

## **EXECUTIVE SUMMARY**

How important is educational attainment in New Yorkers' ability to complete training and to secure and retain employment? This report – based primarily on the experience of 582 HOPE enrollees over a three-year period – offers empirical evidence to inform those concerned with workforce development in regards to program design, funding and policy.

### **Key Findings:**

Educational credential (high school diploma or GED) was *not* correlated to the *rate* of job placement. Students without high school equivalency were just as likely as those with the credential to find employment. However,

- Educational credential clearly impacted starting salary and type of job secured.
- For students who lacked strong reading and math skills, having high school equivalency was insufficient to ensure they became employed.
- The full impact of educational credential on outcomes was affected by certain demographics and barriers to employment (with gender, reading/math skills and psychiatric diagnosis having particular significance).
- Having an educational credential played a large role in off-setting the effect of other barriers such as age, gender and childcare needs.
- Educational credential greatly impacted completion of HOPE's work readiness training program.

### **Recommendations:**

People concerned with the field of workforce development – practitioners, advocates, funders, policymakers – can undertake strategies to strengthen the pathway for job seekers in relation to education. Specific recommendations at the close of this report speak to the importance of:

- Attending not only to credentials but actual skill levels and creating vehicles for students to receive ongoing educational study during job training and continuing through employment.
- Ensuring stable childcare, housing and other critical life supports for program completion.
- Recognizing gender issues and particular supports needed for women.
- Planning carefully for the increasing market requirement of high school equivalency – while also working with industry partners to explore where this may be superfluous.
- Recognizing – in industry and policymaking – that meeting the city's dual goals of economic growth and poverty reduction requires well-trained, educated, hard-working adults to be able to make a living wage and secure adequate work supports.