



Newark Summer Youth Employment Program Evaluation

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

SEPTEMBER 2021

The Newark Summer Youth Employment Program (SYEP) is a six-week summer experience that offers youth the opportunity to gain exposure to the world of work and develop important skills focused on work readiness and financial literacy.

SYEP’s mission is accomplished through career exploration, forging positive relationships with adult mentors, receiving training and practice on workplace soft skills, creating a professional portfolio, and encouraging early building blocks for a positive financial future.

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Newark SYEP Highlights

The program has a direct impact on youth, staff, and partners, resulting in improved work readiness, attitudes, skills, and cultivated networks among youth and their worksites. The following summaries highlight findings from the evaluation process.

Program at a Glance

3,289 applicants

1,945 youth participants served (enrolled and de-enrolled)

4 Project-Based Learning Experiences serving a combined total of 787 participating youth

944 youth were selected for 62 self-certification worksites and employers offering remote internships



Program Results Highlights

Program Completion

95% of enrolled youth completed the program and were paid for at least four weeks of work¹

98% of youth enrolled in a self-certification worksite or internship participated in these opportunities

Work Readiness

Of the 1,135 youth surveyed...

81% report that their experience with SYEP will help them be successful later in life

86% report that their experience has motivated them to do better in school

75% report that they gained a greater understanding of the qualifications needed for future careers

84% reported that they gained a greater understanding of their career interest

Financial Empowerment

36% of the 768 youth with active MyPath accounts completed at least 1 out of 5 MyPath financial literacy modules

68% of the 699 youth engaged with Financial Literacy training through LRNG earned at least 1 badge

82% of the 738 youth identified as “unbanked” opened a bank account²

930 youth received their pay via direct deposit at least once³

85% of youth completed the America Saves pledge⁴

Employer Satisfaction

Of 17 worksites surveyed...

94% were overall “very satisfied” or “satisfied” with the youth that they hired over the summer

94% reported being “very satisfied” or “satisfied” with the project-based work submitted by the youth participants

94% indicated that the project-based work was “useful” to their company/organization and the remaining 6% noted that it was “somewhat useful”

- ¹ This measure was based on payroll reporting, as daily attendance was not available due to technical challenges with the Empower App.
- ² These youth were identified through a pre-placement financial literacy survey conducted at the beginning of the program.
- ³ These youth were identified through the Community Financial Resources Report.
- ⁴ Based on the 1,472 users tracked in the Empower App.

Program Evaluation Observations

Observation 1

SYEP offers long-term benefits to the community. Youth participants return year after year, and refer others to take part in the robust, multi-faceted activities that shape the community's future leaders and citizens.

Observation 2

SYEP is not just a summer job — it provides youth with career planning, life skills, and workforce preparation. Beyond curriculum, youth participants are introduced to the professional workplace, where communication, interpersonal, and leadership skills are modeled. They report an increased understanding of professionalism, mentorship, collaboration, and other work-ready behaviors that will lead to their future success.

Observation 3

SYEP helps youth consider what's possible for their future. It exposes youth to new career possibilities in a wide variety of sectors and industries, and they make direct connections with leaders in those fields.

Observation 4

SYEP has an opportunity to strengthen the structure of their communication system. This would enhance stakeholder and partner relationships, and increase the likelihood that youth participants will return.

Observation 5

SYEP's staff was effectively able to pivot to a virtual platform, however in order to continue to scale the program, additional capacity is needed. Program staff have demonstrated a strong connection to mission and a dedication to adjust activities as needed. Achieving the long-term impact envisioned by SYEP will require additional capacity and an investment in human capital and operations.

Evaluation Methodology

The SYEP evaluation process spanned 10 months and focused on key research questions around Data Collection Procedures and Programmatic Impact. The evaluation was implemented in two phases:

PHASE 1 FORMATIVE EVALUATION	PHASE 2 SUMMATIVE EVALUATION
Program Logic Model design Review existing data collection processes, instruments, and reporting approaches Design survey, interview, and focus group protocols	20 stakeholder interviews Responses from 3 focus groups (staff, employers, and youth) Survey data from youth participants and staff



Program Overview

The Newark SYEP supports 14–24-year-olds in gaining career experience, training, workforce skills, and financial knowledge over a six-week summer period.

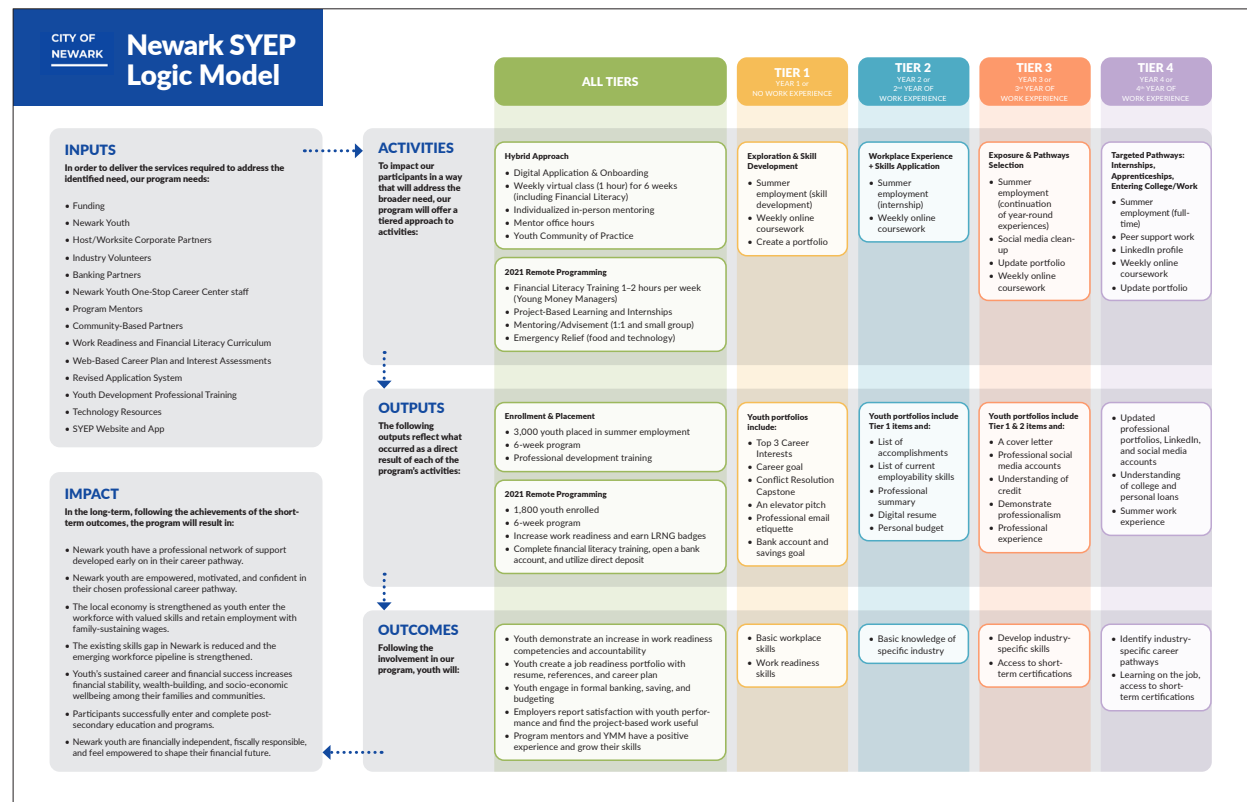
As a “learn and earn model,” SYEP is bolstered by a network of supporting organizations, contributing community leaders, and public-private partnerships. The multifaceted program strategy allows youth to explore career paths and opportunities, forge positive relationships with adult mentors, receive training and practice in workplace skills, create a professional portfolio, and encourage early building blocks for a positive financial future. SYEP embeds a youth development lens that empowers youth as valued members of the workforce and the community.

In 2020, activities were adjusted to a new, fully virtual model of webinars, remote work experiences, virtual coaching and mentorship, industry-specific career exposure and networking, and project-based learning. SYEP also focuses heavily on financial literacy training and education, where youth benefit from hands-on financial mentorship, online modules, and tools to establish a budget, savings goals, and a banking relationship. Program participation has been proven to increase the likelihood of gainful employment, open previously limited employment opportunities, achieve sustainable careers, and break the cycle of inter-generational poverty in the community.

Program Logic Model & Tiered Pathways Approach

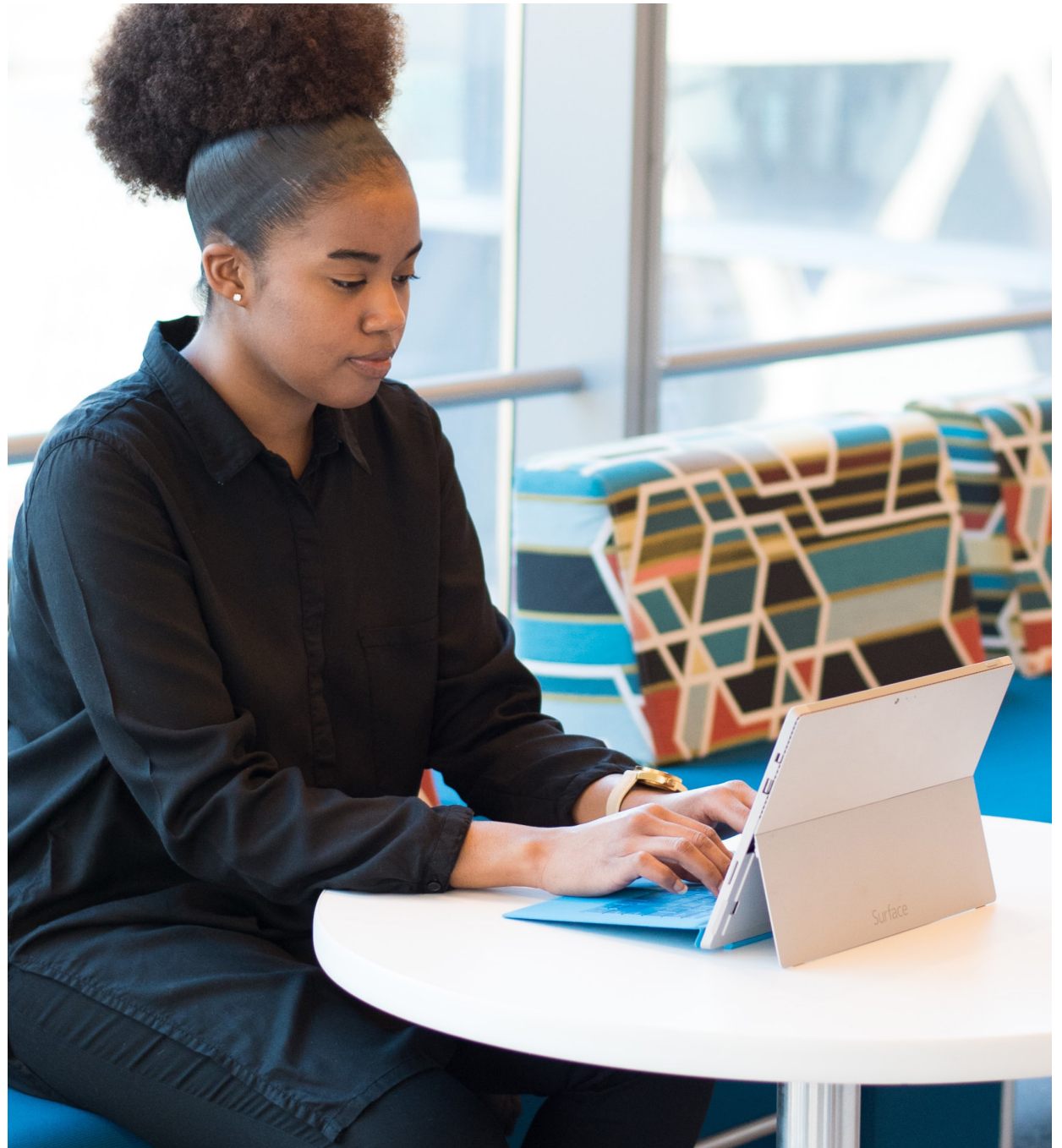
Newark SYEP’s approach to service delivery includes a goal of working with youth over multiple years to deepen current levels of impact. The SYEP Logic Model describes the four-tiered approach that articulates this vision.

>> [View the full Logic Model online.](#)



As a result of participating in SYEP 2021, 1,755 youth completed a 6–8 week paid work-readiness program, with the majority (75%–86%) of those surveyed (1,135) reporting that their SYEP experience has motivated them to do better in school, has given them a greater understanding of their career interest and the qualifications needed for those careers, and will help them be successful later in life. Weekly stipends increased from \$100.00 in 2020 to \$175.00 (\$287.50 for interns and college students) in 2021. Community engagement indicators reported satisfaction also rose in 2021 on the part of staff, instructors, partners, employers, self-certification sites, Young Money Managers, and Program Mentors.

Moving forward – in addition to maintaining the upward trends in applicants accepted/enrolled, community partner engagement, and participant compensation – continual improvement measures for enrollee retention, participant completion of work-readiness badges, and overall survey completion rate would allow for increased program reach, greater curriculum impact, and enhanced analysis of impact for future programming.



Project-Based Learning

Project-Based Learning (PBL) experiences were designed to promote the development of work skills by collaborating on real-world projects. During the summer of 2021, over half of the youth participating in SYEP were engaged with one of four PBL opportunities.

Summer Science Research Program (SSRP)

The Opportunity Network + Newark Youth One Stop

The SSRP is a six-week research course geared toward underrepresented youth interested in science and healthcare careers. These budding scientists collaborate to grow foundational research skills, explore their STEM-related interests, and connect with industry professionals.



Impact Highlights

- 81% of interns know more about relevant career paths and opportunities
- 81% of interns learned skills that can help them on their path to a meaningful career
- 25% increase in interns showing evidence of strong critical thinking skills
- 19% increase in interns' comfort with public speaking
- 18% increase in interns demonstrating foundational research skills

Social Justice, Advocacy, Education, Law

The Gem Project

The Gem Project allows SYEP participants to serve as community youth organizers, addressing inequalities in the areas of education, justice, or health. Participating youth create and launch a project that expresses their views and perspectives.



Impact Highlights

- Youth showed growth in their perceived intelligence and perceived talent from the beginning to the end of the program.
- Youth showed greater self-awareness of their ability to manage behaviors, thoughts, and emotions in a variety of settings.
- Youth especially benefited from "Coalition Days." This space was held to decompress the week, work on projects, share best practices, and cross-collaborate.



Innovate 2021

Student Dream

This digital course focuses on strengthening the technical knowledge, professional network, work experience, character, and financial health of SYEP enrollees. Innovate 2021 incorporates digital skills and financial literacy training prior to leading youth through project development and presentation delivery.

STUDENT DREAM

Impact Highlights

- 17 songs added to Student Dream's sync licensing catalogue
- 6 Student Dream app ideas generated
- 4 College Money digital marketing campaigns
- 64% of projects received grades of 70% or better, with 21% scoring 90% or higher
- 26% increase in youth who understand the steps to pursue a career in digital marketing
- 30% increase in youth who know what steps to take to pursue a career in music

Programming Spotlight: Financial Literacy

One aspect of the Newark SYEP that sets it apart from other programs is its focus on financial literacy training and education. This emphasis – which begins even before applicants are accepted into the program – focuses on financial skill-building and exposure to key financial wellbeing behaviors, such as opening a bank account and setting a savings goal. SYEP's financial literacy activities center around virtual curriculum and training modules, and peer-led instruction and mentorship from Young Money Managers (YMMs). Participating youth complete online activities and courses on topics ranging from building a budget and tracking expenses, to credit facts and how investments work.

Health & Engineering

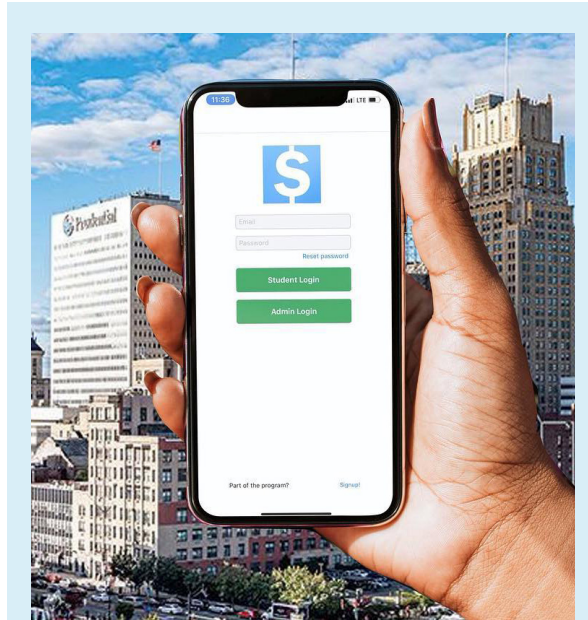
Exponentially Well Institute for All (EWIFA)

This STEM-focused project is driven by real-world health and wellbeing issues facing the local community, and culminates in a hands-on engineering and design project where youth conceptualize a medical device that helps solve a problem related to the chronic diseases they study.



Impact Highlights

- Youth engaged in a mastery series where they demonstrated a 21% increase in their knowledge of the diseases studied
- Youth engaged in public health conversations where they candidly shared their opinions as well as moral and ethical views on respective topics



Financial Literacy Impact Highlights

As a result of SYEP's Financial Literacy training and programming:

1,251 youth signed an America Saves Pledge

768 were active in MyPath financial literacy models

699 were active in LRNG financial literacy models

610 youth opened a new non-custodial bank account after previously being unbanked

930 youth utilized direct deposit for at least 1 stipend payment

Significant opportunities exist for SYEP to advance financial literacy goals and outcomes to continue to positively impact youth financial empowerment.

Evaluation Recommendations

The Newark Summer Youth Employment Program is positioned well for organizational success. With the development of a multi-year, tiered model of youth impact, there are significant opportunities to deepen and strengthen existing relationships with participants to encourage continued involvement.

Recommendation 1

Take steps to simplify the logistics of current programming to allow for sustainable growth. Continue to identify areas of program operation where efficiency could be increased to lay a foundation for successful future expansion.

Recommendation 2

Fully utilize the available features of Community Software Solutions (CSS) to streamline document uploads, direct deposit, attendance, and timesheet submission. This would allow youth to track time, staff and mentors to approve attendance, and payments to be processed accordingly, removing some of the technology-related barriers encountered this year.

Recommendation 3

Utilize the CSS reporting feature to understand the roster of youth at each site. When site partners and instructors have this information prior to the start of the summer programs, they can better prepare for the SYEP enrollees.

Recommendation 4

Continue to utilize the Empower App for connecting youth and program mentors, and realize its potential to serve as a central messaging exchange. To prepare for next year, consider utilizing the Empower App as a messaging exchange for stakeholders, an information repository, and link the app to the CSS participant website.

Recommendation 5

Consider devoting the first week of programming to “worksite training” so the team can ensure that youth understand expectations, policies, and procedures of SYEP. Participants and project managers alike would benefit from additional onboarding and orientation at the onset of program activities that lays out expectations for youth and staff.

Recommendation 6

Build data collection requirements into regular programming. To streamline data collection processes, Luminary recommends adjusting pre-program surveys from the application process to the beginning of the activities and enforcing mandatory compliance and completion of surveys and modules to allow for year-over-year comparisons.

Recommendation 7

Begin onboarding participating youth earlier in the year, and consider “fast tracking” youth who have participated in the program before. This would advance SYEP’s multi-year tiered impact goals and ease pressure on program staff and administrators in the spring and early summer.

Recommendation 8

Streamline the Financial Literacy program curriculum so that it is a single approach and core to the program offering. There is a critical opportunity to refine and enhance the Financial Literacy curriculum and programming.

Recommendation 9

Offer a hybrid in-person and virtual model for Summer 2022. A hybrid model could include trainings, financial education, and project submission virtually, but incorporate in-person networking, connection, and hands-on, workplace experience where appropriate.

Recommendation 10

Implement a communications plan for timely, effective flow of information to all parties. Streamlined, effective, and timely communication enhances the youth experience and partner perceptions of the benefits of SYEP participation.

About Luminary Evaluation Group



Luminary Evaluation Group is a program evaluation firm that helps nonprofits and funders identify what is working, what is not working, and what options exist to enhance programming. At the core of our collaborative process is deep contextual exploration, anchored by qualitative data collection and analysis. We listen, observe, and build reciprocal relationships with our clients, and facilitate sharing and exploration between stakeholders. Our deep contextual knowledge of nonprofit programs, challenges, and goals allows us to work with stakeholders to identify useful questions for the base of the evaluation protocol, and to understand the issues and contexts of a given evaluation project. This enables us to develop an appropriate evaluation plan to reflect the reality of a program, capture existing knowledge, and produce essential new insights. Our clients report being able to clearly see actionable next steps from evaluation findings.

SERVICES

- **Program Evaluation**
We help nonprofits assess their impact and make data-driven decisions based on findings and recommendations.
- **Evaluation Capacity Building**
Organizations often conduct data collection and assessment with their own staff. We help them build evaluation plans and ongoing practices that they can implement.
- **Logic Models**
A solid logic model is the foundation impact. We help organizations build and refine logic models.
- **Model Capture**
Good programs need good materials. We help organizations codify and articulate their program models by designing user-friendly and attractive written manuals and guides.
- **Surveys, Interviews, and Focus Groups**
As part of Luminary's commitment to equity and culturally responsive practices, surveys are available in all languages. We also offer focus groups and qualitative interview services in both English and Spanish.

TEAM

ALISON LARocca MANAGING DIRECTOR

Alison has spent her career working at the intersection of nonprofit research, senior level advisement, and strategy. Alison is the Managing Director of [Luminary Evaluation Group](#). Luminary's mission is to improve the lives of children and families by conducting high-quality, participatory research for funders and nonprofit organizations of every size, capacity, and budget who are interested in understanding, articulating, and growing their impact. In this role, Alison brings her particular expertise in participatory evaluation and human centered design, instrument development, data collection, and quantitative and qualitative data analysis. As an evaluator, Alison helps clients communicate research effectively to key stakeholders and other broad audiences. Specifically, she supports organization leaders as they work to use data effectively, incorporate evidence-based practices into programs and policies, assess effectiveness, and improve outcomes. Alison is a graduate of Williams College and holds a Master's in Elementary Education from Merrimack College.

LATOSHIA DEVOSE SENIOR CONSULTANT

LaToshia has 11 years of experience working in various capacities on initiatives geared toward increasing child care program capacity. She is a firm believer that every business operator has the ability to manage an effective business and that every child deserves a

quality education. Previously, she served as the ECE Business Development Director with Public Health Management Corporation in Philadelphia. In that role, LaToshia provided leadership and coordination on the Fund for Quality, a high quality child care facility expansion program. During her tenure on that project, over 2,500 new child care seats were created to serve children from low-income families. LaToshia also oversaw the implementation of a local child care facility's improvement grant fund for several years in addition to managing a replication organizational TA/facility program in Washington, D.C. Through this work, tens of thousands of child care seats were improved and/or sustained.

ERIN MURPHY CONSULTING ASSOCIATE

Erin is a Consulting Associate with Luminary Evaluation Group, leading all product design efforts. Erin's superpower is making the team's analyses and client reports even more accessible through the use of highly effective, user-friendly structure and design. Her comprehensive understanding of copywriting, copyediting, and design skills are showcased in numerous complex projects for a range of clients in all sectors. Erin holds a Bachelor of Fine Arts in Communication Design from the Massachusetts College of Art and Design.

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