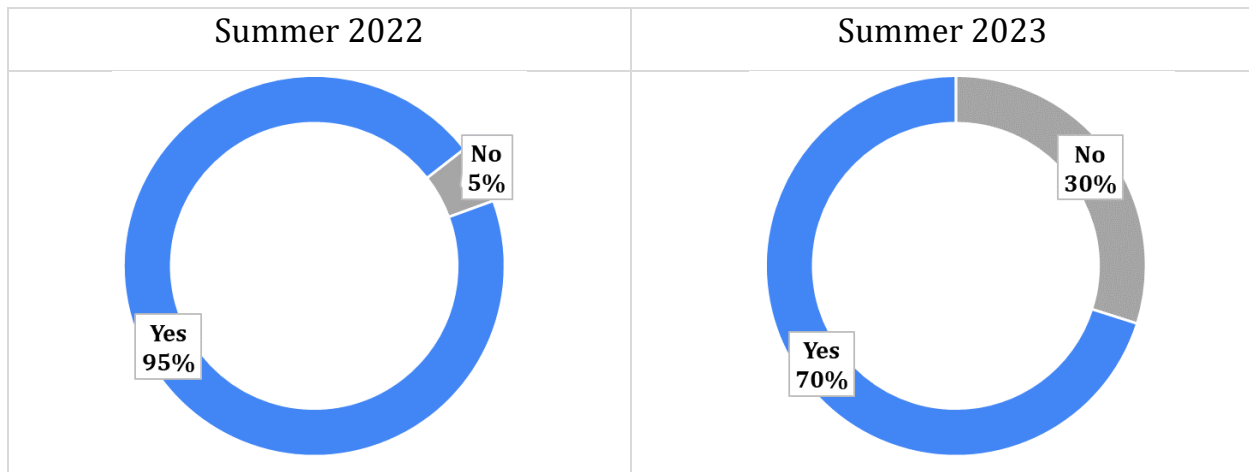
Compared to last year, participants are comparable in age with an average age of 15.2 both years. Program participants were more diverse ethnic and racially as compared to last year with less Black or African American (93% to 82%) youth and more Multiracial (<1% to 7%), White (5% to 7%), Asian (<1% to 3%), and Hispanic (3% to 6%) youth. In 2023, there was also more geographic representation, serving less Gainesville residents (from 82% in 2022 to 67% in 2023) and more representation in rural areas; in particular, Hawthorne (3% to 11%) and Alachua (4% to 8%).

TeensWork had more Rural Participants in Year 2.



Also of note is less youth reported TeensWork as their first employment experience as compared to last year. Both years on the application teens were asked if this would be their first job experience. While in 2022, 95% of youth responded “yes”, 70% indicated this would be their first job during 2023. To a large extent, those reporting this was not their first job experience had participated in TeensWork during 2022 (95%). Overall, 26% of 2023 TeensWork youth had also participated in 2022.

Will this be your first job?



Who were the employers?

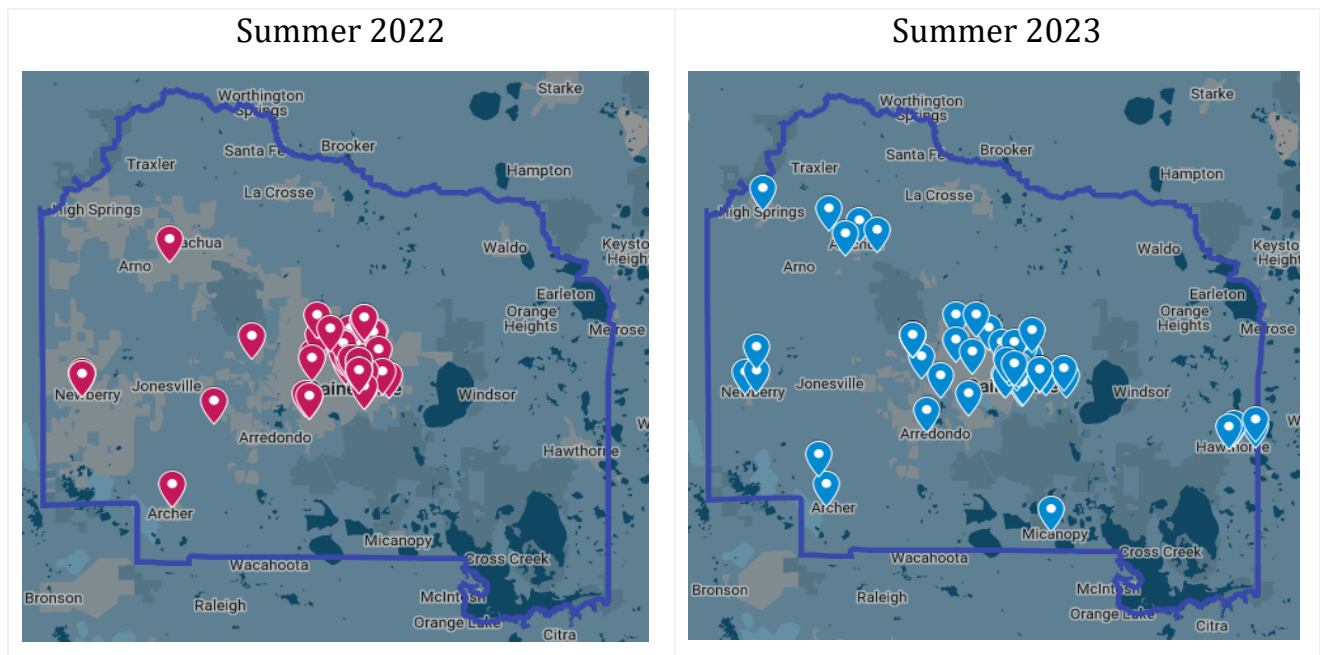
TeensWork Alachua is a collaboration of non-profit, government, and private businesses seeking to support youths’ successful transition to adulthood. TeensWork staff recruited, trained, and supported 49 for-profit, non-profit, and public organizations to provide youth employment opportunities at 62 work sites.

The number of work sites increased from 42 to 62 in summer 2023 and added new work sites in rural communities including Hawthorne, Micanopy, and High Springs.

Work Sites by City and ZIP Code

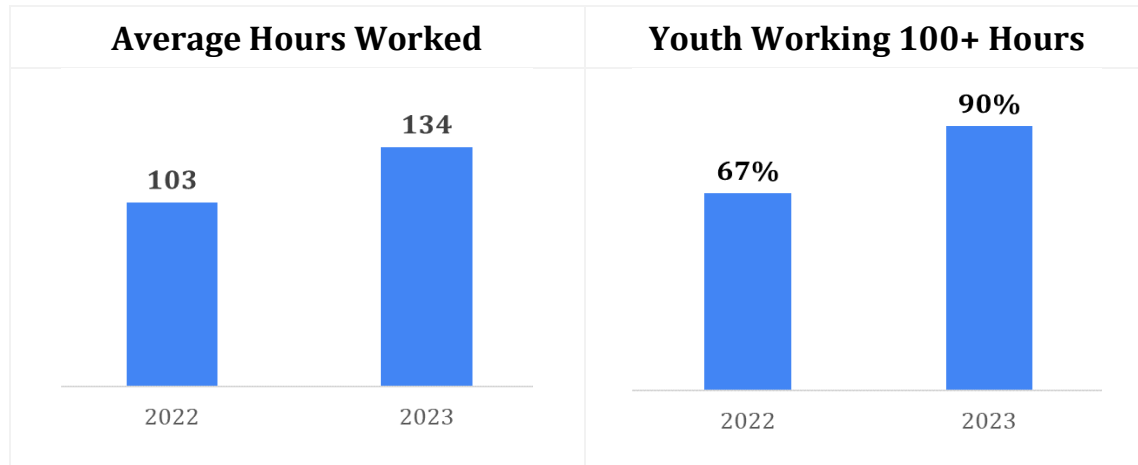
City and ZIP code	2022	2023
Alachua	1	4
32615	1	4
Archer	1	3
32618	1	3
Gainesville	37	43
32601	14	14
32605	4	3
32606	1	9
32607	-	1
32608	4	2
32609	10	4
32627	-	1
32641	4	9
Hawthorne	-	7
32640	-	7
High Springs	-	1
32643	-	1
Micanopy	-	1
32667	-	1
Newberry	3	3
32669	3	3
Grand Total	42	62

Location of TeensWork Work Sites

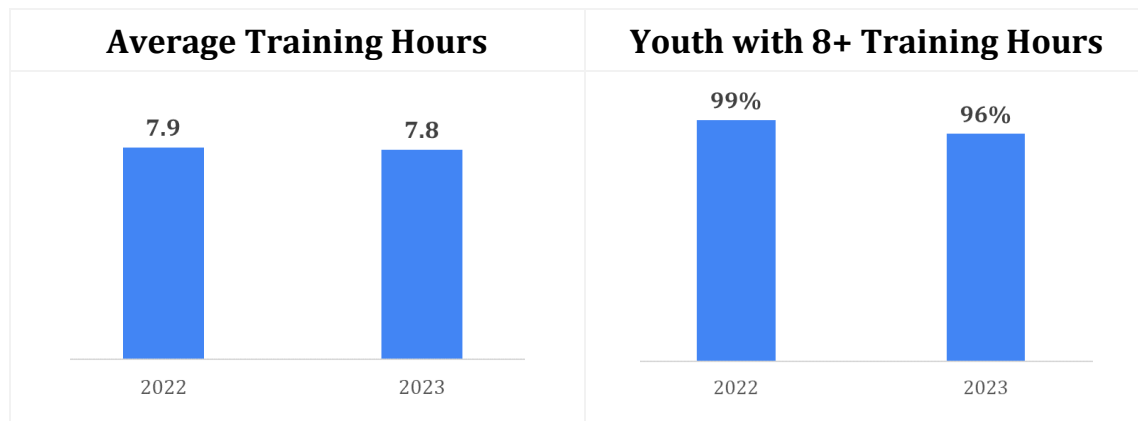


How much did youth participate?

Youth were given the opportunity to work up to 150 hours across 6-8 weeks of program. Youth hired worked an average of 134 hours with 90% working at least 100 hours over the course of the summer. This reflects growth in youth participation and retention in the program from the previous year where teens worked an average of 103 hours and 67% worked 100+ hours over the duration of the program. The most common reason for youth not retaining employment was due to transportation, family or personal and work performance issues.



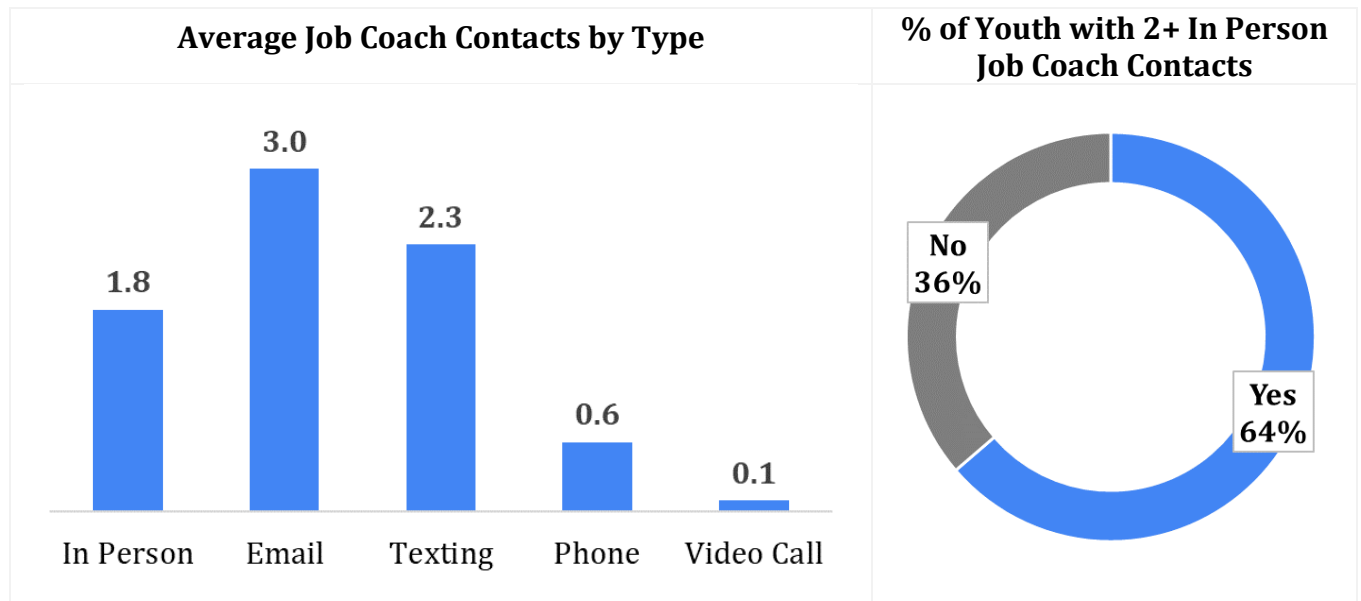
Additionally, in 2023 youth were required to complete eight hours of pre-employment work readiness training and to receive an additional two hours of work readiness over the course of the summer. Most of the youth completed the full 8 hours of pre-employment; however, the additional hours of work readiness training did not occur as expected.



How much support did youth receive from job coaches?

Each youth is paired with a job coach that they communicate with on a weekly basis. The job coaches offer support and encouragement and help youth problem solve when needed. Job coaches help youth identify goals they would like to work toward during employment, develop good work habits such as arriving on time, communicating with their employers, and clocking in and out of work. Job coaches also check in on the businesses to make sure that youth are meeting expectations and to help redirect youth as necessary.

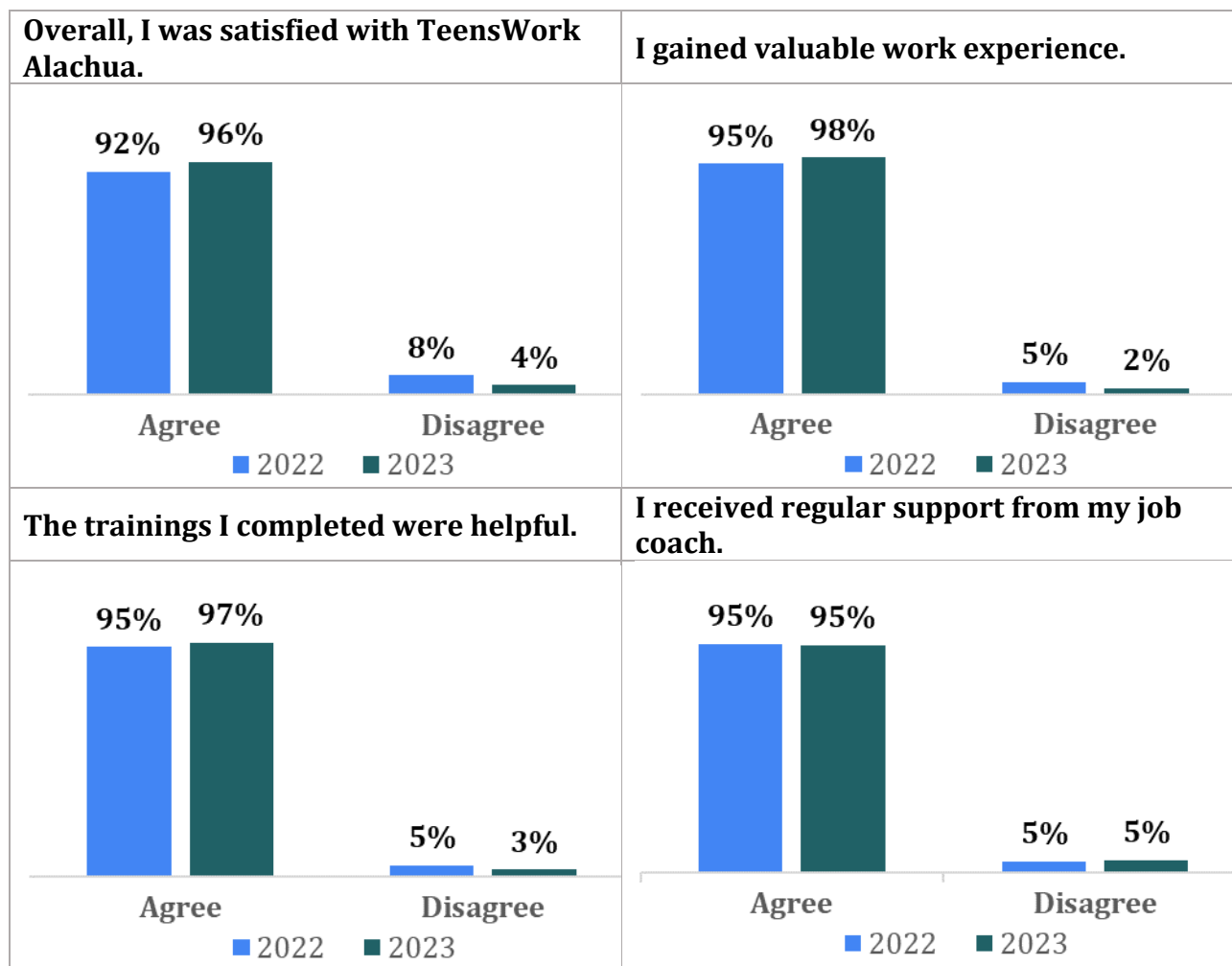
Overall, youth received an average of 7.8 contacts from their job coach. The most prevalent type of job coach contact was emails and texting. We sought for teens to receive at least two in-person job coach contacts over the course of the program. On average, youth received 1.8 in-person job coach meetings with 64% of teens receiving two or more in-person job coach support meetings.

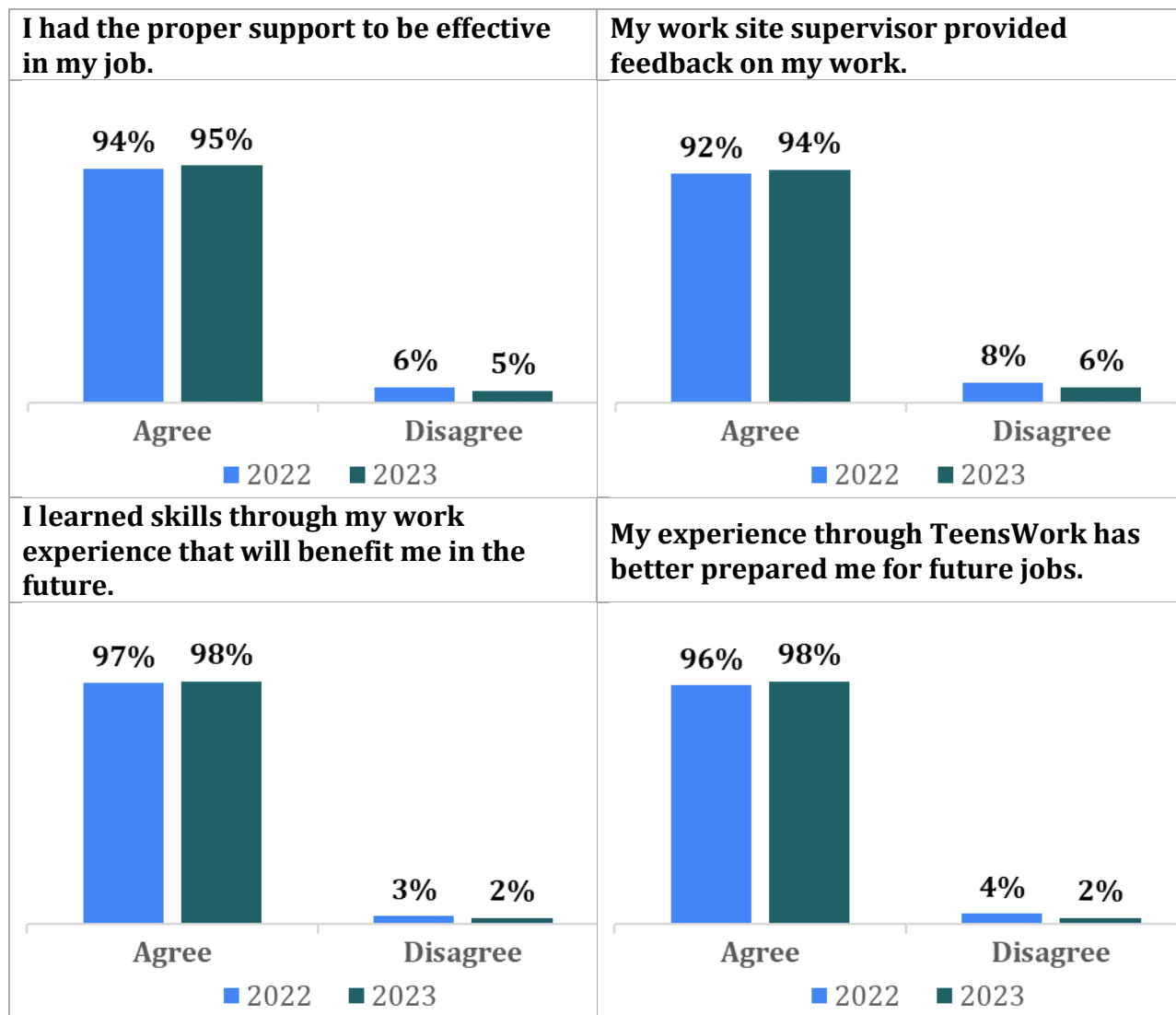


Were youth satisfied with the program?

At the end of the program, teens were asked to complete a brief satisfaction survey to learn their perception of the program, how it was helpful, and ways to improve. Survey completion rates are important because larger participation yields more representative, valid, and meaningful results. Overall, 128 responses were received with a 60% completion rate. This is an improvement compared to last year's completion rate of 50%.

Like last year, teens report very high levels of satisfaction with the program. Nearly all teens reported they gained **valuable work experience, preparation for future jobs, and skills that will benefit them in the future (98%)**. Teens highly rated all areas of satisfaction, even at rates slightly greater than last year.





Teens were also asked:

- **Why did you choose the program?**

While there were a variety of reasons why teens chose to participate in TeensWork, the most common included wanting to get work experience and found this opportunity a good fit as it was for teens just starting out. There were youth who mentioned this was their first job experience as well as youth indicating that they were returning from 2022 and chose to do so because they had a good experience or found it valuable. Making money and keeping busy were also key drivers and several teens noted specifically that they were looking to earn money to buy school clothes, supplies, and shoes. Some teens indicated their motivation for TeensWork was at the suggestion of a parent or other trusted adult who told

them they should participate. Many youth also expressed intrinsic motivation, seeking to gain work skills to better prepare themselves for their future career and adulthood.

- **What impact has the TeensWork program had on you?**

The most prevalent impact teens noted was in gaining work experience, work skills, and building professional connections and social skills. Youth responded that they learned how an “*actual job works*” and gaining experience on “*how to be on a job and work*”. A number youth expressed this was their first work experience. In many responses youth noted it helped them to build valuable work skills. Some skills mentioned included: time management, communication, social skills, teamwork, precision, public speaking, patience, and persistence. Teens felt the program taught them more about responsibility and the importance of being responsible through this experience. Many teens also noted increased financial literacy – how to save, budgeting, banking, the value of money, etc.

- **Please list any further feedback, suggestions, or concerns.**

Not as many teens responded with feedback, suggestions, or concerns, but among those that did, the most common qualitative theme for feedback/suggestions was they want the opportunity to decide which job they are assigned to. Some respondents indicated that next year they wanted to remain at the same site, while others wanted a different opportunity, and that they would like more of say in choosing their employment assignment. Many teens mentioned they had a positive experience and would like the program to be longer in duration and/or offer more hours per week. Recognition and praise were expressed regarding the support offered by the job coaches by several teens.

The most prevalent qualitative themes using emergent coding are displayed:

Why Chosen?	#	Program Impact	#	Feedback	#
Work Experience	52	Work Experience	28	Job Choice	7
Money	30	Work Skills	16	Great Experience	7
Teen Opportunity	15	Connections	16	More Program	4
Work Skills	14	Responsibility	11	Amazing Coach	3
Future Preparation	11	Financial Literacy	9	Higher Pay	3

Quotes from TeensWork teens:

Why did you choose the program?

- “So, I could learn how to work a real job and have skills.”
- “I wanted to make money.”
- “I felt this was an opportunity for me to gain work experience as a teen.”



What impact has TeensWork had on you?

- “Having my first job experience.”
- “[It] showed me what it’s like to have a job and some responsibilities. It also showed me the meaning of teamwork and how everyone really helps each other to make the company growing and improving.”
- “The TeensWork program taught me how to be responsible and respectful and work on my communication skills.”

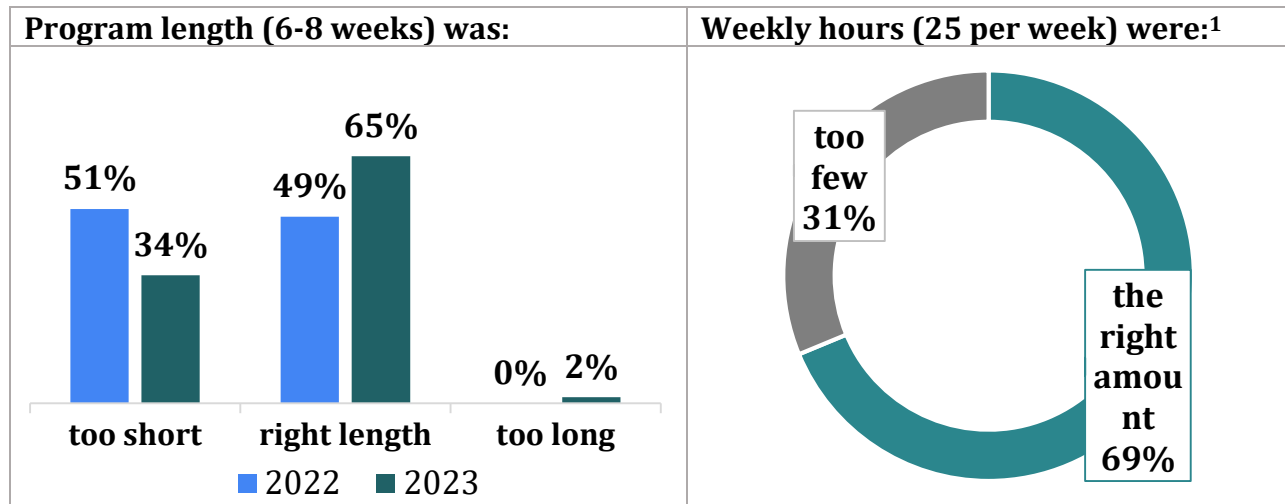


Feedback, suggestions, or concerns.

- “We are given options to choose a job. Knowing what’s available when hired working a job that we like.”
- “Maybe higher the pay or give more weeks.”
- “Very grateful for this program. The amount of support I got from not only my job coach but all of them is amazing.”

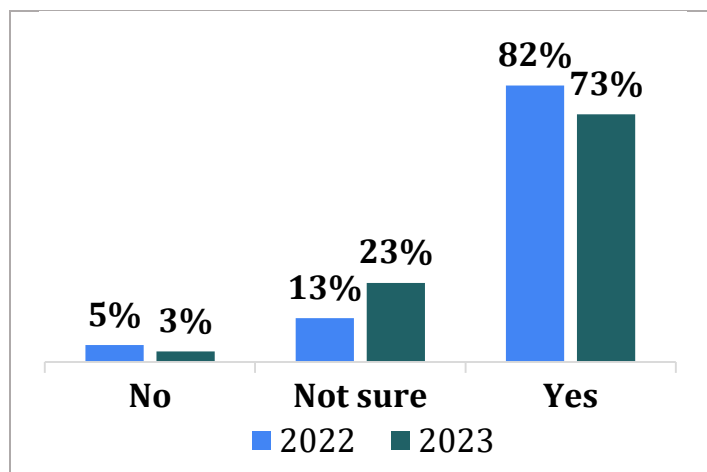


In 2023 a change was made so youth could extend their employment experience up to eight weeks to meet the full 150 hours, and a greater portion of youth felt the program was the “right length” as compared to last year. Even so, still about a third of youth reported that the program was too short, and the hours were not enough.



When asked if they would be interested in participating next year, 73% said “yes”, while nearly a quarter were “not sure”. Compared to last year, a lower percentage of teens were looking to continue after 2023. This may be due to repeat participants. Other youth employment programs limit teens to three sessions of programming as gains are limited after that point.

Would you be interested in participating next year?

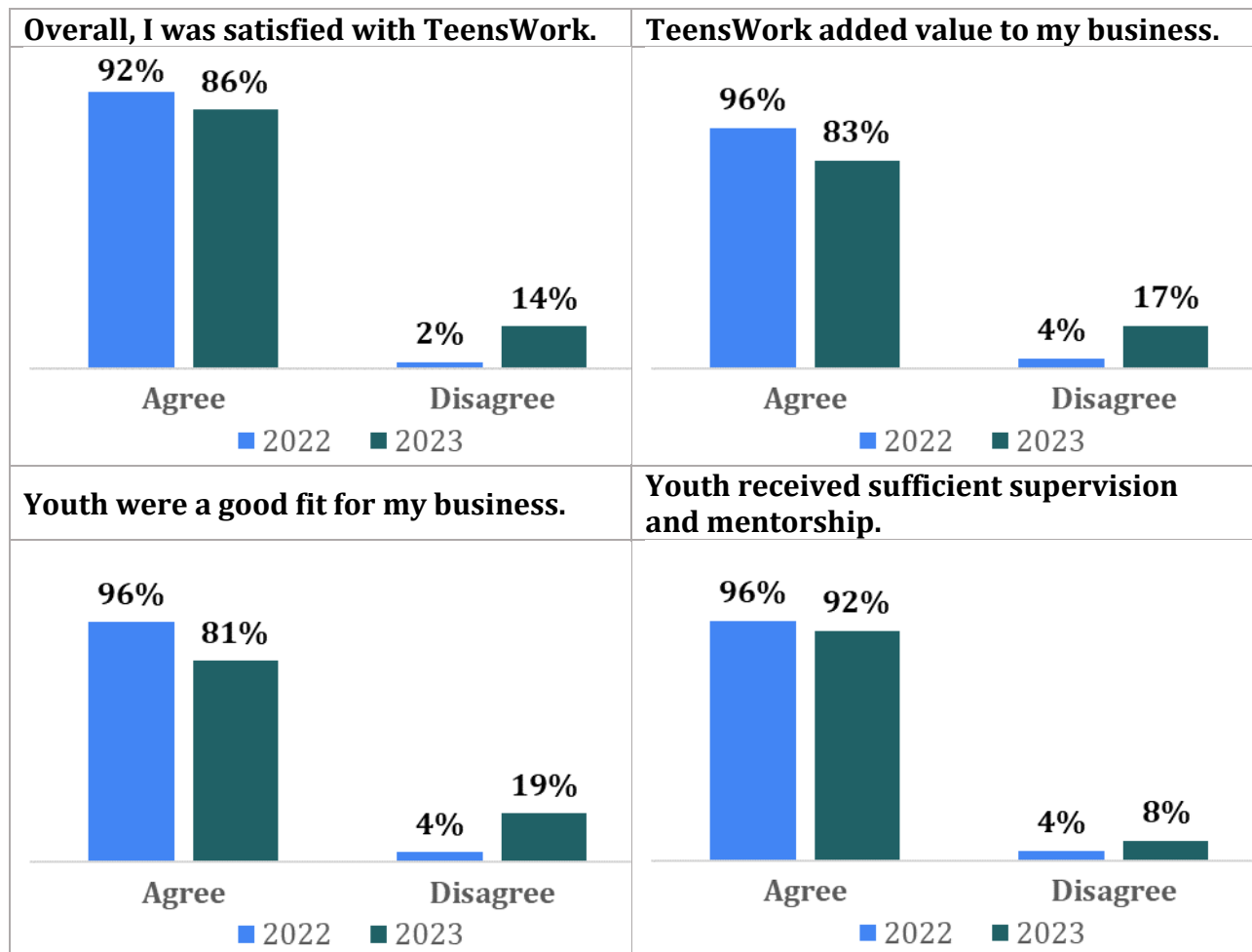


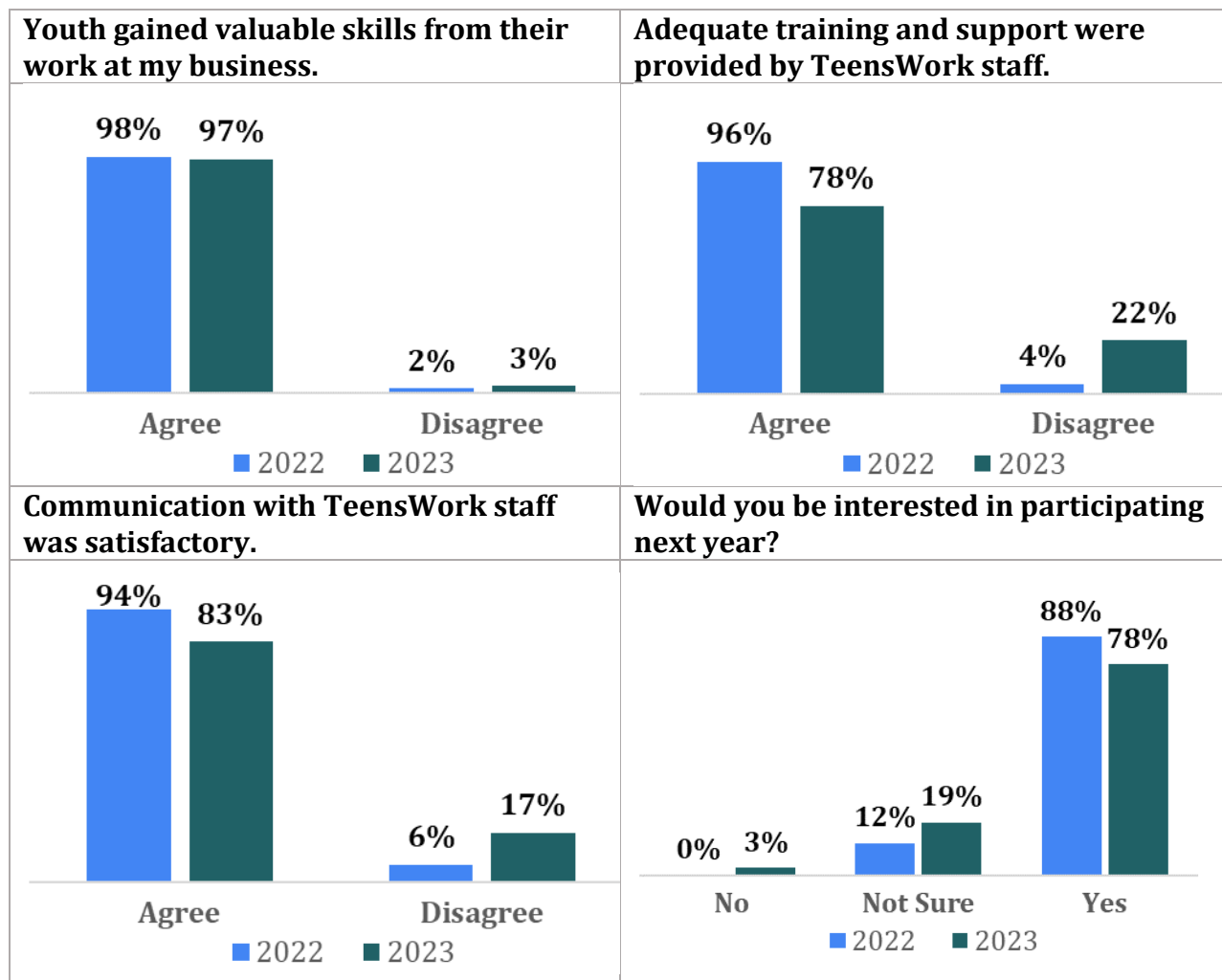
¹ This was not asked in 2022.

Were employers satisfied with the program?

At the end of the program, work site supervisors were encouraged to complete a satisfaction survey to learn their perception of the program and ways to improve. Overall, 36 responses were received with a 58% completion rate. This represents a decline from last year's completion rate of nearly 100%.

Overall, among the employers that did respond agreed that youth did receive **adequate mentorship** (92%) as well as **gaining valuable skills** (97%) from their TeensWork experience. Across all items, there was lower satisfaction among employers as compared to last year. The lowest level of satisfaction was with the training and support provided (78%) and that the youth were a good fit for their business (81%).





Employer were also asked:

→ **Why did you choose to participate?**

The most common reason employers cited for choosing to participate in TeensWork was that they wanted to help young people. Related to this was helping prepare youth for the future, giving them work experience, skills, and industry exposure. Several employers mentioned being motivated by wanting to keep kids safe, off the streets, or in a safe environment during the summer. Some employers also shared the need for extra staffing provided by the program.

→ **Please share a TeensWork success story.**

Prevalent success story themes included teens excelling in their job function, completing important tasks, or experiencing growth in knowledge and skills over the

course of the summer. Employers shared successes in youth gaining career perspective, industry exposure, and understanding of how a business runs. Several businesses noted their teens were helpful and the synergy between giving and receiving efforts, knowledge, and ideas for a mutual benefit.

→ **Please list any further feedback, suggestions, or concerns.**

Feedback on communication, which involved programmatic expectations, wanting more information on their TeensWork employees, and managing youth accountability were areas employers noted for improvement. Several employers noted issues with teens accountability (e.g., attendance, following rules) and that some teens did not take their employment experience seriously and lacked motivation. Like the teens, employers wanted the opportunity to interview and choose teens who would be a good fit for their business. Along with that some suggested having earlier training and involving employers in them. There were several responses noted that they thought the program was great and hope to see it continued.

The most prevalent qualitative themes using emergent coding are displayed:

Why Chosen?	#	Success Stories	#	Feedback	#
Help Teens	22	Excellent Job	9	Communication	6
Work Experience	10	Task Completion	6	Teen Accountability	4
Future Preparation	5	Growth	6	Interview Opportunity	4
Keep Safe	5	Industry Exposure	5	Choose Teens	4
Help Needed	5	Helpful/Synergy	5	Great Program	4

Quotes from TeensWork employers:

Why did you choose to participate?

- **“We believe in this program and keeping teens off the streets and earning a paycheck.”**
- **“To help youth in Hawthorne gain needed job opportunity and training.”**
- **“I was short staffed and needed help. This was a way to help my business and the students get experience.”**

Please share a TeensWork success story.

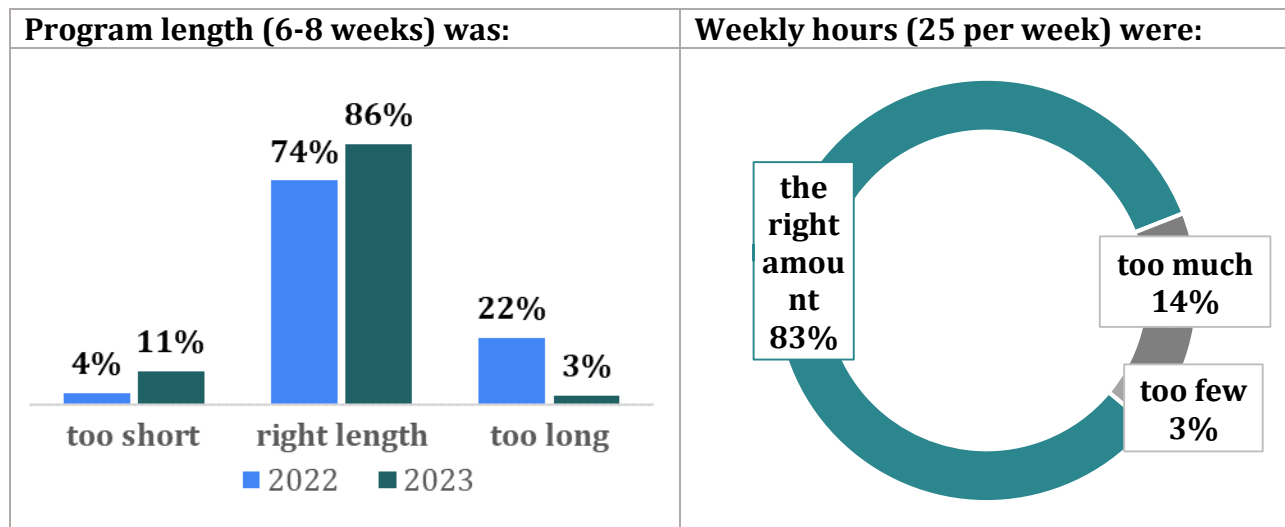
→ “[Teen] was given the responsibility of leading a team of his peers in certain job duties. He was initially hesitant because he's introverted. Once given the responsibility, his true leadership characteristics began to emerge as he began to collaborate on task assignments for each of his team members. He also gained valuable knowledge of resume writing, interview skills and an opportunity to evaluate his interpersonal skills working with others or what we call team building activities.”

Please list any further feedback, suggestions, or concerns.

→ “I highly recommend early preparation, include interviews, and allowing the employers to play a role in the process. In addition, it is important to have knowledge of kids’ allergies, etc. before placing them at different work sites.”

→ “Make sure the student is aware of the position he or she will be placed. An interview with the student would help.”

Most employers felt the program length and weekly hours were a good fit. Compared to the teens, employers were more apt to say the weekly hours and program length were the right amount. Moreover, employers were pleased with the program length compared to last year.



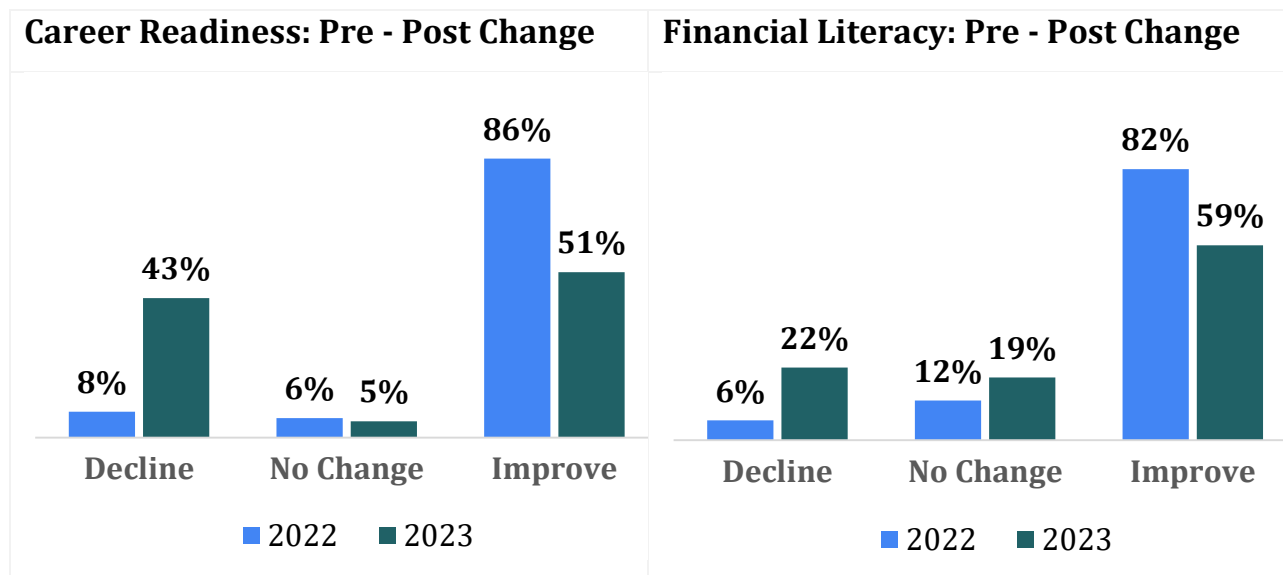
What were other benefits and outcomes?

Work Skill

Both teens and employers had the opportunity to indicate work skills gained retrospectively via the satisfaction survey. Nearly all employers felt teens gained valuable skills from their work experience at their business (97%). Similarly, 98% of teens agreed that they learned skills through their work experience that will benefit them in the future. This was a key reason why teens choose to be involved in the program was to gain work experience and skills and TeensWork delivered.

Career Readiness & Financial Literacy

Pre and post assessments were completed to gain insight on specific areas, such as job seeking, resume writing, good work habits, human resources, college/career options, and financial literacy. For summer 2023, there were 74 teens who completed both a pre and post assessment. In comparison to last year, completion declined from 51% (113/220) to 34% (74/215). This assessment was administered at the beginning and again at the end of the program. Overall, 51% of teens demonstrated pre-post gains in career readiness and 59% in financial literacy. This is a substantial decline in gains versus 2022.



Several changes were made to the assessment tool by the program staff. Some of the changes included the wording of items, increasing from 20 to 28 items; modifying response options from a 3-point to a 5-point scale as follows:

Summer 2022	Summer 2023
▪ Little or none: <i>I need to know more!</i>	▪ Strongly Disagree
▪ Some: <i>Tell me more.</i>	▪ Disagree
▪ A lot: <i>I know this (or have done this)!</i>	▪ Neutral
	▪ Agree
	▪ Strongly Agree

The revised assessment seemed greatly impacted by social desirability bias, which is a where survey respondents felt pressure to indicate what they believe is the “right answer”. Program staff indicated that teens may have believed that if they appeared to be more knowledgeable on their pre survey that they would land a better job. Indeed, eleven of the 28 items had 80% or more of youth who already agreed they had this knowledge, which left little room for improvement or “gains”. In comparison, *only one* item in the 2022 assessment had 80% or more of teens who respondent “A lot”². Another factor that may have influenced results is “experience limitation”, which is a phenomenon, whereby youth “didn’t know what they didn’t know” at pre and then knowledge limitations are recognized more at post. Survey fatigue is also another an important consideration for any evaluation, where teens may have “completed” the survey but not taken the time to carefully read and report their true experience.

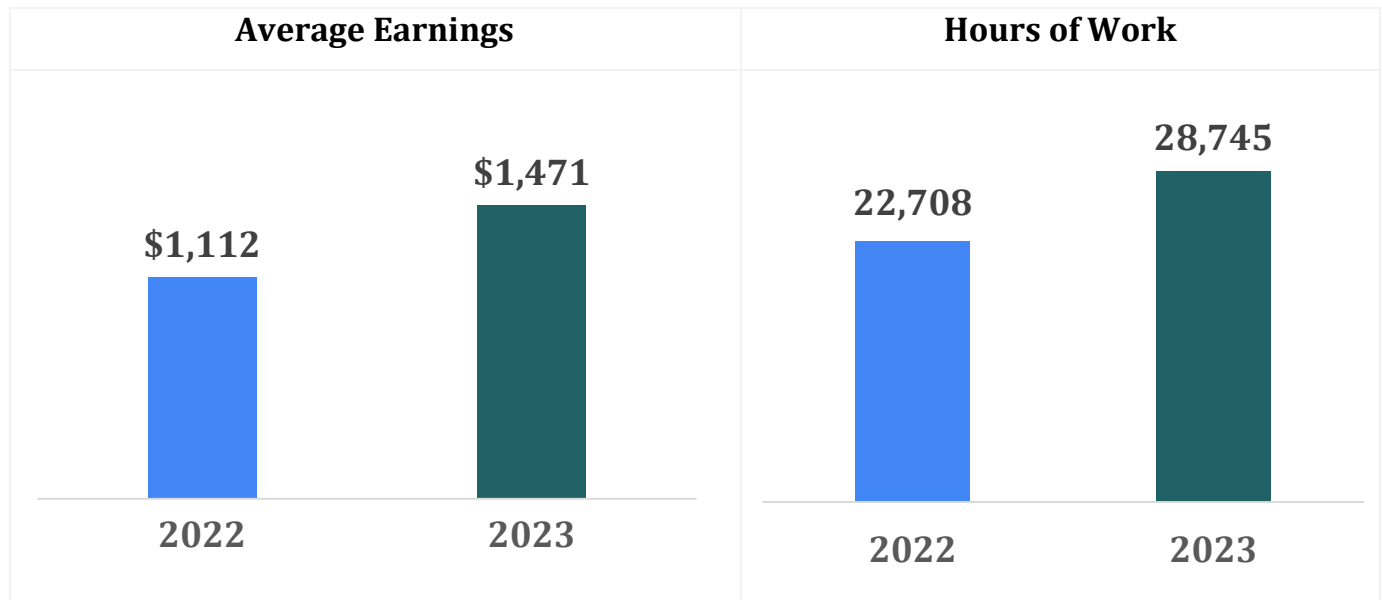
² This one item was, “Importance of being on-time for work”.

In addition to the satisfaction survey, work site supervisors were to complete mid and end of program assessments on each youth for them to give input on growth in – punctuality, appropriate dress, communication, receives direction, attitude management, accountability, task completion, and overall progress. This assessment was introduced in 2023 and not part of the 2022 evaluation. However, not enough matched responses were received to allow for representative results (n<10).



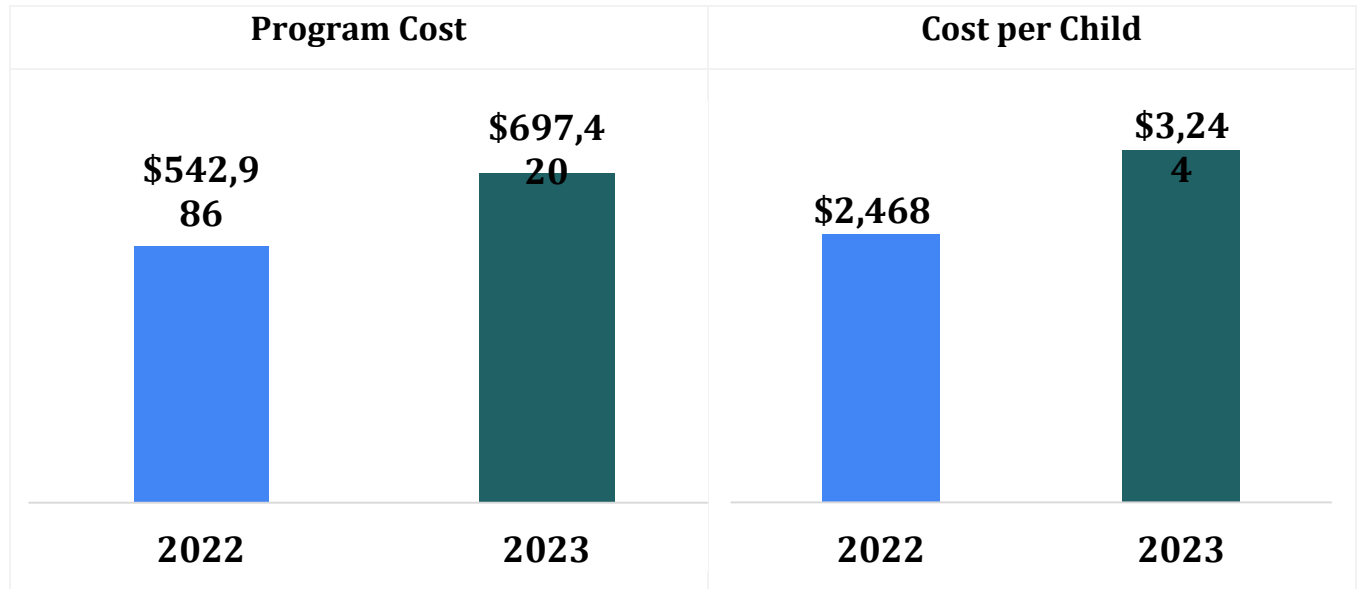
Community Investment

Another benefit of the program is that it allows youth to earn their first paycheck and become a member of the Alachua County labor force. Youth earned an average of **\$1,471** over the course of the summer. Businesses gained **28,745** hours of worked clocked by TeensWork teens. The average earning and the hours of work both demonstrate growth and improvement from Year 1.



How much did programming cost?

The Trust allocated **\$866,467** dollars for TeensWork Alachua, 80% which was expended for FY2023 with the total program cost of **\$697,420**. Compared to last year the program expenditures increased by 31%. The cost per teen is \$3,244.



Conclusion

TeensWork served 215 teens in 2023, 26% of which were returning participants from Year 1. A key motivator for participating teens was to gain work experience, earn money, and to have a supported experience where they would learn skills and prepare for the future. These expectations were met with 98% of teens reporting they gained valuable work experience, preparation for future jobs, and skills that will benefit them in the future. Moreover, teens earned an average of \$1,471 over the course of the summer.

On average teens worked 134 of 150 possible hours with 90% of teens working 100 hours or more. There was a sizable improvement in hours worked and program retention from the previous year. Nearly all teens participated in eight hours of work readiness training and received an average of eight job coach support contacts.

Other notable successes include:

- Expansion of from 42 to 62 work sites, including more rural sites.
- More geographically diverse teens served throughout Alachua County.
- 96% of teens were satisfied with the program overall.
- 28,745 hours of work clocked.

Areas of improvement moving forward include:

- More job coach support for teens and employers.
- Start earlier and provide more training for teens and employers.
- Facilitate interview opportunities. Teens wanted to have more choice in their job assignments. Similarly, employers expressed interest in wanting to choose the best fit for their organization and suggested having interviews with teens.
- Refine career readiness and financial literacy assessment and ensure participant awareness of the purpose of assessments to limit social desirability bias and increase response rates.

A major programmatic challenge was – in a short time frame – to identify and retain qualified part-time, temporary staff to serve as job coaches for the program. The ability to offer consistent, full-time employment to potential job coaches will draw in higher quality candidates and allow TeensWork to create long-standing relationships with community partners and student participants.

Overall, there were many successes and some very important lessons learned. With these insights and improvements already underway we hope to see even greater successes for teens in summer 2024.

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