



# TRYING TO WORK

*A door-to-door survey of low-income residents  
on barriers to employment and service needs*

April 2007

*Columbus Workforce Alliance*

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## Table of Contents

Introduction	1
Having Their Say	3
Voices from the Field	16
Summary of Findings	25
Appendix A: Resident Survey	28
Appendix B: Staff Survey	32

## INTRODUCTION

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It is widely accepted that ensuring a robust workforce is fundamental to the sustainability of our economies. As communities throughout the State of Ohio grapple with their state of workforce preparedness and competitiveness, there is wide recognition that today's job market requires a knowledge-based workforce. In turn, ensuring that all Ohioans have the necessary knowledge and skills to fulfill industry needs is a priority for our policy makers and a variety of stakeholders throughout the State.

This report is written to address and contribute to the discussion on workforce preparedness for the segment of our population that is low-income unemployed, underemployed, and not-in-the-labor-force (NILF). How then do we ensure that this population is sufficiently able to contribute to our labor force and local tax bases? Logically, the answer to this question is broad. In an attempt to address the question, the Columbus Workforce Alliance surveyed over 900 low-income residents to gather their input on perceived employment barriers and what is needed to advance employment for this often-disenfranchised segment of local communities.

Throughout the State, low-income unskilled job-seeking populations are classified in a variety of ways, including the definition of hard-to-serve. Poverty, housing instability, lower educational levels, long-term welfare participation, unskilled, and higher-than-average unemployment rates, most often describe the communities in which these Ohioans reside. The neighborhoods surveyed for this report are similarly characterized with higher rates of poverty and unemployment, and disproportionately more likely to have lower levels of education.

***The Columbus Workforce Alliance (2005):***

- › Central Community House
- › Columbus Urban League
- › Godman Guild Association
- › **Jewish Family Services**
- › Neighborhood House, Inc.
- › St. John Learning Center
- › St. Stephen's Community House
- › The Salvation Army

In order to better understand the needs of individuals in distressed neighborhoods, the Columbus Workforce Alliance (CWA) conducted a door-to-door survey of residents as well a survey of front-line workforce development staff about employment needs and services. The CWA is a consortium of community and faith-based agencies focusing on workforce development. Member agencies provide an array of services to job seekers. These services help individuals overcome barriers to employment, gain needed education and skills, and find and retain jobs that pay family-

sustaining wages. The agencies have formed a voluntary alliance that works to streamline the services available to residents. Identifying methods that enhance workforce participation and preparedness, while supporting the advancement of wages for low-income families is a fundamental goal of the CWA. The Alliance is confident that the information presented in this report can provide insight into perceptions of low-income job-seeking residents throughout the state.

This report on survey results is the first phase of a larger project report titled *Meeting the Needs of Low-Income Unemployed and Underemployed Job Seekers*. The project examines the impact of the CWA's integrated service delivery approach. The objective of the larger project is to identify what service delivery strategies work best to help low-income unemployed, underemployed, and not-in-labor-force (NILF) individuals find and retain jobs with family-sustaining wages. The CWA hopes to identify information and strategies that can be utilized with like populations throughout Ohio.

This report is divided into the following sections:

- ▶ **HAVING THEIR SAY** documents the results of a door-to-door survey of over 900 residents living in a federally designated Empowerment Zone in Columbus, Ohio. This section discusses the demographics of these urban communities. It then goes on to provide residents' perspectives of workforce services, and the use of those services found in their communities. Residents also provide suggestions for what services they believe would assist them to find and retain meaningful employment (p. 3).
- ▶ **VOICES FROM THE FIELD** details the survey results of 80 staff working in the field of workforce development throughout the Capital City. This section describes 1) barriers customers face and the strategies that work best to help job seekers find and retain jobs; 2) the responses provided by staff compared to those provided by residents; and 3) comments on the state of services and referral processes in the local area (p.16).
- ▶ **SUMMARY OF FINDINGS** provides a report summary as well as recommendations for future action (p. 25).
- ▶ **APPENDICES A AND B** contain the original surveys used with residents and agency staff (p.28)

## HAVING THEIR SAY: COMMUNITY RESIDENTS' PERCEPTIONS

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### *Columbus EZ neighborhoods are:*

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- › Argyle Park
- › Atcheson East
- › Driving Park
- › East Columbus
- › Franklinton
- › Italian Village
- › Livingston Park
- › Milo Grogan
- › Mount Vernon
- › Near East
- › North Central
- › Old Oaks
- › Olde Towne East
- › South Linden
- › University
- › Weinland Park

In the summer of 2005, the CWA went door-to-door and surveyed 913 central city residents living in communities facing greater than average amounts of socio-economic distress. 90% lived in targeted neighborhoods collectively known as the Columbus Empowerment Zone. The CWA sought to obtain residents' perspectives on the barriers to employment faced by low-income job seekers. The respondents provided information about their education, employment barriers, and workforce development needs. Respondents also answered questions about their familiarity with, and use of, community agencies and the public workforce system. To supplement the door-to-door data collection, the CWA held four focus groups. While two focus groups contained a mix of individuals, one focus group included only young African American men, and one included only ex-offenders. The CWA is now using these research findings to pilot and expand services based on the needs identified by residents.

This section of the report discusses the following:

- › **WHO LIVES IN THE CENTRAL CITY?** documents demographic characteristics of residents including information about their employment and earnings (p.4).
- › **WHAT ARE THE BARRIERS?** describes residents' perceived barriers to employment (p. 7).
- › **WHAT ARE THE SERVICE NEEDS?** reports what residents said would help them find and maintain employment (p.10).
- › **WHAT IS KNOWN ABOUT SERVICES?** documents residents' knowledge and use of community and public agencies for help with employment (p. 13).

## Who lives in the central city community?

Columbus’s central city region (Empowerment Zone) spans 21-census tracts containing a population of approximately 54,000<sup>1</sup>. A 2000 report by the Columbus Compact Corporation confirmed that residents in the Columbus Empowerment Zone (EZ) were disproportionately more likely to have higher rates of poverty and unemployment and to not be in the labor force (NILF) than residents in the surrounding metropolitan area<sup>2</sup>. In fact, the study showed that EZ residents fell behind on every indicator of socioeconomic well-being. The unemployment rate in the EZ was double that of the City of Columbus.

This resident survey confirms the economic distress felt by these residents. The unemployment rate for the Columbus metropolitan area was 5.3% in 2005. However, as seen in Table 1, over 55% of survey respondents indicated that they were unemployed. This survey makes no distinction between individuals traditionally counted as unemployed and those considered to not be in the labor

**! Only 34% of respondents work full-time.**

force. Also, although not all employed respondents said if they worked full-time or part-time, 12% did indicate that that they worked only part-time. Therefore, at most, only 34% of survey respondents work full-time.

**Table 1**  
Employment Status and Gender by Race/Ethnic Group

	Population		Employed	Unemployed	Female <sup>3</sup>	Male <sup>3</sup>
African-American	617	67.6%	41.7%	58.3%	65.0%	34.8%
White	173	18.9%	51.4%	48.6%	59.0%	39.9%
Somali/E. African	28	3.1%	35.7%	64.3%	46.4%	53.6%
Latino	24	2.6%	75.0%	25.0%	45.8%	50.0%
Asian	18	2.0%	66.7%	33.3%	61.1%	38.9%
Other	24	2.6%	45.8%	54.2%	75.0%	25.0%
Not reported	29	3.2%	27.6%	72.4%	27.6%	13.8%
<b>Total</b>	<b>913</b>	<b>100%</b>	<b>44.9%</b>	<b>55.1%</b>	<b>61.8%</b>	<b>35.9%</b>
2000 Census			51.6%	48.6%	53.5%	46.6%

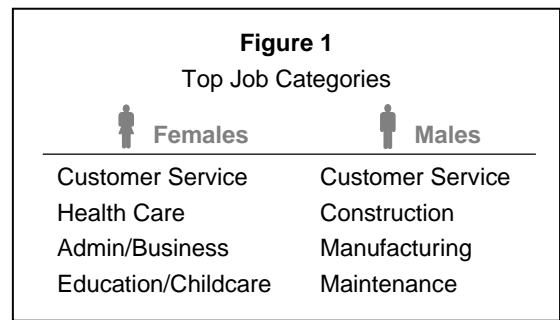
The majority of survey respondents were female. Though gender showed relationships to certain data in the survey, an individual’s gender did not have an influence on whether or not he or she was employed. However, a person’s race did have a significant relationship to employment status: African-Americans had a higher likelihood of being unemployed.

<sup>1</sup> Census 2000 Summary File 3 (SF 3) - Sample Data. Total population determined from summing total population of each census tract.

<sup>2</sup> Columbus Compact Corporation, October 2000, *Parity Indicators Project*. Not in Labor Force (NILF) refers to individuals who may be discouraged and disengaged. Such individuals have simply given up on (or refuse to engage in) the active search for employment.

<sup>3</sup> Percentages of females and males do not sum to 100% due to 21 respondents not reporting gender.

Of approximately 400 employed respondents, the majority (64%) work full-time between 31 and 50 hours a week and earn between \$6.00 and \$9.00 per hour. Only 3% of the sample reported working more than one job. Nearly one-third of the employed work in the customer service field. Note that over 50% of the respondents employed in this field indicate that they make an annual income of less than \$15,000. This research also indicates stereotypical gender patterns in the various fields as displayed in Figure 1.



The relationship between education, employment and income is well-documented. Therefore, looking at educational attainment can provide additional information regarding income levels. According to the 2000 Census, in Franklin County, 19% of those age 18 to 24 had no high school diploma or GED<sup>4</sup>. However, in the EZ, this percentage was almost 45%. Of Franklin County residents over the age of 25, 14.3% never completed high school or GED, while for residents in the EZ, this figure rises to 35%. Of the community residents surveyed here, 28.4% indicated that they had no high school diploma or GED.

Table 2 depicts the significant relationship between employment and education as found in the CWA’s community survey. Those without a diploma or holding only a high school diploma/GED were less likely to be employed than those with higher levels of education. This is especially important as 68% of respondents (589 individuals) indicated that they had only a high school diploma, a GED or no diploma at all. This lack of education translates into lower yearly income as well. Seventy-five percent of those with no diploma made less than \$15,000.

**Table 2**  
Employment Status and Income by Educational Level

	# of Respondents	% of Respondents	% Employed	Yearly Income <sup>5</sup>			
				\$0 - \$15,000	\$15,000- \$25,000	\$25,001- \$40,000	\$40,000+
No high school diploma	245	26.8%	29.0%	82.0%	7.8%	2.9%	0.8%
High School/GED	344	37.7%	40.7%	66.0%	15.4%	8.1%	3.5%
Some College	151	16.5%	57.6%	48.3%	25.2%	19.2%	2.0%
Associate degree	35	3.8%	54.3%	45.7%	17.1%	14.3%	11.4%
4-year degree	55	6.0%	76.4%	27.3%	10.9%	21.8%	34.5%
Grad/Professional school	32	3.5%	84.4%	34.4%	9.4%	25.0%	21.9%
Not reported	51	5.6%	37.3%	29.4%	5.9%	2.0%	0.0%
<b>Total</b>	<b>913</b>	<b>100%</b>	<b>44.4%</b>	<b>61.1%</b>	<b>14.0%</b>	<b>9.9%</b>	<b>5.1%</b>

Table 2 provides additional details regarding the relationship between education, employment and income. Regarding age, young adults (age 18-25) were more likely to be unemployed

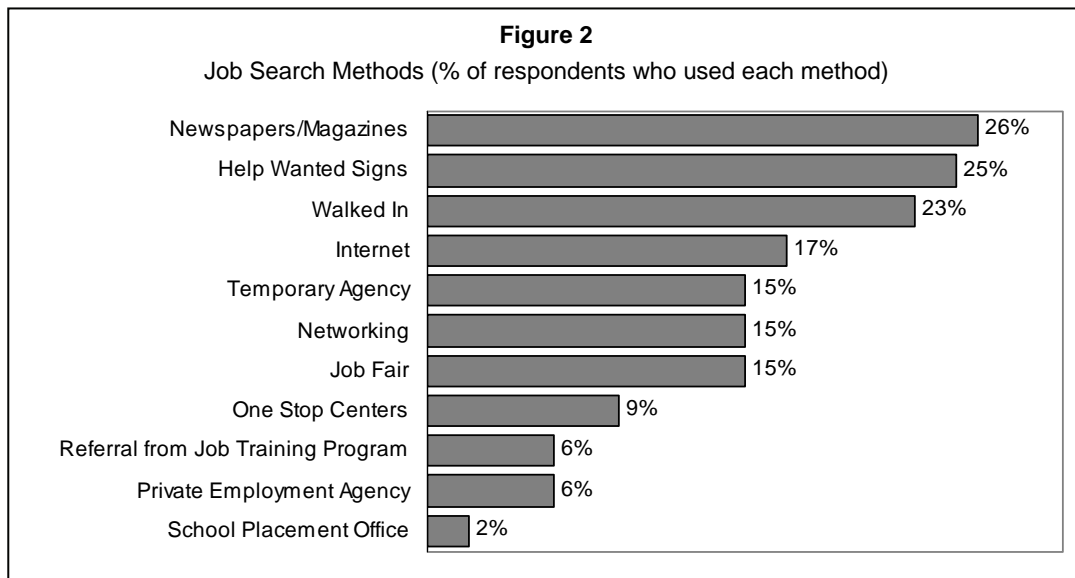
<sup>4</sup> Census 2000 Table QT-P20.

<sup>5</sup> Percentages across income categories do not sum to 100% due to 90 respondents not reporting income.

than respondents of other ages. More than half of respondents over the age of 46 were unemployed. One might assume that those older than 55 would be nearing retirement or already retired. However, focus group participants stated that many older adults want or need to work because Social Security does not provide the necessary financial resources.

Finally, of unemployed individuals, 53% were unemployed for more than one year and an additional 14% were unemployed for over 6 months. Older respondents were more likely to be unemployed for longer periods of time.

In addition, the survey asked residents which job search methods they typically use. (See Figure 2.) Regardless of race or gender, respondents chose the same top three methods (newspapers, help wanted signs, and walking into a business). Agencies can use this information to inform customers of the various services available, including the public One Stop centers and various job training programs available throughout the city.



## What are the barriers?

The survey asked currently unemployed residents to rank the top three primary reasons that they were not working. Common barriers included taking care of family responsibilities, lack of education and skills, injuries, lack of transportation, and the inability to find work.

**Table 3**  
Barriers to securing own employment

	% who listed barrier as one of top 3 (n=508)
Family responsibilities	32%
Need more education/skills	25%
Injuries/Health problems	23%
Lack of transportation	19%
Can't find work	18%

Important differences in barriers appeared when looking at responses by gender. (See Table 4.) The top three barriers reported by women were: family responsibilities (39%), lack of education and skills (25%), and lack of childcare (23%). Men, however, reported the following top three barriers: Injuries/health problems (26%), lack of education and skills (24%) and the inability to find work (23%). Note that while only 19% of men listed family responsibilities as a barrier and 5% of men listed childcare as an issue, 22% listed having a criminal record as a leading barrier - ranked fourth overall for men.

**Table 4**  
Barriers to securing own employment - by Gender<sup>6</sup>

	Unemployed Men (n=172)	Unemployed women (n=320)
1	Injuries/Health problems	Family responsibilities
2	Need more education/skills	Need more education/skills
3	Can't find work	No childcare/Can't afford
4	Criminal record	Injuries/Health problems
5	Laid off/Downsized	Lack of transportation

Few racial and ethnic differences appeared regarding barriers to employment. One exception was that the small number of Somali and other African respondents listed not speaking English well as a top barrier. It is important to note then, that while race affects a person's employment status overall, there was no evidence to suggest that barriers to employment differ across races.

Barriers to employment by age category fell in the expected directions. Younger respondents (age 18-35) were more likely to note family responsibilities, childcare issues, and the need for additional education and training. Older age groups (over age 46) were more likely to note having been injured, being disabled, laid off or retired. Though disability was not a top five

<sup>6</sup> Sum of unemployed men and women (492) does not equal the total of unemployed (508) due to respondents not reporting gender.

barrier to employment, a higher proportion of those in the 36 to 54 year old age group checked this as a barrier. This age category was the only one to mention having a criminal record. Perhaps individuals who have committed a crime within the last decade are now being released and are unable to find employment.

A second question asked residents their opinions regarding the top three reasons why their neighbors were not working. This question provides insight into perceptions that people hold about their neighborhoods. It also seeks to elicit responses that residents might not give about themselves because of a desire to give socially acceptable answers. As seen in Table 5, when asked in this manner, common barriers included: lack of transportation, a criminal record, simply not wanting to work, lack of childcare and lack of work experience. On this question, 22% of respondents mentioned drug and alcohol problems as a barrier which only 4% of respondents identified as a personal barrier to employment. Transportation, however, appears as a top barrier regardless of how the question was asked.

**Table 5**  
Opinions of barriers affecting neighbors

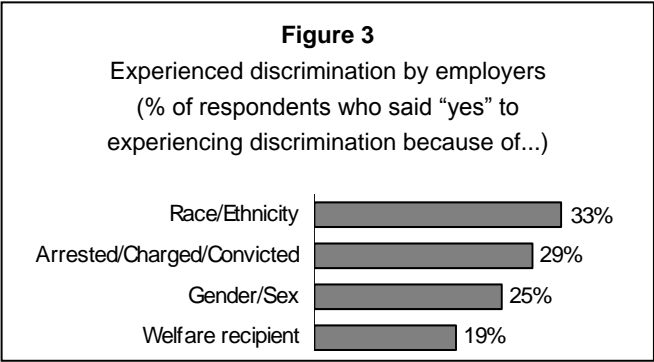
	% who listed barrier as one of top 3 (n=508)
Lack of transportation	36%
Criminal record	35%
Don't want to work	30%
No childcare/Can't afford	29%
Lack of work experience	27%

An important note is that residents were given fewer options for this question than for the previous question. For example, the top-ranked family responsibility item from the previous question was not listed as an option here. This can make comparing responses from these two questions more complex.

Focus group participants underscored lack of transportation as a problem. They mentioned the difficulty in using the local public transportation system. As one participant said, “The buses don’t go everywhere in the city. The good paying jobs are far out, but buses might not go out there.... Well, they might go some places but if you have to be there at 6:00 a.m. and the buses don’t start until 5:00 a.m. or after, you’ll never make it. Also, if I get off late, I can’t get home.” An important note is that 64% of employed survey respondents indicated that they used their own car to get to work. Lack of transportation was noted equally across all of the EZ communities.

Another barrier highlighted through focus groups was the fact, or perception, that no jobs exist in the local neighborhood. One participant stated, “I think companies just aren’t hiring.” Other respondents focused more on the issue in particular neighborhoods. For example, “In my neighborhood, there are only stores and carry-outs. There is nothing in walking distance to put in an application.” The focus group of young African-American men felt that jobs were going to immigrants willing to accept a lower wage or who were hired by family members.

**Discrimination.** The survey then directly asked residents if they ever felt that an employer had refused to hire them based on some characteristic. Overall, 55% of respondents to these questions indicated that they perceived employer discrimination. Response rates varied by category of discrimination and are displayed in Figure 3. Male respondents were much more likely than female respondents to say that they believed their arrest or conviction kept them from getting a job. 24% of females, however, said that their status as a welfare recipient led to discrimination.



Research confirms that employers have been known to discriminate more on the basis of race and ex-offender status than on the basis of welfare status<sup>7</sup>. This notion was supported by the focus group data. In addition to the issues related to transportation and a lack of marketable skills, young African-American men acknowledged that they felt that the biggest barriers to employment were “the system” and the impact of first impressions.

Focus group participants talked further about employer discrimination related to ex-offenders. They noted that when employers see “conviction” checked on the job application, they no longer consider that person a viable candidate. Participants suggested that this unwillingness to give people a chance to earn a living is detrimental to employing an increasing number of Columbus residents. According to one African-American male ex-offender, “A lot of people [employers] don’t want to hire you because of your record. It took me like eight or nine months to find a job – it’s not the job I want but... A lot of people who do look for jobs say it’s hard; [employers] don’t call back. I think the biggest thing is the record.”

Focus groups participants also raised the issue of age discrimination against older job seekers. They noted that employers are reluctant to hire older and middle-aged job seekers due to skills deficits. Respondents indicated that they do not know which types of trainings are available to help with these skills deficits. Additionally, they are reluctant or unwilling to enter into training programs for fear of starting new careers. However, many noted that in today’s economy working after age 65 is a necessity because Social Security is not enough to live on. One participant explained this way: “Age, and being over-educated or over-qualified is the problem. I worked for AT&T for 29 years and then I was downsized. When I go out looking for a job now, I keep hearing that I’m ‘over-qualified.’ How can you have too much education or experience? I’m retired now, but I need more money (you know, being retired is not all it’s cracked up to be!).” According to another participant, “Age discrimination is an issue. A lot of older people need jobs... If you only get \$500 and your apartment is \$350 how can you pay rent, utilities and food? Older people can’t really get part-time jobs let alone full-time jobs.”

<sup>7</sup> Holzer, Harry et al., 2003. “Employment Barriers Facing Ex-Offenders” The Urban Institute Reentry Roundtable Discussion, New York University Law School; Holzer, Harry. 1996. *What Employers Want: Job Prospects for Less-Educated Workers*. New York: Russell Sage Foundation; Pager, Devah. 2002. “The Mark of a criminal Record” Unpublished, University of Wisconsin, Madison.

## What are the service needs?

After soliciting information about barriers to employment, the survey asked unemployed residents about involvement in training and preferences regarding training classes and supportive services. The list of education, training, and supportive services provided to residents was generated from knowledge about the various needs within the EZ community. That knowledge came from a survey of adult education needs conducted by the CWA in 2005, and occupational skills training options that pay decent wages and provide career advancement opportunities.

Only 17% of respondents said that they had completed a job training or education program in the last 12 months. Slightly fewer indicated that they were currently enrolled in a certification or degree program. Most of these 85 respondents were enrolled in a General Equivalency Diploma (GED) program, followed by an Associate degree, and then a Bachelor degree program. Very few respondents mentioned being enrolled in English as a Second Language (ESL), vocational/technical program, or other professional programs.

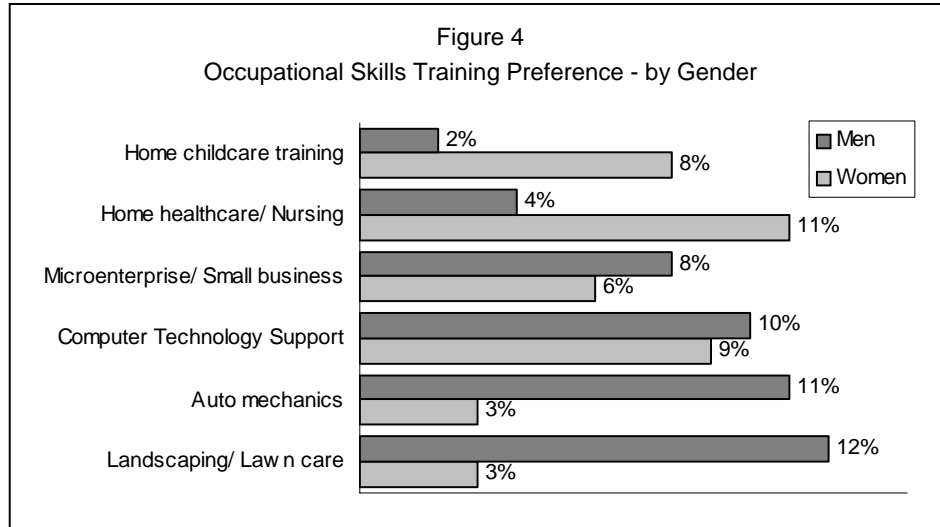
Respondents indicated interest in a mix of “soft skills” activities, education, and supportive services. Table 6 shows the top six service options across all categories. These included computer skills, higher education/college, transportation options, GED, communication skills, and childcare assistance. At least 10% of respondents indicated interest in these services.

**Table 6**  
Desired training and services

Highest rated training or service	% indicating interest
Computer skills	18%
Higher Education/College	13%
Transportation options	13%
GED	12%
Communication skills	11%
Childcare assistance	11%

Interest in many services as indicated by the closed-ended questions was limited. However, when residents could state anything that they would like to see their neighborhood-based agencies offer, there was additional support for skilled trade programs, more transportation and childcare options, expanded services for ex-offenders in terms of re-entry assistance, communication and interviewing skills, and services centered on financial literacy. Several respondents said that budgeting classes and “courses on how to save money” would be useful.

There were gender differences in the types of service desired. Childcare showed the sharpest gender difference with 15% of females selecting childcare and only 3% of men doing so. The gender difference also appeared regarding the interest in occupational skills. (See Figure 4.) Though none of the occupational skills ranked highly overall, when looking at interest by gender, some skills training was as highly desired as the other training and services.



The focus groups again confirmed the survey data. All participants wanted more services related to communication and general presentation skills. They recognized that to be employable, they must effectively communicate with employers in a professional manner. One participant from the African-American male group noted that while these skills are as critical as math and reading, they are not taught in the middle and high schools where they are desperately needed. He suggested that employers and mentors (or staff of community agencies) come to the schools to talk about and demonstrate the importance of these skills. Employers then might see a change in the quality of job-seeking candidates. Members of the ex-offender focus group were uncertain about how to best promote themselves as qualified candidates when faced with the task of talking about their convictions with employers. Other focus group members mentioned that these soft skills services are available if people seek them out. This could indicate a lack of awareness of services (addressed in the next section) or a desire to see services delivered in a different manner.

When asked about which time slots would work best for residents desiring these services, 50% said that morning sessions (7am-11am) would work best, 33% said afternoon (12pm-4pm), and the remaining 17% said evening (5pm-9pm).

Finally, survey respondents had the opportunity to answer two open-ended questions. The first asked what services they want to see in their neighborhoods. The second asked them to give advice to local officials about unemployment and underemployment in the neighborhood.

Residents reiterated the need for more childcare, including extended hours at affordable prices. Single mothers trying to find employment have a problem when it comes to the cost of daycare, as well as the limited hours childcare is available. Transportation was mentioned again. Residents stated that the public transportation authority, COTA, must offer bus routes that go to additional areas of the city. They must also run for a longer time throughout the day. For those people who must work until 11 or 12 at night on the weekdays, if the COTA bus does not run that late they have no way of getting to and from work.

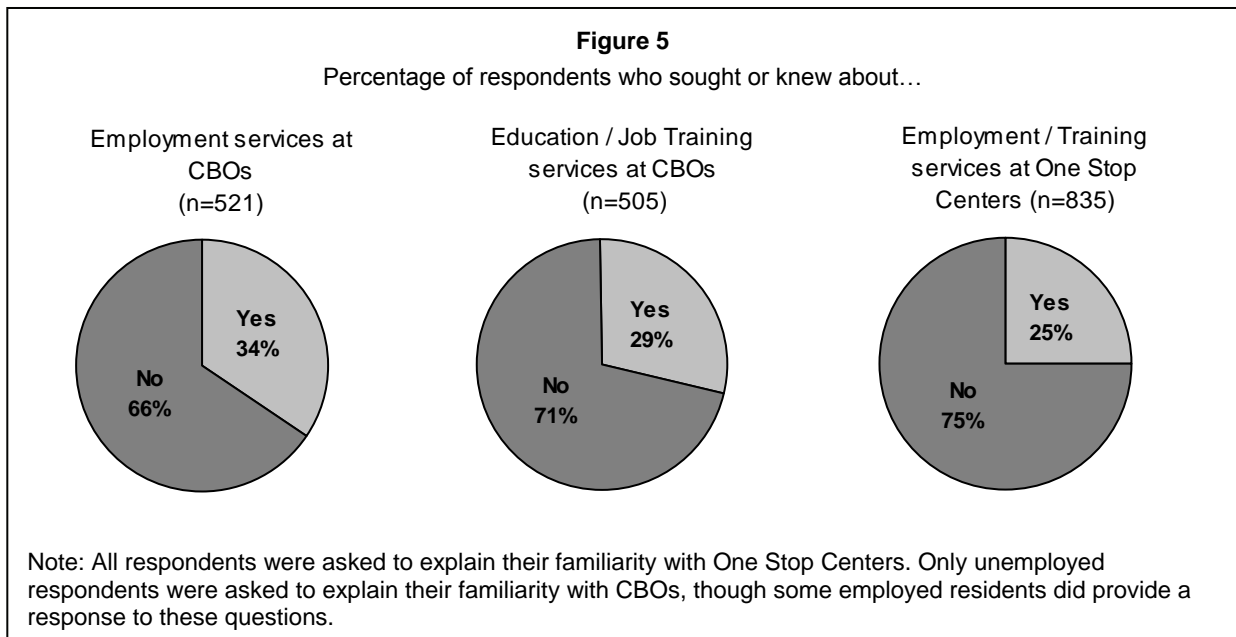
Respondents also raised issues that did not appear elsewhere in the survey. The most common piece of advice for local officials was to stop outsourcing jobs. Respondents feel that the tax benefits for sending jobs overseas have taken away many businesses from their communities. The lack of employment then contributes to crime. Residents mentioned the need to clean the neighborhoods of crime and drug houses, as well as to clean yards and paved streets. They feel that that would help to attract more businesses. People stressed the need not just for more jobs, but better jobs. Minimum wage jobs are beneficial for getting back into the job market, but families cannot survive on a minimum wage job alone. By providing apprenticeship programs, shadowing opportunities, and on the job training, community agencies could help more people find jobs that are suitable to their lifestyle. People who have faced joblessness could act as motivators to others in the community.

In order to raise awareness of available jobs, many residents mentioned advertising, including the idea of advertising job openings on television. Providing public access to online employment opportunities or a weekly paper with job openings would help awareness.

The final area mentioned repeatedly was the need for special services for the disabled, elderly and ex-offenders. In addition, employers need to be aware of the problems with age, race, disability, and ex-offender discrimination. The disabled and elderly whose jobs previously required physical activity need training programs to learn new job skills or to transition to a less strenuous part-time job. Respondents mentioned the need for agencies to work with employers who are reluctant to hire ex-offenders. Finally, respondents stated the need to create an agency directed exclusively towards trying to find employment for those with criminal records. The fact that these agencies do exist in the central city speaks to the knowledge, or lack thereof, regarding Columbus' existing services.

## What is known about services?

Residents in need of social services, as well as education and employment services, often go to their neighborhood or community-based organizations (CBO) first for services. Publicly-funded agencies such as the local One Stop Centers also offer such services. Residents responded to a series of questions regarding their awareness of services, whether or not they sought services, and their opinion of how helpful or satisfied they were with the services. While there are, in fact, several agencies and organizations throughout the EZ and in the surrounding area, few respondents knew of these agencies or had sought services from them. Figure 5 indicates the percentage of residents that sought service or knew about the existence of these services. These charts do show that respondents are slightly more likely to be familiar with CBOs than with the public One Stop Centers.



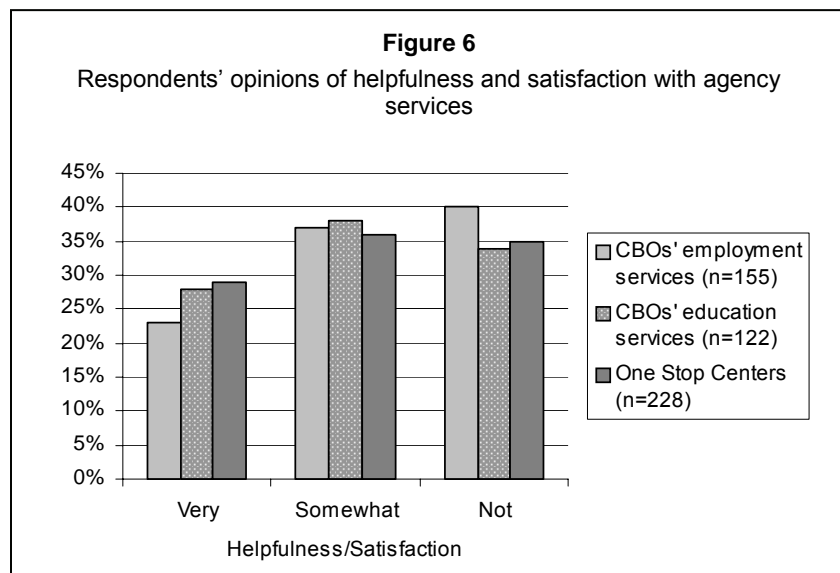
About 65% of respondents who knew about services at CBOs actually used those services. In contrast, 98% of respondents aware of One Stop Centers actually used those services. This could indicate a need for CBOs to better explain their services.

Some differences emerged between which sub-groups of the population knew about the availability of services. Respondents between ages 26 and 54 were more likely to know about all of the services than younger or older respondents. Additionally, respondents were more or less knowledgeable of services based on where they lived. For instance, respondents living in zip codes 43201 (University Community/Weinland Park/Italian Village/Milo-Grogan) and 43203 (Mt. Vernon/Eastgate/Concerned) were more likely than others to know about community agencies offering education and job training services. Residents in zip codes 43203, 43211 (Linden), 43215 (Franklinton) and those living outside of the EZ were more likely to be familiar with the local One Stop Centers.

One expectation would be that respondents receiving Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF)<sup>8</sup> would be familiar with various education and employment options. However, TANF recipients were no more likely than other respondents to know about employment and education services at CBOs. Also, though One Stop Centers are co-located with TANF offices, only 30% of TANF recipients checked “Yes” when asked, “Are you familiar with the One Stop Opportunity Centers which offer employment and training services?” This statistic may point to the need to better define the role and services of the One Stop Center.

The figures above, while based on a small number of respondents in the sample, nonetheless support the information gleaned from focus group sessions. Focus group participants were aware of at least one CBO, even if they had not used it for services. Interestingly, those who were familiar with CBOs and those who were not were equally likely to say that they did not know that these agencies offered employment services.

Respondents who had used the various services were asked to indicate how helpful or satisfied they were with those services. Unfortunately, Figure 6 shows that of the small number of respondents who said they actually used agency services, most respondents found that they were not very helpful or only somewhat helpful. Across all categories of services, the number of people who were very satisfied with services was less than the number not satisfied with services. No agency or service clearly outperformed any other.



Focus group participants, who were familiar with CBOs and the One Stops and had used the services of these entities, commented about the need for better customer service. Participants mentioned feeling disrespected and “left out in the cold” by staff at these agencies. Focus group participants stated about the overall experience at the One Stops and CBOs:

“I didn’t get much help... I went everyday for seven months and nothing. They leave old job leads on the table. When I was there, some lady came in the room and was looking on the table with job openings and the lady who was working in the room said, ‘Oh, those are old announcements;

<sup>8</sup> The Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF) became effective in July 1, 1997 and replaced what was then commonly known as welfare: Aid to Families with Dependent Children (AFDC) and the Job Opportunities and Basic Skills Training (JOBS) programs.

those jobs aren't open anymore,' and I was like, 'Why are there old job openings on the table?'"

"It's like the people are good for helping you with a resume and helping you fax it. And job fairs, too, but it just seems like nobody's hiring."

"[One Stop staff] was helpful with my resume and they did what I asked them to do. They weren't as helpful as [CBO] because [CBO] really tries to get to know you. The One Stop, they were helpful but it was like I was just one other person. They didn't put forth the effort to build a relationship and didn't go beyond that."

"Somebody I know didn't get much assistance there. They had them sit in front of a computer and look for a job. It's like the people at [CBO] are nice, but not helpful in actually sitting down with people and helping them to find a job."

## **VOICES FROM THE FIELD: EMPLOYMENT PROFESSIONALS' PERCEPTIONS**

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This section details the findings of a survey of the staff of community-based organizations and government workforce development agencies. The sample of respondents included front-line workers such as case managers, career advisers, employment specialists, and employment directors who interact with customers seeking employment services. Service providers are on the front lines with job seekers everyday. Thus, the survey gauged a sense of the barriers to employment, as well as the strategies that can aid hard-to-employ individuals.

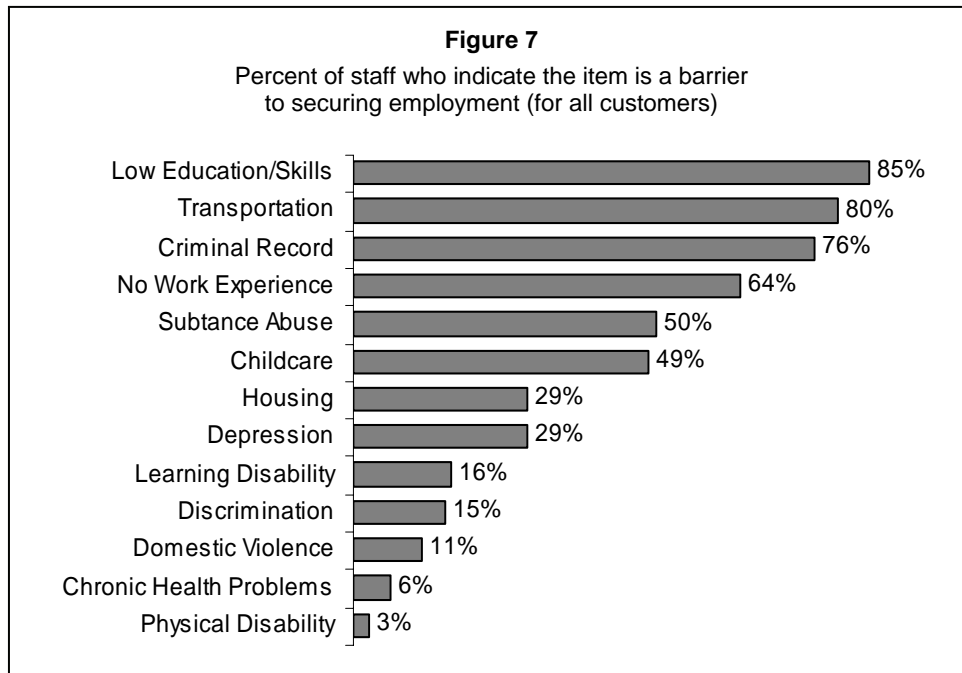
The questionnaire was mailed to over 200 workforce development staff at 27 different agencies in the city. Some agencies serve all job seekers, while others focus on specific populations such as youth, adults, ex-offenders, refugees, or other immigrants. The final sample consisted of 80 respondents, a 40% response rate. These respondents answered questions about their perceptions of the most common barriers to employment faced by their job-seeking customers. They also commented on the nature of supportive services and referral processes in the city. Finally, respondents offered their opinions on which strategies work best to move hard-to-serve job seekers toward gainful employment.

This section discusses the following:

- ▶ **WHAT ARE THE BARRIERS?** documents staff members' comments about barriers to employment and experiences with discrimination faced by the customers they serve. This section also discusses similarities and differences in the barriers as identified by staff versus residents (p.17).
- ▶ **WHAT STRATEGIES WORK?** summarizes staff comments about the best way to move customers toward meaningful employment (p. 22).
- ▶ **WHAT IS THE STATE OF SERVICE PROVISION?** details staff comments about the effectiveness and sufficiency of local services (p. 24).

## What are the barriers?

Staff members were provided with a list of 13 common barriers to employment. They were first asked to indicate the barriers that seemed to be most prevalent among all customers. Respondents could choose as many barriers from the list as they thought applied to their customers. Then, staff was asked to indicate the most prevalent barriers for specific subgroups of customers including each gender, each of three age groups, and for customers with criminal records. Figure 7 shows staff perception of the prevalence of barriers as experienced by their customers overall. Among the most common barriers are a limited education and skill set, transportation, having a criminal record and little to no work experience.



Staff always included the top four barriers as listed in Figure 7 within the top six barriers of every population subgroup, except older adults. For instance, when asked about the most prevalent barriers that women faced, these four items appeared, as well as childcare and drug or alcohol abuse. In the case of women, childcare was the most frequently listed barrier, followed by transportation, limited education and skills, little work experience, substance abuse and having a criminal record. In fact, as seen in Table 7, staff respondents consistently list the same six items as top items for all subgroups, with only small and expected deviations. For example, when asked about barriers that men or ex-offenders face, childcare drops out of the top six and housing appears. The list for older adults is the only one which differs significantly from other groups. A question arises which is: Should staff be paying more attention to certain barriers based on characteristics of their customers?

**Table 7**  
Barriers to securing employment - by subgroup

	<u>Gender</u>		<u>Ex-Offenders</u>	<u>Age of Adults</u>		
	Women	Men		Young (18-24 years)	Middle-aged (25-44 years)	Older (over 44 years)
1	*Childcare	*Criminal Record	*Criminal Record	*Work Experience	*Low Education	*Low Education
2	*Transportation	*Low Education	*Low Education	*Low Education	*Transportation	*Transportation
3	*Low Education	*Substance Abuse	*Transportation	*Transportation	*Criminal Record	Chronic Health Issues
4	*Work Experience	*Transportation	*Substance Abuse	Childcare	*Work Experience	Physical Disability
5	Substance Abuse	Work Experience	*Work Experience	Substance Abuse	Substance Abuse	Criminal Record
6	Criminal Records	Housing	Housing	Criminal Record	Childcare	Depression

\* indicates that more than 50% of staff respondents listed the issue as a barrier.

Front-line workers believe that all ages of job seekers are challenged most by limited education and skills and a lack of transportation. However, the extent to which each group is hindered by the barriers differs. As might be expected, staff view childcare issues and lack of work experience as much more of a problem for younger adults than for older adults. Also, while older job seekers are less likely to have childcare and substance abuse issues, staff perceives that they are more likely to be faced with chronic health problems, physical disability, and depression than either young or middle-aged adult job seekers.

In open comments, staff listed the following additional barriers found with different ages:

- Youth:
  - poor sense of work ethic
  - bad attitudes
  - unrealistic expectations about types of available jobs
- Middle-aged:
  - apprehension about getting a GED
  - apprehension about training for a new career
- Older:
  - aversion toward gaining new skills/education
  - lack a general support system, including transportation

Staff serving immigrant populations state that many immigrant women come from countries where they do not receive the same amount of education as men, nor are they accustomed to working outside of the home. Additionally, some women follow religious and cultural rules regarding appropriate dress. Finally, some of these women are very reliant upon the men in their lives. These factors hinder immigrant women’s ability to obtain gainful employment. Staff assisting immigrants, as well as non-immigrants, noted that substance abuse appears quite commonly among their male clients. Respondents suggested that men use these substances as coping mechanisms to a much greater degree than women. Unfortunately the use of these substances often turns into addiction, which if combined with other barriers further impedes their ability to find work.

**Comparison with residents' responses.** In some areas, staff perception of barriers mirrored what residents themselves stated, and in some areas it differed. When reviewing these similarities and differences, it is important to note that the list of barriers presented to each group was different. For example, residents were not asked to rank housing, depression and mental health, learning disability and domestic violence. On the other hand, the survey given to staff did not include some items mentioned frequently by residents such as having family responsibilities or attending school.

*Differences regarding health concerns as a barrier to employment*

Staff members were asked to comment on “chronic health problems,” and residents were asked about “injury/health problems.” The following differences in perceptions by staff and residents could be due to the phrasing of the survey item. However, understanding health care as a barrier to employment requires knowing more about residents’ health concerns and the availability of adequate health care for them.

- › Middle-aged residents list injuries and health as a top barrier.
- › Male residents list injuries and health problems as the top barrier to employment
- › Women list injuries and health as the fourth most common barrier.
- › Staff recognizes health issues only in the older population.

*Differences regarding criminal records as a barrier to employment*

- › Staff consistently identified having a criminal record as a barrier to employment.
- › Female residents did not report this as a frequent barrier.

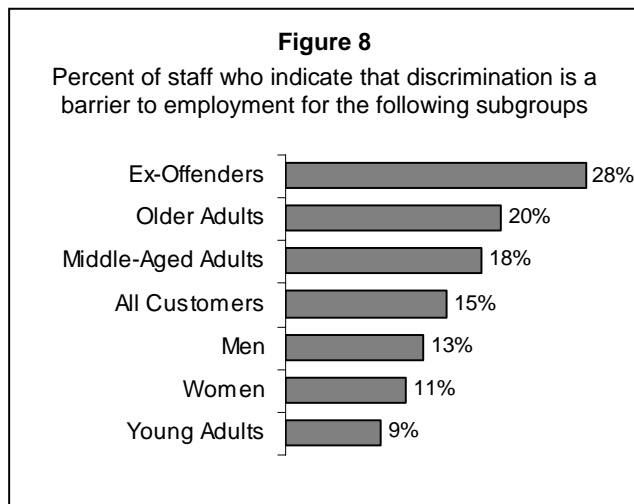
*Differences regarding substance abuse as a barrier to employment*

- › Staff identified substance abuse as a top issue for all groups except older adults.
- › No demographic group of residents identified substance abuse as a frequent barrier.

*Similarities between staff and residents*

- › Both agree that lack of education and transportation are issues for men.
- › Both agree that women need childcare, transportation, and education and skills.

**Discrimination.** When indicating barriers for various subgroups, staff did not rank discrimination as one of the most frequent barriers. However, looking at the responses does show the groups most likely to face discrimination. (See Figure 8). In addition, when asked in an open-ended question, many staff did mention discrimination as an employment issue. Similarly, residents did not indicate discrimination as a frequent issue when it was placed among a list of other barriers. However, when asked specifically about discrimination, over half of unemployed residents indicated that they had experienced employer discrimination. Also, the staff responses displayed in Figure 8 match



those given by residents in that ex-offenders and older adults were highlighted as the most affected groups.

**Ex-offenders.** Front-line staff was asked specifically about the extent to which employers were reluctant to hire individuals with spotty work histories, who had received welfare, or who had been incarcerated. Staff agreed that these groups did face discrimination, especially ex-offenders. Comments were similar regardless of if the staff person worked at an agency that specifically assisted ex-offenders or at an agency serving a broader clientele. These other agencies have seen a marked increase in the numbers of ex-offenders coming to them for services. One staff member said:

“The reluctance [to hire clients with these histories] is often supported by company policy, which makes it easier for employers to flat out say ‘I’m not going to hire x, y, z population.’ The salient identity that these populations carry won’t be erased until these policies change and they are hired for dignified jobs...Folks in our agency are often more likely to be hired for seasonal work or low paying jobs where there is not room for upward mobility, no benefits, or childcare options.”

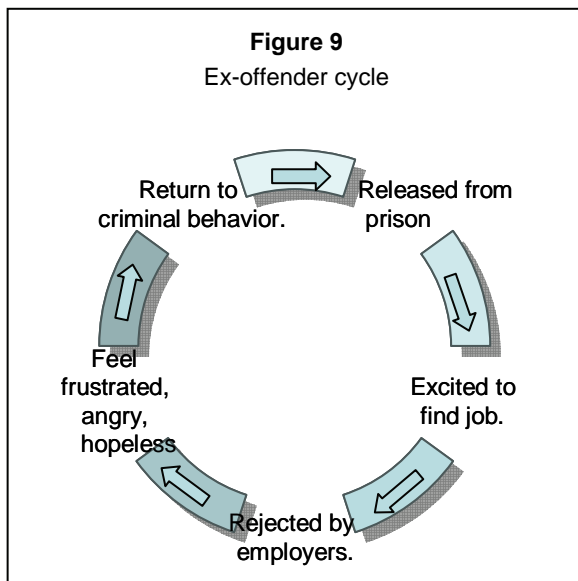


Figure 9 illustrates a cycle which staff expressed that many ex-offender customers experience. In this cycle, ex-offenders leave prison with excitement about finding work. However, after being turned away by employers, they develop frustration, anger and a “why bother” attitude. One respondent suggested that an inability to secure legitimate employment contributes to ex-offenders selling or using drugs or engaging in prostitution. Staff may then perceive that these individuals are not serious about finding a job. According to one respondent, “When I assume that clients are not serious or lazy, I find when I look deeper it turns out that the client just feels hopeless and alienated.”

In addition, several respondents mentioned that some ex-offenders are easily frustrated when employment prospects do not work out as they had hoped. These individuals do not have an accurate understanding of the role of education and skills training in obtaining employment. They also might not understand employers’ aversion to hiring ex-offenders. Moreover, respondents noted the poor work ethic and attitudes of some ex-offenders, which further erode the likelihood of finding work. Unfortunately, having a criminal record and little to no work experience combine in such a way as to create a significant barrier to employment. Even staff who agreed that discrimination against ex-offenders was an issue highlighted the importance of providing these customers with the proper job readiness and educational training. Agencies can also educate employers regarding the eagerness of ex-offenders to work and the availability of services (e.g., federal bonding program) for businesses that hire ex-offenders.

**Immigrants.** Although mentioned less frequently, staff noted the reluctance on the part of employers to hire or interview immigrants, even when they meet the qualifications for the job. One respondent noted how hearing a foreign-sounding name or seeing unfamiliar clothing raises flags of suspicion among employers. Respondents stated that the job seeker must also attempt to overcome this barrier by presenting him/herself as an educated and qualified candidate. Respondents mentioned that some immigrants seem unwilling to put forth this effort. For some this may mean learning to ride the bus. For others, changes to dress may be necessary for certain jobs and immigrants must make decisions on whether or not these changes are acceptable in order to obtain work.

As the immigrant population continues to increase in Columbus, it is important that social service providers be culturally competent in understanding these new groups. Some respondents referred to Muslims as foreigners and indicated that dress rules were cultural only. This negates that fact that religious belief may be guiding decision-making by Muslims, both U.S. citizens and immigrants. Social service providers must be able to articulate job trade-offs for those who choose to follow religious beliefs. In addition, providers could help employers and immigrant groups come to compromise where possible. As an example, a hospital system in Minneapolis worked with local Muslim agencies to design uniforms for maintenance and nursing staff that were acceptable according to religious custom.

**Age discrimination.** The presence of age discrimination against older job seekers was also discussed by respondents. Staff noted employer reluctance to hire older and even middle-aged job seekers due to the skills deficit that many of them have. As several respondents implied, an individual who worked the same job for 25 years will likely need some skills training or education in order to be marketable. The problem, according to respondents who mentioned age discrimination, is that many middle-aged and older job seekers do not know the available types of training, where they are located, or are reluctant or unwilling to enter into training programs. These comments regarding age discrimination closely mirror the comments raised by focus groups containing community residents (as discussed in *Having Their Say*, page 9.)

## What strategies work?

### *Frequently mentioned strategies:*

- Help develop self-esteem & provide positive support
- Assess strengths, skills & interests
- Develop job readiness skills
- Reduce barriers

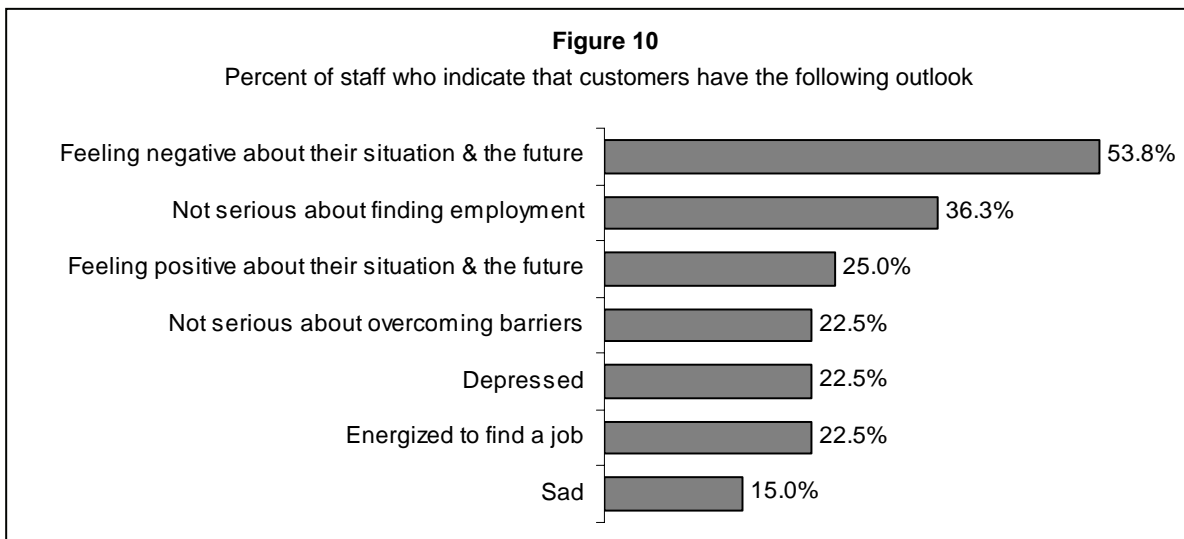
Staff was also asked what strategies work best to move individuals into employment. Responses tended to fall under four basic themes: improving self-esteem and attitude; properly identifying strengths, skills and interests; developing job readiness skills such as resume development and interviewing; and reducing barriers.

The first theme included the importance of helping to develop the job seeker’s self-esteem. Figure 10 underscores the importance of this element. When asked about the outlook of customers seeking employment-related services, over half of staff indicated that customers feel negative about their present situation and the future. In fact, only 25% of staff indicated that some customers have positive attitudes or are energized about job possibilities.

Comments provided by staff and residents suggest the following actions be taken by staff:

- Exhibit a positive, encouraging and caring attitude.
- Help clients reach small successes,
- Be honest and persistent with clients
- Continue encouragement after the customer has found gainful employment.
- Provide individualized counseling and instruction to develop self-esteem and confidence.

One respondent noted, however, that, “It is still important to allow the clients to take responsibility for their lives. They have to be held accountable for their actions and decisions and so I like to think of our relationship as a ‘co-working’ relationship.”



Another theme involved the importance of assessments in identifying strengths, skills and interests. This step is the base for creating career plans as well as for matching customers to employment opportunities. Using strengths to build short and long-term goals provides the

client with a foundation to experience success. Many staff found it easier to keep customers on track when they had created individualized career plans including goals and objectives based on career interest and skill assessments. This reinforces comments made by residents in which they indicated that staff should ask about their career goals rather than just seeking to place them in any available job opening. Some staff found it more beneficial to help job seekers to focus on educational goals first and then work their way up to employment goals. Staff mentioned that job seekers must understand the end result of improving their education and skills. Thus, helping clients to obtain a GED is where many organizations can be most useful.

Many respondents mentioned the need to provide customers with the basic skills necessary to find employment. These included resume and cover letter writing, interviewing, networking and job search techniques. Some respondents listed other life skills such as conflict resolution, anger management, and gaining understanding regarding the consequences of behavior. While many staff mentioned the usefulness of individualized counseling and instruction, others praised the workshop method. They stated that customers can learn from each other in job coaching groups. One respondent noted the importance of keeping job leads and opportunities up-to-date, so that outdated information would not further frustrate customers.

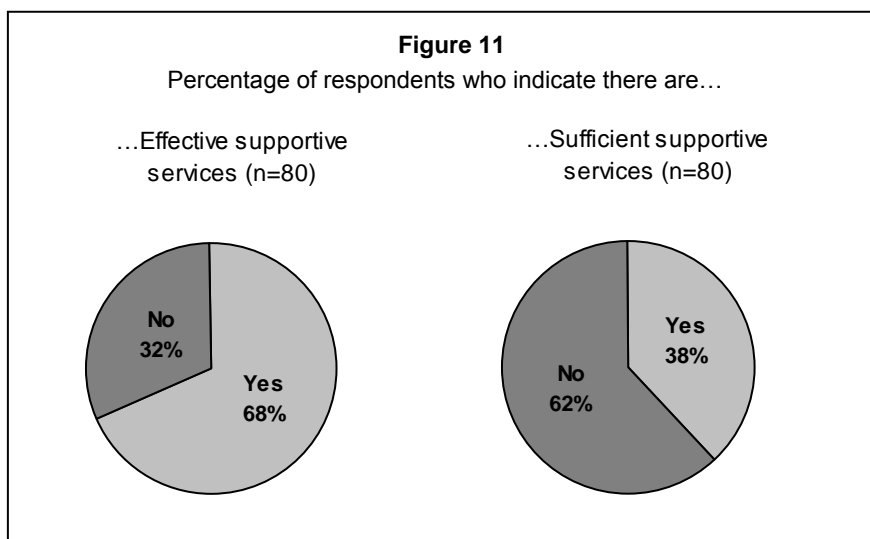
The fourth most frequently mentioned area was that of reducing barriers to employment. Some respondents mentioned barrier reduction generally. Others, however, delineated specific barriers including transportation assistance, substance abuse treatment, physical and mental health services, housing and legal services. Regarding transportation, one respondent stated that if the customer is unable to find a means of getting to an interview or application session, he/she will have little success in securing and keeping a job.

Some staff also explained the need to develop relationships with potential employers. By knowing the strengths and weaknesses of the job-seeking customer as well as the needs of the employer, the staff will have a better understanding of how their clients fit with potential employers. This comment supports the view of residents who suggested that closer connections between agencies and employers would help them obtain jobs, rather than just prepare for jobs.

In the end, most staff agreed that a “holistic approach” to career development works best. Very few staff listed only one strategy in response to this question. Most included a combination of strategies that addressed job seekers’ mental state, built on their strengths, developed their skills, and reduced barriers. One respondent stated that a collaborative approach, including job seekers, agency staff and employers, can make the community better.

## What is the state of service provision?

Lastly, staff was asked whether they believed that effective and sufficient supportive services and referral practices existed in the community. As Figure 11 indicates, staff members agree overwhelmingly (68%) that there are effective supportive services and referral practices among the various employment service agencies in the city. This suggests that a majority of practitioners believe that they and others are doing a good job at providing such services. Still, almost one-third believe such services are ineffective. Few respondents provided comments. However, one indicated a need for more services serving those aged 18 to 24 and another indicated a need for services that really understand their customers.



The right-side of Figure 11 reveals a different story. Here, respondents indicate that they do not believe there are enough services. In the open-ended responses, several respondents mentioned the need for more funding to provide additional services. Another respondent pointed out that if a customer does not have children, or a disability, there is very little assistance available. Other respondents noted an insufficient number of programs and services centered on transportation, childcare, education, and training. According to one respondent, “There are insufficient resources to meet the increasing demand for quality career development and support services mostly due to shrinking public and private resources. As those individuals requiring employment assistance experience complex barriers to self-sufficiency, community service providers are being stretched beyond our capacity.”

Respondents also took the opportunity to provide additional comments. Several of these comments addressed the funding environment in which employment services providers are forced to operate. Increased cuts in funding have led to insufficient resources for workforce development purposes. This has affected the extent to which local agencies are able to offer effective career development services to hard-to-serve clients. As one respondent noted, “You cannot serve the customers’ needs if first you do not address the agencies’ needs.” While the vast majority of respondents espoused a holistic approach to providing employment services, they note that such an approach is increasingly difficult given current funding constraints.

## SUMMARY OF FINDINGS

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Overall, low-income unemployed and underemployed job seekers recognize that there are two parts of the unemployment story. They know that today's job seekers must be "job ready" and possess the education and skills that employers seek. However, they see the current employment environment as one in which there is discrimination in hiring practices, in addition to an increasing number of businesses locating outside of the central area. These restrictive access issues contribute to these job seekers' continuing disillusionment.

- Lack of education and skills is acknowledged as a formidable barrier to employment. In fact, residents rank this as the second most significant issue confronting them. Given that almost 70% of community respondents had a high school diploma, GED or less, this is not surprising. Additionally, 70% of residents with these educational levels reported earning less than \$15,000 annually. One-quarter of unemployed residents who responded to the survey indicated that lack of education and skills affected their ability to get a job. Staff at community-based and government agencies offering workforce development and supportive services rated this as the number one barrier hindering residents from finding employment.
- Residents and focus group participants also noted the difficulty of finding a job in the city when many well-paying jobs are located in suburbs where local bus service is limited. Even if employers are near a bus-line, employees who work on shifts not aligning with general commute patterns may not have access to a bus at the appropriate time. Finally, many residents may need to use multiple buses to take their children to childcare and then to arrive at work on time. Agency staff confirmed that transportation is a key barrier for the people that they serve, rating this as the number two barrier for residents.

Regarding needed services, residents made many requests, but were also unaware that some of the services already exist. Survey respondents asked for developmental training in areas such as verbal communication and presentation skills, computer skills, GED services and greater access to post-secondary education. They also requested supportive services such as transportation and childcare.

An overwhelming majority of residents surveyed were unfamiliar with the local One Stop Centers and with many of the workforce services offered by community-based organizations. Furthermore, of the individuals aware of these services, most found them less than helpful or were not satisfied with the services received. This provides important information for agencies as they seek to enhance services to residents.

Residents indicated that the inability of local agencies and CBOs to assist ex-offenders and others facing discrimination coupled with employer unwillingness to hire from these groups creates a feeling of hopelessness among many hard-to-serve individuals. Staff also noted the prevalence of discrimination against certain types of job seekers, specifically ex-offenders. Respondents noted that the current "employers' market" allows employers to choose barrier-free candidates for positions. They also suggested that employers have been reluctant to give ex-offenders and others with spotty work histories a chance to prove that they can contribute

to their workplaces. All survey respondents, staff and residents, indicated the presence of age discrimination. Still, as many staff admitted, the employers do not always create the barriers to employment. As one respondent said, “The hardest customer to place is the unmotivated one; no matter what you do, if they are unmotivated, it doesn’t matter.” Residents also thought that many of their neighbors didn’t work because they had no desire.

Staff noted a number of strategies for assisting job-seeking customers. A holistic approach would include improving self esteem and attitude; properly identifying strengths, skills and interests; developing job readiness skills such as resume development and interviewing; and reducing barriers. Although agency staff believe that they were effective in providing these services, they also stated that not enough services exist relative to the need. Various comments also indicated that agencies are often territorial, rather than focused on working together for the benefit of the job seekers and community. This suggests that advancing collaboration could enhance the outcomes for job seekers.

Almost all of the respondents appear to make the connection between lack of employment opportunities in the city and the current state of poverty in the central city area. One respondent stated, “A lack of employment opportunities breeds crime and poverty-stricken neighborhoods, which in turn, doesn’t make business want to come to these communities.” A creative and concerted effort across economic development and workforce organizations, employers, and residents is needed to make changes on a community level.

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## Service Recommendations

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- ▶ Organizations (CBOs, One-Stops, and Training Providers) involved in workforce development and employment and training should expand their marketing communication strategy aimed at increasing awareness of services to the target population. Strategies should include traditional and nontraditional outreach methodologies.
- ▶ Given the emergence of new technologies, additional resources should be made available for computer literacy training. Ensuring that this service offering is broadly available to adult residents living in impoverished neighborhoods is fundamental in helping to bridge the digital divide and improving the marketability of low-income job seekers.
- ▶ Providers must expand service offerings and referral networks to address residents’ lack of industry-recognized skills. Non-traditional approaches are warranted to promote residents’ success in post-secondary training and educational environments. Because many low-income residents have not had positive results in secondary education environments, they may be reluctant and even intimidated by post-secondary or training institutions. Offering short-term occupational skills courses in non-traditional settings should be examined.

- › Stakeholders acknowledge that transportation is a crucial labor-force attachment issue, therefore, workforce service providers need to create effective partnerships with local transit authorities. Identifying reverse commute options to broaden the types of transportation assistance offered to this population is essential. Optional transportation models might include vanpools, ride share programs, and car ownership initiatives for low-income residents.
- › Workforce practitioners serving low or limited skilled individuals, ex-offenders, and mature workers populations could consider offering targeted outreach to employers.
- › “Soft skills” job readiness programming must include curriculum that bolsters participants’ verbal communication skills, self-confidence and salesmanship in order to support high-level functioning in the workplace. Providers should also consider financial literacy instruction as a fundamental component of job preparedness training.
- › To address issues of discrimination, diversity training should be offered to start-up and small business owners and employers. These employers often have limited resources to allocate to human resources or professional development. Given that these businesses account for the largest job growth throughout the nation, ensuring that they recognize the value of diversity is critical.

# APPENDIX A: RESIDENT SURVEY

Directions: Please check the box or circle the answer that most closely describes you or resembles your opinion.

## Labor force participation/employment

1. Do you currently work for pay?  Yes  No

**[IF NOT EMPLOYED, GO TO NUMBER 7]**

1a. If yes, is your job full-time or part-time?  Full-time  Part-time

1b. Do you currently have more than one job?  Yes  No

**[IF NO, GO TO NUMBER 3]**

2. How long have you been working at your main job?

2 months or less  3-6 months  6 months- 1 year  1-3 years  3 + years

2a. How long have you been working at your second job?

2 months or less  3-6 months  6 months- 1 year  1-3 years  3 + years

3. How much does your job pay (or your two jobs combined)? \$\_\_\_\_\_

3a. Is that per hour, per week, bi-weekly, or per month? [please circle]

4. On average, how many hours do you work per week?

1-10  11-20  21-30  31-40  41-50  51-60  60+

5. In which job category is your main job?

Manufacturing  Customer service (hotel, food etc.)  Construction  Technical/I.T.  Transportation  
 Administrative  Education  Sales  Maintenance  Other \_\_\_\_\_ (please specify)

6. How do you get to work?

Own car  bus/other public transportation  walk  cab  work at home  car pool  
 Other \_\_\_\_\_ (please specify)

**[IF CURRENTLY EMPLOYED, GO TO NUMBER 10]**

7. How long has it been since you were last employed?

Less than 2 months  3-6 months  7-12 months  More than 1 year

8. The last time you looked for a job which job search methods did you use? (check all that apply)

- Attended a job fair
- Check out "help wanted signs"
- Check with state employment services such as the One Stop Opportunity Centers
- Internet search on the computer
- Looked at ads in the local newspapers/magazines
- Networked with friends/family to get a job/job interview
- Referral from job training program
- Used a private employment agency
- Used a school placement office
- Used a temporary agency
- Walked in and applied
- Other \_\_\_\_\_ (please specify)

9. Thinking about your situation, what are the top 3 reasons you are not working (enter 1, 2, and 3 in the boxes)

- |  |  |
|--|--|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Injury/health problems                      | <input type="checkbox"/> Company/business closed |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Disabled                                    | <input type="checkbox"/> Strike/labor dispute    |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Taking care of family/home responsibilities | <input type="checkbox"/> Laid off                |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Drug/alcohol problem                        | <input type="checkbox"/> Retired                 |
| <input type="checkbox"/> No childcare/cannot afford childcare        | <input type="checkbox"/> Quit                    |

(Continued next page)

**Directions: Please check the box or circle the answer that most closely describes you or resembles your opinion.**

- |  |   |
|--|---|
| <input type="checkbox"/> In school/other training program        | <input type="checkbox"/> Fired                              |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Need more education/skills/training     | <input type="checkbox"/> No transportation                  |
| <input type="checkbox"/> No work experience/need more experience | <input type="checkbox"/> Criminal record                    |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Don't speak English well enough         | <input type="checkbox"/> Do not want to work                |
|  | <input type="checkbox"/> Wages too low/no benefits          |
|  | <input type="checkbox"/> Cannot find work/no jobs available |
|  | <input type="checkbox"/> Discrimination                     |
|  | <input type="checkbox"/> Weather                            |
|  | <input type="checkbox"/> Other _____ (please specify)       |

**10. Think about the people you know in your neighborhood who are not working. In your opinion, what are the top three reasons you think they are not working? Enter 1, 2, 3 in the boxes.**

- |  |  |  |
|--|--|--|
| <input type="checkbox"/> No childcare/cannot afford childcare    | <input type="checkbox"/> Criminal record                     | <input type="checkbox"/> Do not want to work |
| <input type="checkbox"/> No work experience/need more experience | <input type="checkbox"/> Drug/alcohol problems               | <input type="checkbox"/> Discrimination      |
| <input type="checkbox"/> No transportation                       | <input type="checkbox"/> Don't speak English well            |  |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Disabled                                | <input type="checkbox"/> Need more education/skills/training |  |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Injury/health problems                  | <input type="checkbox"/> Cannot find work/ no jobs available |  |

**[IF CURRENTLY EMPLOYED, GO TO NUMBER 19]**

**11. Have you ever felt that an employer refused to hire you or interview you for a job because:**

- |                              | <b>Yes</b>               | <b>No</b>                |
|------------------------------|--------------------------|--------------------------|
| Of your race/ethnicity       | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Of your sex/gender           | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| You had been on welfare      | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| You had been arrested or     | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Charged/convicted of a crime | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |

**Education, Training, and Supportive Services**

**12. In the last 12 months have you completed a job training class or educational program (GED, apprenticeship program, computer skills program etc.)? Note: Completed means you finished all of the class requirements**  Yes  No

**13. Are you currently enrolled in a degree or certificate program?**  Yes  No

**13a. If yes, which one?**

- |   |   |
|---|---|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Associates (2-year degree)         | <input type="checkbox"/> GED                          |
| <input type="checkbox"/> B.A./B.S. (4-year college degree)  | <input type="checkbox"/> M.A. (graduate degree)       |
| <input type="checkbox"/> ESL (English as a Second Language) | <input type="checkbox"/> Vocational/technical         |
|   | <input type="checkbox"/> Other _____ (please specify) |

**14. Which of the following training/education classes would best assist you in getting or keeping a job? (check all that apply)**

- |  |  |
|--|--|
| <input type="checkbox"/> ABLE                                    | <input type="checkbox"/> Microenterprise/Small Business Training         |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Access to higher education/college      | Occupational Skills Training:  |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Career advancement services             | <input type="checkbox"/> Auto mechanics                                  |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Communication skills                    | <input type="checkbox"/> Computer Technology Support                     |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Computer skills (basic/advanced)        | <input type="checkbox"/> Health information/Medical billing and coding   |
| <input type="checkbox"/> ESL/ESOL                                | <input type="checkbox"/> Home childcare training                         |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Financial Literacy/ Money Management    | <input type="checkbox"/> Home Healthcare/Personal Care/Nursing Assistant |
| <input type="checkbox"/> GED                                     | <input type="checkbox"/> Home weatherization                             |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Job readiness/Customer service training | <input type="checkbox"/> Landscaping/Lawn Care                           |
|  | Supportive Services  |
|  | <input type="checkbox"/> Childcare assistance                            |
|  | <input type="checkbox"/> Transportation options                          |

**Directions: Please check the box or circle the answer that most closely describes you or resembles your opinion.**

**14a.** If you were interested in taking training/education classes such as those listed above, which time would you prefer?       Morning (7am-11am)     Afternoon (12pm-4pm)     Evening (5pm-9pm)

**15.** Do you know of agencies in your neighborhood that offer employment services (i.e. job search assistance/counseling/resume writing)?       Yes       No

**15a.** If yes, which ones? \_\_\_\_\_

**16.** Have you ever sought employment services from neighborhood agencies in your neighborhood?       Yes       No

**16a.** If yes, how helpful did you find those agencies to be in terms of serving your employment needs?

Very helpful     Somewhat helpful     Not so helpful

**17.** Do you know of agencies in your neighborhood that offer education or job skills training?     Yes       No

**17a.** If yes, which ones? \_\_\_\_\_

**18.** Have you ever sought education/job training services from neighborhood agencies in your neighborhood?     Yes       No

**18a.** If yes, how helpful did you find those agencies to be in terms of serving your training needs?

Very helpful     Somewhat helpful     Not so helpful

**19.** What other services would you like to see your neighborhood-based organizations/agencies offer that would assist with your employment-related needs?

**20.** Are you familiar with the One Stop Opportunity Centers which offer employment and training services?     Yes     No

**20a.** If yes, have you used the One Stop Opportunity Centers for your employment and training needs?     Yes     No

**21.** If you received employment and/or training services from the Opportunity Centers, how satisfied were you with the helpfulness/usefulness of the Center?

Very Satisfied     Somewhat Satisfied     Not Satisfied at all

**Demographics**

Are you:

**22.**     Female       Male

**23.**     Black/African American  
          White/Caucasian  
          East African/African  
          Somali  
          Latino/Hispanic  
          Asian/Pacific Islander  
          Other \_\_\_\_\_ (please specify)

**Directions: Please check the box or circle the answer that most closely describes you or resembles your opinion.**

Are you:

24.  18-25  
 26-35  
 36-45  
 46-54  
 55-65  
 65+

25. Registered to vote?  Yes  No

26. Highest level of education completed?

- No high school diploma/GED  
 HS/GED  
 Some college, not completed  
 2-year associates degree  
 4- year college degree  
 Graduate/professional school

27. What is your yearly income?

- \$0-10,000  
 \$10,001-15,000  
 \$15,001-20,000  
 \$20,001-25,000  
 \$25,001-30,000  
 \$30,001-40,000  
 \$40,001-50,000  
 \$50,001-60,000  
 \$60,001+

28. Do you currently receive welfare/TANF benefits?  Yes  No

29. Where do you currently live?

- 43219 Duxberry  
 43211 Linden  
 43205 Old Town East/Livingston Park/Driving Park/South of Main  
 43203 Mt. Vernon/Eastgate/Concerned  
 43215 Franklinton/Downtown/Near East  
 43201 University Community/Weinland Park/Italian Village/Milo-Grogan  
 43209 East Side (near Airport)  
 43222 Franklinton/West Side  
 Other \_\_\_\_\_ (please specify zip code)

30. If you could advise local officials about the situation of unemployment and underemployment in your neighborhood, what would you suggest?

**THANK YOU FOR COMPLETING THE COLUMBUS WORKFORCE ALLIANCE EMPLOYMENT SURVEY!**

# APPENDIX B: STAFF SURVEY

Directions: Please select the most appropriate answers. Check all that apply. Use additional sheets if necessary.

1. In general, which of the following are the most common barriers to employment among your customers/clients?

- |  |  |  |
|--|--|--|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Housing             | <input type="checkbox"/> Drug/alcohol abuse                      | <input type="checkbox"/> Domestic violence               |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Childcare           | <input type="checkbox"/> Very low education/basic skills         | <input type="checkbox"/> Chronic health problems         |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Physical disability | <input type="checkbox"/> Criminal records                        | <input type="checkbox"/> Experiences with discrimination |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Learning disability | <input type="checkbox"/> No work experience or training          |  |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Transportation      | <input type="checkbox"/> Depression/other mental health problems |  |

Additional comments related to this question:

2. Which of these barriers seem to be more prevalent among your female customers/clients?

- |  |  |  |
|--|--|--|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Housing             | <input type="checkbox"/> Drug/alcohol abuse                      | <input type="checkbox"/> Domestic violence                         |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Childcare           | <input type="checkbox"/> Very low education/basic skills         | <input type="checkbox"/> Chronic health problems                   |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Physical disability | <input type="checkbox"/> Criminal records                        | <input type="checkbox"/> Experiences with discrimination           |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Learning disability | <input type="checkbox"/> No work experience or training          | <input type="checkbox"/> NA/Do not assist female customers/clients |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Transportation      | <input type="checkbox"/> Depression/other mental health problems |  |

Additional comments related to this question:

3. Which of these barriers seem to be more prevalent among your male customers/clients?

- |  |  |  |
|--|--|--|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Housing             | <input type="checkbox"/> Drug/alcohol abuse                      | <input type="checkbox"/> Domestic violence                       |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Childcare           | <input type="checkbox"/> Very low education/basic skills         | <input type="checkbox"/> Chronic health problems                 |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Physical disability | <input type="checkbox"/> Criminal records                        | <input type="checkbox"/> Experiences with discrimination         |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Learning disability | <input type="checkbox"/> No work experience or training          | <input type="checkbox"/> NA/Do not assist male customers/clients |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Transportation      | <input type="checkbox"/> Depression/other mental health problems |  |

Additional comments related to this question:

4. Which of these barriers seem to be more prevalent among your ex-offender customers/clients?

- |  |  |   |
|--|--|---|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Housing             | <input type="checkbox"/> Drug/alcohol abuse                      | <input type="checkbox"/> Domestic violence                              |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Childcare           | <input type="checkbox"/> Very low education/basic skills         | <input type="checkbox"/> Chronic health problems                        |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Physical disability | <input type="checkbox"/> Criminal records                        | <input type="checkbox"/> Experiences with discrimination                |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Learning disability | <input type="checkbox"/> No work experience or training          | <input type="checkbox"/> NA/Do not assist ex-offender customers/clients |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Transportation      | <input type="checkbox"/> Depression/other mental health problems |   |

Additional comments related to this question:

Directions: Please select the most appropriate answers. Check all that apply. Use additional sheets if necessary.

5a. Which of these barriers seem to be more prevalent among your young adult customers/clients (i.e. 18-24)?

- |  |  |   |
|--|--|---|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Housing             | <input type="checkbox"/> Drug/alcohol abuse                      | <input type="checkbox"/> Domestic violence                              |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Childcare           | <input type="checkbox"/> Very low education/basic skills         | <input type="checkbox"/> Chronic health problems                        |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Physical disability | <input type="checkbox"/> Criminal records                        | <input type="checkbox"/> Experiences with discrimination                |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Learning disability | <input type="checkbox"/> No work experience or training          | <input type="checkbox"/> NA/Do not assist young adult customers/clients |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Transportation      | <input type="checkbox"/> Depression/other mental health problems |   |

5b. Which of these barriers seem to be more prevalent among your middle aged adult customers/clients (i.e. 25-44)?

- |  |  |   |
|--|--|---|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Housing             | <input type="checkbox"/> Drug/alcohol abuse                      | <input type="checkbox"/> Domestic violence                                    |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Childcare           | <input type="checkbox"/> Very low education/basic skills         | <input type="checkbox"/> Chronic health problems                              |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Physical disability | <input type="checkbox"/> Criminal records                        | <input type="checkbox"/> Experiences with discrimination                      |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Learning disability | <input type="checkbox"/> No work experience or training          | <input type="checkbox"/> NA/Do not assist middle-aged adult customers/clients |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Transportation      | <input type="checkbox"/> Depression/other mental health problems |   |

5c. Which of these barriers seem to be more prevalent among your older adult customers/clients (i.e. 45+)?

- |  |  |   |
|--|--|---|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Housing             | <input type="checkbox"/> Drug/alcohol abuse                      | <input type="checkbox"/> Domestic violence                              |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Childcare           | <input type="checkbox"/> Very low education/basic skills         | <input type="checkbox"/> Chronic health problems                        |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Physical disability | <input type="checkbox"/> Criminal records                        | <input type="checkbox"/> Experiences with discrimination                |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Learning disability | <input type="checkbox"/> No work experience or training          | <input type="checkbox"/> NA/Do not assist older adult customers/clients |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Transportation      | <input type="checkbox"/> Depression/other mental health problems |   |

Additional comments related to these set of questions:

6. What is the general demeanor of those customers/clients who come into your agency seeking employment- related services?

- Not serious about overcoming barriers (i.e. lax about getting treatment/counseling; continuing to engage in negative behaviors)
- Not serious about finding employment (i.e. won't follow through on job leads, resume development etc.; won't keep appointments with Employment Specialist)
- Feeling positive about their situation and the future
- Feeling negative about their situation and the future
- Sad
- Depressed
- Energized to find a job

Additional comments related to question:

Directions: Please select the most appropriate answers. Check all that apply. Use additional sheets if necessary.

7. In your experience, which mix of strategies work best to move your clients/customers toward gainful employment?

8a. In your opinion are there effective supportive services and referral protocols among community-based organizations and governmental agencies in the city to assist customers/clients with the various barriers they face?  Yes  No

8b. In your opinion are there sufficient supportive services and referral protocols among community-based organizations and governmental agencies in the city to assist customers/clients with the various barriers they face?  Yes  No

9. How does employment discrimination impact the job seeking customers/clients you see in your agency? That is, is there a general reluctance on the part of employers to hire those who may have spotty employment histories, or be welfare recipients or ex-offenders?

Any additional comments about barriers to unemployment among hard-to-serve customers/clients:



# ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

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This report comprises the first phase of a larger project being undertaken by the Columbus Workforce Alliance. This project, titled Meeting the Needs of Low-income Unemployed and Underemployed Job Seekers, seeks to determine the best practices for helping low-income unemployed, underemployed, and not-in-labor-force individuals find jobs. Specifically, the CWA seeks to identify service delivery strategies that support these individuals' movement into jobs earning family-sustaining wages.

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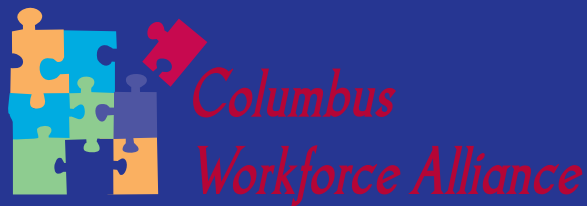
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