

**APPENDIX J:**

**12-MONTH INCENTIVE EXPERIMENT FINDINGS**

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**MEMORANDUM****TO:** Cynthia Miller and Eileen Pederson**FROM:** Jillian Stein and Lisa Schwartz**DATE:** 11/25/2013

YBP-154

**SUBJECT:** Incentive Experiment Findings

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This memo provides a brief overview of the purpose and implementation of the incentive experiment, and presents the main findings and our recommendations for the 30-month follow-up survey data collection.

**Purpose And Implementation**

An incentive experiment was incorporated into the 12-month follow-up survey in order to test whether offering a higher incentive to youth (1) produced efficiencies by encouraging youth to complete their surveys early, and (2) improved data quality by increasing response among otherwise underrepresented segments of the sample.

To answer these questions, respondents were randomly assigned to treatment and control incentive-experiment conditions.<sup>1</sup> The treatment group received a letter offering them a \$40 gift card if they completed within the first four weeks of data collection. The control group received a letter offering them a \$25 gift card for completing the survey regardless of when they completed.

**Main Findings And Recommendations:<sup>2</sup>**

The findings show that the \$40 incentive condition is associated with 1) greater odds of completing early; 2) reduced costs due to fewer cases being sent to the phones and the field; and 3) potentially greater representativeness among respondents (although these findings were not statistically significant). As a result, we recommend continuing to offer the “early bird special” during the 30-month follow up survey data collection.

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<sup>1</sup> As a first step in the analysis, we determined that there were no significant differences between the incentive-treatment and control groups, establishing that random assignment worked.

<sup>2</sup> For a more detailed review of the results, please see the *Detailed Results* section on page 2.

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## DETAILED RESULTS, ORGANIZED BY RESEARCH QUESTION

### Research Questions:

- I. Were the incentive treatment and control groups roughly comparable at baseline across key demographic variables? In other words, did random assignment into the incentive experiment work correctly?
  - ❖ **Result.** There were no significant differences between the incentive experiment treatment and control groups; random assignment in the incentive experiment worked correctly.
- II. Within the analytic sample<sup>3</sup>, were the incentive treatment and control groups roughly comparable across key demographic variables at baseline?
  - ❖ **Results:** There were no significant differences between the characteristics of the incentive experiment treatment and control groups within the analytic sample.
- III. Within the analytic sample, was the incentive-treatment condition associated with higher odds of completing the 12 month follow-up survey within the first four weeks of data collection? If yes, what happens if you add controls for other variables thought to impact response.
  - ❖ **Result:** Those who were offered the \$40 incentive had 38 percent higher odds of completing their survey within the first four weeks, compared to those who were offered the \$25 incentive. This finding remained significant after controlling for a host of demographic characteristics associated with non-response such as gender, age, and race (OR= 1.38 p<.01).
- IV. Did the incentive treatment condition generate efficiencies by encouraging youth to complete in the first four weeks, hence resulting in fewer cases being sent to the phone or field?
  - ❖ **Result:** As noted above, sample members in the incentive-treatment group were 38 percent more likely to complete their survey within the first four weeks of data collection. These cases were not subject to more labor intensive and costly data collection efforts including contacts from telephone interviewers, extensive in-house locating, or ultimately field locating.

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<sup>3</sup> We are still in the process of collecting 12 month survey data, therefore we restricted the analytical sample to cases that were released at least four-weeks prior to the date that the interim data file was pulled (N=2,562).

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V. Was the incentive condition particularly effective for certain segments of the YouthBuild sample?

- ❖ **Result:** We found that the \$40 incentive was associated with higher response among males, African-Americans, and those who were eighteen or younger, although these findings were not significantly different. Nevertheless, we plan to test this further in subsequent analyses including a larger analytic sample.

cc: Lisbeth Goble, Sean Harrington, Cathy Lu, Dan O'Conner