Mentoring: Community-based (including volunteer costs)
Public Health & Prevention: Community-based
Benefit-cost estimates updated December 2023. Literature review updated May 2018.

Current estimates replace old estimates. Numbers will change over time as a result of model inputs and monetization methods.

The WSIPP benefit-cost analysis examines, on an apples-to-apples basis, the monetary value of programs or policies to determine whether the benefits from the program exceed its costs. WSIPP's research approach to identifying evidence-based programs and policies has three main steps. First, we determine "what works" (and what does not work) to improve outcomes using a statistical technique called meta-analysis. Second, we calculate whether the benefits of a program exceed its costs. Third, we estimate the risk of investing in a program by testing the sensitivity of our results. For more detail on our methods, see our Technical Documentation.

Program Description: In community-based mentoring programs, volunteers are paired with at-risk youth. At-risk youth are those who exhibit problem behaviors in school, report issues with substance use, or are formally or informally involved in the juvenile justice system. Mentors are expected to build relationships with mentees with the aim of improving a variety of outcomes including academic achievement, substance use, and crime rates. Mentors and youth typically meet in the mentee's home for relationship-building and guidance. These meetings typically occur weekly for an average of 12 months. Additional activities may include going to the movies, trips to convenience stores, or participating in group activities planned by the organization administering the program. Community-based organizations provide the volunteer mentors with an average of eight hours of training and regular supervision. Mentors may be matched to youth on a variety of factors, typically gender, race or ethnicity, and other common interests. This analysis includes studies of manualized and non-manualized mentoring programs including: Across Ages, Project BELONG, Summer Youth Employment Program, Career Beginnings, Sponsor-a-Scholar, and The Buddy System, among others.

Community mentoring programs that targeted youth with disruptive behavior disorders or used the Big Brothers-Big Sisters model were excluded from this analysis and are examined in separate analyses.

Benefit-Cost Summary Statistics Per Participant

Benefits to:			
Taxpayers	$2,701	Benefit to cost ratio	$2.26
Participants	$5,732	Benefits minus costs	$5,821
Others	$4,285	Chance the program will produce	
Indirect	($2,291)	benefits greater than the costs	59%
Total benefits	$10,428		
Net program cost	($4,607)		
Benefits minus cost	$5,821		

The estimates shown are present value, life cycle benefits and costs. All dollars are expressed in the base year chosen for this analysis (2022). The chance the benefits exceed the costs are derived from a Monte Carlo risk analysis. The details on this, as well as the economic discount rates and other relevant parameters are described in our Technical Documentation.

Meta-Analysis of Program Effects

Outcomes measured	Treatment age	No. of effect sizes	Treatment N	Adjusted effect sizes and standard errors used in the benefit-cost analysis						Unadjusted effect size (random effects model)	
				First time ES is estimated			Second time ES is estimated				
				ES	SE	Age	ES	SE	Age	ES	p-value
Grade point average^	15	3	322	0.047	0.087	17	n/a	n/a	n/a	0.106	0.226
High school graduation	15	2	758	0.101	0.143	18	0.101	0.143	18	0.293	0.040
Office discipline referrals^	15	1	179	0.048	0.124	15	n/a	n/a	n/a	0.125	0.316
School attendance^	15	1	76	0.186	0.224	16	n/a	n/a	n/a	0.186	0.406
Alcohol use before end of middle school	15	2	311	-0.109	0.204	16	-0.109	0.204	18	-0.134	0.511
Cannabis use before end of middle school	15	1	76	-0.260	0.225	16	-0.260	0.225	18	-0.260	0.246
Crime	15	4	886	-0.051	0.098	17	-0.051	0.098	27	-0.258	0.289

^WSIPP's benefit-cost model does not monetize this outcome.

Meta-analysis is a statistical method to combine the results from separate studies on a program, policy, or topic in order to estimate its effect on an outcome. WSIPP systematically evaluates all credible evaluations we can locate on each topic. The outcomes measured are the types of program impacts that were measured in the research literature (for example, crime or educational attainment). Treatment N represents the total number of individuals or units in the treatment group across the included studies.

An effect size (ES) is a standard metric that summarizes the degree to which a program or policy affects a measured outcome. If the effect size is positive, the outcome increases. If the effect size is negative, the outcome decreases.

Adjusted effect sizes are used to calculate the benefits from our benefit cost model. WSIPP may adjust effect sizes based on methodological characteristics of the study. For example, we may adjust effect sizes when a study has a weak research design or when the program developer is involved in the research. The magnitude of these adjustments varies depending on the topic area.

WSIPP may also adjust the second ES measurement. Research shows the magnitude of some effect sizes decrease over time. For those effect sizes, we estimate outcome-based adjustments which we apply between the first time ES is estimated and the second time ES is estimated. We also report the unadjusted effect size to show the effect sizes before any adjustments have been made. More details about these adjustments can be found in our Technical Documentation.

Detailed Monetary Benefit Estimates Per Participant

Affected outcome:	Resulting benefits:[1]	Benefits accrue to:				
		Taxpayers	Participants	Others[2]	Indirect[3]	Total
Crime	Criminal justice system	$396	$0	$991	$198	$1,584
High school graduation	Labor market earnings associated with high school graduation	$2,694	$6,347	$3,455	$0	$12,497
Alcohol use before end of middle school	Property loss associated with alcohol abuse or dependence	$0	$1	$3	$0	$4
Cannabis use before end of middle school	Health care associated with cannabis abuse or dependence	$21	$4	$23	$11	$59
High school graduation	Costs of higher education	($411)	($622)	($187)	($205)	($1,425)
Alcohol use before end of middle school	Mortality associated with alcohol	$1	$1	$0	$9	$11
Program cost	Adjustment for deadweight cost of program	$0	$0	$0	($2,303)	($2,303)
Totals		$2,701	$5,732	$4,285	($2,291)	$10,428

[1]In addition to the outcomes measured in the meta-analysis table, WSIPP measures benefits and costs estimated from other outcomes associated with those reported in the evaluation literature. For example, empirical research demonstrates that high school graduation leads to reduced crime. These associated measures provide a more complete picture of the detailed costs and benefits of the program.

[2]"Others" includes benefits to people other than taxpayers and participants. Depending on the program, it could include reductions in crime victimization, the economic benefits from a more educated workforce, and the benefits from employer-paid health insurance.
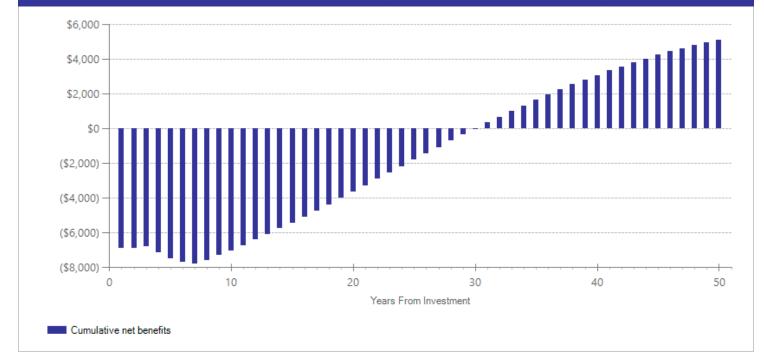
[3]"Indirect benefits" includes estimates of the net changes in the value of a statistical life and net changes in the deadweight costs of taxation.

Detailed Annual Cost Estimates Per Participant

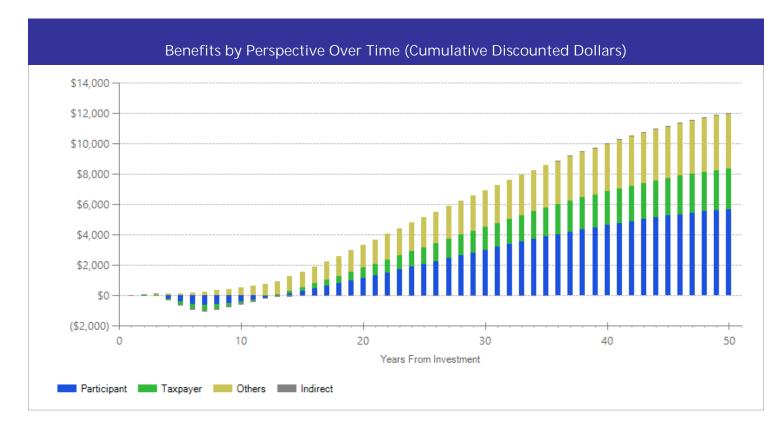|	Annual cost	Year dollars	Summary	
Program costs	$3,905	2016	Present value of net program costs (in 2022 dollars)	($4,607)
Comparison costs	$0	2016	Cost range (+ or -)	60%

The per-participant cost estimate is based on the weighted average costs of four out of seven programs included in this analysis. Due to variation in mentoring intensity in studies, we estimate program costs for two lower-intensity mentoring programs and for two higher-intensity mentoring programs and assume an average program cost. We estimated the cost for Baltimore Youth Bureaus, a one-year group-mentoring program, based on Hanlon et al. (2002). We estimate costs for Across Ages, a three component program lasting 7.5 months, as reported in Aseltine et al. (2000). We computed the cost for Sponsor-a-Scholar, a one-on-one mentoring program lasting three years, based on program costs reported in Johnson (1999). Finally, we constructed the costs for The Buddy System, a mentoring program that provides a monthly stipend to mentors for 12 months, as described in O'Donnell et al. (1979). Cost estimates exclude the cost of volunteer time and donated space.

The figures shown are estimates of the costs to implement programs in Washington. The comparison group costs reflect either no treatment or treatment as usual, depending on how effect sizes were calculated in the meta-analysis. The cost range reported above reflects potential variation or uncertainty in the cost estimate; more detail can be found in our Technical Documentation.
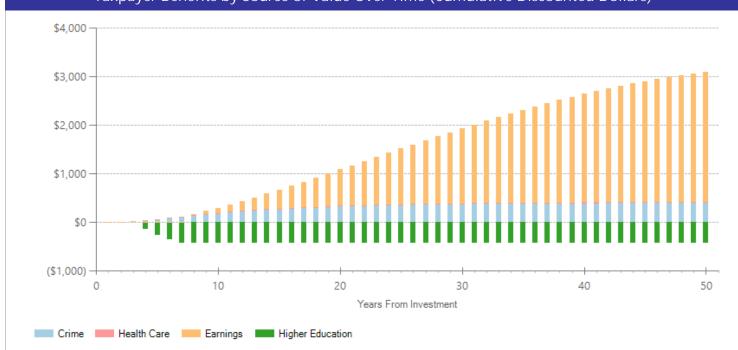
Benefits Minus Costs Over Time (Cumulative Discounted Dollars)

The graph above illustrates the estimated cumulative net benefits per-participant for the first fifty years beyond the initial investment in the program. We present these cash flows in discounted dollars. If the dollars are negative (bars below $0 line), the cumulative benefits do not outweigh the cost of the program up to that point in time. The program breaks even when the dollars reach $0. At this point, the total benefits to participants, taxpayers, and others, are equal to the cost of the program. If the dollars are above $0, the benefits of the program exceed the initial investment.

Benefits by Perspective Over Time (Cumulative Discounted Dollars)

The graph above illustrates the breakdown of the estimated cumulative benefits (not including program costs) per-participant for the first fifty years beyond the initial investment in the program. These cash flows provide a breakdown of the classification of dollars over time into four perspectives: taxpayer, participant, others, and indirect. "Taxpayers" includes expected savings to government and expected increases in tax revenue. "Participants" includes expected increases in earnings and expenditures for items such as health care and college tuition. "Others" includes benefits to people other than taxpayers and participants. Depending on the program, it could include reductions in crime victimization, the economic benefits from a more educated workforce, and the benefits from employer-paid health insurance. "Indirect benefits" includes estimates of the changes in the value of a statistical life and changes in the deadweight costs of taxation. If a section of the bar is below the $0 line, the program is creating a negative benefit, meaning a loss of value from that perspective.

Taxpayer Benefits by Source of Value Over Time (Cumulative Discounted Dollars)

The graph above focuses on the subset of estimated cumulative benefits that accrue to taxpayers. The cash flows are divided into the source of the value.

Citations Used in the Meta-Analysis

Aseltine, R.H., Dupre, M., & Lamlein, P. (2000). Mentoring as a drug prevention strategy: An evaluation of Across Ages. *Adolescent and Family Health 1*(1), 11-20.

Blakely, C.H., Menon, R., & Jones, D.J. (1995). *Project BELONG: Final report.* College Station, TX: Texas A&M University, Public Policy Research Institute.

Buman, B., & Cain, R. (1991). *The impact of short term, work oriented mentoring on the employability of low-income youth.* Minneapolis, MN: Minneapolis Employment and Training Program.

Cave, G., & Quint, J. (1990). *Career Beginnings impact evaluation: Findings from a program for disadvantaged high school students.* New York, NY: Manpower Demonstration Research Corporation.

Hanlon, T.E., Bateman, R.W., Simon, B.D., O'Grady, K.E., & Carswell, S.B. (2002). An early community-based intervention for the prevention of substance abuse and other delinquent behavior. *Journal of Youth and Adolescence, 31*(6), 459-471.

Johnson, A. (1999). *Sponsor-a-Scholar: Long-term impacts of a youth mentoring program on student performance.* Princeton, NJ: Mathematica Policy Research.

O'Donnell, C.R., Lydgate, T. & Fo, W.S.O. (1979). The Buddy System: Review and follow-up. *Child Behavior Therapy, 1,* 161-169.

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