



American Heart Association.

Data Science & Evaluation

# Advancing Careers in Informational Technology at Urban Ed, Inc.

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Evaluating the Impact of a Community-Driven Career Skills Training Program in Washington, D.C.

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Social Impact Fund



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## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Workforce development training programs have been recognized as one possible solution for addressing barriers that prevent or hinder people from accessing stable employment opportunities and from achieving economic stability. Despite recent research demonstrating an association between a person's employment status, including duration of unemployment, with adverse health outcomes and poor healthcare access (Silver et al., 2021), economic inequities continue to exist, especially in historically under-resourced and under-invested communities. For this reason, the American Heart Association's (AHA) Social Impact Funds, including the Bernard J. Tyson Fund, has taken steps toward providing supports to place-based initiatives that are focused on implementing community-driven solutions within their respective communities to combat these inequities.

In August 2022, the AHA Social Impact Funds granted funding to Urban Ed, Inc., a 501(c)(3) non-profit organization located in Washington, D.C., to support its efforts in increasing economic empowerment and reducing the achievement gap among program participants. Its mission is to provide adults, youth, and children in the Washington, D.C. region with technology-driven education, information, and skill development. Through its STEM Acad Pathways to Prosperity initiative, Urban Ed, Inc. aims to create more entry points into sustainable careers in the high-demand information technology (IT) field for underrepresented D.C. residents who are unemployed and underemployed (Urban Ed, Inc., n.d.)

Therefore, to help the AHA Social Impact Funds understand what program outcomes were achieved and what types of impact were experienced by program participants, the AHA Evaluation team conducted a mixed methods evaluation study from May to June 2023. This study involved conducting individual interviews and administering a post-program survey to program participants. The post-program survey was completed by 48 program participants and 11 individual interviews were completed with program participants.

Results from the post-program survey revealed that most survey respondents identified as male (70.8%) and were between the ages of 24 and 44 (85.5%). The survey results also showed a 45.8% increase in employment rates among survey respondents who completed a career pathway program at Urban Ed, Inc., as compared to pre-program employment rates. Similarly, self-reported annual incomes increased among survey respondents who completed a career pathway program at Urban Ed, Inc., as compared to self-reported pre-program annual incomes. Approximately two-thirds of survey respondents reported earning a current annual income between \$60,000 and \$69,999, or more than \$100,000. In addition, about 80% of survey respondents shared that they have since experienced an increase in salary/wage in their primary job. Also, more than 87% of survey respondents reported being extremely confident in having the skills and knowledge to advance their careers. Furthermore, about 77% of survey respondents noted improvements in both their economic status and overall life and well-being

since completing their career pathway program. Many survey respondents were also extremely satisfied with the education and skills training received from Urban Ed, Inc. (79.2%).

Moreover, several key findings were observed in the qualitative interviews with program participants. Interview participants described improvements in their overall life and well-being following their participation in a career pathway program at Urban Ed, Inc. compared to their pre-program status. While financial insecurity and housing instability were reported as two common barriers experienced beforehand, interview participants described experiencing improvements in these two areas after attending Urban, Ed, Inc. Similarly, some interview participants reported positive changes in their overall mental and physical health after attending Urban Ed, Inc., as compared to their prior states of mental and physical health. Interview participants expressed appreciation for the supportive learning environment, access to tools and resources, financial assistance, and the design of the curriculum that Urban Ed, Inc. provided. Interviewees suggested that Urban Ed, Inc., including other similar workforce development programs, improve its advertising and marketing strategies to help improve community access to these types of programs.

Overall, these findings suggest that Urban Ed, Inc. was helpful in fostering a supportive and engaging learning environment for program participants to complete their education and skills training needed to successfully gain certification. Additionally, these findings suggest that Urban Ed, Inc. was valuable in helping program participants obtain stable, living-wage job opportunities and the skills and knowledge to advance their careers further. To this end, to continue strengthening current programmatic efforts at Urban Ed, Inc., it is recommended that Urban Ed, Inc. consider 1) enhancing recruitment and community engagement strategies; 2) increasing female representation among program participants; 3) improving job and internship placement opportunities; and 4) continue providing financial stipends and vouchers to program participants. Community-driven workforce development programs, like Urban Ed, Inc., should be recognized as practical solutions that have the potential to spur economic growth within their communities and influence positive changes, both short- and long-term, if given the necessary supports to thrive.

## INTRODUCTION

Addressing social determinants of health (SDOH)<sup>1</sup> has become a driving force to improving the health and well-being of individuals and achieving health equity for all. According to the national objectives set forth by the Healthy People 2030 initiative, increasing employment opportunities among working-age people has been identified as a key objective within the Economic Stability domain – one of the five domains of SDOH – to help improve the health and well-being of individuals nationwide.

It has been reported that stable employment can be linked to improved health outcomes and well-being (Rural Health Information Hub, n.d.). Yet, gaining access to employment opportunities in low- and moderate-income communities is often impacted by various institutional barriers and obstacles including, but are not limited to, job availability and pay, education and training, transportation, childcare and family issues, crime and substance abuse, housing instability, disabilities and mental and physical health, and public assistance programs (Huynh, 2020). Hence, one of the solutions to addressing and improving access to employment opportunities and increasing economic stability in low- and moderate-income communities is the implementation of workforce development training programs.

Recognizing workforce development training programs as a possible solution for reducing or eliminating barriers to accessing stable employment opportunities, the American Heart Association, through the Social Impact Funds, has taken action to invest in community-driven solutions, like community workforce development programs, to reduce or eliminate barriers that prevent individuals in historically under-resourced and under-invested communities from gaining stable employment and achieving economic stability. Thus, in August 2022, the AHA Social Impact Funds granted funding, through the Bernard J. Tyson Impact Fund, to Urban Ed, Inc., a 501(c)(3) non-profit organization located in Washington, D.C., to continue its efforts in improving economic growth within their communities.

While different types of workforce development training programs focus on specific employment barriers or specific career fields, Urban Ed, Inc. focuses on exposing children and youth to various levels of technology and preparing adults to enter the fast-growing IT industry. According to the U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, employment in computer and IT occupations is projected to grow by 15% from 2021 to 2031 (U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, 2022). With this projected growth in mind, the Urban Ed, Inc. team provides education and skill-building activities to program participants in the STEMAcad Pathways to Prosperity program and upon completion of a career pathway program, assists individuals with securing employment.

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<sup>1</sup> “Social determinants of health (SDOH) are the conditions in the environments where people are born, live, learn, work, play, worship, and age that affect a wide range of health, functioning, and quality-of-life outcomes and risks” (Healthy People 2030, n.d.).

Through this work, Urban Ed, Inc. aims to create more entry points into sustainable careers in the high-demand IT field for underrepresented residents living in the Washington, D.C. region who are unemployed and underemployed (Urban Ed, Inc., n.d.).

Therefore, the purpose of this evaluation study was to assess, to what extent, Urban Ed, Inc. was able to achieve its intended outcomes, such as the number of participants placed into high-earning job positions, as well as understanding the types of impact the program had on participants, such as experiencing a job promotion or salary increase, using both qualitative and quantitative methods. As a result, to help guide the evaluation process, three key evaluation questions were developed:

1. To what extent did the program reach its objectives (e.g., did the program have its intended effect on program participants)?
2. To what extent did the program benefit the priority population?
3. How can the program be improved to optimally benefit future program participants? From the perspective of the program participants, in what ways can the organization improve its effectiveness?

This final report presents the findings from the evaluation study conducted by the AHA Evaluation team. The evaluation results are structured in three sections: Section A) overall investment cycle delivery, Section B) post-program survey results, and Section C) key themes from the qualitative interviews.

## METHODOLOGY

This evaluation study used a mixed methods design that included conducting individual interviews and administering a post-program survey to program participants who completed a career pathway program at Urban Ed, Inc. The AHA Evaluation team collaborated with Urban Ed, Inc. staff to identify and recruit program participants between May and June 2023 using a purposive sampling strategy. Adult individuals who were 18 years of age and completed a career pathway program at Urban Ed, Inc. at least 6 months prior to the start of the evaluation study were identified and recruited to participate in the post-program survey. Only those who completed the post-program survey and completed a career pathway program at Urban Ed, Inc. at least 1 year prior to the start of the evaluation study were eligible to participate in an individual interview.

Eighty-five adult individuals were identified by the Urban Ed, Inc. staff but only 77 individuals were contacted about the evaluation study because contact information for eight individuals could not be located. Eligible participants were sent an email from an Urban Ed, Inc. staff member explaining what the evaluation study was about, why they were being contacted, and what they were being asked to do. Interested participants were invited to complete an informed consent form prior to completing the post-program survey. A total of 52 survey responses were received, however, two survey responses were reported as incomplete and an additional two survey responses did not meet the eligibility criteria therefore, they were excluded from the analysis. Overall, 48 completed survey submissions were received and analyzed.

Of the participants who completed the survey, only 19 individuals expressed interest in participating in an individual interview. While 19 individuals were eligible to participate in the interview process, eight individuals did not respond to either email or phone calls to schedule an interview. Participants who expressed interest in participating in an individual interview were contacted to confirm their voluntary participation prior to scheduling an interview. Overall, 11 interviews were completed with program participants and underwent analysis.

### **Data Collection Methods**

*Post-Program Survey* – A post-program survey was created and administered to program participants who completed a career pathway program at Urban Ed, Inc. at least 6 months prior to the start of the evaluation study ([see Appendix A](#)). Multiple choice, multi-select, Likert scale, and open-ended text questions were developed and addressed seven general topic areas: 1) participants' characteristics, 2) employment experience before participating in a career pathway program, 3) employment experience after completing a career pathway program, 4) participants' program experiences, 5) self-reported changes in economic status, 6) self-reported changes in life and well-being, and 7) program satisfaction and recommendation. Each eligible

survey participant received a \$30 dollar Amazon e-gift card incentive upon completion of the survey process.

*Participant Interviews* – A semi-structured interview guide was created to help facilitate the interviews with program participants ([see Appendix A](#)). Open-ended questions were developed and addressed four general topic areas: 1) participants’ experiences prior to their participation in a career pathway program, 2) participants’ program experiences and perceptions about program impacts, 3) participants’ perceptions about community barriers and facilitators to accessing career skills training program, and 4) participants’ recommendations for program improvement. Eleven interviews were completed with program participants and were hosted virtually using Zoom software. Interviews lasted approximately 30 to 60 minutes and were recorded and transcribed. Audio recordings from participant interviews were transcribed by Rev.com, an online transcription service. Each participant received a \$30 dollar Amazon e-gift card incentive upon completion of the interview process.

## **Data Analysis**

*Post-Program Survey Data* – Analysis of the survey responses was completed using Excel and Dedoose. Descriptive statistics were reported for each multiple-choice, multi-select, and Likert scale survey question as appropriate. Open-ended text questions were coded and organized by theme where applicable. Due to the nature of the post-program survey, no statistical significance testing was performed.

*Participant Interview Data* – Analysis of participants’ interviews was completed using both deductive and inductive analytics approaches...<sup>2</sup> Initial codes and sub-codes were created based on program objectives, key evaluation questions, post-program survey questions, and interview questions using deductive practices. All codes were organized into a codebook and were frequently updated and modified throughout the analysis process to establish an appropriate hierarchical coding framework. Codes and sub-codes were further analyzed to identify overarching themes to inform the basis of the evaluation findings. Specific participant quotes have been selected to represent different themes.

## **Data Storage and Protection**

Data collected from the post-program survey and the participant interviews were stored on a password-protected computer. Only program staff directly involved with the data collection and who have been trained in methods to protect data confidentiality had access to the data. All survey and interview responses were treated as confidential and were not shared in a way

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<sup>2</sup> Deductive analysis is the process of working from “top down” and establishing predetermined codes, such as from key evaluation questions, whereas inductive analysis is the process of reading through the data and capturing codes, patterns, and themes that emerge (Vanover et al., 2022).



that identified respondents. Rather, all data collected from study participants were combined and shared in aggregate form to maintain confidentiality. Additionally, caution was taken to ensure interview participants were not asked for any identifiable information during the interviews and that any type of personal identifying information captured during the interviews was removed. All audio recordings were stored on a password-protected computer and deleted after they were transcribed.

### **Ethical Consideration**

This evaluation study was reviewed by an Institutional Review Board (IRB)<sup>3</sup>. It was determined on March 31, 2023, that this study did not meet the Department of Health and Human Services' definition of human subjects research and, therefore, did not require IRB oversight. This study did not involve deception and involved no more than minimal risk to participants, yet caution was taken to ensure interview participants did not experience distress or more than normal emotions during the interview process. An informed consent form was created and electronically distributed to all survey and interview participants ([see Appendix A](#)). Completed informed consent forms were collected via Qualtrics or Microsoft Forms.

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<sup>3</sup> An Institutional Review Board (IRB) is a committee that reviews research proposals to ensure the rights and welfare of research participants are protected and that the research is carried out in an ethical manner.

## KEY FINDINGS

This section provides an overview of administrative data collected throughout Urban Ed’s investment cycle and summarizes key findings from the post-program survey and individual interviews. Due to the purposive sampling strategy used to identify and recruit program participants for this evaluation study, the findings from this evaluation cannot be generalized to the entire population residing in Washington, D.C.

### SECTION A: INVESTMENT CYCLE OVERVIEW

From August 1, 2021, to July 31, 2023, Urban Ed, Inc. served 190 individuals with access to career skills training and employment opportunities. One hundred thirty-eight (138) individuals received career skills training along with financial wellness, career coaching, and guidance. One hundred fourteen (114) individuals obtained employment upon completion of their training, generating an average aggregate income of \$2,916,000 dollars from these new job opportunities. Lastly, Urban Ed, Inc. reported \$909,970 dollars in additional revenue from other corporations, foundations, and individual donors.

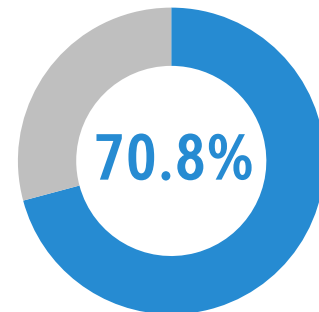
**\$909,970**  
additional revenue  
generated.

### SECTION B: POST-PROGRAM SURVEY RESULTS

#### Characteristics of Survey Participants

Forty-eight program participants completed the post-program survey. Most of them identified as male (70.8%), non-Hispanic (95.8%), and Black or African American alone (85.4%). In addition, almost all survey respondents were between the ages of 25 and 44 (85.5%) and half of them reported having attended some college or university but received no degree (27.1%) or attained a technical school certificate (22.9%). See [Appendix B](#) for a further breakdown of survey participants’ characteristics.

Most survey respondents were **male**.



#### Participants’ Employment Experiences Before and After Attending Urban Ed, Inc.

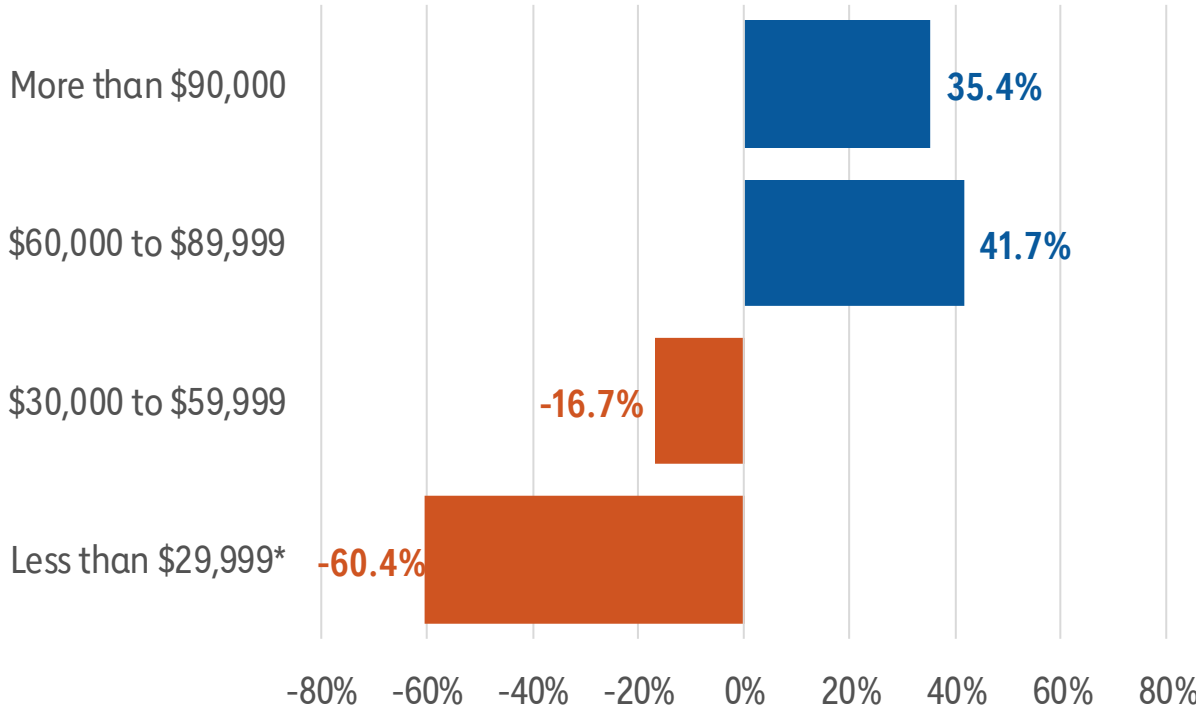
Before attending Urban Ed, Inc., 56.3% of the survey respondents were unemployed yet most of them reported seeking employment at that time (85.2%). On the other hand, of the 43.8% of survey respondents who were employed before attending Urban Ed, Inc., 61.9%

and 38.1% reported working full-time or part-time, respectively. Annual incomes reported by those who were employed before attending Urban Ed, Inc. varied across different levels but did not exceed \$59,999 dollars overall.

After attending Urban Ed, Inc., almost 90% of survey respondents reported being currently employed and working full-time or part-time. Those who were not currently employed cited reasons, such as being disabled, having children, or relocation, for impacting them from obtaining a job. While current annual incomes varied among those currently employed, an equal proportion of them reported earning between \$60,000 and \$69,999 (31.3%), or \$100,000 or more (31.3%). Additionally, 60.5% of those currently employed reported working for their current employer between 1 and 3 years. Approximately 80% of them described being extremely satisfied or very satisfied with their current job, however, only about 68% were extremely likely or somewhat likely to continue working for their current employer for the next 12 months.

Reported annual incomes less than \$29,999 **DECREASED** by about 60%, while annual incomes greater than \$60,000 **INCREASED** by more than 35% among survey respondents after attending Urban Ed, Inc.

*\*Note: Survey respondents unemployed before attending Urban Ed, Inc. were observed as having zero annual income.*



## Participants' Program Experiences

About half of the survey respondents reported that their primary motivation for enrolling in a career pathway program at Urban Ed, Inc. was to change career fields (52.1%). Obtaining a new job and personal interest were two other common reasons reported by 20.8% and 10.4% of survey respondents, respectively, for enrolling in a career pathway program at Urban Ed, Inc.

Almost half of survey respondents reported they completed their career pathway program 1 to 3 years ago (47.9%). About 60% of survey respondents reported waiting three months or less to receive their first job offer after completing their career pathway program at Urban Ed, Inc. More than half of them received one to two job offers, whereas about 10% received more than five job offers upon completion of their career pathway program.



## Participants' Perceptions of Key Program Benefits

Survey participants described several key benefits of completing a career pathway program at Urban Ed, Inc. The most common key benefit described by many survey respondents related to the career and professional development received from the program, including gaining IT skills and knowledge, access to resources, and certifications. The second most common benefit reported by respondents related to career-enhancing opportunities, such as gaining stable employment and recognizing the skills and knowledge gained contributes to the idea of "being marketable." In addition, a third common benefit described by many survey respondents related to personal development and growth. This included gaining more self-confidence,



patience, motivation, determination, focus, and independence after completing their program. Other less common benefits reported included attaining economic stability, experiencing a "life-changing" opportunity, receiving continued support and mentorship, establishing career connections, and improving the quality of life for self and others.

## Participants' Experiences with Career-Enhancing Opportunities

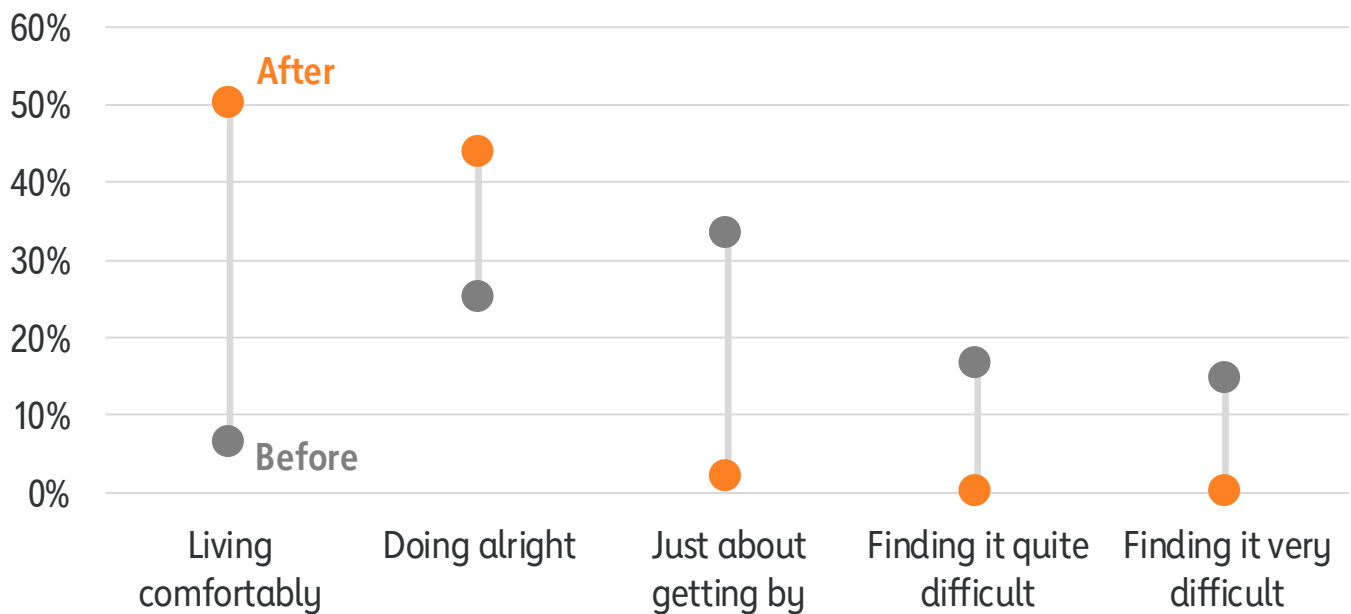
Approximately 81% of survey respondents shared they have received an increase in salary/wage in their primary job since completing a career pathway program at Urban Ed, Inc. Additionally, about half of the survey respondents reported they have experienced two or three of the following career-enhancing opportunities: an increase in salary/wage in their primary job, a job promotion, and/or a job position/title change.

**81%** of survey respondents have received an increase in salary/wage in their primary job.

## Participants' Self-Reported Changes in Economic Status

Before beginning a career pathway program at Urban Ed, Inc., one-third of survey respondents reported they were just about getting by financially. Another one-third of survey respondents reported that financially they were finding it quite difficult (16.7%) or very difficult (14.6%). However, after completing a career pathway program at Urban Ed, Inc., 93.8% of survey respondents reported they were now living comfortably (50.0%) or doing alright (43.8%) financially.

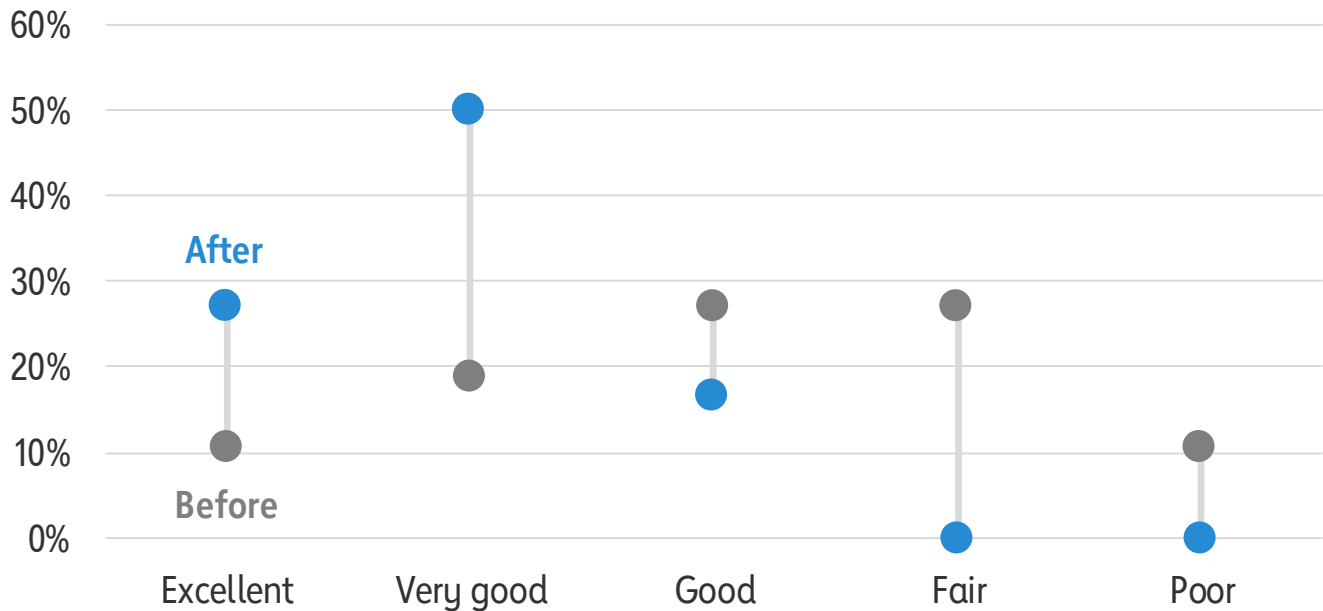
**Most survey participants** reported living comfortably or doing alright **AFTER** attending Urban Ed, Inc. than **BEFORE**.



### Participants' Self-Reported Changes in Life and Well-Being

Before beginning a career pathway program at Urban Ed, Inc., more than half of survey respondents (54.2%) reported the quality of their overall life and well-being as good (27.1%) or fair (27.1%). Whereas, after completing a career pathway program, more than 75% of respondents described the quality of their overall life and well-being as excellent (27.1%) or very good (50.0%).

**About 77% of survey participants** reported their quality of life and well-being as excellent and very good **AFTER** attending Urban Ed, Inc. than **BEFORE**.



### Participants' Level of Agreement

Almost all survey respondents agreed, to some extent, that the program they completed at Urban Ed, Inc. was interesting (97.9%). About 85% of survey respondents strongly agreed that participating in a program at Urban Ed, Inc. gave them the opportunity to make career connections. Further, about 95% of survey respondents agreed, to some extent, that the knowledge and skills they learned in an Urban Ed, Inc. program related to their current job responsibilities. Almost all survey respondents agreed, to some extent, that participating in an Urban Ed, Inc. program helped them to gain marketable workplace skills in the IT field and improve their professional development skills and career readiness knowledge. Lastly, about 95% of survey respondents agreed, to some extent, that the education and skills training received at Urban Ed, Inc. can be attributed to their ability to find work.

**95%** of survey respondents agreed that the education and skills training received at Urban Ed, Inc. can be attributed to their ability to find work.

### Participants' Level of Confidence

After completing a career pathway program at Urban Ed, Inc., more than 80% of survey respondents reported their level of confidence in maintaining stable and continuous employment, having the skills and knowledge to advance their career, and meeting their goal of becoming economically stable as extremely confident. Only about 2% of survey respondents rated their level of confidence in maintaining stable and continuous employment as somewhat confident.

**More than 87% of survey participants** reported being **extremely confident** in having the skills and knowledge to advance their careers after attending Urban Ed, Inc.



**90%**

are extremely likely to recommend Urban Ed, Inc. to a friend or family member.

### Participants' Program Satisfaction and Recommendation

Overall, 79.2% of survey respondents were extremely satisfied with the education and skills training they received from Urban Ed, Inc. In addition, about 90% of them reported they are extremely likely to recommend Urban Ed, Inc. to a friend or family member. See [Appendix B](#) for additional figures and tables.

## SECTION C: KEY THEMES FROM THE QUALITATIVE INTERVIEWS



Eleven individual interviews were completed with program participants. From these 11 qualitative interviews, six key themes were constructed and included: 1) perceived quality of life before program participation, 2) participants' experiences completing a career pathway program, 3) barriers to accessing employment and career skills training programs, 4) impacts of completing a career pathway program on participants, 5) ways to improve community access to employment and career skills training programs, and 6) program recommendations from interview participants. Each key theme is described in further detail below.

### PERCEIVED QUALITY OF LIFE BEFORE PROGRAM PARTICIPATION



Interview participants were invited to reflect on where they were in life prior to applying and enrolling in a career pathway program at Urban Ed, Inc. Responses from interview participants highlighted various barriers and challenges impacting respondents' quality of life, past employment experiences, and moments in time that described a shift in career aspirations.

Interview participants generally characterized their life and well-being prior to attending Urban Ed, Inc. negatively. Respondents reported a number of socio-economic barriers and challenges they experienced at that time. A lack of financial security was a common barrier shared by many of the participants. One respondent shared that they "didn't have the financial means to live a decent lifestyle." Another shared that they were receiving "public assistance" at the time.

*"I was poor...I [could barely] make ends meet at that time..."*

A lack of stable housing was a second barrier experienced by a few respondents. One participant shared that they were "homeless and living in one of the worst areas you can possibly live in." Another participant also shared that prior to attending Urban Ed, Inc. they were living in a shelter.



Poor health conditions were another challenge several respondents reported. Stress, anxiety, depression, and physical disabilities were some of the health concerns reported. One respondent shared, “I was just really in a space where I felt hopeless” and another shared they had recently undergone a secondary surgery to address a chronic health condition.

Further, most interview respondents described having non-IT related job positions prior to attending Urban Ed, Inc. such as retail positions or food delivery positions. Several respondents described experiencing negative work environments consisting of limited growth opportunities, lack of proper compensation, or workplace harassment. Some shared that they worked long hours with inconsistent schedules.

*“I had to become a delivery driver for a few years.”*

*“I didn't like the environment. I didn't think the environment that I worked in was healthy, for the pay...”*

*“I was an Uber driver for about two years...It was really inconsistent, no insurance, not healthy sitting in a car all day...”*

As interview respondents reflected on their past work experiences and employment situations, they shared specific moments in time when they decided to pursue a different career path, thus leading them to discover Urban Ed, Inc. For instance, one participant shared that they were tired of working at their previous job and “needed a change.” Another respondent shared they were no longer happy at their job and wanted to pursue something different.

*“I was at a career end where I needed a change, I wanted a change.”*

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## **PARTICIPANTS' EXPERIENCES COMPLETING A CAREER PATHWAY PROGRAM**



Interview participants were asked to share what their overall experience was like completing their career pathway program at Urban Ed, Inc. Responses from respondents highlighted overall positive experiences, common barriers and challenges experienced, helpful and useful aspects of the program, and the process of finding employment.

Almost all interview participants had positive experiences while completing their career pathway program at Urban Ed, Inc. Respondents primarily described their program experience as “great” and “wonderful” and expressed their appreciation and gratitude for Urban Ed, Inc. However, one respondent described their experience as “okay,” primarily because they had to work while completing their program.

*“If there's one word to describe or one sentence to describe [Urban Ed, Inc., it is] a ray of light that should not go down, should never go down.”*

When interviewees were asked what types of challenges they encountered while completing their career pathway program at Urban Ed, Inc., many respondents reported experiencing no challenges at all. However, some of the respondents reported a few challenges, including challenges with transportation, virtual learning environment, teaching styles and design, and self-discipline and personal commitment to learning.

- ❖ *Transportation* – A couple of respondents described transportation as a challenge experienced while completing their career pathway program. One participant shared that due to lack of transportation, they had to walk 2 to 3 hours to get to and from Urban Ed, Inc. Another participant shared how challenging it was to find parking around the area near Urban Ed, Inc.

*"I have to come extremely early or cut off whatever I'm doing at home so that I can leave enough time to find parking, and sometimes you can catch a ticket..."*

- ❖ *Virtual Learning Environment* – When the COVID-19 pandemic caused Urban Ed, Inc. to transition from an in-person learning environment to a virtual learning space, a couple of respondents described their challenges with learning remotely. Respondents described the challenge of not having the opportunity to learn "hands-on."

*"...it was a bit of a challenge once we had to move out of the classroom due to Covid....because I'm kind of hands-on and I like to see and touch and feel, so to kind of do it."*

*"Being remote is kind of difficult to a degree, just because it's hard to learn when you're not doing things hands-on..."*

- ❖ *Teaching Style and Design* – The teaching style and design was another challenge noted by a couple of participants. One participant shared how they preferred learning through the use of visual aids which differed from the current teaching styles and design provided by Urban Ed, Inc. Another respondent described how career-specific jargon was a challenge they encountered when first learning about IT.

*"I'm a visual learner, and I found out that the other course I chose was a little hard to learn because ... It was a little hard because there was no visual, and finding visuals is very hard. Even if someone explains it to me face-to-face, I wasn't understanding it."*

- ❖ *Self-Discipline and Personal Commitment to Learning* – The last challenge mentioned by a couple of respondents was the lack of personal commitment to setting time aside and studying.

*"Nothing major challenge-wise, more just me. It was me really dialing in and doing the studying that was required to pass that test."*

*"It was more so a personal commitment to getting the homework done, doing the labs, doing the, putting in the work."*

The interview participants were also encouraged to reflect on any aspects of the Urban Ed, Inc. program they felt were useful or helpful as they completed their career pathway program. Participants shared a wide range of program aspects they found to be helpful, such as the supportive learning environment, access to tools and resources, financial assistance, and design of the curriculum.

- ❖ *Supportive Learning Environment* – Nearly all respondents found the learning environment, including staff and peer support, at Urban Ed, Inc. to be helpful in completing their career pathway program. One participant shared that after failing the certification exam two times, one of the instructors "really pushed" them to keep going.

*"Whenever I needed information or help with a certain section or anything I [couldn't understand,] I [could] always get ahold of one of them and get the correct information straightened out..."*

Several participants also commented on the family-like dynamic as a contributing factor to creating a supportive learning environment. One respondent shared, "...what I liked a lot about [Urban Ed, Inc. was that it was] more than just the teachers and the principal, you know what I mean? It was more so just like a family. Everyone's trying to help each other out because everyone essentially has the same goal, it's to get a job, get a career, and do well in life."

*"...it didn't feel like school. It more so felt like a family member helping you. And I say that to say, [there] was never pressure to do this and do that, you know what I mean? It was more so just like you work accordingly and do the best that you can on your own time...Ms. Williams and Ms. Brown, and also Mr. Timothy [were more of a] mentor rather than a teacher. It felt like they were teaching me life gems as well as helping me get through the program and helped me get to that career and the next step in my life."*

- ❖ *Access to Tools and Resources* – Access to tools and resources was another aspect of the program that many respondents expressed appreciation for. Respondents shared that Urban Ed, Inc. provided access to a variety of software platforms to help them obtain their certifications. One interviewee shared that if an individual didn't have access to a computer or network access, Urban Ed, Inc. would provide a laptop or a hotspot for the individual to use. Another respondent shared that "if you didn't pass, they look at what you failed on and

then they work on it, on that area, so that way when you take the test you can pass it the second time.”

*“...what I enjoyed most about the process [of completing a certification] was the resources. Again, there's so many platforms that you could use to study, to practice with different tools. If on the test they have simulations, Ms. Williams has different tools where you could practice the simulation...[For example, the tools will] take you through all of the steps to not only secure a router but to configure one so it's connected to the modem. So those tools were helpful.*

- ❖ *Financial Assistance* – About half of the interviewees spoke about the usefulness of the vouchers provided by Urban Ed, Inc. Respondents shared that Urban Ed, Inc. provided a stipend to participants and vouchers to participants who were scheduled to take the certification exams. Respondents expressed appreciation and gratitude for the free vouchers for their training and certification exams.

*“...[Urban Ed, Inc.] just kept providing me with the vouchers to actually go through and pass...”*

*“[Urban Ed, Inc.] paid for our vouchers, they paid for our training. They even got us retake vouchers in case we failed one of the exams. There aren't many places that'll do that for free for you if you're hungry enough to want it.”*

- ❖ *Curriculum Design* – The design of the curriculum was another aspect of the program that several respondents reported as helpful to them while completing their career pathway program. Some respondents expressed appreciation for the flexibility and self-paced structure of the courses. One respondent shared that the program provided “[a] layout for you not to fail,” and another liked the flow of the course.

*“...it was a big help not having to go on every day, pay for transportation back and forth, pay for parking. That's one thing that [Urban Ed, Inc.] brings amongst other things in regards to just making it convenient for the participants.”*

Based on the information shared, the process of finding employment after completing a career pathway program at Urban Ed, Inc. differed among program participants. For example, one respondent shared how they received a job within two weeks of completing their certification, whereas a few other respondents reported receiving a job within six months to one year after completing their certifications. One aspect of the program several respondents found helpful with finding employment after completing a career pathway program was the career and professional support provided by Urban Ed, Inc.

Respondents highlighted mock interviews, resume support, and networking opportunities as helpful activities in supporting the process of finding employment. One respondent shared that “through the networking events and mock interviews [they] could reach out to some of the people that [Urban Ed, Inc.] connected them with to [gain some insight] into what the particular job was about.” Another shared that Urban Ed, Inc. “had the additional resources looking for jobs with recruiters and other people looking for interns.”

*“...[Urban Ed, Inc.] kind of gave me an idea of what to look for, who to look for, and how to get to where I need to go.”*

*“...[Urban Ed, Inc.] set us up as far as where they would have the partners that they had in the past would come and do interviews. I think we got invited downtown to a job fair, or just to meet with other programs and meet with other companies to see how you'll prepare your resume or how to, I don't know, apply for jobs, be professional. They wouldn't [have] a strict dress code, but it was more so, it was a professional environment. They would have people come and talk to us. They would have former students [who I am] still in contact with will come that are in the government, or working in these jobs, and come and talk with what they did.”*

*“...[Urban Ed, Inc.] also provided mock interviews, and those also help with landing that career, because some things you don't think about is how important your ability to interview is, you're selling yourself. So most of the time, you get 15 to 30 minutes to sell yourself, and that's the difference between you getting a job or not. So that was critical, and I used that skillset to get that first career, because the first job was hard to get because you're trying to sell yourself, because you have no experience, you have no tangible paid IT experience, so somebody has to take a chance on you. And what got the job was my interview. My interviewing, I think, was stellar, and that's what got me in the door with that first job.”*

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## **BARRIERS TO ACCESSING EMPLOYMENT AND CAREER SKILLS TRAINING PROGRAMS**



All interview participants were invited to share what they believe are the main barriers and challenges experienced by people in their community to accessing workforce development programs. Barriers reported by interviewees included a lack of awareness or outreach about these types of programs, a sense of fear or discouragement, and financial cost.

- ❖ *Lack of Awareness and Outreach* – The lack of awareness and outreach about employment and skills training programs was a common barrier mentioned by respondents. Respondents shared how individuals often simply do not know that these types of programs are available

within the community. For example, one respondent described sharing information about Urban Ed, Inc. to some people who were unaware of the program.

*"A lot of people don't know some of these programs are available..."*

*"I think they don't know...I had two coworkers that I told about [Urban Ed, Inc.]...And everybody's like, "Oh my God, I've never heard of this. Oh, wow. What's this? I never heard of this." So I think it's getting the word out. People just don't know. So I think that's the biggest challenge."*

*"When I moved to DC, I think it was in 2013 to, I believe, going into 2014...I didn't get to [Urban Ed, Inc.] until 2017. [Urban Ed, Inc.] was right there all along but I didn't know until someone said, "Hey, you need to go to Urban Ed," and I was just like, "Oh, okay. Wow. I never knew what [Urban Ed, Inc.] was. What is Urban Ed, Inc?""*

- ❖ **Sense of Fear or Discouragement** – Another common barrier described by some respondents was people's sense of fear or discouragement. Respondent shared that some people may be scared to miss out on other activities and opportunities happening around them or because they simply do not know a lot about the IT field. One respondent described how people may experience other people and programs discouraging them from participating in workforce development programs, like Urban Ed, Inc.

*"...it's hard for participants to be able to find programs like [Urban Ed, Inc.]. I say that because for me...I would've never found out about [them] if it wasn't for the DC government programs that I participated in. [But] sometimes [the caseworkers would] discourage you...Because they believe...that a person doesn't have the stamina to continue to learn or to continue to excel...I almost got discouraged."*

*"Honestly, I think what holds a lot of people back is just fear. Fear of loss, and fear of not being able to achieve what they need to achieve...[I think] a lot of people get discouraged because they think that they're not enough...their confidence isn't there because they think that they can't do it...So I think that's the biggest challenge that the community faces is that..."*

- ❖ **Financial cost** – The financial cost of attending an IT training program was a third common barrier mentioned by interview participants. Respondents described how attending an IT training program can be expensive and often out of reach to individuals in low-income communities who are seeking out these types of career skills training programs. One respondent described looking into another IT program but found that it would cost about \$8,000 dollars to enroll.

*"There's a lot of people out there that the barrier of entry to getting training for these tests, it's just too hard, the barrier of entry, and when I say that it's just the cost...there's a lot of other training courses out there...that people just can't afford, so that stops them right there of pursuing that, which ultimately leads to a fruitful career."*

*"Money is another big one. People are working, they don't have time to decide between, "Oh, do I want to go to these trainings, or do I want to figure out how I'm going to eat for the next two weeks?"*

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## IMPACTS OF COMPLETING A CAREER PATHWAY PROGRAM ON PROGRAM PARTICIPANTS



Interview participants were invited to share their perceptions about how the program impacted their life and well-being after completing their career pathway program. Responses from respondents demonstrated perceived improvements in overall life and well-being as well as perceived improvements in current work experiences and employment situations.

As participants reflected on their life and well-being before attending Urban Ed, Inc. and then after completing their career pathway program, many respondents expressed improvements in their overall quality of life. Economic stability was one socio-economic factor that respondents discussed. About half of the respondents reported an improvement in their economic status. For instance, one respondent shared that after receiving their certification, they were able to "earn decent money" to support themselves and their family. Another shared that it "provided the financial means for [them] to live that lifestyle [they] needed."

*"I mean, consistent income is coming in. I'm able to provide for my family. I'm just in a better place."*

*"...when I moved from the salary that I was making to the salary that they started me, that was just a life changing."*

Housing security was another factor a few respondents discussed. One respondent shared that prior to attending Urban Ed, Inc., they were living with their parents, however after completing their career pathway program, they were able to purchase their own house.

*"I make more than enough money now to support everyone and keep a roof over our head and eat."*

*"...[the program] gave me a lot of stability. From living at my mother's house to having a wife and kids and having my own house."*

A couple of participants, who initially described experiencing various health concerns before attending Urban Ed, Inc., described improvements in their health. One participant shared, “I would say that I'm a lot happier now. It's a breath of fresh air. I am okay now.” Another shared how they are experiencing much less stress now than compared to before.

Compared to past work experiences and employment situations, interviewees generally described improvements in their work experiences and employment situations after attending Urban Ed, Inc. Respondents expressed gratitude for the IT knowledge and skills achieved during their career pathway program. Additionally, several respondents described gaining confidence and motivation over the course of obtaining their certifications. For instance, one interviewee shared, “when you get that first [certification], it builds up that confidence.” Further, more than half of the respondents described being “more marketable” now that they completed their career pathway program.

*“I have skills that are marketable and competitive as it relates to pay.”*

*“...you will be surprised how many jobs are not filled. I'm getting emails often for positions...[that] I've turned a few down. But yeah, I realize now that I'm very marketable.”*

*“I'm sure I'm much, much, much more marketable now than I was two, three years ago.”*

Respondents also described experiencing or pursuing different career-enhancing opportunities, such as receiving a job promotion or pursuing additional certifications. For instance, one respondent shared how the training they received from Urban Ed, Inc. has contributed to their ability to obtain job positions that may typically require a college degree. A couple of other respondents shared their aspirations to grow their careers by obtaining additional certifications or by starting their own businesses.

*“The goal is to reach the consultant point in regards to where I can actually become a consultant...”*

*“I'm learning every day [in my job and] I'm working on my fourth, or I think it's fifth, certification.”*

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## **WAYS TO IMPROVE COMMUNITY ACCESS TO EMPLOYMENT AND CAREER SKILLS TRAINING PROGRAMS**



Although several barriers were described by interview participants, only a few ideas and strategies were shared by respondents about how access to workforce development programs could be improved within the community. Some of the suggestions included improving advertisement and marketing strategies, implementing an IT curriculum in schools for youth,



providing virtual learning opportunities, and finding mentors to offer support throughout the process.

- ❖ *Improving advertising and marketing strategies* – Respondents described how improving advertising and marketing strategies could address the lack of awareness and outreach – one of the main challenges reported by respondents – in accessing workforce development programs in the community. For instance, one participant shared how these types of career skills training programs should host an open house as one way to engage with the community.

*“...that's probably the biggest one, just letting people know it's available.”*

*“I think it's getting the word out.”*

Other ideas and strategies mentioned by respondents included implementing an IT curriculum in schools for youth, providing virtual learning opportunities, and finding mentors to provide support and guidance.

*“...start adding these curriculums in schools at a younger age...I feel like if we involve those in the community at the earlier stages of child development, then we'll have more people willing to take a leap into the field.”*

*“[Learning remotely], I think that takes out some of the barriers because you can access it from your phone, your computer, everybody has a phone...you can get to it even if you don't have a vehicle, it's in your pocket.”*

*“I would say just having a solid foundation around you, a circle that wants to see you do good.”*

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## **PROGRAM RECOMMENDATIONS FROM INTERVIEW PARTICIPANTS**



Interview participants were invited to share any recommendations or ideas about how the workforce development program at Urban Ed, Inc. could be improved for future participants based on their experiences participating in the program. Several participants believed the program was already doing a good job and had no recommendations for Urban Ed, Inc. However, three specific recommendations came up during the interviews that were mentioned more than once by multiple respondents. They believed these three recommendations could help improve current programming efforts at Urban Ed, Inc.

1. **Enhance recruitment and community engagement strategies.** Half of the interview participants indicated that Urban Ed, Inc. could enhance its current recruitment and

engagement strategies. Respondents believed that leveraging different advertising and marketing tactics could be useful in “spreading the word” about the program. One participant stated that the program “needs more visibility” because when they have informed people about Urban Ed, Inc. people are often unaware of the program. Some ideas proposed by respondents included using different social media platforms (e.g., TikTok, Instagram, Twitter), participating in local job or career fairs, attending local community events, and connecting with local media outlets to engage the community.

*“I would tell [Urban Ed, Inc.] that it'll probably be good for them to start...throwing workshops or events in the community where they can get some of the old students and some of the new students [and] give an introduction to IT to people [that are] walking around in the street...And that might draw in more people in the community to say, "Hey, your school, let me actually look into it." So that'll probably be one thing I would say would be helpful.”*

*“I was thinking one time of going [to] my local news channel and just [saying], "Hey, you guys want to spotlight this program that's here?" Get funding for them. "...this is a program that is very useful"...”*

*“I think [Urban Ed, Inc.] should have alumni...talk to the community because it's important to see success. Everyone wants to do something, but until they see someone else do it, it makes more sense...But I do feel like the outreach of success stories, things of that nature, is something that's very, very important. ”*

- 2. Increase program staffing.** Another recommendation that arose from interviews with program participants was increasing the number of program staff. While all interviewees expressed their appreciation for the support and guidance received from program staff, some respondents believed the program could benefit from hiring more staff, especially instructors. One participant suggested having someone dedicated to assisting former participants who were seeking help from Urban Ed, Inc.

*“I think [Urban Ed, Inc.] needs more staff. I think they need more people that are permitted to training and supporting their students. They just don't have enough resources. I think because they have a short staff, their schedules aren't that flexible, it's hard to get time with someone.”*

*“...if they had someone that was just there to just deal with the alumni, then that would be super helpful because like I said, I don't want to interfere because I know [there are] more individuals that come in, and I know they need the same support that Urban Ed, Inc. gave me. So, I don't really be wanting to interfere or bother them too much...But if they had*

*someone to just deal with people like me, the alumni, people that already made it through, that would be very supportive as well.”*

- 3. Improve job and internship placement opportunities.** As respondents reflected on their experiences with Urban Ed, Inc., some respondents believed the program could benefit from improving its job and internship placement opportunities. A couple of respondents suggested partnering with more companies or establishing an entry-level pathway program with new or existing partnership companies.

*“...maybe partnering with more companies. So once people do get their certification, they can almost quickly and instantly go into a job. I think [Urban Ed, Inc.] partners with some, but I would say partnering with more companies that provide A+, security network, or wherever it may be. That way, it can streamline the process, because, speaking from a person who was on the hiring side, it was difficult for us to find people who wanted to get into call center work, because it's a basic IT job. So we had to partner with other companies to try to get people who, just after A+, and who wanted to work. So maybe just partnering with more companies.”*

*“I think if [Urban Ed, Inc.] could place people [in] internships, and maybe the internship is paid through Urban Ed, Inc., so they're just getting the experience of doing this work...I think getting [an opportunity to get] your feet wet and [apply] the things that you're learning in the classroom...”*

## DISCUSSION

This evaluation study of a community-driven workforce development program implemented by Urban Ed, Inc. provided valuable insight into the perceptions and experiences had by program participants. Survey responses spotlighted several trends in respondents' work experiences and employment situations, program experiences, and self-reported changes in economic status and overall life and well-being. Additionally, conversations with interviewees revealed similarities and differences in program experiences and brought attention to the helpful aspects of the program as well as the barriers and challenges often experienced by people from racial and ethnic minority groups who are trying to gain stable employment opportunities and achieve economic stability.

The career skills training program implemented by Urban Ed, Inc. aims to reduce and eliminate barriers for individuals who are interested in pursuing employment opportunities in the IT field. Recognizing the financial cost of enrolling in an IT training program as a burden to many individuals, Urban Ed, Inc. supports program participants by providing stipends for their training and vouchers for certification exams. The stipends and vouchers give program participants the opportunity to focus on their courses and coursework while removing any stress and worries they may have regarding finances. As one interview participant remarked, "there aren't many places that'll do that for free (referring to the vouchers)."

Additionally, responses from the post-program survey and the qualitative interviews revealed that before attending Urban Ed, Inc., most respondents were unemployed. Individuals working beforehand reported working either full-time or part-time in minimum-wage jobs, such as retail and food delivery jobs. While annual incomes varied, most respondents who were employed reported earning less than \$60,000 annually. Health concerns, like stress and anxiety, lack of financial security, and stable housing were common barriers experienced by interviewees prior to attending Urban Ed, Inc.

However, after completing a career pathway program at Urban Ed, Inc., most respondents shared that they are currently employed and working full-time or part-time in IT-related jobs. Again, while annual incomes varied, many respondents experienced an increase in annual incomes, to some extent, and most reported earning between \$60,000 to \$69,999 or \$100,000 or more annually. In addition, respondents' perceptions of their life and well-being, including their mental and physical health, economic stability, and housing situations, saw improvements after completing their career pathway program. Most respondents now perceived the quality of their overall life and well-being as excellent or very good.

Access to living-wage jobs that are considered high demand, such as careers in the IT field, often requires some postsecondary education and training, in addition to hands-on experience, both of which may pose barriers to individuals residing in low-income communities. Yet, findings

from this mixed methods evaluation study suggest that Urban Ed, Inc. has had a positive impact in addressing these types of barriers and supporting program participants in accessing employment opportunities and working towards economic stability. In addition, cultivating a safe and supportive learning environment at Urban Ed, Inc. suggests there is a level of importance to encouraging personal and career development among program participants. Based on interviews with program participants, staff and fellow peers were recognized as providing support and guidance to each other, thus creating a “family-like” dynamic at Urban Ed, Inc. This allows program participants to feel comfortable asking for help and trusting the staff to support and guide them through the process.

Observing the changes that have occurred along each interviewee’s journey suggests that Urban Ed, Inc. was helpful in supporting the education and training process, finding stable, employment opportunities, and achieving economic stability. Results from the survey suggest that program participants are likely to experience improvements in their confidence in maintaining stable and continuous employment, having the skills and knowledge to advance their careers, and meeting their goal of becoming economically stable upon completion of their career pathway program, which aligns with many of the experiences described by interview participants. Although most interview respondents completed their program 1 to 3 years ago, further research is needed to understand the long-term outcomes and impacts of those who completed their program more than 3 years ago to see what similarities and differences exist.

Based on the post-program survey results and the qualitative interviews with program participants, the following recommendations may be helpful in improving programming efforts at Urban Ed, Inc. that may be attainable and feasible:

- 1. Enhance recruitment and community engagement strategies.** Leveraging different social media platforms, particularly TikTok and Instagram, may be a way to share introductory knowledge about IT careers as well as general information about Urban Ed, Inc. Also, engaging with the community during local events and inviting alumni to share their “success stories” and the truths about their experiences may be an inviting approach to individuals who do not have any knowledge about the various careers in the IT field.
- 2. Increase female representation among program participants.** According to the U.S. Department of Labor, Women’s Bureau, approximately 24% of women were employed in computer occupations in 2021 (U.S. Department of Labor, Women’s Bureau, n.d.). As such, the IT workforce continues to remain predominantly male. Acknowledging the lack of gender diversity in IT roles and positions, organizations like Rewriting the Code and Black Girls Code, to name a few, have taken strides to increase female representation in the IT industry, such as hosting workshops, networking events, and providing mentorship. Therefore, recognizing the overall low enrollment rate of female individuals at Urban Ed, Inc., compared to the enrollment rate of male individuals (39% vs. 61%, respectively),

implementing new or enhanced strategies for increasing female enrollment at Urban Ed, Inc. may be worth considering. For instance, creating a more female-centric mentoring program or hosting events or workshops for female individuals interested in gaining IT skills and obtaining IT jobs. Prioritizing efforts to engage female youth and adults in IT courses will not only increase the number of female individuals enrolled at Urban Ed, Inc. but also contribute to reducing the gender gap in the IT field overall.

3. **Improve job and internship placement opportunities.** Although interview participants appreciated the support they received from Urban Ed, Inc. in finding employment, some respondents believed Urban Ed, Inc. could benefit from improving its available opportunities to obtain a job or internship placement. Reviewing current partnerships with government, state, or local companies and organizations to determine if a direct employment pipeline can be created, if not established, may be helpful for participants who have obtained recent certification. Additionally, networking and establishing new partnerships may be helpful in offering more in-person or remote job and internship placement opportunities for individuals who completed a career pathway program. Creating such opportunities will provide individuals with the hands-on, professional experience necessary for advancing their careers in the IT field.
4. **Continue providing financial stipends and vouchers to program participants.** The financial costs associated with IT courses and certification exams can be expensive and out of reach for individuals who come from low- to middle-income communities. For instance, purchasing one A+ certification exam voucher may cost anywhere from \$246 dollars and higher and if an individual does not pass the first time, they will need to purchase another voucher (CompTIA, n.d.). Therefore, continuing to provide financial stipends and vouchers to program participants can reduce or eliminate these financial barriers that prevent individuals from pursuing IT career skills training programs and, ultimately, careers in the IT field.

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## LIMITATIONS

Although the findings from this evaluation study suggest a positive impact on program participants, it is important to note the limitations of this study. One limitation of this study is the sample size. Although 85 program participants were identified by Urban Ed, Inc. staff, only 48 surveys were completed and included in the analysis. Due to this small survey sample size and the unique and variable experiences of each respondent, key findings from the post-program cannot be generalized to the general population. Selection bias is the second limitation of this study. While eligibility criteria were established, recruitment of program participants may have been based on who could be contacted within the established timeframe thus preventing a random selection of program participants. Since recruitment of

program participants may have been achieved based on availability, participant selection may not be representative of the study population. The third limitation of this study is interviewer bias. The personal characteristics and level of training the interviewer had may have impacted the results of the interview (Salazar, 1990). The interviewer proceeded to ask probing questions based on the responses provided by the interviewees; due to the variable nature of the interviews and the unique experiences shared by participants, different probing questions were asked to each participant at times. The probes were asked based on what information the interviewer thought the participant could elaborate more on and may have influenced the responses shared by the interviewee. The fourth limitation of this study is response bias. Survey and interview participants may have selected answers or shared responses they perceived as correct or based on inaccurate or incomplete recollections of their experiences participating in the program.

## CONCLUSION

This mixed methods evaluation study provided an opportunity for the AHA Social Impact Funds and Evaluation teams to gain a better understanding of the programmatic efforts led by Urban Ed, Inc. in implementing their career skills training program in Washington, D.C. While the findings from the post-program survey and the qualitative interviews highlighted key strengths of the program and opportunities for improvement, they also demonstrated the positive impact Urban Ed, Inc. has had on its program participants in obtaining stable, living-wage job opportunities and achieving economic stability. In addition, these findings suggest that Urban Ed, Inc. has been a valuable source in helping program participants experience positive changes in their overall life and well-being – areas that extend beyond the employment and economic aspects of life. Overall, Urban Ed, Inc. has been instrumental in helping to reduce the barriers and challenges experienced by individuals in accessing the necessary education and skills training to gain stable employment opportunities and achieve economic stability. As such, community-driven workforce development programs, like Urban Ed, Inc., should be seen as practical solutions that have the potential to increase economic growth within their respective communities if provided the necessary supports to thrive.



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## APPENDICES

### APPENDIX A: DATA COLLECTION TOOLS

- Informed Consent Form



Urban Ed\_Informed  
Consent Form\_FINAL

- Post-Program Survey



Urban  
Ed\_Post-Survey Instr

- Participant Interview Guide



Urban Ed\_Interview  
Protocol\_FINAL.pdf

## APPENDIX B: FIGURES AND TABLES

**Table B1**

*Demographics of Survey Participants, (n=48).*

Demographics	n	%
<b>Gender</b>		
Female	14	29.2%
Male	34	70.8%
<b>Age</b>		
25 – 34	21	43.8%
35 – 44	20	41.7%
45 – 54	6	12.5%
65 or older	1	2.1%
<b>Ethnicity</b>		
Non-Hispanic	46	95.8%
Hispanic	2	4.2%
<b>Race<sup>a</sup></b>		
Black or African American alone	41	85.4%
Multiple races	4	8.3%
Prefer to self-describe	2	4.2%
Prefer not answer	1	2.1%
<b>Educational Attainment</b>		
Some college or university, but no degree	13	27.1%
Technical school certificate	11	22.9%
Bachelor's degree (e.g., BA, BS)	10	20.8%
High school diploma or GED	9	18.8%
Associate degree (e.g., AA, AS)	3	6.3%
Graduate or professional degree (e.g., master's, PhD)	2	4.2%
<b>Time Since Completing a Career Pathway Program</b>		
1 – 3 years	23	47.9%
4 – 6 years	10	20.8%
7 – 10 years	8	16.7%
> 10 years	7	14.6%

<sup>a</sup> Survey participants could select more than one option for race, so take caution when interpreting.

**Table B2***Employment and Financial Status of Survey Participants Before and After Attending Urban Ed, Inc., (n=48).*

	Before		After	
	n	%	n	%
<b>Employment Status</b>				
Employed	21	43.8%	43	89.6%
<i>Full-time</i>	13	61.9%	41	85.4%
<i>Part-time</i>	8	38.1%	2	4.2%
<i>Self-Employed</i>	---	---	3	6.3%
<i>Homemaker</i>	---	---	1	2.1%
<i>Other</i>	---	---	1	2.1%
Unemployed	27	56.3%	5	10.4%
<i>Yes, looking for work before Urban Ed, Inc.<sup>a</sup></i>	23	14.8%	N/A	N/A
<i>No, not looking for work before Urban Ed, Inc.<sup>a</sup></i>	4	85.2%	N/A	N/A
<b>Annual Income Level</b>				
\$90,000 or more	---	---	17	35.4%
\$60,000 to \$89,999	---	---	20	41.7%
\$30,000 to \$59,999	14	29.2%	6	12.5%
\$29,999 or less <sup>b</sup>	34	70.8%	5	10.4%

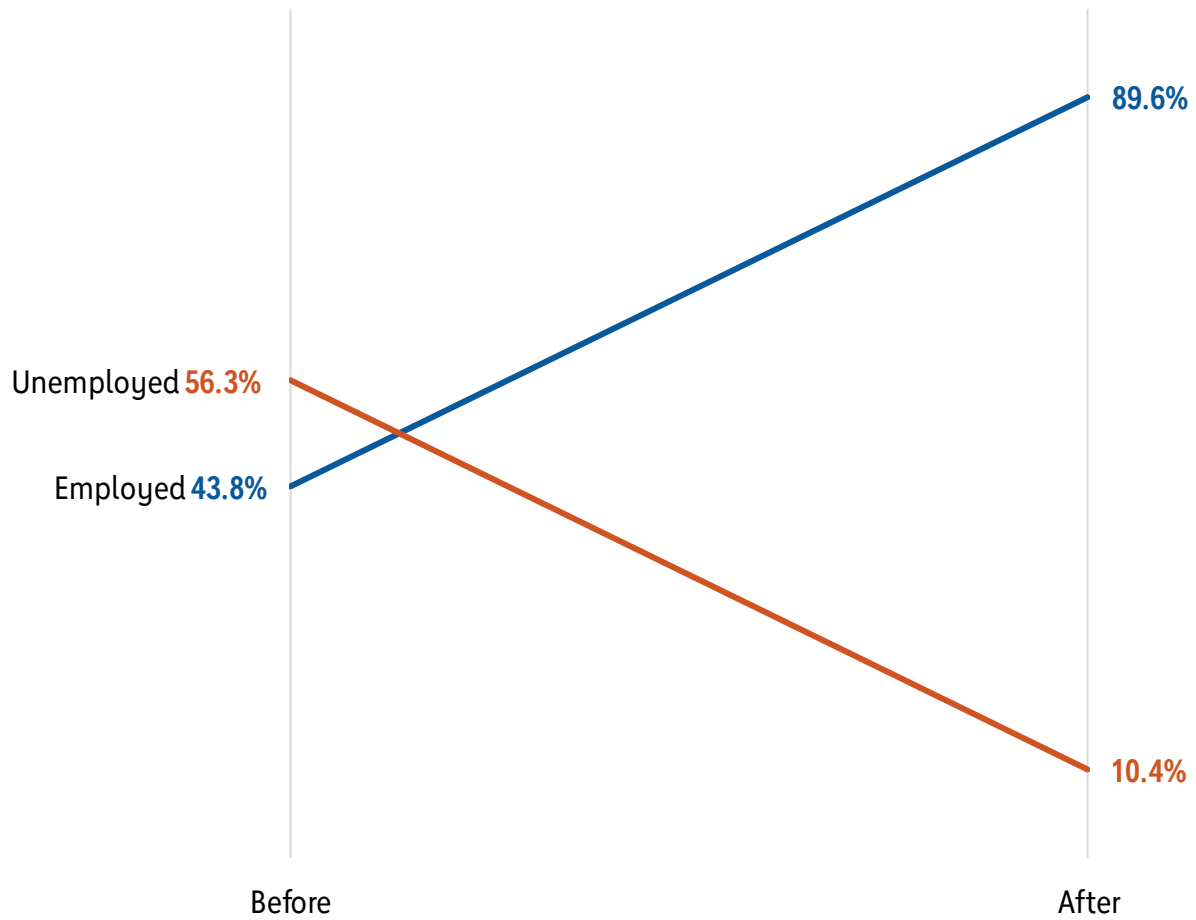
<sup>a</sup> The number of survey participants who were unemployed before attending Urban Ed, Inc. and looking for employment.

<sup>b</sup> Survey participants who were unemployed before attending Urban Ed, Inc. were reported as having zero income.

Figure B1

Overall Employment Status of Survey Participants.

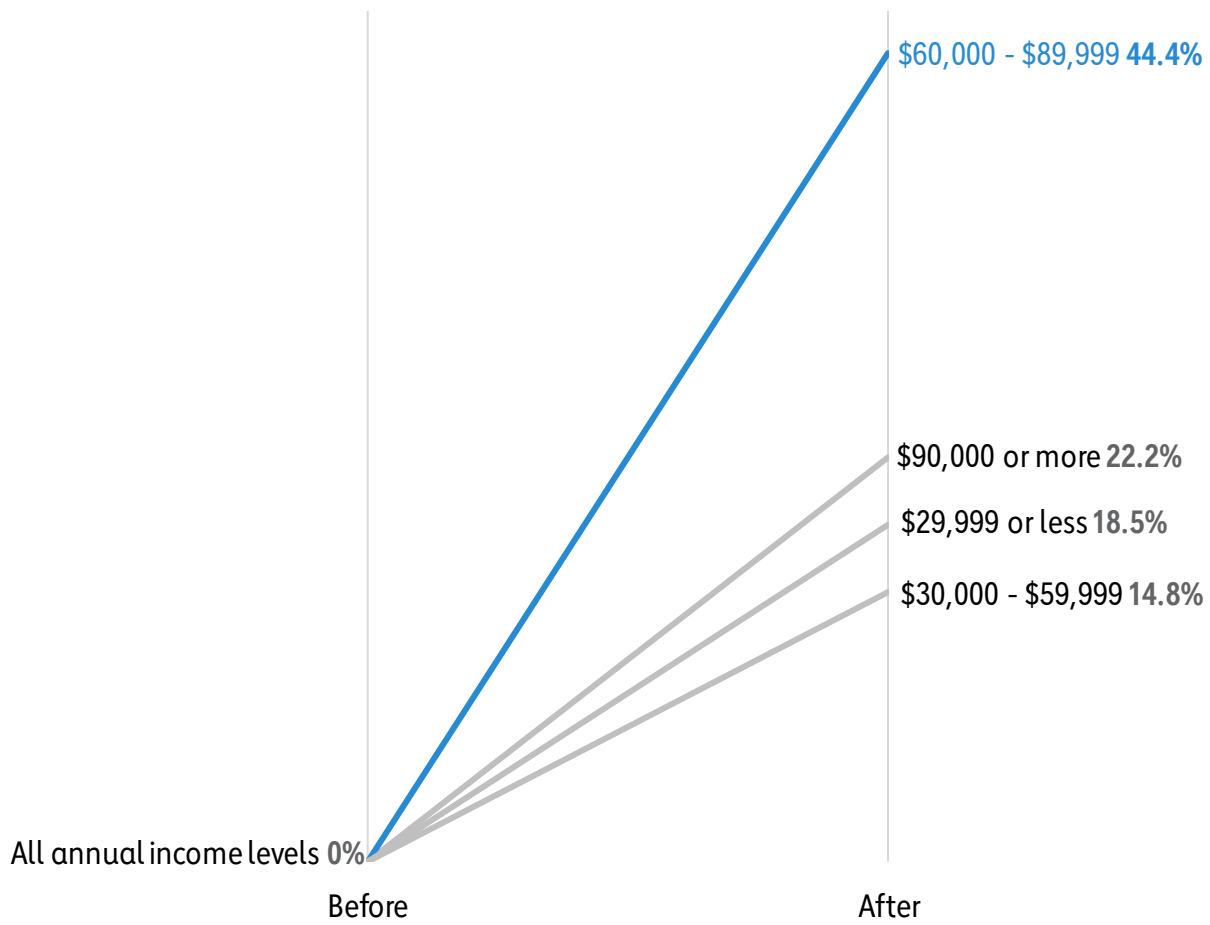
Almost 90% of survey participants were **employed** after attending Urban Ed, Inc., whereas **more than half** of survey participants were **unemployed** before attending Urban Ed, Inc. (n=48)



**Figure B2**

*Changes in Annual Income Received by Survey Participants Unemployed Before Attending Urban Ed, Inc.*

A **greater proportion** of survey participants who were unemployed before attending Urban Ed, Inc. were now receiving annual incomes between **\$60,000 to \$89,999** after attending Urban Ed, Inc.  
(n=27)

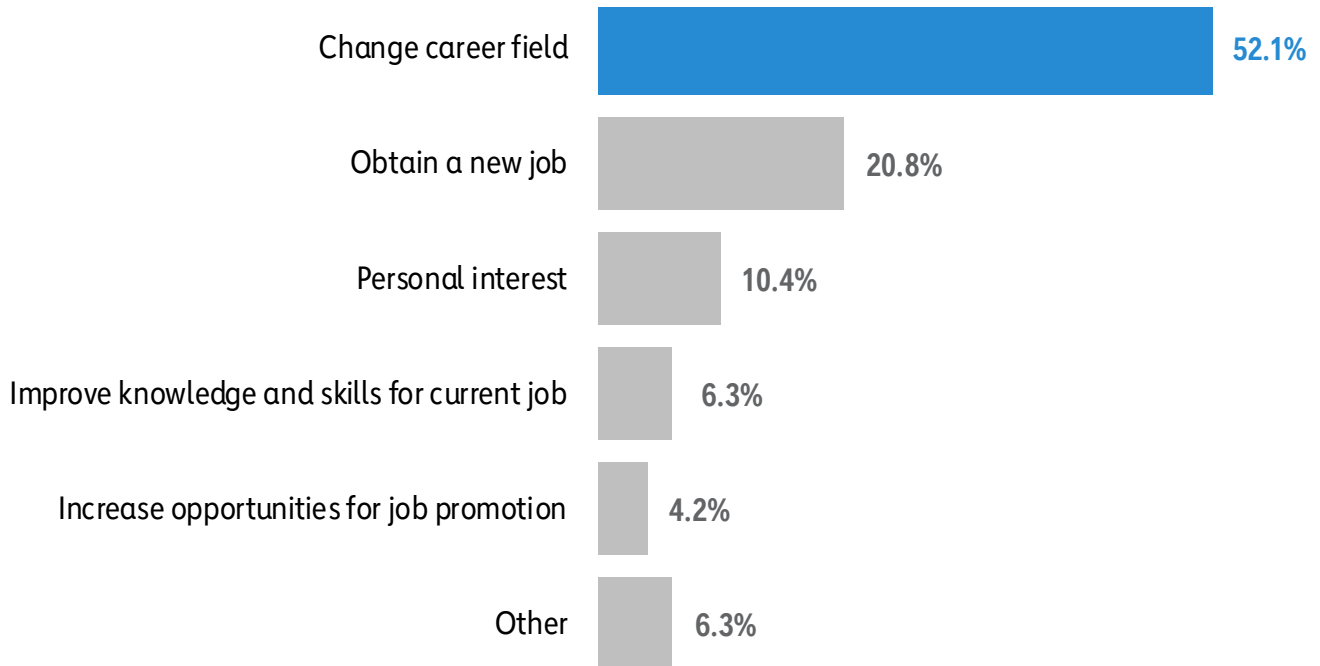


**Figure B3**

*Survey Participants' Primary Motivation for Attending Urban Ed, Inc.*

**More than half** of survey participants reported that their primary motivation for attending Urban Ed, Inc. was to **change career fields**.

(n=48)



**Table B3**

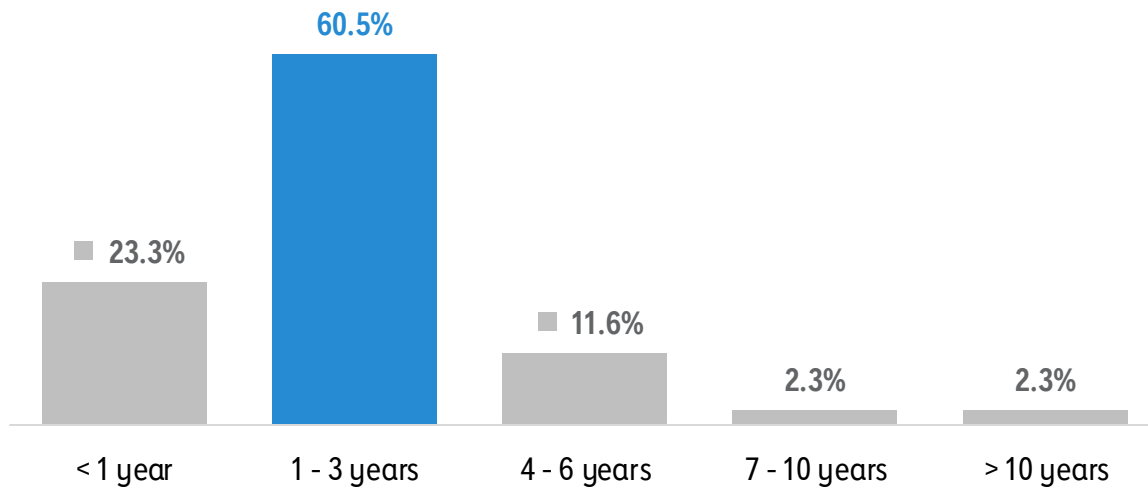
*Length of Time and Number of Job Offers Received Among Currently Employed Survey Participants, (n=43).*

	n	%
<b>Length of Time to Receive First Job Offer</b>		
< 1 month	15	34.9%
1 – 3 months	13	30.2%
4 – 6 months	9	20.9%
> 6 months	6	14.0%
<b>Number of Job Offers Received</b>		
1 – 2 job offers	26	60.5%
3 – 4 job offers	12	27.9%
> 5 job offers	5	11.6%

**Figure B4**

*Survey Participants' Length of Employment with Current Employer.*

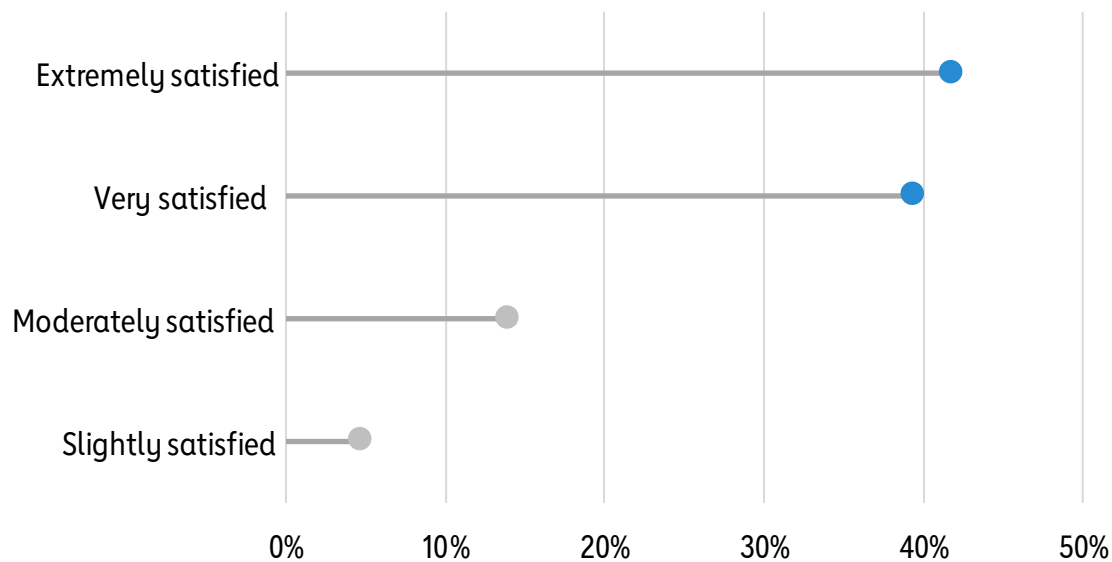
About 60% of currently employed survey participants have been working for their current employer for 1 to 3 years.  
(n=48)



**Figure B5**

*Survey Participants' Level of Satisfaction with Current Employment.*

Survey participants who are currently employed reported they were extremely satisfied or very satisfied with their current job.  
(n=43)

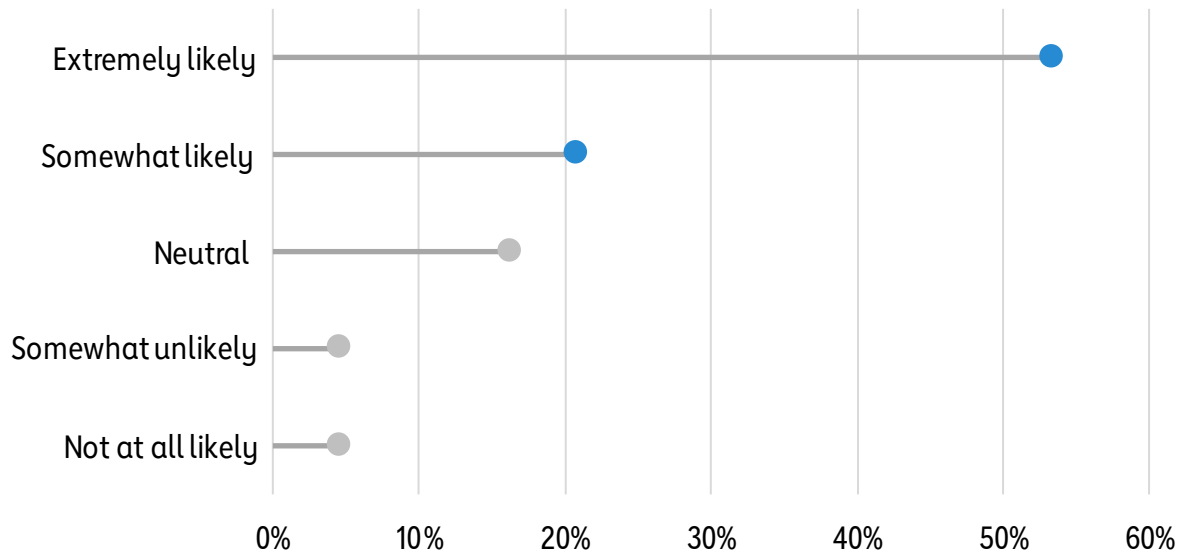




**Figure B6**

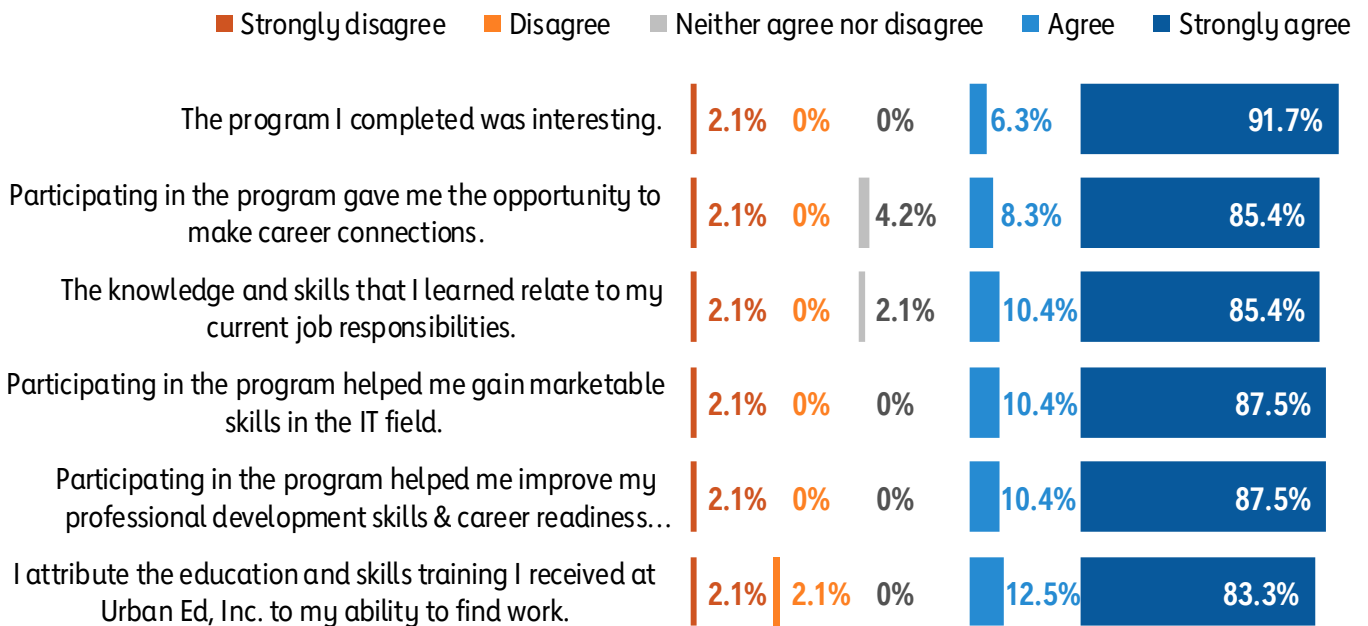
*Survey Participants' Likelihood of Retaining Current Employment.*

**More than half** of currently employed survey participants reported they were **extremely likely** to continue working for their current employer for the next 12 months.  
(n=43)



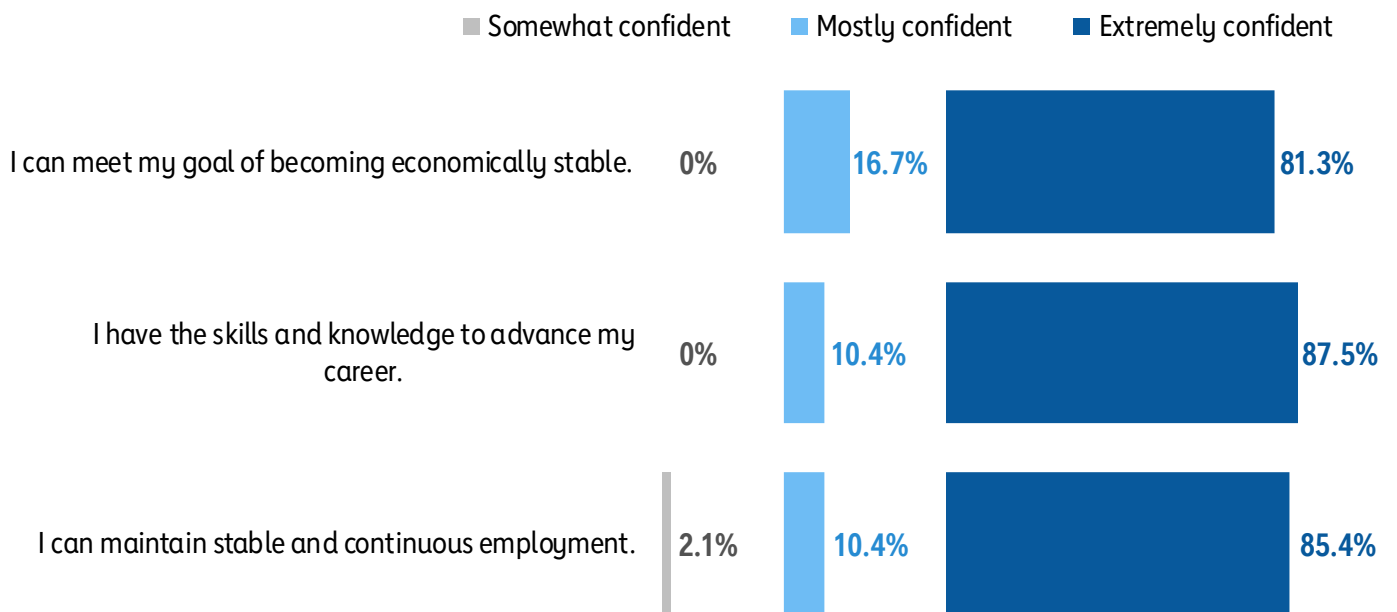
**Figure B7**

*Survey Participants' Level of Agreement About Their Program Experience, (n=48).*



**Figure B8**

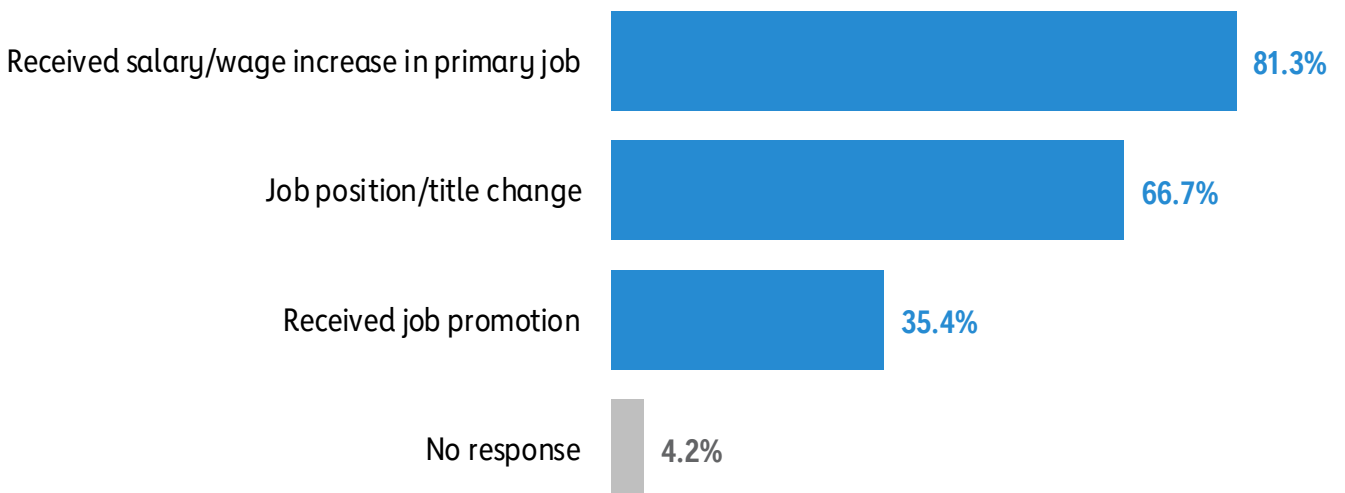
*Survey Participants' Level of Confidence About Employment, Skills and Knowledge, and Economic Stability, (n=48).*



**Figure B9**

*Career-Enriching Opportunities Experienced by Survey Participants.*

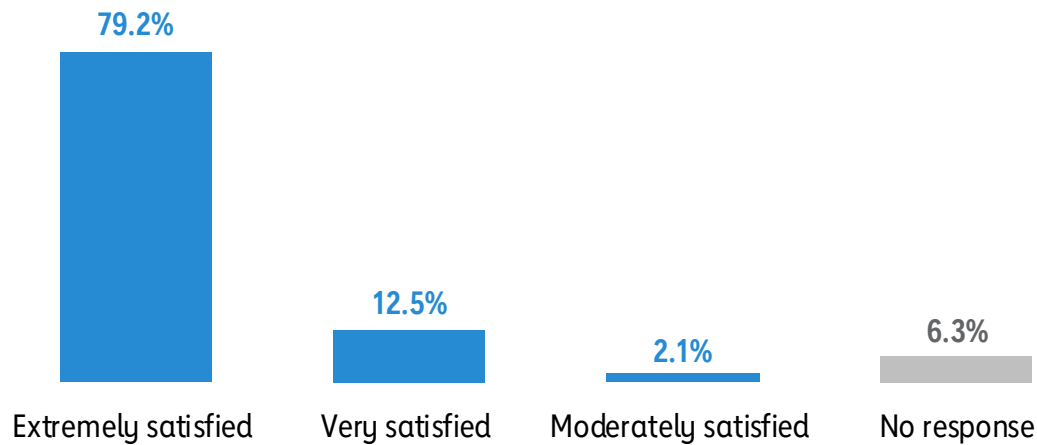
**Most survey participants** reported **receiving a salary/wage increase** in their primary job since completing a career pathway program at Urban Ed, Inc. (n=48)



**Figure B10**

*Survey Participants' Level of Satisfaction with the Education and Skills Training Received from Urban Ed, Inc.*

**Most survey participants** were **extremely satisfied** with the education and skills training they received from Urban Ed, Inc.  
(n=48)



**Figure B11**

*Survey Participants' Likelihood of Recommending Urban Ed, Inc. to a Friend or Family Member.*

**Most survey participants** reported they are **extremely likely** to recommend Urban Ed, Inc. to a friend or family member.  
(n=48)

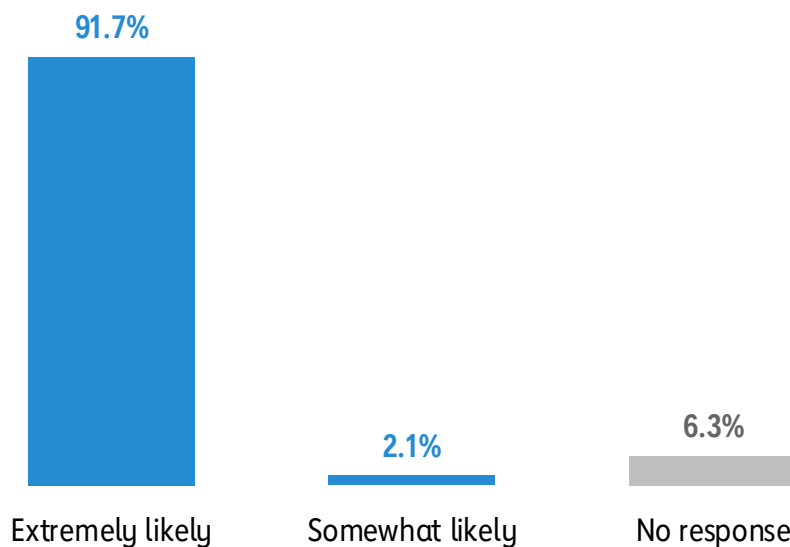


Figure B12

How Survey Participants First Heard about Urban Ed, Inc.

Most survey participants first heard about Urban Ed, Inc. through word of mouth or from a friend.

(n=48)

