

Economic Environment Survey of Employment & Training Providers
Summary of Responses

In September 2009, the Chicago Jobs Council (CJC) conducted a survey of employment and training service providers to understand how provider organizations are being affected by the current economic environment, and to get a sense of what the employment and training service delivery landscape may look like after one-time federal recovery funds are expended. Executive directors, presidents and other leadership of 228 organizations (non-profit, for-profit, government and community colleges) were surveyed. These organizations are primarily CJC Members, Frontline Focus participants, and WIA providers. CJC received a total of 43 survey responses (19% response rate). Following is a summary of responses for each survey question.

1) Select the category that best describes your organization:

- ✓ Non-profit community organization - 36
- ✓ For-profit community organization - 4
- ✓ Government agency - 2
- ✓ Community college - 0
- ✓ Other - 1 (fill-in response: Non-profit Church Ministry)

2) How are State budget cuts, funding reductions by private foundations, and other challenges in the current economic environment affecting your organization specifically in terms of staffing for employment and training programs and services? (Please specify which economic events are having the greatest impact on your organization.)

- ✓ The vast majority of respondents are experiencing negative impacts from State cuts and reductions by private foundations. Additionally, respondents cited other economic challenges as the housing crisis, reductions by individual donors/members, and long pay cycles from the State.
- ✓ Multiple respondents also indicated that the economic environment is making it more difficult to place clients in employment therefore impacting organizational performance outcomes.

3) Has your organization received additional funding as a result of new funding opportunities through the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act (ARRA)? If so, how have these additional resources affected your organization in terms of staffing for employment and training programs and services?

- ✓ 23 respondents have or are slated to receive ARRA funds (additionally, 2 respondents received ARRA monies for programs/services not related to employment and training). The remaining 18 respondents have not received ARRA funds.
- ✓ Those who received funding were split on how beneficial these funds would be for their organizations. Some organizations were able to launch new initiatives and programs, create new staff positions, retain existing staff, increase capacity to deliver services and programs, and felt that funds were helping offset cuts. Other recipients of funds are concerned about the restrictive and time-limited nature of funding and feel that ARRA funds are not nearly enough to make up for cuts.

4) Has your organization had to, or does your organization anticipate needing to, make any reductions or increases in staff for employment and training programs and services? For either staff increases or reductions, please provide information on the number of positions and types of positions affected, as well as the timeline for these staff changes.

- ✓ 15 respondents have had to or anticipate needing to make reductions in staffing, including layoffs, reductions in paid hours, use of staff furlough days, and leaving vacated positions unfilled.
- ✓ 15 respondents have increased staffing with either temporary or permanent positions, or by increasing staff hours.
- ✓ 8 respondents have had to make staff reductions in some programs and increases in others, depending on how funding could be applied.
- ✓ 5 respondents indicated no change in staffing.

5) If your organization is hiring or creating new positions, are these positions considered temporary (i.e. only for the duration of ARRA funding), or permanent (i.e. your organization will commit to raising funds to support these positions post-ARRA)? What is your organization's staffing vision and strategy once contracts funded through federal recovery dollars are completed?

- ✓ 5 respondents consider their organizations' new hires permanent.
- ✓ 5 respondents indicated a range of commitment on their organizations' part to retain new hires.
- ✓ 5 respondents anticipate being able to retain some new hires – potentially moving them into different positions once ARRA funds have discontinued – but will not be able to retain all.
- ✓ 6 respondents indicated that positions were filled as temporary.

6) Is your organization planning or undergoing any restructuring or expansion of its employment & training programming and services as a result of federal recovery act funding? If so, what employment and training services are you adding and/or what programs are you restructuring?

- ✓ Less than half (15) of respondent organizations are either currently undergoing or are planning some restructuring. For some organizations, restructuring involves the addition of new programming (specifically mentioned: transitional jobs, green jobs and bridge programs). Other respondents indicated organizational restructuring in the form of increased capacity for existing programs and services. Respondents also described restructuring efforts driven by new and increased demands of both job seeker and employer clients, as well as shifting industry opportunities.

7) How are current economic conditions and events affecting your organization's interest in and/or budget for staff training and professional development opportunities?

- ✓ Approximately half (20) of respondents to this question indicated a decrease in interest in or funds for training. This ranged from travel-budget cuts for out-of-town training – to 'survival-mode' existence precluding even the consideration of training time and expense.
- ✓ 15 respondents indicated that their interest in or funds for training were unchanged. A couple of these organizations explained that although times were tight, they remained committed to providing staff with training opportunities.
- ✓ 4 respondents said their organization had an increase in interest or funds for training.
- ✓ Additionally, one respondent indicated that their organization's training budget had increased, however increased demands on staff time precluded them from being able to take advantage of opportunities.

8) If your organization currently has or anticipates an increased need for staff training due to hiring, what types of training topics would be most helpful? (Check all that apply)

- ✓ Retention strategies (program retention and post-placement retention) – 21 (62%)
- ✓ Job development for special populations of job seekers (youth, criminal records, etc) – 18 (53%)
- ✓ Orientation to the workforce development system – 14 (41%)
- ✓ Leadership and management – 12 (35%)
- ✓ Job development basics – 10 (29%)
- ✓ Other – 9 (27%)

- ✓ In the ‘Other’ category, respondents specified the following training topics:
 - Proposal writing and funding sources
 - Constructing appropriate evaluation methods with limited resources
 - The importance of outcomes based measurement and metrics in workforce development and/or employment based programs
 - Identifying collaborations
 - Case management basics
 - Training designed to assist in achieving NAWDP certification
 - Contract negotiation skills

9) Are there any other impacts on your organization from either funding reductions or increases?

- ✓ Respondents noted the following impacts on their organizations:
 - Staff pay and benefit reductions
 - Challenges with retaining staff due to pay reductions coupled with increased job demands
 - Reductions in services (program closures, reductions in program hours and time spent with clients) and the number of participants served
 - Long waiting lists for clients
 - Reductions in supportive services for clients
 - New client expectations due to one-time only ARRA funded programs – staff anticipates that clients will be disappointed when programming is not able to be repeated
 - Negative impacts on cash flow
 - Cuts to operating budget (including cuts to office maintenance, supplies, office space)
 - Constant ‘survival-mode’ thinking
 - Negative impacts on infrastructure building
 - A need for educational programs to be revamped to be shorter and quicker access
 - Challenges that result from the restrictive and temporary nature of stimulus funding
 - New efforts to clarify mission and increase fundraising

- ✓ In addition to direct impacts from economic events, a couple of respondents described being indirectly affected by the struggles of referring and partner agencies.
- ✓ Some respondents also discussed that, due to the economic environment at large, they were seeing changes in both their job-seeker applicants and employer networks.
- ✓ A couple of respondents described positive impacts such as new involvement in a new collaborative on employment services, and an innovative building renovation appropriation that allowed their organization to create work experience for participants.