

# Early Experiences of the Performance Partnership Pilots for Disconnected Youth (P3): Cohort 1 Pilots

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## ABSTRACT

In response to calls from state and local providers of youth services for a more efficient and integrated system to serve disconnected youth, the U.S. Congress (2014) authorized the Performance Partnership Pilots for Disconnected Youth (P3) in the Consolidated Appropriations Act of 2014. Under the Act, up to 10 P3 pilots could be awarded to states, local, or tribal governments to pool funds from at least two Federal discretionary programs and, as needed, to apply for waivers from the programs' requirements. Through the Act, five agencies—the U.S. Departments of Education, Health and Human Services, and Labor (DOL); the Corporation for National and Community Service; and the Institute of Museum and Library Services—awarded a first cohort of nine P3 pilots in October 2015. Subsequent authorizations expanded P3 to include the U.S. Departments of Justice and Housing and Urban Development. These agencies, along with the Office of Management and Budget, designed P3 to test the hypothesis that awarding flexibilities to states and localities to pool funds and to obtain waivers would reduce barriers to providing effective services for disconnected youth.

To assess P3, Federal agencies sponsored a five-year national evaluation, under the direction of the DOL Chief Evaluation Office. The contracted evaluators, Mathematica Policy Research and its partner Social Policy Research Associates, have undertaken an implementation evaluation of P3, including a study of three cohorts of P3 grantees. Using data from the evaluation's implementation study, this paper reflects on the early experiences of the nine cohort 1 pilots. The data primarily come from interviews conducted in spring and summer 2017 with pilot administrators, staff, and partners. Subsequent products focusing on the implementation study will include data from an additional round of visits to the cohort 1 pilots and the six pilots awarded as part of the 2015 and 2016 Appropriations Acts.

In the first year, most pilots focused on the traditional program activities of developing and providing outcome-focused services to disconnected youth. Beyond this work, however, the vision for P3 was to better coordinate the way state and local systems provided those services. As pilots sought to implement the flexibilities afforded them, the following findings emerged:

1. Pilots that were starting to make system changes were led by state or local agencies that frequently convened and coordinated with local youth-serving organizations. These lead pilot agencies were able to bring together partners from across different program areas, such as education and labor.
2. All pilots brought together a diverse set of partners. Pilots indicated that government and community partners were willing to work across their different program areas, such as education and labor, to coordinate their youth-related services.
3. Not all leaders of pilots' grantees and their partners had a full understanding of the available flexibilities. They reported that a clearer understanding was important for pilots to pull together existing funding streams to support the youth intended for services and to remove other programmatic barriers that limit how these funds support youth-related services.

4. Five pilots had proposed in their applications to create shared data systems, but, in the first year, none accomplished this goal, largely due to logistical and privacy concerns. Indeed, two decided not to pursue shared systems, and three reported that they were continuing local discussions to develop such systems. In the meantime, for purposes of P3, all pilots developed work-arounds to share data about their participants and for reporting.

Future papers from the evaluation of P3 will explore these and other implementation topics involved in the realization of the P3 authority. In addition, a future paper will synthesize the results of the cohort 1 pilots' local evaluations to document the pilots' contributions to the evidence of what works for disconnected youth.

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## A. INTRODUCTION

Historically, programs and services from across the Federal government have supported “disconnected” youth—those youth who are not engaged in school or work (U.S. Government Accountability Office 2008). These programs focused on particular challenges some youth might face, such as homelessness, or a particular strategy to reengage them, such as supporting their reentry into high school or preparing them for work, and each program brought its own eligibility and reporting requirements. Furthermore, multiple state and local agencies administered these youth-focused programs. Although agencies might work collaboratively, the priorities and performance goals across their multiple programs could differ.

In response to calls from state and local providers of youth services for a more efficient and integrated system to serve disconnected youth, the U.S. Congress (2014) authorized the Performance Partnership Pilots for Disconnected Youth (P3) in the Consolidated Appropriations Act of 2014. Under the Act, up to 10 P3 pilots could be awarded to state, local, or tribal governments to pool funds from at least two Federal discretionary programs and, as needed, to blend Federal funds and apply for waivers from programs’ eligibility and reporting requirements. P3 was testing the hypothesis that these flexibilities would result in improved outcomes for the disconnected youth served. Through the Act, five agencies—the U.S. Departments of Education (ED), Health and Human Services (HHS), and Labor (DOL); the Corporation for National and Community Service (CNCS); and the Institute of Museum and Library Services (IMLS)—awarded a first cohort of nine P3 pilots. Through subsequent authorizations—the Consolidated and Further Continuing Appropriations Act, 2015 and the Consolidated Appropriations Act, 2016—that expanded P3 to the U.S. Departments of Justice (DOJ) and Housing and Urban Development (HUD), respectively, the Federal partners awarded six additional pilots by early 2017 (U.S. Government Accountability Office 2017). P3 has been reauthorized by the appropriation acts of each subsequent year, although no additional pilots were awarded as of publication of this paper.

To assess P3, the Federal partners awarded a five-year national evaluation, under the direction of the DOL Chief Evaluation Office, to Mathematica Policy Research and its subcontractor, Social Policy Research Associates. Through the evaluation’s multiple components (see Box 1), the Federal partners sought to document the work of the pilots, examine their implementation of the P3 authorization, and support local evaluations of the pilots’ impacts on youth outcomes.

“The P3 program, authorized by the Consolidated Appropriations Act, 2014...will enable up to ten pilot sites to test innovative, outcome-focused strategies to achieve significant improvements in education, employment, and other key outcomes for disconnected youth using new flexibility to blend existing Federal funds and to seek waivers of associated program requirements.”

*Federal Register*, vol. 79, no. 226, November 24, 2014.

### Box 1. Components of the National Evaluation of P3

- 1. Implementation study.** The implementation study is examining the work of the Federal, state, and local partners to assess their role in changing systems and in providing innovative services to youth. The team conducted two rounds of visits in 2017 and 2018 to cohort 1 pilots authorized in the 2014 Appropriations Act and will conduct one round of visits in 2019 to the six pilots authorized by the 2015 and 2016 Appropriations Acts.
- 2. Outcomes analysis.** The national evaluation team reported on the administrative data collected from the nine cohort 1 pilots to define the population of youth who participated in P3, the services they received, and the employment and education outcomes they achieved.
- 3. Evaluation technical assistance.** The nine cohort 1 pilots and four of the subsequent six pilots planned to conduct experimental, quasi-experimental, one-group pre/post, or implementation evaluations as part of their grant applications. Through the national evaluation, team members provided ongoing technical assistance to pilot leaders and their independent local evaluators to help strengthen the designs and reporting of their local evaluations. In 2019, the evaluation team will synthesize findings from across the cohort 1 local evaluation reports.

This paper from the evaluation’s implementation study reflects on the early experiences of the nine cohort 1 pilots. The data primarily come from interviews with pilot stakeholders conducted in spring and summer 2017. Across the nine pilots, the evaluation team interviewed 169 stakeholders, including P3 administrators, staff, and partners. The paper begins by describing P3 as envisioned by the Federal government, describes the nine pilots to provide context for the emerging findings, and then presents the early findings. Subsequent products focusing on the implementation study will be based on an additional round of visits to the cohort 1 pilots and the six pilots awarded as part of the 2015 and 2016 Appropriations Acts.

## B. CONCEPTUALIZATION OF P3

P3 applied an existing strategy—performance partnerships—to improve service delivery systems for and outcomes of disconnected youth (see Box 2 for definitions of key terms). Under this strategy implemented by the Environmental Protection Agency since 1995, Federal agencies provided grant recipients with program flexibilities across two or more programs in exchange for improving outcomes for the intended population (U.S. Government Accountability Office 2017).<sup>1</sup> Interest in this strategy grew as a result of a 2011 presidential memorandum (The White House 2011) that encouraged Federal agencies to work with state, local, and tribal governments to eliminate administrative, regulatory, and legislative barriers to produce better results in Federally funded programs.

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<sup>1</sup> The National Environmental Performance Partnership System allowed states flexibility to pool Federal environmental grants for water, air, and other environmental issues to better meet their state and local needs. The Environmental Protection Agency and the states negotiated performance partnership agreements that provide flexibility but also establish performance goals. See <https://www.epa.gov/ocir/national-environmental-performance-partnership-system-nepps> for more information.

**Box 2. Key P3 terms defined**

- **Blended and braided funds.** Both blending and braiding combine funds from two or more separate funding sources to support program services for a particular target population. When blended, however, funds of each source are not allocated or tracked by the individual source. Thus, the funding streams lose their individual identity and are pooled together to meet the population's needs. With braiding, on the other hand, each funding stream retains its initial programmatic and reporting requirements, although some requirements might be waived (AGA Intergovernmental Partnership 2014).
- **Consulting agency.** The Federal P3 agency responsible for monitoring a P3 pilot on behalf of the Federal partners. OMB assigned the consulting agency based on the discretionary program funds identified for the pilot. Designated consulting agencies for the nine cohort 1 pilots included DOL (four pilots), ED (three pilots), HHS (one pilot), and CNCS (one pilot).
- **Disconnected youth.** Youth who are not engaged in school or work, or who are at risk of becoming unengaged. P3 further defined these youth as ages 14 to 24 and from low-income households. They could be homeless, in foster care, or involved in the juvenile justice system.
- **Federal partners** Consolidated Appropriations Act of 2014 authorized five agencies—ED, HHS, DOL, CNCS, and IMLS—to enter into P3 performance partnership agreements with state, local, or tribal governments. Subsequent authorizations expanded P3 to HUD and DOJ. OMB convened the agencies and coordinated the government's overall efforts.
- **Lead pilot agency.** The partner agency tasked with operationalizing the P3 authority in the pilot. In seven of the nine cohort 1 pilots, this agency was also the grantee of record. In two pilots, the grantee designated another partner to serve in this role. The lead pilot agency typically held decision-making authority over daily operations, policy, programming, or convened partners.
- **P3 authority.** The authority allowed awarded pilots, led by state, local, or tribal governments, with flexibility to test innovative strategies to improve the outcomes of their disconnected youth. Pilots proposed to pool together the funds from at least two Federal discretionary programs, requesting waivers as needed to serve their youth efficiently.
- **Performance partnerships.** A strategy used to provide grant recipients of Federal programs with flexibility to blend or braid across two or more of these programs and obtain waivers in exchange for improving outcomes for the intended population.
- **Pilot partner agency.** P3 grantees were encouraged by the Federal agencies to collaborate with youth-serving and other organizations, as appropriate. Pilots partnered with many organizations, such as those providing workforce, education, justice, housing, library, and other services.
- **Waivers.** Waivers from Federal discretionary programs provide state and local providers with the flexibility to organize their program and systems to better meet the needs of its population. Requests for waivers from programmatic requirements are submitted to the appropriate Federal agency for approval.

Discussions among Federal and external stakeholders in response to the memorandum led to Federal interest in developing performance partnerships for programs serving disconnected youth. In 2012, the Interagency Forum on Disconnected Youth, a collaboration formed by the Office of Management and Budget (OMB), ED, HHS, HUD, DOJ, and DOL, released a request

for information to learn from states and local areas about the barriers impeding their efforts to serve their disconnected youth (U.S. Government 2014; U.S. Government Accountability Office 2017). The challenges identified through this effort included the following:

- Limited understanding of strategies and programs that work
- Lack of coordination and alignment across the systems, especially education and workforce systems, that serve youth
- Program requirements and policies that make it hard to engage the neediest youth and holistically service their needs
- Multiple and fragmented data systems that inhibit the flow of information
- Other administrative requirements that do not allow partners to comprehensively serve the disconnected youth population

These efforts led to the authorization of P3 in the Consolidated Appropriations Act of 2014 (see Figure 1 for key milestones).

**Figure 1. Early P3 milestones**



Based on the Act and stakeholder input, the Federal agencies designed P3 to test the following hypothesis: awarding flexibilities to states and localities to pool funds across discretionary programs and to obtain waivers to programmatic requirements would reduce barriers to providing effective services. This would result in changed service delivery systems and improved outcomes for youth ages 14 to 24 (U.S. Department of Education 2014; U.S. Government 2014). To test this hypothesis, the Federal agencies issued a notice inviting applications that laid out their vision for P3, which included the following:

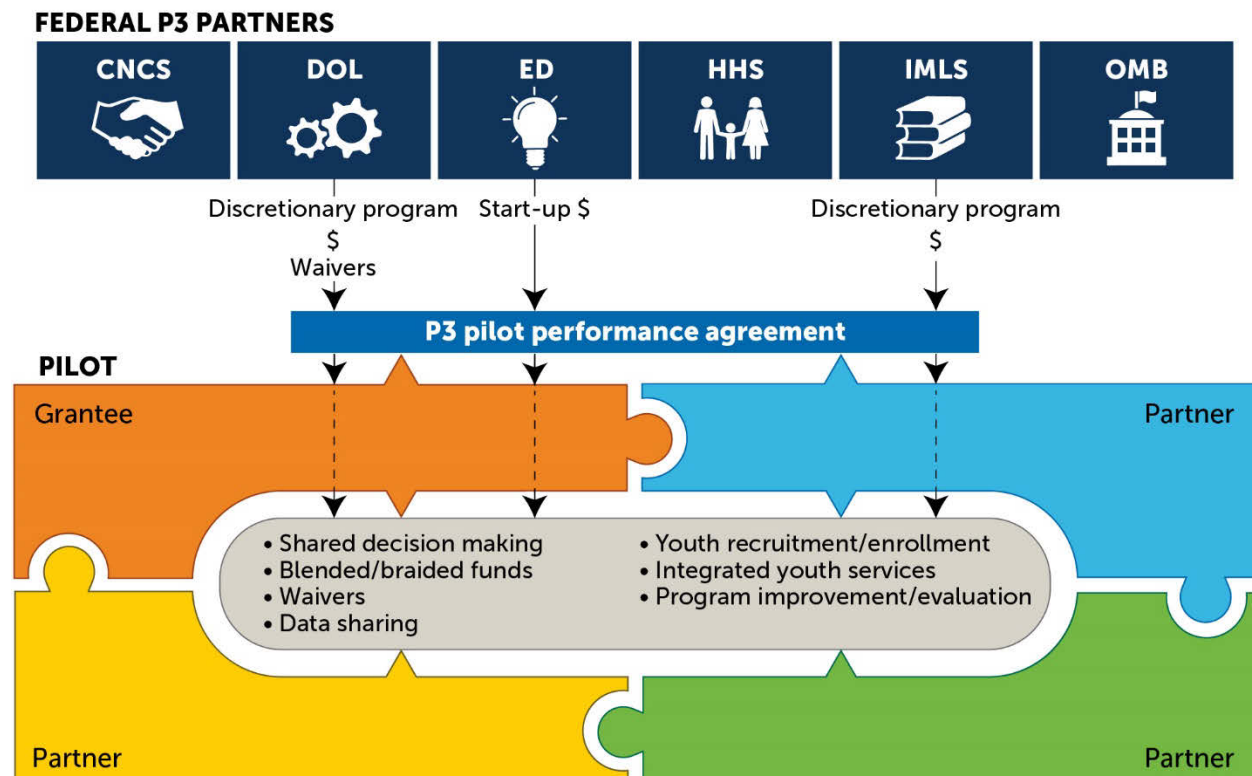
- ***Developing a coordinated service delivery system.*** The Federal partners encouraged the grantees to collaborate with governmental and other organizations from across different domains, such as education and labor, to create an integrated service delivery system to better meet the needs of their youth.
- ***Designing innovative, promising approaches to serving disconnected youth.*** These partners would assess the needs of their youth and together design an intervention or set of services that would best meet the needs of these youth or specific subgroups of youth. As defined by the Act, disconnected youth were ages 14 to 24 and from low-income households; and “either homeless, in foster care, involved in the juvenile justice system, unemployed, or not enrolled in or at risk of dropping out of an educational institution” (U.S. Congress 2014). Federal agencies encouraged applicants to be creative in their program designs.

- ***Identifying the funding sources and needed waivers to support the approach.*** P3 was not a typical grant program. The Act did not authorize additional program funds for P3, and the notice inviting applications instructed applicants to identify two or more existing discretionary program funds from P3 partner agencies—DOL, ED, HHS, CNCS, and IMLS—to blend or braid in support of their approach. When funds are blended to support a program or services, they become one funding source and lose their initial program identity, but braided funds are used jointly to support funds while retaining their programmatic identity and requirements (see Box 2). To further support their approach, pilots identified and requested needed waivers from these funding sources’ programmatic requirements, such as allowable activities, eligibility requirements, and reporting.
- ***Expanding the knowledge base of approaches that work.*** The ultimate goal is to improve the outcomes of youth. In exchange for flexibility, pilots committed to improving participating youths’ education, employment, and other outcomes. P3 required pilots to have the capability to share and use data to assess performance and improve upon their strategies. The notice also established priorities for experimental and quasi-experimental evaluations of at least one component of a pilot’s services.

Although the Act did not authorize additional funds for P3, Federal partners recognized the need for funds as “incentives to participate in P3” and for the “additional coordination and collaboration” required to implement the performance agreements that pilots would enter into with one or more of the Federal partners (U.S. Department of Education 2014). These funds were designated for activities, such as partner collaboration, governance, evaluation, and data system enhancements. Three Federal agencies—DOL, ED, and CNCS—together allocated \$7 million for start-up funds for up to 10 pilots as part of cohort 1.

Under P3, an awarded pilot entered into a performance agreement with two or more of the Federal agencies. Each performance agreement specified the Federal agency that would serve as the consulting agency, that is, the agency serving as the grant’s program office; the discretionary funding sources supporting the pilot’s activities; any approved waivers; and the performance measures by which the pilot would be held accountable for improving participating youths’ outcomes. ED, as the lead Federal agency, entered into and administered the agreements on behalf of the Federal partners and oversaw the disbursement of start-up funds.

In the illustrative pilot presented in Figure 2, three Federal agencies—DOL, ED, and IMLS—entered into a performance agreement with the grantee and its three partners for a P3 pilot. As the pilot had identified discretionary program funds from DOL and IMLS for the pilot, these two agencies signed the agreement, approving the use of their program funds and any waivers. The other Federal partners, although not directly involved in this pilot, continued to coordinate policy at the Federal level. At the pilot level, the four entities worked collaboratively to design the approach to serving the target population of disconnected youth, blended or braided their identified program funds to meet the needs of these youth, shared data and other resources, and provided services to youth. In this illustrative example, the grantee received the DOL funds as well as the P3 start-up funds through ED as the lead Federal agency, and one of the partner entities received the IMLS discretionary program funding. As demonstrated by the interlocking pieces, the pilot entities are intended to form an integrated system for serving disconnected youth.

**Figure 2. Illustrative P3 pilot**

CNCS = Corporation for National and Community Service; DOL = U.S. Department of Labor; ED = U.S. Department of Education; HHS = U.S. Department of Health and Human Services; IMLS = Institute of Museum and Library Services; OMB = Office of Management and Budget.

## C. COHORT 1 PILOTS: OPERATIONALIZING THE P3 AUTHORITY

The Federal partners announced the nine cohort 1 pilots in October 2015 and, by April 2016, all pilots had signed performance agreements (U.S. Government Accountability Office 2017). As encouraged by the Federal partners in the notice inviting applications, the pilots put forth various approaches to implementing the P3 authority to serve the disconnected youth in their communities. These included how the pilots chose to operationalize their flexibilities, partnerships, the types and quantities of services available through those partners, and how they defined the P3 concept at the local level.

The pilots were awarded in communities across the country to grantees that included a mayor's office, a police department, social service agencies, a city, county regional workforce agencies, and a tribal entity (see Table 1). Each pilot received up to a maximum of \$700,000 in start-up grant funds to support its efforts, including coordinating partners to serve their disconnected youth and supporting a local evaluation.<sup>2</sup> The grantee served as the lead pilot agency in seven of the nine pilots. In the remaining two pilots, the grantee designated a partner organization to serve

<sup>2</sup> In September 2016, eight of the nine pilots received supplemental funds, which ranged from \$48,000 to \$175,000.



as the lead pilot agency—one pilot identified a well-known community-based organization (CBO) to lead the pilot and another selected an education-focused partner.

**Table 1. Cohort 1 P3 pilots**

Pilot location	Grant recipient	Federal consulting agency
Baton Rouge, Louisiana	Office of the Mayor–President of Baton Rouge	ED
Broward County, Florida	Children’s Services Council of Broward County	ED
Chicago, Illinois	Chicago Department of Family and Support Services	HHS
Eastern Kentucky	Eastern Kentucky Concentrated Employment Programs	ED
Indianapolis, Indiana	City of Indianapolis Metropolitan Police Department	DOL
Los Angeles, California	City of Los Angeles	DOL
Oklahoma	Oklahoma Department of Human Services	DOL
Seattle, Washington	Workforce Development–Council of Seattle-King County	DOL
Ysleta del Sur Pueblo, Texas	Ysleta del Sur Pueblo	CNCS

Source: P3 pilot on-site data collection and document review, 2017.  
 CNCS = Corporation for National and Community Service; DOL = U.S. Department of Labor; ED = U.S. Department of Education; HHS = U.S. Department of Health and Human Services.

Pilots developed two main administrative structures: the grantee or its designated lead agency in five pilots generally held decision-making authority over daily operations, policy, and programming; and, in the other four pilots, advisory committees or work groups made most pilot decisions. The grantee or lead agency generally convened these committee meetings, with partners expected to contribute and solve problems related to the challenges facing the pilots. In this section, we describe the pilots’ approaches to P3; in the next section, we discuss emerging findings from their efforts in the first year.

***P3 applicants in eight of the nine pilots focused the authority granted by P3 to develop a program to serve disconnected youth instead of focusing on changing their systems for serving youth.*** In planning for their P3 pilots, these grantees reported during site visits that they started by considering how they could leverage the available P3 start-up funds and available discretionary program funds to better connect their youth to available services or develop an intervention for them. Generally, the partners in these communities reported that they focused more on the immediate service needs of their youth than on changing their communities’ systems for serving disconnected youth.

***One of the pilots operationalized P3 as an approach to engage more partners in systems change efforts involving disconnected youth.*** This pilot had conducted previous work through local initiatives to identify administrative barriers across partners and funding streams that made it difficult to serve disconnected youth. Pilot leaders reported that P3 presented the opportunity

to eliminate some of these administrative barriers for partners to coordinate and better serve youth.

Through P3, the partners at this pilot were able to engage other involved systems (such as probation and social services) to determine a system-wide approach that could serve all youth and find the appropriate partner services for each youth based on need. System-level partners staffed a set of work groups to design policies and procedures for different elements of the pilots, such as identifying waivers and defining outcomes measures and data sources.

***Pilots built on existing work and expertise to identify disconnected youth populations they aimed to serve.*** In planning for the services to provide to youth under P3, the pilots considered previous initiatives to identify the disconnected youth population that would benefit from the flexibility offered through P3. These initiatives ranged from more than a decade of experience trying to coordinate services across multiple partners to more recent taskforces or grant opportunities. One pilot's partners brought long-standing relationships and coordinated efforts to identify administrative barriers in serving the disconnected youth population. More recently, in 2014, as part of another pilot, the mayor convened the Your Life Matters Violence Prevention Task Force to identify issues and needs of disconnected youth. This pilot sought to engage youth in two public housing developments, because the task force reported that a large disconnected youth population resided there. Similarly, a previous grant opportunity enabled another pilot to assess the needs of youth in foster care and youth at risk of homelessness, and the pilot identified its target population based on these findings.

***All pilots operationalized P3 by identifying disconnected youth and providing them with services.*** In seven pilots, partners provided case management services to youth, linking them to existing program and services within their communities. Since this involved individualized referrals and supports, not all youth within a pilot received the same suite of services. Many of these services were provided through the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA) Title I Youth program, and made possible through the braiding of funds and flexibility in eligibility requirements (such as counting foster youth as out of school for purposes of meeting the out-of-school youth expenditure requirement).

As an example, one pilot had dedicated P3 staff provide individualized case management and referrals to youth in seven counties. An in-school coordinator provided alternative school students with counseling, mentoring, and service referrals. The in-school coordinator also connected youth to local opportunities and training options, such as industrial cardiopulmonary resuscitation and child development associate certification, and hosted field trips to college campuses and local businesses. Participating youth could access WIOA Title I Youth program services simultaneously. The P3 coordinator who worked with out-of-school youth provided mentoring and referrals, and connected youth to apprenticeship and work experience programs and to navigators in local colleges to help them transition into colleges. A youth parent coordinator provided mentorship and referrals as well, and established a pantry for youth with child care necessities, providing items such as diapers. Both in- and out-of-school youth participated in opportunities fairs.

Two pilots developed specific interventions for their target populations. P3 enabled one pilot to expand a subsidized work experience and mentoring program for young mothers of children in Head Start or Early Head Start. Another pilot provided a 10-month education, employment, and cultural training program for tribal youth ages 14 to 24.

*To support the services planned for youth, most pilots planned to braid funding sources.* Pilots identified discretionary programs that would be blended or braided to support their planned services for youth, and most had approval from DOL to use WIOA Title I Youth program funds (Table 2). As noted by the U.S. Government Accountability Office (2017), four pilots planned to blend funds.

**Table 2. Cohort 1 P3 pilots' Federal discretionary program funds**

Pilot location	Federal discretionary program funds	Plans to blend or braid funding
Baton Rouge, Louisiana	Carl D. Perkins Career and Technical Act (ED)	Braid
	Elementary and Secondary Education Act, Title 1, Part D (ED)	Braid
	WIOA Title I Youth (DOL)	Braid
Broward County, Florida	21st Century Community Learning Centers (ED)	Blend
	Library Services and Technology Act: Grants to States (IMLS)	Braid
	WIOA Title I Youth (DOL)	Blend
Chicago, Illinois	Head Start (HHS)	Braid
	WIOA Title I Youth (DOL)	Braid
Eastern Kentucky	Full Service Community Schools (ED)	Braid
	GEAR UP (ED)	Blend
	Promise Neighborhoods (ED)	Blend
	WIOA Title I Youth (DOL)	Blend
Indianapolis, Indiana	WIOA Title I Youth (DOL)	Blend
	YouthBuild (DOL)	Blend
Los Angeles, California	Transitional Living Program (HHS)	Braid
	WIOA Title I Youth (DOL)	Braid
Oklahoma	AmeriCorps (CNCS)	Braid
	Now is the Time—Healthy Transitions (HHS)	Braid
	WIOA Title I Youth (DOL)	Braid
Seattle, Washington	AmeriCorps (CNCS)	Braid
	Reentry Employment Opportunities (DOL)	Braid
	WIOA Title I Youth (DOL)	Braid
Ysleta del Sur Pueblo, Texas	AmeriCorps (CNCS)	Blend
	Native American Library Services: Enhancement grant (IMLS)	Blend

Source: P3 pilot on-site data collection and document review, 2017.

CNCS = Corporation for National and Community Service; DOL = U.S. Department of Labor; ED = U.S. Department of Education; HHS = U.S. Department of Health and Human Services; IMLS = Institute of Museum and Library Services; WIOA = Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act.

Seven of the nine pilots planned to braid funding from at least one discretionary program. For example, one pilot planned to braid funds from DOL, HHS, and CNCS programs to provide case management services to youth. In addition to braiding funds, two of these pilots also planned to blend funds from multiple sources. The remaining two of the nine pilots planned only to blend funds; one planned to blend funds from two DOL discretionary programs and the other to blend funds from CNCS and IMLS programs. However, as discussed below, at the time of site visits in 2017, two of the four that planned to blend funding were not doing so.

***The Federal P3 agencies awarded 25 statutory waivers to these Federal discretionary programs.*** These waivers were awarded to eight of the nine pilots. One pilot’s performance agreement did not include waivers. Although the pilot requested waivers in its application, the Federal partners did not grant them, because either they were not needed or the agency from which they were requested was not included in the P3 authorization.

Twelve of the waivers awarded pertained to the WIOA Title I Youth program (Table 3). These waivers fell into three main categories: (1) youth eligibility requirements, such as basing eligibility on schoolwide rather than individual income designations and counting in-school foster, homeless, and runaway youth as out-of-school youth for purposes of meeting the out-of-school youth expenditure requirement; (2) the minimum percentage of expenditures to be spent on out-of-school youth; and (3) WIOA performance indicators—in particular, allowing program participants to use P3 measures instead of the WIOA performance indicators.

**Table 3. Intended use of Federal waivers received by cohort 1 P3 pilots**

Type of waiver	Description	Number of pilots (of 9)	Number of waivers
<b>WIOA Title 1 Youth program</b>			
Youth eligibility	Accepted alternate definitions of <i>in-school</i> and <i>out-of-school youth</i>	4	4
Out-of-school expenditures	Negotiated revised out-of-school youth expenditures	3	3
Performance indicators	Allowed use of alternative performance indicators	5	5
<b>Eligibility requirements of other programs</b>			
Youth eligibility	Expanded grade, income, or other youth eligibility requirements	5	6
Other	Expanded eligibility requirements, such as type of school	2	3
<b>Administrative</b>			
Fiscal match	Waived match requirement for portion allocated to P3	2	2
Subcontracting	Allowed for subcontracting ED funds	2	2
<b>Total</b>			<b>25</b>

Source: Pilots’ performance partnership agreements.

Note: This table includes approved requests for statutory waivers, but does not signify actual use of the waiver. Nonstatutory requests are not included here.

ED = U.S. Department of Education; WIOA = Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act.

Nine of the remaining granted waivers addressed other programs’ eligibility requirements. For example, one pilot received a waiver from DOL’s Reentry Employment Opportunities (REO) program allowing the program to include foster care and homeless youth as exemptions to eligibility rules. Without the waiver, REO participants must be 18 years or older. Another pilot received a waiver from the Carl D. Perkins Career and Technical Education Act, which does not allow services to youth below grade 7 who were 14 years or older and overage for their grade. This approved waiver allowed the pilot to serve youth beginning in the 6th grade. The other four waivers were administrative in nature, waiving a required funding match or allowing for the subcontracting of particular program funds.

**Table 4. Cohort 1 P3 pilots' target populations, number of youth, and setting**

Pilot location	Target population	Number of youth over course of pilot	Setting
Baton Rouge, Louisiana	In-school youth	84	One alternative high school and one alternative middle school
Broward County, Florida	In-school youth	420	Six high schools
Chicago, Illinois	In- and out-of-school parenting youth	210	Head Start or Early Head Start centers, and participants' homes
Eastern Kentucky	In- and out-of-school youth	1,000	County school districts' regular and alternative schools and other settings (such as a training academy, jails, or detention centers)
Indianapolis, Indiana	In- and out-of-school youth	80	Two public housing complexes
Los Angeles, California	Out-of-school youth	7,475	13 education and employment centers for youth
Oklahoma	In-school foster youth	150	Public assistance offices
Seattle, Washington	Out-of-school youth	100	3 workforce centers
Ysleta del Sur Pueblo, Texas	In- and out-of-school youth	85	Tribal community

Source: P3 pilot on-site data collection and document review, 2017.

***Using discretionary program funds supported by the waivers, the pilots served in- and out-of-school youth, and two engaged a specific subpopulation of youth.*** Four pilots chose to serve in- and out-of-school youth, three only in-school youth, and two focused on out-of-school youth (Table 4). Seven pilots did not intentionally or exclusively reach out to a special population, such as parenting or foster care youth. For them, engaging youth with different characteristics was part of a broad strategy to recruit disconnected youth. WIOA Title I Youth program waivers that renegotiated the proportion of funds serving out-of-school enabled pilots to serve more in-school youth.

Two of the nine pilots solely focused on a specific subpopulation of disconnected youth. In particular, one pilot was designed specifically for young parents of children younger than age 5 in Head Start or Early Head Start programs. These youth could be in- or out-of-school. In the other, the pilot selected in-school foster youth ages 14 to 17 who would be transitioning to independent living as the target population. The pilot identified this group as most in need of coordinated employment and education services.

The pilots also planned to serve different numbers of youth with their approved discretionary program funding that were procured outside of the P3 authority. Based on their use of discretionary program funds and interpretation of the notice inviting applications, pilots intended to serve from 80 to 7,475 youth over the course of the pilot.

## **D. EARLY LESSONS AND CHALLENGES IMPLEMENTING THE P3 AUTHORITY**

Beyond providing outcome-focused services to disconnected youth, the vision for P3 was to change the way state and local systems provided those services. As pilots sought to implement the P3 authority they had been granted, lessons and challenges emerged in the following areas:

(1) lead agencies' role in convening partners from across different systems; (2) implementing the flexibilities to streamline or coordinate the services provided to youth; (3) expanding the partner networks that serve the youth; and (4) sharing data across partners to better address youths' needs. In this section, we describe the early lessons and challenges that emerged in these areas as pilots sought to implement the P3 authority.

### 1. Lead agencies supported realization of P3 authority

Typically, systems change requires a champion or backbone organization to set a common agenda and goals, establish communications across partners, and lead partners in breaking down the silos inherent in the system (Hargreaves 2010; Turner et al. 2012). For P3, a strong backbone organization had to understand the existing system and ways in which the P3 authority could help ease administrative burdens and have the capacity to convene multiple partners on behalf of the youth.

***Pilots that were beginning to address their local systems were led by state or local agencies that frequently convened and coordinated with local youth-serving organizations.*** Based on site visit data collected across the pilots, the presence of a strong lead pilot agency helped seven pilots navigate the early systems change work and convene the appropriate partners to serve their intended youth population.

- For three pilots, a local government entity served as the grantee and lead pilot agency, coordinating all P3 activities. In one of these pilots, the staff of the lead agency facilitated a monthly meeting at which all key partners discussed any issues or concerns with implementing their pilot, the availability of services, and policy decisions. The advisory committee then made all major decisions, such as the types of services to offer in school and field trip destinations. In the other two pilots, local government agencies also convened partners for advisory meetings, oversaw the services available to disconnected youth through the pilots, and ensured that funds and waivers were used appropriately.
- In two pilots, the workforce partner served as the lead pilot agency and the grantee. These agencies brought their experience providing employment services to youth primarily through the WIOA Title I Youth program and leveraged their established network of providers and resources available through the workforce system. P3 became a part of the agency's larger strategy for serving youth. For example, one of these pilots created sector-based career pathways for P3 youth and engaged employers to address youths' needs for employment and training. Box 3 provides a case study example of how the other pilot's lead agency took a systems approach to coordinate with partners to serve youth.
- In one pilot, a workforce agency as the grantee and an education-focused entity as the lead agency brought many youth-serving entities together to support the region's disconnected youth.
- A human services agency in one pilot, as the lead pilot agency and grantee, capitalized on its existing relationships and experience with a similar initiative to bring together service providers. The agency had the authority and expertise to bring partners to the table and address challenges as they arose. For example, with a first cohort of participants, the pilot partners experienced delays with the P3 start-up funds and their own internal accounting

process. The agency worked through these challenges and had smoothed out the process for the second cohort.

***Two pilots experienced staff turnover and lacked understanding of the P3 authority.*** In one pilot, the lead agency experienced staff turnover, limiting institutional knowledge of P3 and its ability to create a network of providers to serve youth. The partners that had been included in the application reported that they were often confused by the goals of the pilot, rarely met with the lead pilot agency, and were unfamiliar with the flexibilities available through the P3 authority. In the other pilot, partners reported that the lead agency lacked understanding of the service environment and was not able to successfully engage partners inside and outside of its own agency.

### **Box 3. Los Angeles P3: A strong lead agency brings together multiple partners to take a systems approach**

In Los Angeles, the lead partner agency brought together more than 40 partners to use the P3 authority to evaluate the system of providers serving disconnected youth. The lead partner agency relied on its partners to participate in work groups with specific goals related to improving services for disconnected youth. The pilot convened the following work groups to design activities, set priorities, and assess pilot activities:

- **Partnership Advisory Committee.** This committee consisted largely of local elected officials overseeing youth development work in the Los Angeles region. Its purpose was to ease communications across the various governmental entities.
- **Operational Working Group.** This group focused on the delivery systems for P3, considering how to create enrollment and referral processes and bring together partners at the provider level.
- **Data, Evaluation, and Research Work Group.** This group helped define outcome measures, create data-sharing agreements, work with the local data system on access issues, and facilitate the evaluation.
- **Policy and Waiver Work Group.** This group developed and monitored the list of waiver requests.
- **Steering Work Group.** This group oversaw overall coordination and communication of work group activities.
- **Strategic Plan Work Group.** This group was created to develop the strategic plan.

The pilot provided P3 services at the city's 13 YouthSource Centers. Managed by the lead partner agency, these YouthSource Centers served disconnected youth with WIOA Title I Youth program dollars and other state and local funding (for example, summer youth employment through the mayor's office general funds) in high-needs areas. To be eligible for WIOA Title I Youth program services, Los Angeles required youth to register for P3 and complete P3 soft skills training.

## **2. Fully using flexibilities proved difficult**

Although generally reported as useful, all the pilots reported challenges with aspects of the flexibilities offered by the P3 authority. The pilots' leaders appreciated the flexibility to bring together different funding sources to support their pilots and discussed the ways in which the waivers benefited them, especially in expanding the eligible youth population for their planned services. However, pilots encountered challenges in fully realizing these flexibilities, including (1) lack of understanding and unclear guidance offered around the flexibility, (2) state- and local-level reluctance to recognize or support the Federally granted flexibilities, and (3) the value of implementing the flexibilities given the small numbers of youth that some of the pilots served (Figure 3). Even with these challenges, some pilots were able to demonstrate successes in using flexibilities.

**Figure 3. Summary of challenges implementing flexibilities**

**Understanding** the flexibility afforded by P3  
7 pilots



**Obtaining buy-in** from state and local partners  
4 pilots



**Weighing effort** needed to implement flexibility for few students  
2 pilots

Note: The number of pilots totals more than nine because pilots could encounter multiple challenges.

**Leaders in seven pilots reported that the flexibilities afforded by P3 were not clear or as flexible as they expected.** Leaders in five of the initial cohort 1 pilots indicated that P3 was not as flexible in practice as expected, starting with the negotiations on the performance indicators included in their final performance agreement. For example, leaders in one pilot noted that Federal agencies required indicators that focused on employment when the purpose of the pilot was to serve in-school youth exclusively. In addition, because these pilots' leaders understood the intention of the authority as permitting state and local providers with flexibility, they did not always understand why some of their requests for flexibility were denied.

In seven pilots, leaders also found the flexibilities—both blending and braiding of the funding sources and the waiver identification process—difficult to identify and implement. Indeed, interviews indicated that three pilots were unclear on the difference between the two financing strategies. They also reported challenges in determining what waivers were needed or appropriate for their planned use of the services.

In general, leaders across these initial pilots indicated that P3 could be strengthened with more guidance and information from the Federal P3 agencies. They indicated that they needed additional information or training on the processes for blending and braiding of funds from across Federal agencies. Similarly, staff described the waiver process as challenging and said they would have benefited from guidance from the Federal P3 agencies—in addition to the information provided in the notice inviting applications and the accompanying bidders' conferences.

**While implementing P3 flexibilities, four pilots experienced challenges obtaining buy-in from state and local partners.** These pilots found that state agencies and local partners had either little knowledge that granting waivers would be part of a larger Federal initiative or little interest in granting flexibilities. As a result, the pilots encountered difficulties when working with state agencies and local partners to implement their P3 pilots. One pilot met resistance from a state agency to accommodate requests to change how the state allocated a particular discretionary program's funding. This led to months of discussions across agencies to allow for the flexibility. In another of these pilots, respondents reported that local partner agencies had previous experiences in which funding flexibilities resulted in penalties for disallowed costs that had to be



repaid. As a result, rather than blending funding agencies' different discretionary program funds, this pilot braided the funds to support the youth services.

***Partners in two pilots reported that they did not use their WIOA Title I Youth program waivers, given the small number of youth served by this program.*** In these pilots, partner staff noted that the awarded flexibility created additional paperwork outside of their normal processes, and the number of youth receiving P3 services did not justify this administrative burden. For example, in one pilot, the WIOA Title I Youth program administrator reported that P3 referred fewer than five youth for services. As a result, tracking P3 performance measures instead of the WIOA performance indicators for these youth, which was granted by a waiver, would have required additional effort.

***Still, six pilots reported blending or braiding funds across multiple discretionary programs.*** Two pilots blended at least part of their discretionary funds. In both instances, one agency was the grant recipient of the different discretionary programs and could more easily blend the funds (see Box 4). No pilots fully blended funds from all sources to provide services to youth. Five pilots, including one that blended programs' funds, successfully braided at least some of their funding. For example, using different sources of discretionary funds, one pilot paid for coaches and career college counseling for youth and their parents, and provided meals for youth. In the process, all funding streams that paid for each piece remained visible, in part because agencies required separate reporting requirements. Similarly, another pilot used a source of funds to provide educational supports for youth to complete their high school degree or high school equivalency certificate, whereas other funds supported case management and workforce development services. These funding streams were braided, not blended. The remaining two pilots had not accessed their planned discretionary program funds by the time of the first visit and, thus, had not braided or blended the funding.

#### **Box 4. Eastern Kentucky case study example of opportunities and challenges associated with using flexibilities**

In its application, Eastern Kentucky proposed to combine Federal funds from the WIOA Title I Youth program and multiple ED programs—including the GEAR UP and Promise Neighborhood programs—to link the area's in- and out-of-school youth with available education and employment activities. To ensure that the available funds met the needs of all youth, the pilot proposed to blend funds from most of these funding sources and use them to support P3 coordinators, subcontractors, and participant services. The pilot requested a set of waivers to result in one program with shared eligibility standards, performance standards, and monitoring.

However, due to existing contracts that the local WIOA administrative agency had with its Youth program providers, those funds could not be blended. The pilot did blend the ED program funds. To provide a comprehensive set of services, the pilot braided the WIOA Title I Youth program funding with the ED funding. The WIOA Title I Youth providers offered employment-related services to P3 youth in and out of school. They coordinated the work of those providers and, as needed, helped fund special events with the P3 blended dollars. Using blended ED and P3 start-up funds, the pilot's coordinators reached out to youth in alternative schools, jails, and other settings to provide them with counseling and referrals to connect them to education- and employment-related services.

### 3. Partner networks expanded to serve disconnected youth

To operationalize P3, pilots brought together partners that could serve their target youth population, whether in- or out-of-school youth. As discussed above, pilots based their plans on prior work and the partners that they had worked with before. Still, most pilots pulled together prior partners from across many domains to support P3. These partners reported positive experiences coordinating with others in the network.

*All pilots' partner networks extended beyond workforce and education to provide a menu of services for disconnected youth.* As the ultimate goal of P3 was to improve youths' education and employment outcomes, all pilots included workforce and education partners. Even if they had worked together in some capacity before, pilots reported that P3 offered an expanded opportunity for the workforce and education systems to work together. For one pilot, these connections created a more streamlined process for serving disconnected youth across a wide geographic area with multiple programs and funding sources.

In addition to workforce and education partners, pilots also brought other partners to the table. It is worth noting that not all of these partners were working together for the first time, but P3 brought them all together under the one initiative. Only four of the pilots reported that they brought together at least one partner that had not worked with the other entities before. Partners represented many different entities, including the following:



**Community-based organizations.** Seven pilots included CBO partners to help recruit youth for services, provide services, and contribute to system-building efforts. For example, in one pilot, a local CBO provided home visits and held weekly socialization meetings for youth involved in pilot activities.



**Justice-related organizations.** Four pilots engaged justice-involved youth through these organizations. Police departments, juvenile detention centers, and court systems served in pilot advisory committees or as direct service providers. For example, in one pilot, the judicial department provided educational presentations to youth on the consequences of negative behaviors, responsible citizenship, and the court's services.



**Human services agencies.** Three pilots used human services agencies to provide supportive services to disconnected youth. In one pilot, the local human services agency actively engaged with other P3 partners to connect youth who visit workforce centers with cash assistance, food assistance, and available supportive services such as transportation assistance through these programs.



**Housing agencies.** Three pilots partnered with housing agencies for P3. Housing agencies provided services in two pilots, and participated in the advisory committee in the third. One of these pilots specifically tried to engage youth at two local housing agency apartment buildings. In another pilot, the housing agency used information collected through an assessment to identify needs and provide temporary housing placements for youth while working on long-term stability.



**Health providers.** Three pilots included local health system partners to provide mental health and substance abuse services. In one pilot, a local health system provider hosted mental health support groups open to the community that disconnected youth could attend.



**Local library systems.** In two pilots, library representatives attended P3 partner meetings, provided space, and helped identify disconnected youth in need of services.

**Some planned partnerships did not come to fruition.** In four pilots, early staff turnover and shifting priorities of new leaders contributed to an organization's lack of involvement in P3. In one of these pilots, the workforce agency director position turned over. The previous director contributed to the planning of the pilot, but the new director had little prior information or engagement with P3. In the case of two pilots, the lead pilot agency was unable to invest time and other resources needed to fully engage their potential partners. The fourth pilot did not partner with some youth-serving organizations, as the flexibilities related to their programs did not materialize.

#### 4. P3 partners reported limited sharing of data

To track progress toward the goals of implementing the P3 authority and systems change, pilots were required to regularly collect and assess data from across their partners. Collecting and sharing data among partners are key requirements in the systems change process (Bernstein and Martin-Caughey 2017; Hargreaves 2010). Pilots encountered several challenges in using and sharing data across partners, including not being able to implement plans for shared data systems, lack of capabilities among existing systems, and confidentiality concerns.

**Pilots encountered roadblocks in creating shared data systems.** In their applications, five pilots proposed to create shared data systems among all local P3 partners. The goals of these shared systems were to ease the administrative burden of collecting the same data on disconnected youth and to streamline the process of delivering services across partners. However, as of the site visits in 2017, none had completed the development of such a system: three pilots were working to create a shared system; one had decided not to share data; and one determined that it did not need a complex data system.

- The three pilots working to create a shared system reported that this effort required more time and partner buy-in than originally anticipated. For example, one pilot wanted to grant partners access to an existing state workforce system because the system could provide partners with the needed information on youth and could serve as a central point to record referrals and services that youth receive from all partners. In this effort, which was ongoing at the time of the site visit, the pilot leaders reported that convincing the state that this access could benefit the partners—and ultimately the disconnected youth being served by all the partners—required significant time and several conversations.
- Although one pilot initially intended to share data with partners, it decided that the new data system would only serve the lead pilot agency. Pilot staff reported that partners wanted to

maintain their own separate systems. In addition, the lead pilot agency experienced delays in implementing the new data system and therefore focused on training its staff on the system, rather than expanding it to include partners.

- The remaining pilot found that it did not need a complex data system as it had originally envisioned during the grant application phase. This pilot explored several options of available data systems and decided that an Excel spreadsheet with data collected from partners would suit the reporting requirements.

***Instead, pilot partners maintained their own data systems to record services for disconnected youth and reported data, as needed, to the P3 grantee.*** Across the nine pilots, most pilot partners maintained their own systems and sent only relevant information to the lead partner agency for reporting purposes. These systems did not have the capability to share information directly or link data. For example, in one pilot, the lead pilot agency said that it did not have access to workforce or education data. These two systems had never been linked before and there was no intention to connect the systems. Therefore, to collect information on youth served through P3 partners, the lead pilot agency had to request data from all partners. These data were then entered into an Excel spreadsheet for coordination and reporting purposes. In fact, lead partner agencies in six pilots relied on Microsoft Excel spreadsheets and other work-arounds to collect data for reporting. The other three pilots used multiple existing data systems to collect participants' information. These pilots typically received printed reports from multiple partners' systems for reporting purposes.

***Privacy concerns hindered pilot partners' ability to share youths' data.*** Partners in all pilots cited privacy concerns as the main reason for not sharing data about their youth participants. In particular, education partners mentioned Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act requirements or administrative regulations that hindered sharing the youths' education data. For example, one pilot had a data-sharing agreement between the human services agency and school district that predated P3. However, the pilot was unable to collect all the participant-level data it requested because of confidentiality concerns.

## E. MOVING FORWARD

Information collected during the early stage of the P3 pilots suggest that pilots focused on implementing their interventions for their intended youth, rather than taking full advantage of the flexibilities offered to change their systems for serving youth. At the same time, the following findings emerged from pilots' early experiences operationalizing the P3 authority:

1. Pilots that were starting to make system changes were led by agencies that frequently convened and coordinated with local youth-serving organizations. These lead agencies were able to bring together partners from across different program areas, such as education and labor.
2. All pilots brought together a diverse set of partners. Pilots indicated that government and community partners were willing to work across their different program areas, such as education and labor, to coordinate their youth-related services.

3. Not all leaders of pilots' grantees and their partners had a full understanding of the available flexibilities. They reported that a clearer understanding was important for pilots to successfully blend or braid existing funding streams to support the youth intended for services and to remove other programmatic barriers that limit how these funds support youth-related services.
4. In the first year, none of the pilots completed the development of a shared data system, largely due to logistical and privacy concerns. For purposes of P3, they developed work-arounds to share data about their participants and for reporting.

Future papers from the evaluation of P3 will explore these and other implementation topics involved in the realization of the P3 authority. These papers will provide more information about the efforts of the nine cohort 1 pilots and the six pilots awarded in subsequent cohorts. In addition, a paper will synthesize the results of the cohort 1 pilots' local evaluations to document the pilots' contributions to the evidence of what works for disconnected youth.

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