

# **The “Work Well” Program – An Evaluation Proposal**

Kendall Goodland

## **Introduction**

The Storehouse Community Center operates on a mission of providing resources to economically disadvantaged families and individuals in the Plano area. As an extension of The Storehouse’s long-running program, The Academy, The Work Well Program seeks to address the educational and vocational training needs of neighbors. The core problem here is underemployment. This phenomenon can be a consequence immigration and economic disenfranchisement.

Underemployment can be defined as, when considering Work Well’s mission, as employment that does not fit or reflect skillset, financial needs, and education of individuals (Corporate Finance Institute, n.d.). Many neighbors who seek assistance from The Storehouse are low-income, often coming from immigrant backgrounds. Many of these individuals and families are unable to secure living-wage employment (i.e., are finding themselves underemployed). These ailments lead to difficulties in making ends meet and fulfilling economic duties.

## **Program description**

Work Well’s mission is to connect neighbors experiencing underemployment with vetted job partners, providing a clear pathway toward stable, living-wage employment. These partners operate alongside The Storehouse to provide vocational training and education. Work Well offers training in technical skills (computer, mechanical, etc.) as well as language skills relevant to the workplace. Program runners must ask themselves, “how can the program lead to higher-paying jobs for participants?”

Work Well operates similarly to other job-training programs, working alongside job partners who assist developers in training and education curriculum. Partners invest in the program and are expected to hire candidates upon program completion. Candidates are selected from the pre-existing Academy students, which enrolled 935 students and marked 726 successful class completions by the end of 2023 (The Storehouse Community Center, 2023).

## **Labor Market Theory**

Work Well focuses in on the solutions to underemployment by basing their treatment on the theoretical framework of labor markets (i.e., the supply and demand for employment). Workers are the supply designed to meet the labor demands within industries (Kenton, 2024). The demands differ among industries, and often there is a problem when supply does not meet demand. Necessary intervention takes place when workers find themselves undertrained, and companies understaffed. Work Well seeks to provide adequate training to neighbors so that their skills match those demanded by the industry. When industries’ demands begin to outpace supply, opportunities for higher-paying jobs will improve, and workers will generally gain more bargaining power (Kenton, 2024).

## **Goals/Questions asked**

Upon the announcement of Work Well, The Storehouse Community Center issued a press release detailing the program’s preparation and goal. The goal of Work Well is to “provide neighbors with a living wage, full benefits and a path to transformation while providing the employer with a base of pre-vetted employees who are ready to work” (High, 2023). Work Well seeks to answer an important question as part of their program:

*How well does the Work Well Program meet the employment/financial needs of participants?*

This question provides a foundation for analysis and exploration. However, it is important to note that concepts like ROI and cost-benefit analysis will be left out of this proposal, as the Work Well program has not generated enough qualitative and quantitative data to construct a reliable evaluation model for investment. Program runners will work toward the program goal by assessing activities and determining outputs. Some of these activities of the program include:

- Resume workshops
- Mentorship programs for candidates
- Workplace language skills training
- Interview workshops with trained volunteers

Analysis will include an observation portion, where participants, staff, and stakeholders will provide observational data throughout the duration of the program. Work Well’s goals and functions are comparable to those of Project TIME, which provided workplace and literacy training to automotive industry workers. Like Work Well, Project TIME had job partners that worked with program coordinators to develop curriculum in English-as-a-second language, technical reading and writing, and career development (Schroyer & Payne, 1994). However, Project TIME focused on a specific industry. Work Well partners vary when it comes to specialization and operation.

### **Evaluation design**

In order to conduct this evaluation, this proposal utilizes a switching replications quasi-experimental design using random assignment. This model will contain one control group and one treatment group, but before the experiment concludes, the treatment and control groups will be switched, and the experiment will be replicated. Design notation would appear as follows:

<b>R</b>	<b>O</b>	<b>X</b>	<b>O</b>	<b>O</b>
<b>R</b>	<b>O</b>		<b>O</b>	<b>X</b>

This design was chosen due to the longitudinal nature of the program. Training takes time, job matching takes time, and completion takes time. One of the biggest hurdles in this study is the period during which participants will be evaluated post-program. It can be very difficult to measure long-term outcomes while maintaining contact with all participants. With this in mind, this proposal settles on keeping up with participants over a 12-month period post-program.

### **Hypotheses**

Having identified Work Well's goal and the question they desire to answer, two hypotheses have been constructed as part of this design:

*H0*: The "Work Well" program does not affect participants' pathways toward short-term outcome compared to those who don't participate.

*Ha*: "Work Well" participants demonstrate improved pathways toward short-term outcomes over those who do not participate.

### Methods

This proposal will seek to answer these two hypotheses in the context of the program using statistical analysis. The proposed model is based on Donald Kirkpatrick's original four-level model: reaction criteria, learning criteria, behavior criteria and results criteria (Alsalmah & Callinan, 2021). Beginning with the reaction level, program runners will gather qualitative data through a post-program questionnaire meant to measure participants' feelings and satisfaction with the way activities were carried out. These questionnaires may include items containing Likert-scaled feeling thermometers, as well as yes or no questions, as measuring feelings can be tricky.

The next level is learning. To implement this, evaluators will conduct one-on-one interviews and provide pre- and post-treatment assessments regarding what they have learned from the program curriculum. This will be replicated once groups are switched. The following level is behavior – which according to Kirkpatrick, needs to be fulfilled with one-on-one interviews, questionnaires, or a combination of the two (Alsalmah & Callinan, 2021). For the purposes of this evaluation design, one-on-one interviews may offer a more accurate demonstration of knowledge. The final level is results – strategies on assessing results will depend on the financial capabilities of the program, which have not yet been made completely clear.

### Population & sample size

The target population of Work Well is economically disenfranchised neighbors in the Plano area. Since there is no information on how many neighbors are currently enrolled in The Academy, no information is known as to how many candidates will be selected to participate in Work Well during its trial phase. Operating on a theoretical framework, sample size will be determined by total neighbors enrolled and candidates chosen for the program. For the sake of simplicity, we will propose a sample size of  $n=100$ , as The Storehouse aimed to employ 100 neighbors by the end of 2024 upon the announcement of the program (High, 2023). The sampling method used will be simple random sampling.

### Analysis and outcomes

Analysis of this program will be strictly inferential, starting with hypothesis testing. This is because this proposal seeks to reject or not reject the null hypothesis based on results. This can be done using a paired-sample t-test. The purpose of this analysis is to compare the multiple

groups when it comes to program outputs (i.e., improved job placement and training completion) and the outcomes of the program. This proposal operates on one particular outcome, in which participants are expected to maintain stable, living-wage employment over a 12-month period. This is a relatively short-term outcome given the nature of analysis. As previously discussed, measures of self-sufficiency are far more difficult to gather as time passes. Over these 12 months, participants will be surveyed regarding their quality of life and career advancements.

### **Works Cited**

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