



# Deep in the Trenches

Understanding the Dynamics of New York City's Front Line Workforce Development Staff

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## Preface

Workforce professionals help prepare job seekers and place them in suitable positions. These professionals assess the job readiness of job seekers; provide career coaching, job preparation, and vocational training; work with employers to identify job openings, match job seekers with openings; and monitor those placements to improve job retention. Working with disadvantaged and hard-to-serve populations, workforce professionals face many challenges even when broader labor market conditions are favorable. In tough economic times, the challenges confronting workforce developers are even more daunting.

Workforce Professionals Training Institute (WPTI) undertook this study with the assistance of the Fiscal Policy Institute (FPI) to better understand the workforce development profession—the demographics of this workforce, the employment practices within organizations providing these services, and the challenges that workforce staff face in a demanding economic environment. The report's objectives are to encourage professionalism on the part of a very committed workforce and to identify and foster career development opportunities. Ultimately, the study seeks to contribute to improving both the skill development and job satisfaction experienced by workforce staff and to improve the quality of outcomes these professionals are responsible for delivering.

## Acknowledgments

This report was a collaborative effort that would not have been possible without the invaluable input, consultation, and expertise of many people engaged in this important work. Although the managers, funders, workforce development policy experts, and front line staff we spoke with shall remain anonymous, we wish to acknowledge their time, contributions, and thoughtful comments, as well as their commitment to helping thousands of unemployed and under-employed New Yorkers obtain employment.

FPI Research Associate Michele Mattingly conducted the interviews and focus groups, developed and analyzed the survey, and prepared this report, with contributions from Amy Landesman and James Parrott. We are immensely grateful for Michele's dedication and commitment to this project. FPI Research Associate Brent Kramer assisted in analyzing the survey results and preparing the tables and figures.

We would like to especially thank Lou Miceli of JobsFirst NYC, Sharon Sewell-Fairman and Tina Pettigrew of WPTI, Jo Brill of FPI, and Lincoln Restler of New York City Employment and Training Coalition for their contribution to this survey project. Further, we would like to thank those who contributed to the final recommendations. Finally, we are grateful to the New York Community Trust and the Altman Foundation for providing financial support for this project.

## Executive summary

Recognition of the crucial role played by front line workforce development workers led Workforce Professionals Training Institute (WPTI) and the Fiscal Policy Institute (FPI) to undertake a study of this profession in New York City. The objective was to analyze the current state of these jobs and the workers who hold them, with a particular emphasis on issues such as job satisfaction, training, and advancement opportunities, for the purpose of improving the quality of outcomes that workforce professionals are responsible for delivering. The proximate goal was to make recommendations for improving the employment practices affecting workforce professionals. FPI staff conducted interviews with workforce development managers and other professionals in the field, held small group discussions with front line workers, and administered an extensive survey of front line workers.

The results of the survey present a picture of a workforce that is deeply committed to the success of its clientele, well educated, and eager to improve its skills and advance professionally. This workforce is modestly paid and receives fairly good benefits. While the great majority of workers are satisfied with their jobs, there is also a significant desire to seek employment at another organization in the near future. Nearly half of the workers surveyed indicated that they are very or somewhat likely to look for a job at another organization within the next year. And while nearly two-thirds of the survey respondents indicated a strong interest in advancement, only about half of this group indicated that they have a clear idea of what is required to advance or that their supervisor has broached the topic of advancement with them. The results suggest that managers and workforce development policy makers need to consider ways to improve staff retention and invest in this pool of dedicated workers to whose daily efforts the success of workforce development in New York City is intimately tied.

Other highlights of the survey results include the following:

- Front line workers wear a lot of hats, with 72 percent reporting having four or more distinct job responsibilities.
- More than three-quarters of the respondents have earned at least a bachelor's degree, with 34 percent having completed some graduate coursework or an advanced degree.
- Seventy-one percent of front line workers said that they are very interested in receiving training for a supervisory position; among a range of possible training topics, this one elicited the strongest interest.
- More than a third of respondents said that they rarely have enough time in a typical day to do their job as well as they would like.

## Policy recommendations

The report concludes with policy recommendations addressed to front line workers, supervisors and senior staff, and workforce development funders. These recommendations are intended to improve the employment practices affecting front line

workforce development professionals. A diverse and strong skill set, along with improved morale and the opportunity to advance, can, in turn, enhance performance and the quality of outcomes attained for an organization.

Specific recommendations are presented for management staff, front line workers, and sector leaders and funders.

### *Management*

- Respond to front line workers' interest in training.
- Respond to front line workers' interest in advancement.
- Capitalize on front line workers' creativity.
- Examine retention of front line workers.
- Recognize the impact that budget cuts have on staff.
- Address the need for continued leadership development for managers.
- Openly address staff development needs with funders.
- Capitalize on your organization's investments in front line worker training by following through with implementation.

### *Front line workers*

- Map out a career plan.
- Recognize that the benefits of training are dependent on implementation.
- Consider opportunities to diversify skills to enhance job performance and long-term career potential.
- Take advantage of networking opportunities.
- Find a mentor.

### *Sector leaders and funders*

- Incorporate funding for training into contracts.
- Act on this report's findings and recommendations.

## **Conclusion**

New York City's workforce development front line staff are invested in the success of their organizations' clientele. They bring dedication to their jobs, and they are eager to gain new skills and advance in their profession. With the city's stubbornly high unemployment rate, its climbing poverty rate, and the prospect of an exceptionally weak recovery, the challenges facing front line workers will not diminish any time soon. It is hoped that this report will prompt new recognition of the key role that these individuals play and generate renewed efforts to equip them to meet the ongoing challenges of their jobs. Their professional success will benefit all New Yorkers who have a stake in a strong workforce development system.

## Introduction

During the Great Recession of 2008–2009, New York City's unemployment rate doubled, reaching 10 percent.<sup>1</sup> Among some demographic groups and in certain neighborhoods, unemployment rates far exceeded the city's average. More than two years after the official end of the recession, the national recovery is the weakest on record. In New York City, unemployment remains well above its pre-recession level, and job growth has slowed to a crawl. Declines in the unemployment rate are largely explained by discouraged workers leaving the labor force. Besides the personal and community hardships it creates, persistent high unemployment erodes workers' skills and squanders the potential fruits of productive labor.

Beyond the particulars of the Great Recession, while New York City is a global capital that attracts a highly educated and talented labor pool, it has also been characterized for decades by a poverty rate that is chronically higher than that of the country at large. And, as an international port of entry, the city receives large numbers of immigrants who contribute to its economy and culture but who may face language barriers in the labor market. In addition, college graduates constitute a much larger share of the city's adult workforce than they do for the United States overall.<sup>2</sup> The mission of workforce development, then—improving labor market outcomes, particularly for the disadvantaged—is an especially challenging one to undertake in New York City.

Front line employees at workforce development organizations in New York City—workers directly engaged with clients and employers—are at the forefront in dealing with these challenges. Their skills, ingenuity, and persistence are critical to meeting performance goals, coping with declining budgets, and responding to public policy trends and changes in the labor market.

Recognition of the crucial role played by front line workers led WPTI and FPI to undertake a study of this profession in New York City. The objective was to analyze the current state of these jobs and the workers who hold them, with a particular emphasis on issues such as job satisfaction, training, and advancement opportunities, for the purpose of improving the quality of outcomes that workforce professionals are responsible for delivering. The proximate goal was to make recommendations for improving the employment practices affecting workforce professionals. Between the fall of 2010 and the summer of 2011, FPI staff conducted interviews with workforce development managers and other professionals in the field, held small group discussions with front line workers, and administered an extensive survey of front line workers.

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<sup>1</sup> Fiscal Policy Institute. *The State of Working New York City 2011: Scant Recovery for Workers—Some See Gains but Recession Conditions Persist for Most*. July 20, 2011.

[http://www.fiscalpolicy.org/FPI\\_NewYorkCityUnemployment\\_20110720.pdf](http://www.fiscalpolicy.org/FPI_NewYorkCityUnemployment_20110720.pdf).

<sup>2</sup> Ibid.

The results of the survey present a picture of a workforce that is deeply committed to the success of its clientele, well educated, and eager to improve its skills and advance professionally. The workforce is modestly paid and receives fairly good benefits. While the great majority of workers are satisfied with their jobs, there is also a significant desire to seek employment at another organization in the near future. The results suggest that managers and workforce development policy makers need to consider ways to improve staff retention and invest in this pool of dedicated workers to whose daily efforts the success of workforce development in New York City is intimately tied.

## **The New York City workforce development landscape**

New York City has more than 200 workforce development organizations (in fact, one workforce development professional estimates the total at about 300). They vary in size and scope, with some focused exclusively on workforce development and others engaged in a broader range of activities, such as housing assistance and domestic violence services.

Workforce development entails a range of activities, all geared toward improving the labor market outcomes of clients. By necessity, there is a particular emphasis on those facing obstacles in the labor market. These individuals include the re-entry population (individuals who have served time in prison), people with little formal education or employment experience, the disabled, and those with limited English proficiency. Activities undertaken include assessment of the client's needs and abilities; referral to appropriate resources, both internal and external to the organization; training, counseling, and coaching; identification of job openings and referral to employers; and post-employment services to help the client succeed in his or her job.

In the 1990s, welfare reform, as implemented in New York State under Governor Pataki and in New York City under Mayor Giuliani, emphasized rapid attachment to employment—"work first"—at the expense of other considerations. Meanwhile, changes related to the federal Workforce Investment Act ushered in an emphasis on performance-based standards for workforce development organizations. At the same time, there was a shift from a more social-work-based approach to one of "linking labor supply and demand."

While the policy environment has since changed, the population being served by workforce development agencies—including those with low educational attainment or little employment experience, the formerly incarcerated, the disabled, and displaced workers—still faces serious obstacles. One industry employee commented that funding contracts and their milestones put front line workers "under a lot of pressure to be miracle workers," noting that staff are charged with placing people who have not been

employed in years. As several industry employees remarked, there is often a good deal of effort required to get a client to the point of simply being ready for a job interview.

Funders set performance goals, but organizations seeking funding also play a role in the process. One industry employee felt that the competition for funding among New York City's many workforce development organizations leads them to underbid and promise unrealistic results (which, among other things, increases pressure on front line staff to meet the promised targets). Another longtime observer did not feel that low-balling, in and of itself, was reason for concern, arguing that for decades there have been "overpromising and underperforming organizations" and that the increased emphasis on accountability addresses this. She did perceive, however, a shrinking pool of funds for which organizations are competing.

Interviewees identified several factors that distinguish the workforce development environment in New York City. First and foremost, they cited New York City as having an inordinately competitive labor market when it comes to entry-level jobs, making it more difficult for young adults and the hard-to-employ to gain a foothold even in traditionally low-wage occupations. (An analysis of workers aged 25 and older in New York City has shown that, while they represent a larger proportion of the city's overall workforce than do their national counterparts, they have an even more disproportionate share of key low-wage jobs—such as retail cashiers, fast food cooks, and service workers—compared to the national level.<sup>3</sup>)

Interviewees also noted that New York City has a large low-skilled labor pool and that the city is a major port of entry for high-skilled workers from within the United States and abroad. These features make the task for those in the workforce development profession especially challenging. Their clients must compete in a labor market with no shortage of low-skilled workers in a city that attracts talent from all over the world.

Among managers, opinions about the efficacy of the workforce development system in the city differed. One described it as "very structured in approach," with business owners, educational institutions, and economic development corporations actively involved. Some interviewees, however, described the workforce development system as poorly structured. One manager saw this as being unique to New York City, arguing that workforce development systems in other parts of the state were better integrated, with the Workforce1 centers embedded in the community colleges, the community colleges

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<sup>3</sup> Thus, nationally, workers 25 and older represent 61 percent of all workers in selected very low-wage occupations, while in New York City, workers aged 25 and older hold 73 percent of these very low-wage jobs, leaving proportionately fewer low-wage jobs for young workers. Fiscal Policy Institute analysis of 2009 American Community Survey data.

embedded in the community-based organizations, and so on. As she put it, outside New York City, "No door is the wrong door."<sup>4</sup>

One specific concern raised about the structure of the system has to do with the chain of custody—that is, which organization gets credit for a client's placement. For instance, if a community-based organization provides training to a client, and the client finds a job through a public entity, the organization may not get to record the job placement when reporting to funders. This creates the potential for perverse incentives, causing the organization to think twice about providing training or, having provided training, about referring the client to another entity.

One manager cited "complicated streams of funding" as pulling staff members into different program areas—such as literacy, training, employment, and economic development—and felt that these areas are not "seamlessly connected."

Another manager believed that the past fifteen years have witnessed a growing gap between the skills possessed by job seekers and those sought by employers. This gap encompasses both hard and soft skills: literacy and high school math skills, on the one hand, and punctuality and affability, on the other. This same manager also noted the decline over this period of manufacturing jobs in the city, pointing specifically to the closure of the Swingline factory in Long Island City and the Farberware plant in the Bronx, as affecting employment opportunities. Since 2000, the city has lost 100,000 manufacturing jobs.

Another characteristic of the workforce development landscape is the fact that there is no single, dominant industry, therefore requiring training options in diverse areas. However, one manager saw this as a plus, citing New York City's "diverse and strong" range of training opportunities available for workforce development organizations' clientele.

In sum, according to those interviewed, New York City's workforce development landscape is characterized by a competitive labor market and the involvement of a large number of agencies and organizations and streams of funding. It is challenged by the number of people with little labor market experience and low skills. At the same time, while it is coping with the erosion of the city's manufacturing base, it has a diversity of industries and training opportunities. The sheer geographic scale of New York City also presents its own challenges—while the right job may be within a job seeker's own neighborhood, it may also be far away in another borough.

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<sup>4</sup> The May 2011 report published by the City of New York, "One System for One City," addresses the complexity of the city's workforce development system and efforts to increase its coherence. [http://www.nyc.gov/html/sbs/downloads/pdf/SWFSReport\\_2011\\_05\\_24.pdf](http://www.nyc.gov/html/sbs/downloads/pdf/SWFSReport_2011_05_24.pdf).



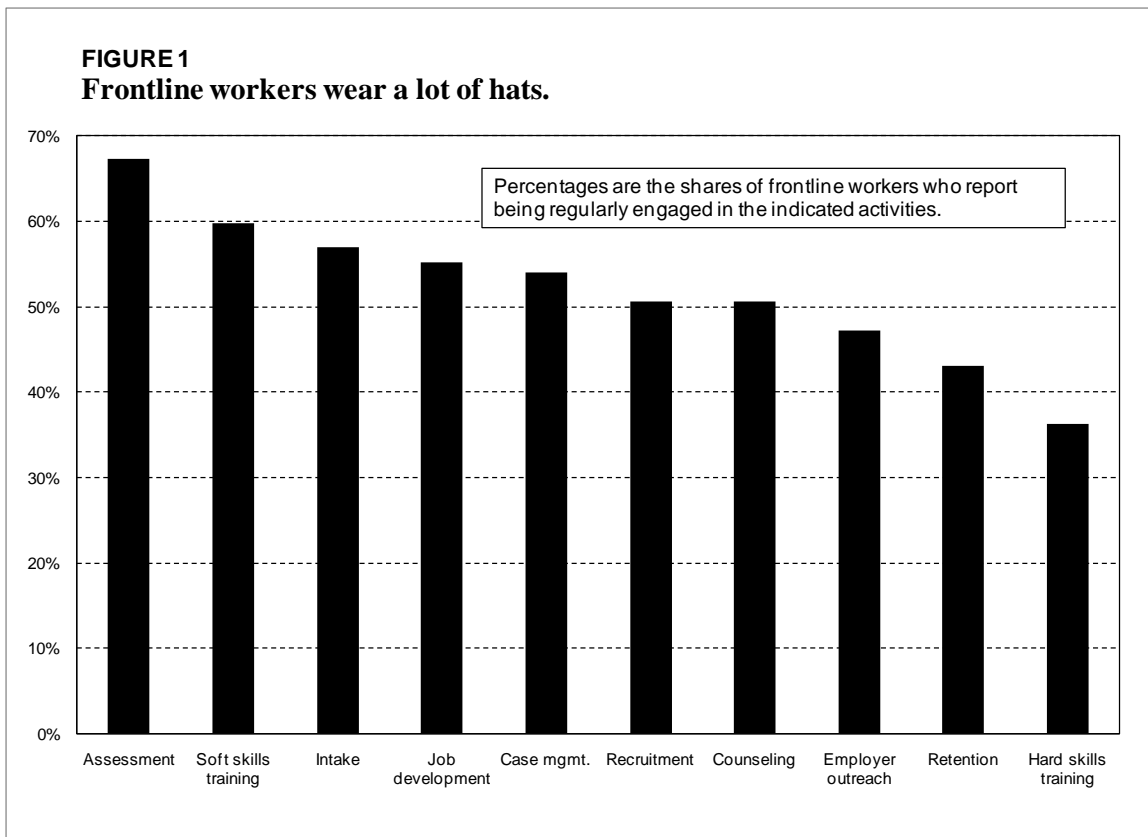
## **The front line worker survey**

The survey of front line workers at workforce development agencies in New York City addressed issues such as job satisfaction, training, and advancement opportunities, while also collecting information on demographics and compensation. Featuring both multiple-choice and open-ended questions, the survey was developed after small group discussions with front line workers and interviews with front line managers and other workforce development professionals in the city. It was administered online during May and June 2011. More than 200 managers and directors of workforce development organizations were contacted by email and asked to forward a letter inviting participation in the survey to their front line staff members. The invitation letter included a link to the online survey. In addition to contacting senior staff in order to reach front line workers, the survey was also publicized through the New York City Employment and Training Coalition newsletter and the WPTI and JobsFirst NYC list serves. In all, 182 surveys were completed, with 6 excluded from the analysis because their responses indicated that they had not been completed by front line workers. All responses were anonymous. (To see the survey, refer to the appendix.)

## Where are front line workers employed, and what do they do?

Survey respondents were queried about the types of organizations for which they work and their job responsibilities. Most (79 percent) work for community-based organizations, with nearly as large a share (77 percent) employed by organizations engaged in other activities beyond workforce development. Two-thirds work for organizations with 50 or more employees.

Front line workers wear a lot of hats, with 72 percent reporting being regularly engaged in four or more distinct job areas. (See figure 1.) The most common activity reported was assessment (67 percent), followed by training in soft skills (60 percent), intake (57 percent), job development (55 percent), case management (54 percent), recruitment (51 percent), counseling (51 percent), employer outreach (47 percent), retention (43 percent), and training in hard skills (36 percent). Some employees also undertake administrative duties, and some, while engaged in front line work themselves, also supervise other staff members.



Front line workers serve a range of populations. More than half (58 percent) of respondents work directly with youth, a similar share (57 percent) directly serve individuals with criminal justice histories, more than a third (36 percent) work directly

with the disabled, and nearly as many (35 percent) directly engage with immigrants and/or refugees. A third of respondents work directly with employers.

## Front line worker demographics

Front line workers are fairly young, with half of them under 33 years of age. The average age is 37, with the youngest worker in their early twenties and the oldest in their mid-sixties. The workforce is disproportionately female (68 percent)—not atypical in the social services professions.

Compared with New York City's labor force in general, respondents were more likely to be African-American. Non-Hispanic whites represented a significantly smaller percentage of workers than in the city's larger labor force, and other groups' shares were slightly smaller. (See figure 2.)

**FIGURE 2**  
**Race-ethnicity of survey respondents and NYC labor force**

	<u>Survey Respondents</u>	<u>NYC Labor Force</u>
Non-Hispanic Black	33.1%	22.4%
Non-Hispanic White	30.4%	38.1%
Hispanic	23.0%	25.3%
Asian and Other	13.5%	14.2%
<b>Total</b>	100%	100%

Source of NYC labor force statistics: FPI analysis of American Community Survey data, 2007-2009.

## Compensation

Front line workers were asked to indicate their annual gross salary range. The median range was \$40,000–\$49,000. The majority (70 percent) of workers reported earnings between \$35,000 and \$59,999.

As shown in figure 3, a vast majority of respondents reported receiving benefits such as medical insurance, dental insurance, and paid sick leave through their employers. Smaller shares reported receiving vision benefits, pension coverage, and paid family leave.

**FIGURE 3**  
**Share of frontline workers receiving benefits**

Medical	91%
Dental	86%
Vision	74%
Pension	60%
Paid sick leave	85%
Paid family leave	51%

## Tenure and experience in the workforce development field

The typical (median) respondent reported being in the workforce development field for five years. The average time in the field, reflecting those with more experience, is closer to seven years. With respect to tenure with their current employer, front line workers reported a median of slightly less than three-and-a-half years and a mean of almost five. More than one in five (21 percent) respondents have been employed in their present job at their current organization for less than a year. Of this group, the previous jobs of half were not in workforce development. In other words, about 10 percent of respondents are new to their current jobs and, apparently, new to the field. Fourteen percent of respondents reported having previously been a client of their organization.

More than half of front line workers have held one or more other positions, in addition to their present one, with their current employer. Regarding the length of time in their current position, workers reported a median of three years and a mean of nearly five.

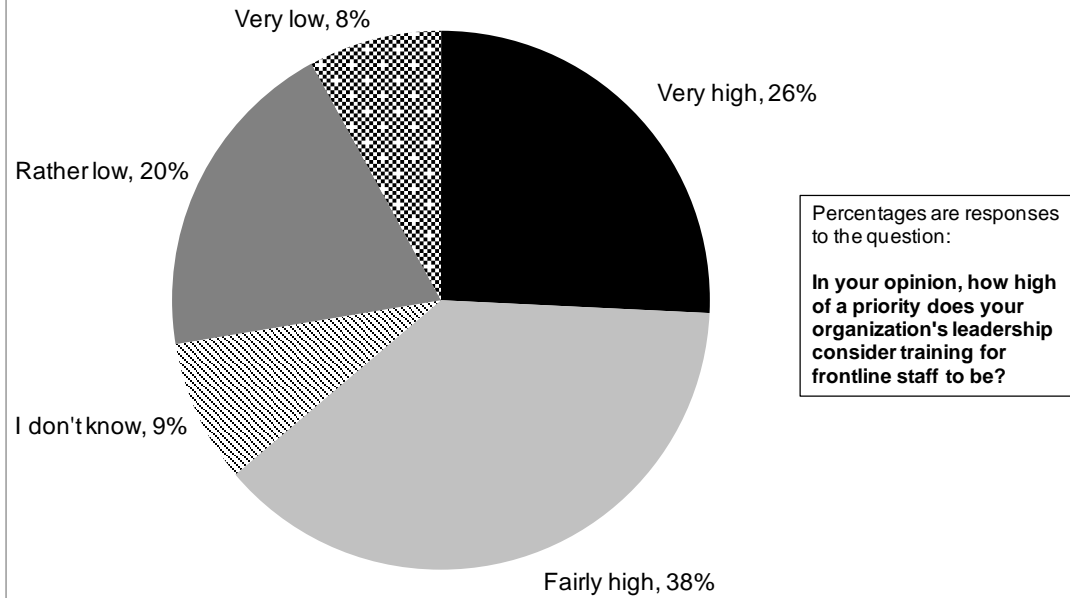
### **Education and training**

The high level of educational attainment reported among respondents was striking—76 percent have earned at least a bachelor's degree, and 34 percent have performed some graduate coursework or completed an advanced degree. Nearly a quarter (23 percent) have received certification in a particular field, such as alcohol/substance abuse counseling.

Respondents were asked to assess how adequately the sum of their formal and informal education and training had prepared them for the demands of their job. The majority of respondents (49 percent) rated it as very adequate, and 41 percent felt that it had been somewhat adequate. Small shares believed that it had been somewhat inadequate (6 percent) or very inadequate (3 percent).

More than one in three front line workers (36 percent) reported having attended a formal orientation upon being hired, and a majority (66 percent) reported receiving training from one or more experienced employees or by shadowing a more senior employee.

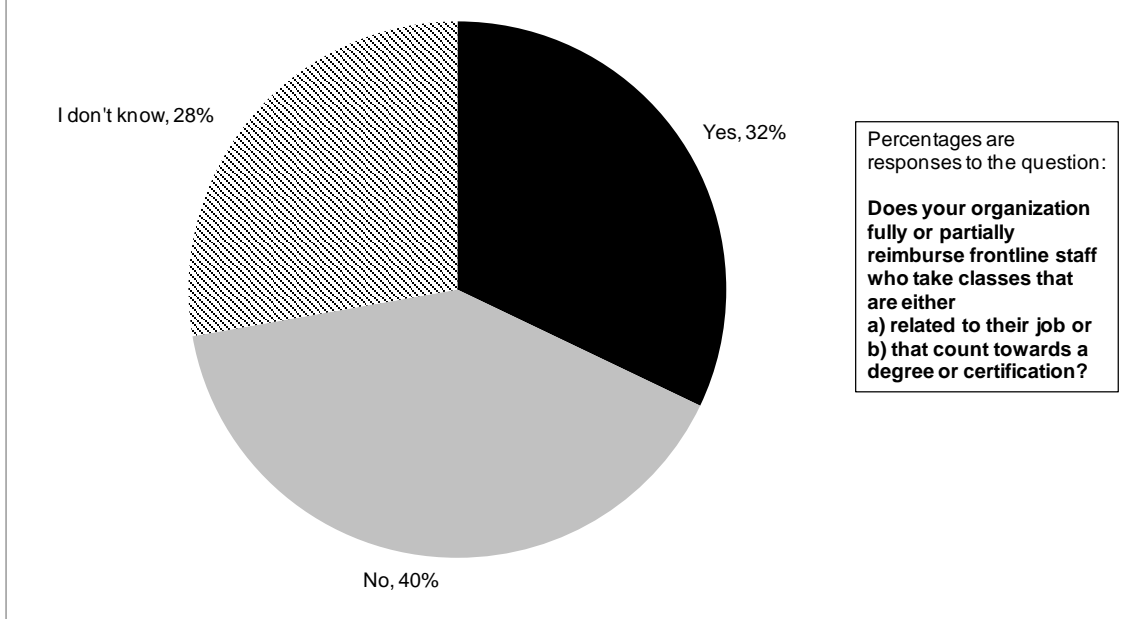
**FIGURE 4**  
**Most frontline workers think their leadership values training.**  
**Yet more than one out of three say training is of low priority in their organization, or say that they don't know how much of a priority it is.**



Nearly two-thirds of respondents believed that their organization's leadership places a very high value or fairly high value on training for front line staff members. However, more than a third rated the value rather low (20 percent), very low (8 percent), or said that they did not know how training was valued (9 percent). (See figure 4.)

With respect to whether their employer fully or partially reimburses staff for tuition for job-related classes, 40 percent said that their organization does not do so, and 28 percent said that they did not know. (See figure 5.)

**FIGURE 5**  
**Forty percent of frontline workers are employed by organizations that don't reimburse tuition for job-related classes. Another 28 percent don't know their organization's reimbursement policies.**



When asked how often their organizations hold in-house staff development trainings (either conducted by organization staff or individuals from outside the organization), the most common response (38 percent) was that trainings take place a few times a year. Nineteen percent work in organizations in which these trainings are held about once a month. Seven percent said that trainings occur about once annually, 11 percent said that they happen less than once a year, 10 percent said that they never take place, and 15 percent said that they were unaware of the frequency.

Regarding trainings that they had attended in the past year, the majority of workers (72 percent) had found such trainings to be somewhat useful (42 percent) or very useful (30 percent). Eighteen percent rated them not very useful, 3 percent found them of no use at all, and 7 percent indicated that the quality was varied.

When asked about trainings conducted by entities other than their employer, 40 percent reported attending several times annually. However, more than half of respondents reported attending only once a year or less. (See figure 6.) Thirty-one percent attend about once a year, 14 percent attend less than once a year, 6

**FIGURE 6**  
**More than half of frontline workers report typically attending an external training once a year or less.**

Several times a year	40%
About once a year	31%
Less than once a year	14%
Never	6%
Haven't been with organization long enough to say	9%
Total	100%

Percentages are responses to the question, "How often do you participate in trainings related to your job that are conducted by organizations other than your employer?"

percent never attend, and 9 percent were unable to estimate the frequency.

For these external trainings, workers' ratings were somewhat more favorable. The share that found them to be very useful rose to 41 percent, and 47 percent deemed them somewhat useful. Those finding them not very useful dropped to 4 percent, 1 percent rated them not at all useful, and 7 percent indicated that the quality was varied.

Workers were asked how useful they would find training in a variety of topics. Figure 7 shows the top twelve topics that were rated "very useful" by respondents. Topping the list was leadership development for front line workers who aspire to become supervisors, which 71 percent of respondents rated "very useful." This sends a clear signal of the desire among a majority of front line workers to advance in their profession. Garnering nearly as much interest were the topics of working with challenging clients and hard-to-serve populations, understanding the local labor market

**FIGURE 7**  
**Leadership training is at the top of the list of training topics frontline workers want to pursue.**

<b>Rank</b>	<b>Training topic</b>	<b>Percentage</b>
1	Leadership development for frontline staff who would like to become supervisors	71%
2	Working with challenging clients and hard-to-serve populations	69%
3	Understanding the local labor market and economic and public policy trends	68%
4	Job development	67%
5	Data collection and analysis and outcomes management	65%
6	Communication skills	64%
7	Job seeker retention	60%
8	Program design	57%
9	Time management	56%
10	Stress management	55%
11	Computer skills	52%
12	Marketing and messaging	49%

Percentages are shares of respondents rating potential training in the topic "very useful."

and economic and public policy trends, and job development. Eleven of the twelve topics were rated "very useful" by more than half of respondents (the twelfth fell shy at 49 percent), an indication that front line workers are hungry to gain new skills across a range of areas and

grow in their jobs.

While workers expressed a strong interest in improving their skills via training, some managers and others in the field stressed that soft skills are more important than hard skills for workers in these positions, and they questioned the extent to which skills such as critical reasoning can be improved via training. As one manager put it, some individuals with a fairly high degree of training need still more training, while those with less may not need any. This person concluded by saying, "It's hard to standardize." One observer argued that while front line jobs do not require a four-year degree, successfully performing in these positions does require the poise and self-confidence that a college graduate typically possesses.



In one organization, monthly trainings are driven by the need to create a common base of understanding among staff members working on disparate contracts. The trainings are repeated during the month to accommodate schedule conflicts. Another manager said that her organization had found a coaching model—using an on-site coach—to be “much more effective” than off-site training, but she also conceded that this approach was expensive.

## **Opportunities for advancement**

Respondents ranked leadership development first among topics in which they would find training very useful, revealing the importance of opportunities for advancement. A large majority of workers (64 percent) indicated a strong interest in advancing into a position with greater responsibility and pay in their current organization. Another 29 percent indicated some interest in doing so, with only 7 percent expressing little or no interest.

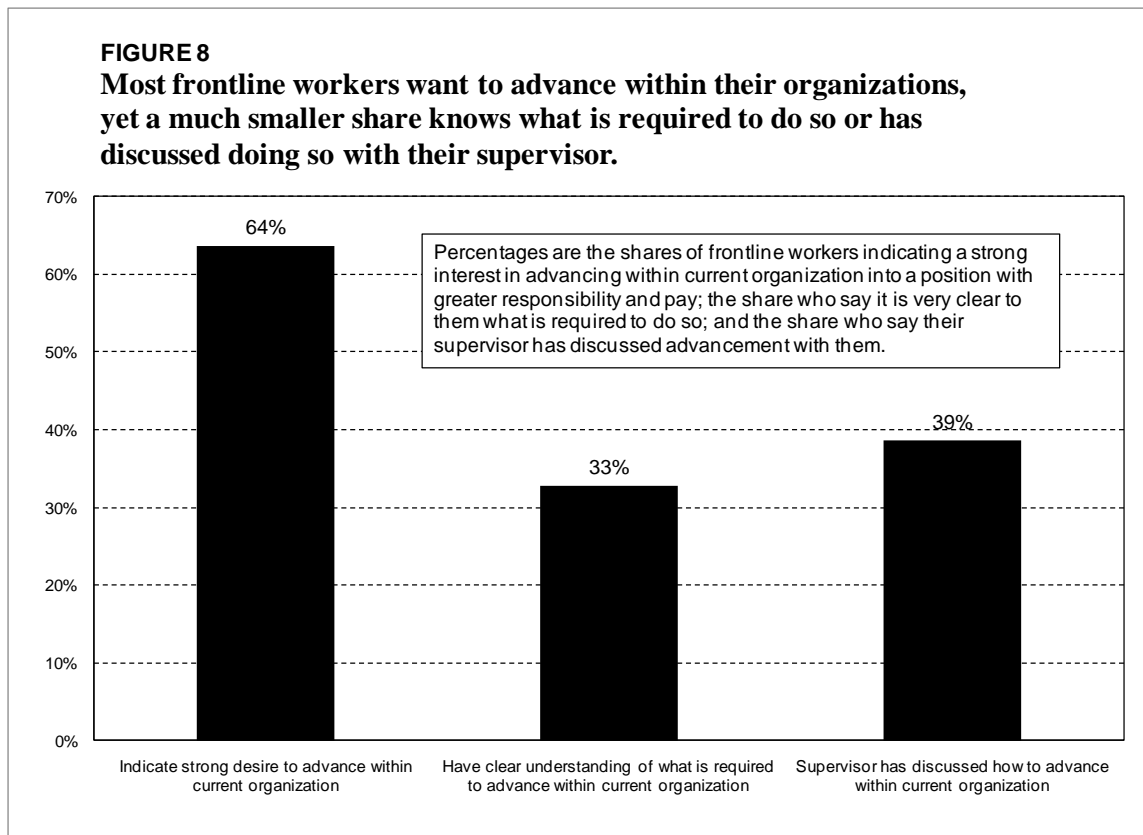
However, only one in three workers (33 percent) reported having a clear idea of what is required to advance. Nearly seven out of ten workers (67 percent) said that they had seen other front line staff members in their organization advance, yet only 39 percent said that their supervisors had discussed with them how front line workers could do so. (See figure 8.) Three quarters said that job openings in the organization are advertised internally; still, for a significant share of workers (25 percent), this practice is not observed.

Well over half (55 percent) of respondents strongly believed that they would need at least a bachelor's degree to advance within their organization. (Remember, however, that 76 percent have at least a bachelor's.) Another 36 percent strongly believed that an advanced degree would be necessary. (Twenty-five percent have a graduate degree.)

When asked about advancement opportunities, one manager was very upbeat about the opportunities within his organization, saying that the practice is to promote only from within. Action plans are developed to identify what workers need to do to advance into a newly created or vacated position. He readily volunteered, though, that this policy has been made possible because of his organization's growth. For another manager, tighter funding has recently restricted advancement opportunities within her organization.

A third manager said that front line staff members in her organization are actively encouraged to advance, even if this means leaving the organization. The organization has a tuition reimbursement program, and the manager maintained that there is no ambivalence about investing in workers and then seeing them move elsewhere. In another organization, advancement does not necessarily entail a formal change of title. Employees who grow within a job and assume more responsibility receive higher

compensation to reflect this growth, but the process is not systematic or formally codified.



## Certification

Certification has been suggested as a vehicle to standardize front line workers' skills and promote greater opportunities for advancement, the implication being that certification helps workers distinguish themselves and signals their worth to present and potential employers.

The possibility of a professional certification program for front line workers was posed to the survey respondents. There were indications of significant but not overwhelming support for the idea. Nearly half (49 percent) strongly agreed that a certification for front line workforce development workers would be a good idea. Thirty percent agreed somewhat, 11 percent disagreed somewhat, 5 percent strongly disagreed, and 5 percent did not know.

A large majority (78 percent) said that it would be important to them that the certification be recognized by government agencies and others shaping workforce development policy in the city. Comments from workers drove home this point:

*"If a certification is offered it should be a state recognized program and certificate."*

*"The certification would be good only if it were truly recognized by employers."*

*"I think it is a great idea, however it would need to be universally recognized."*

Half of workers strongly agreed that a certification would help them be more effective in their current job, while 26 percent somewhat agreed with this proposition. A respondent with a positive view about certification expressed support:

*"Some of the workers in this area are seriously lacking in any knowledge about workforce development. It would be useful if there were a program that offered a certificate so that very basic skills are required when assisting individuals who need the concrete services."*

Over half of respondents felt that a certification would help them advance within their present organization; 30 percent strongly agreed and 24 percent somewhat agreed. Results were similar when respondents were asked about advancement in another organization; 34 percent strongly agreed that the certification would help, and 30 percent somewhat agreed. A dissenting view was taken by one worker who believed that other attributes would outweigh a certification in the job market:

*"I have not seen any instance where professional certifications lead to better job opportunities for workers. In most cases, employers are most interested in previous work experience and transferrable skills demonstrated by actual experience rather than indicated by a certificate or other credential."*

Two-thirds of respondents said that it would be difficult for them to find time for the demands of a certification while on their job (with 30 percent strongly agreeing with this and 36 percent somewhat agreeing). However, almost as large a share (63 percent) said that they might be able to find time outside of work (with 27 percent strongly agreeing and 36 percent somewhat agreeing). Most respondents (76 percent) were unaware of existing certification programs for workforce development front line workers, either in New York City or elsewhere.

Most managers took a skeptical view of a possible certification program, expressing feedback such as "Not quite bought into it" and "Never see a need for things like that." Again, soft skills and on-the-job experience were cited as more valuable than completion of a certification program.

To accept a certification program, managers would need to be convinced that it would be both meaningful and carried out by a reputable provider. Front line workers and several managers said that their estimation of a certification would depend on its being widely recognized, including by the New York City Workforce Investment Board, and developed with input from the workforce development community. One person

employed in the field argued that, due to the unique challenges presented by undertaking workforce development in New York City, the certification should be New York City specific.

One manager thought that the idea of a certification was “worth pursuing,” seeing it as both a signaling device and an incremental way to attain skills, providing workers with “a more palatable way back into school.” Another manager endorsed the general concept, saying that people can always benefit from training, that career advisors would benefit from a better understanding of the labor market, and that establishing a standard would be useful.

A third manager believed that certification would be a “huge step in further professionalizing the field.” She referred to a sense of professional identity possessed by graduates of social work programs and said that certification could play a similar role for those in workforce development. She also believed that certification would assist organizations with recruitment and promotion, and would help funders see value in training. She argued that it might also lead to the creation of new positions for front line workers who want to advance but not necessarily into management.

Finally, another manager qualified her skepticism by saying that a certification could be valuable if it were occupation specific (recognizing the distinct roles played by front line workers within the broader industry).

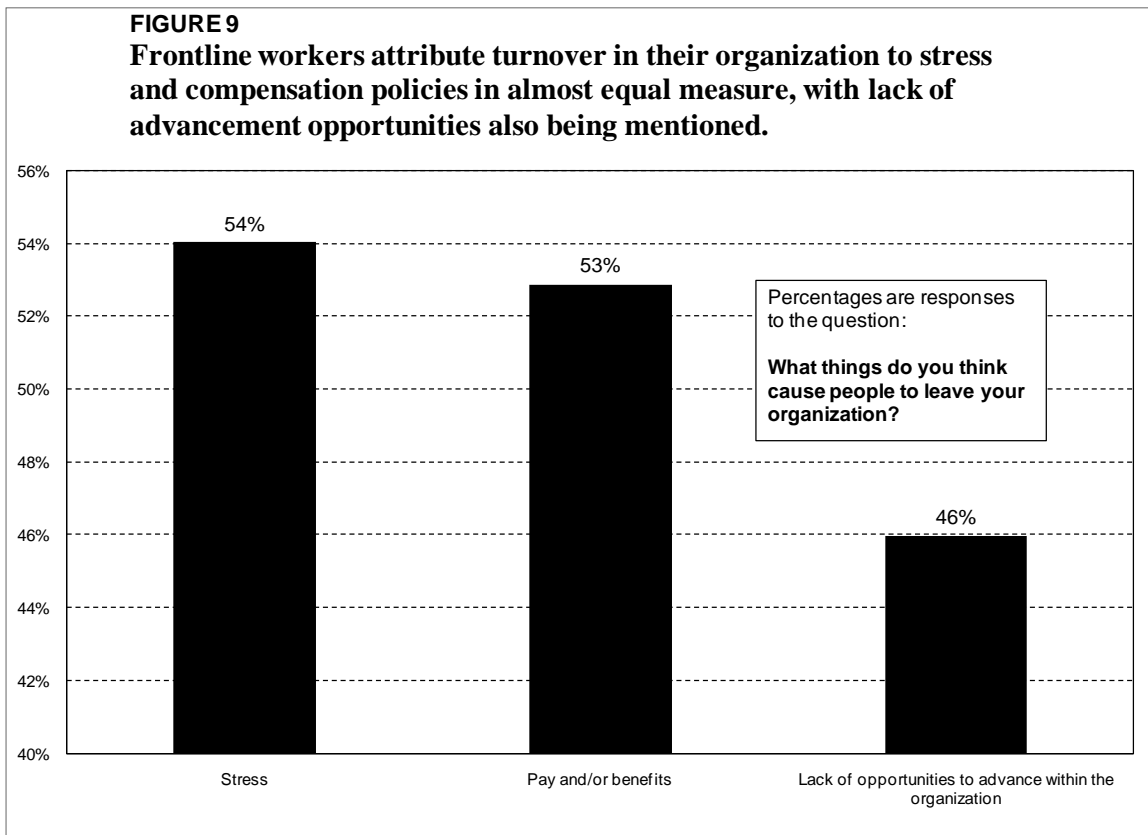
## **Turnover**

An inordinate amount of staff turnover entails excessive recruitment and training costs, as well as lost productivity. It also can create burdens for remaining front line workers. When asked to assess turnover at their organizations, 43 percent of workers deemed it to be moderate. Twenty-eight percent reported a lot of turnover, 22 percent reported a little, and 8 percent did not know.

As for the causes, 54 percent of workers cited stress and 53 percent cited compensation as causing turnover. (Respondents were not asked to select causes exclusively.) Lack of advancement opportunities was blamed by 46 percent, and 10 percent said that excessive overtime was a contributing factor. (See figure 9.)

One manager felt that the degree of turnover in the field is no higher than in other parts of the nonprofit sector, while a different one said that the first 90–120 days are crucial, with turnover low after the six-month threshold is passed. Another manager saw changes in her organization’s client population as driving staff turnover. Previously, clients often needed to simply be pointed “in the right direction.” Now, front line staff members are serving individuals who are not part of social networks in which people have maintained regular employment, presenting a greater challenge for staff.

Yet another manager said that employee retention is her biggest challenge. She believed that the fast pace of the work leads to “organization hopping” and burnout, denying front line workers the time “to step back and reflect and grow as professionals.” In her view, employees “land” in the field of workforce development in a somewhat haphazard way, without having consciously aspired earlier in their lives to enter the profession. She believed that this was particularly true of those who enter the field via jobs that work with youth. From her perspective, training institutes help address this issue by not only being vehicles to improve skills but also helping workers form a professional identity and connect with their cohort.



Within workforce development, turnover is thought to vary with respect to particular front line occupations. Job developers—those who build relationships with employers and identify potential openings—are said to have especially high turnover. This is attributed both to the demands of the job and to the higher salary that a job developer with a successful track record can command. Job developers typically must meet quotas and will not be retained unless they are met. Yet a high-performing job developer is a valued employee and can leverage his or her success into a better-paying job at another organization. One manager saw the qualities that make for a successful job developer—“a diamond-hard ego,” along with being able to take rejection “and think it’s the other

guy's problem"—as also being attributes that can make these employees difficult to manage.

While this study did not attempt to measure program outcomes, interviewees and discussion participants pointed to turnover as a problem for both incumbent staff and agency clientele. For staff, turnover creates discontinuity, affecting their ability to carry out their own responsibilities when other positions are vacant or as new staff members need time to get up to speed. For clients, turnover can also be detrimental. One manager recalled a case in which, due to staff turnover, a client had had three different case managers. The manager believed that turnover can negatively affect a client's trust in a program and its staff, therefore weakening the client's engagement and commitment.

## **Funders**

Funders, public and private, play a key role in shaping the workforce development environment, setting contract terms, determining program goals, and supporting or not supporting investments in staff development. Respondents were asked a series of questions concerning funders' requirements for the projects on which they were working, such as requirements regarding placements, retention, and wage levels of those placed. Respondents were not asked to distinguish between public and private funders.

The overwhelming majority (92percent) of workers said that they usually have a good understanding of funders' requirements, with 43 percent strongly agreeing with this statement and 49 percent agreeing somewhat. Nearly seven in ten (69 percent) said that complying with documentation requirements often significantly interferes with providing the quality of service to clients that they would like to offer; 25 percent strongly agreed, and 44 percent somewhat agreed. A similar share (68 percent) felt that funders' requirements are usually realistic in light of the worker's available time and resources; 18 percent expressed strong agreement, and 50 percent agreed somewhat.

A slightly smaller share of workers (63 percent) viewed funders' requirements as realistic with respect to the needs of their organization's clients; 13 percent expressed strong agreement, and 50 percent agreed somewhat. When asked if funders' requirements are realistic given local labor market conditions, the share agreeing declined to 55 percent, with 13 percent strongly agreeing and 42 percent somewhat agreeing.

With respect to managers, many of those interviewed were critical of aspects of the performance-based funding system and expressed that it has negatively affected front line workers. However, managers also recognized the value of having clear goals and being held accountable. For example, one stated that front line staff can no longer

spend as much time as they used to talking with and counseling clients—yet she also asked, “Why should we be getting money if we can’t show that people are getting jobs?” Another manager referred to the detailed documentation required for a particular intensive short-term project funded under the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act as “oppressive” and distracting from programmatic work. At the same time, she maintained that performance-based contracts have been “a valuable way of becoming more efficient.”

Managers discussed how goals have increased over time, with one stating that placement goals had doubled from one recent fiscal year to the next. Again, this was seen as having both a negative and positive effect on front line staff, providing pressure yet also motivation. Another manager said that while funders have recently begun to specify that jobs must be full-time and have benefits, she has seen a “huge spike” in part-time job openings, a situation that puts a strain on front line workers trying to meet performance targets. Several managers spoke to the issue of sustainability, with one stating that the organization “winds up placing people to place them,” leading to “problems on the retention side” when clients’ placements fall through. One manager said that the social work aspect of working with clients is the “last thing” front line workers are thinking about when trying to meet placement goals.

One interviewee distinguished between public and private funders, stating that she believed that government funders favor a rapid-attachment-to-employment model, often wanting program participants employed within two weeks. In contrast, she found that private funders are more likely to offer a longer timeframe for clients to gain employment, providing “a lot more breathing room.”

Another manager drew a distinction between funding for adult-oriented and funding for youth-oriented programs. On the adult side, she felt, funders can create an environment that is “all about placements.” The work becomes “less about developing people and more running a factory.” She said that this causes front line staff turnover, as the pressured pace and narrow focus lead workers to find less satisfaction in their jobs. With youth-oriented work, the “conversation changes,” and the pressure diminishes.

Besides setting performance targets for workforce development organizations, funders may also shape front line jobs in other ways, including by specifying required educational levels for staff on funded projects. One manager said that this was a new trend. Whereas in the past a funder might have been satisfied with having only one staff member with a four-year or advanced degree on a project, she said that funders are now more likely to want higher levels of educational attainment for all staff associated with a project. A front line worker also commented on this trend, noting that it was necessary for a co-worker at his organization to choose between taking a different position within the organization and seeking employment elsewhere in order for the organization to fulfill a funder’s requirement.

Responses were varied with respect to the weight that funders place on staff training for their grantee organizations. Some respondents stated that funding for staff training is always included in budgets, with certain funders looking specifically for that item, while others argued that there is no recognition on the part of funders to invest in staff training. One manager said that while training funds are included in budgets submitted to funders, they are also the first item to be cut. She also noted that staff members have remedial needs and that funders want to see a "more sophisticated structure in place" before funding staff development.

One manager saw a punitive aspect to training funding, believing that training is funded when organizations are subject to corrective action after failing to meet performance goals. She argued that funders drive the content of training, rather than it reflecting a "more organic process." She also drew a contrast between workforce development and the field of education, in which she saw a more intrinsic recognition of the value of training, and hence more funding for it.

### **Job satisfaction**

Front line workers were asked to rate their job satisfaction on a four-point scale, ranging from very dissatisfied to very satisfied. Eighty-five percent reported being very satisfied (41 percent) or somewhat satisfied (44 percent). This was followed by somewhat unsatisfied (13 percent), and very unsatisfied (only 3 percent).

When asked about which aspects of their job they find most rewarding, respondents overwhelmingly cited their ability to make a difference in the lives of their clients. This sampling of comments is representative of those of the majority of respondents:

*"To know that I am a part (very small part) of seeing a person really change!"*

*"I enjoy the ability to provide people with opportunities they may not have otherwise have been able to take advantage of."*

*"The results that I get from clients that didn't believe in their own ability."*

*"It is rewarding to see persons who are on public assistance finally break free and become self-sufficient."*

*"Most rewarding is the ability to mentor and train the members of the population I work with who really want help and seriously take advantage of the information and training I provide."*

*"Assisting youth with criminal history find a new path to life through work and education."*

*"Helping people who first felt so lost and helpless to finally feel motivated and confidence is a great motivation."*

*"I enjoy helping young adults realize their dreams. It is most rewarding when they come back and visit and tell me about the great things they are doing."*

*"Helping participants overcome specific barriers to employment."*



*"I also enjoy seeing the transformation of our clients from week one to week three. . . . Their self-confidence, self-esteem and general attitude does a 180."*

A smaller share of respondents also spoke to the satisfaction of putting their creativity to work on the job:

*"Program is in start-up phase, the most rewarding aspect is the creative aspects of program planning and development."*

*"Freedom to be creative with my responsibilities."*

*"Innovation, ability to change processes in order to become more effective or stay with what's current."*

*"My job allows me to troubleshoot areas for improvement and implement new ideas."*

*"Solving problems within the organization to improve efficiency and data management."*

*"I also enjoy finding ways to make the program better."*

*"Curriculum development and finding creative ways to engage our low-income job seekers."*

While there was a good deal of uniformity regarding which aspects of their jobs front line workers found most rewarding, being asked about the most frustrating aspects generated a diversity of responses. Three general areas garnered the most comments: complaints about co-workers, management, and organizational operations; frustrations with clients; and lack of resources.

With respect to co-workers, management, and organizational operations, many front line workers' comments suggested work environments that are tense or hectic, and they expressed concerns about transparency and equity. Their comments included the following:

*"Little to no idea-sharing/intellectual stimulation. Not a cooperative environment."*

*"Need cohesive communication from management. Need interest in day to day activities not just mistakes."*

*"There is no trust among staff members."*

*"The ever changing program structure in my current position and the lack of transparency at times between management and staff."*

*"Because we do everything (somewhat frantically) we have a hard time developing a sustainable structure or making change in the organization."*

*"A chaotic environment in which I am frequently unable to complete an assignment or task from beginning to end because I am constantly interrupted by clients or coworkers. Constantly shifting priorities."*

*"No organization, at times unprofessional, policies and rules apply only to certain people."*

Complaints about organizations' clientele registered almost as many comments. While front line workers spoke almost universally to the gratification of serving their clients, they also expressed strong frustrations about the challenges posed in this line of work:

*"Working with people who do not want to be helped."*

*"When program participants become content with their lives on public assistance."*

*"Participants disappearing after we have spent months working with them."*

*"The most frustrating aspect of my job is working with individuals who do not care to work. I can send them on referrals and they do not go because they are not interested in working."*

*"It is troubling how many of the clients with which I work seem to be completely apathetic towards their situations. More often than not, clients fail to take advantage of opportunities presented to them through my agency."*

*"Unmotivated consumers."*

*"Young persons sabotaging their successes through self destructive behavior."*

*"The most frustrating aspect of my job is not being able to persuade a client to come in and connect."*

*"Youth's lack of follow-ups with external programs (CBO) [community-based organizations]. They do not commit as expected. Their struggle between the 'instant gratification' (now) and later rewards."*

*"When students come through the program and have not used their time to better themselves. They leave from us no better than when they came in."*

*"When clients don't do what they are supposed to!"*

*"When the clients relapse."*

The other topic receiving a large number of comments was the lack of resources available to front line workers to carry out their jobs as effectively as they would like:

*"Hire-freeze so everyone is doing more to produce the same amount of results with less."*

*"Lack of manpower. Not enough resources to produce an effective program."*

*"Short staffed."*

*"Lack of sufficient funds to staff the program to provide follow-up services to the program participants."*

*"Managing a department which is understaffed, because of federal and state cutbacks."*

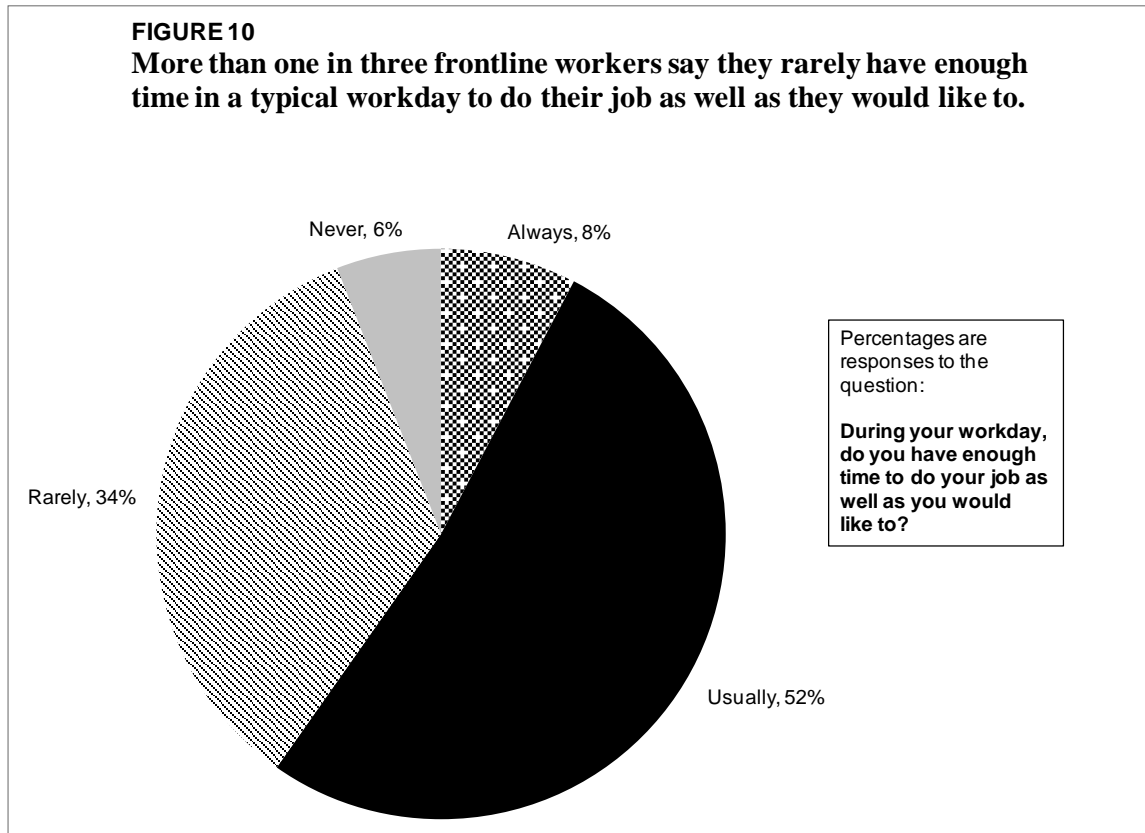
*"Over worked because of lack of support for resource to do job effectively."*

*"Not being able to put more students into classes and not being able to offer more classes that are in high demand in our community."*

Smaller numbers of workers cited frustration with difficulty placing clients in jobs (due to general labor market conditions and obstacles facing individuals with criminal justice histories and those with limited English proficiency); the pressure to meet placement targets and other performance goals; the burdens of documentation requirements; unsatisfactory compensation; and lack of recognition and opportunity for advancement.

A few respondents expressed frustration with relationships with several city agencies, citing “micromanagement” and “constant changes” in agency requirements.

In a separate question, workers were asked if in a typical workday they have enough time to do their job as well as they would like to. As figure 10 illustrates, a majority (52 percent) said that they usually do, but a sizeable share (34 percent) responded that they rarely do. Very small minorities said that they always have enough time (8 percent) or never have enough (6 percent).

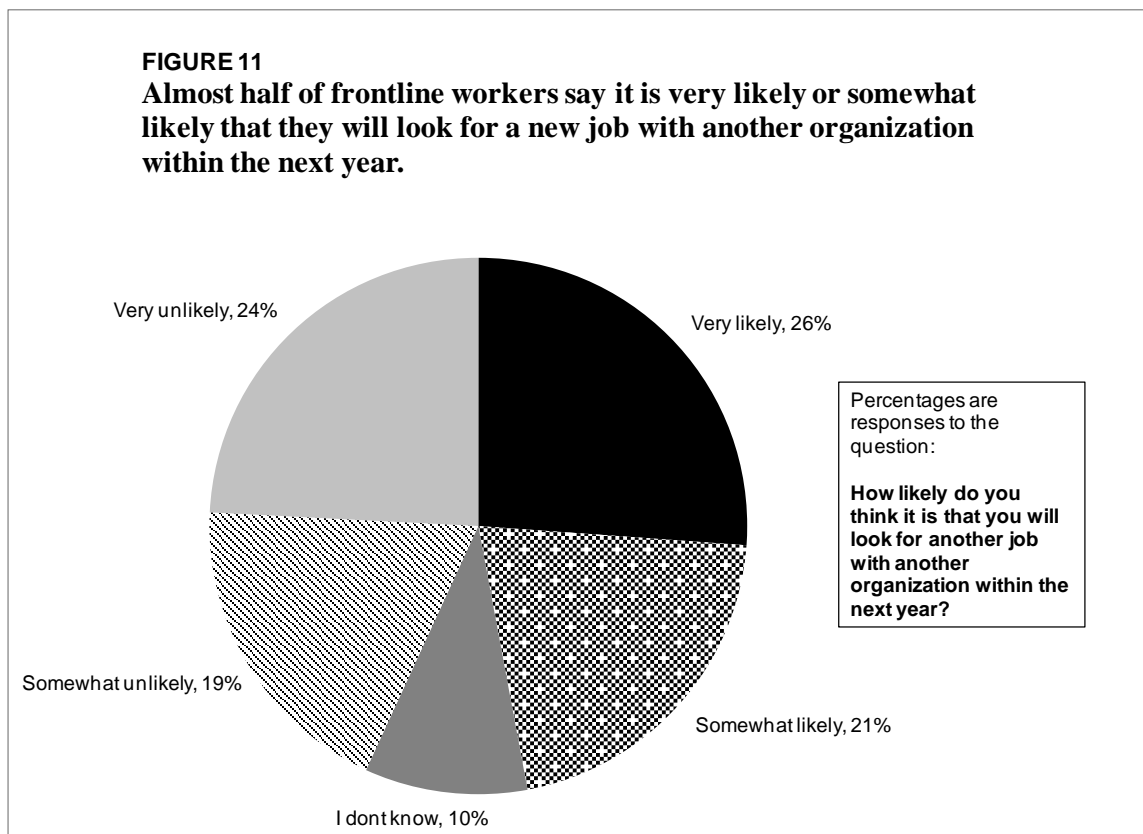


Not having enough time to do one’s job as well as one would like was the factor most strongly associated with job dissatisfaction. Other factors included perceiving funders’ expectations of outcomes as unrealistic and lower gross pay. On the other hand, those workers who found in-house staff development training the most useful were also likely to be those most satisfied with their jobs.

### **Intention to search for new job**

As well as being asked directly about job satisfaction, front line workers were also queried about their intention to seek a new job at another organization. (This question did not specify whether the new job would be in the workforce development field.)

Nearly half (47 percent) reported being very likely (26 percent) or somewhat likely (21 percent) to look for a job at another organization within the next year. (See figure 11.) When the timeframe expanded to the next three years, the share responding in the affirmative jumped to 61 percent, with 37 percent saying that they were very likely to undertake a job search, and 24 percent saying that they were somewhat likely to do so. When asked to assess how easy they thought it would be right now to find a job in New York City with comparable income and benefits, only 10 percent thought that it would be very easy, and 27 percent thought that it would be somewhat easy.



As one might expect, workers who were more dissatisfied with their jobs were more likely to say that they would be looking for other work. Those respondents who believed that it would be relatively easy to find another local job with similar pay and benefits were more likely to indicate their intent to search for such a job, as were those whose jobs included a greater number of discrete job areas.

## Policy recommendations

These policy recommendations are intended to improve the employment practices affecting front line workforce development professionals. A diverse and strong skill set, along with improved morale and the opportunity to advance, can, in turn, enhance

performance and the quality of outcomes attained for an organization. Specific recommendations are presented for management staff, front line workers, and sector leaders and funders.

## **Management**

### *Respond to front line workers' keen interest in training.*

Front line workers indicated a strong interest in training in a range of topics, from leadership development to computer skills, yet a third of workers said either that they perceived a low value placed on training within their organization or that they did not know how training is valued. Training, internal and external, should be ongoing, with managers routinely planning for it. The survey results suggest the particular relevance of training in the following areas:

- Most front line workers want to advance within their organizations. Access to training in leadership development and supervisory skills should be available to staff at all levels of the organization.
- Respondents spoke of the frustrations they face in dealing with difficult clients. Training in topics such as managing expectations, establishing boundaries, and dealing with disappointments is important for workers in this field, many of whom have not had clinical training.
- Front line workers' jobs entail a number of discrete activities, with nearly three-quarters reporting being engaged in four or more distinct job tasks. These workers need a diverse array of skills related to assisting others in seeking and retaining employment, including assessment, job preparation, and employer engagement.

### *Respond to front line workers' strong interest in advancement.*

A majority of respondents indicated a strong interest in advancing within their organizations. Indeed, training for leadership positions ranked first among topics of interest for front line workers. The lack of opportunity to advance was also widely cited as a cause of staff turnover. Yet many workers lack a clear idea of what is required to advance, have not seen other front line workers advance, have not discussed the subject with their supervisors, work at organizations in which job openings are not advertised internally, and do not know if their employer reimburses tuition for job-related training.

Creating job ladders is challenging for organizations that are not expanding. However, there are immediate measures that every organization can take to begin improving

advancement opportunities. Managers should proactively and routinely address the issue with staff members, identifying who is interested in advancement, candidly discussing what potential opportunities exist within the organization, and indicating what skills and experience would be required. Where possible, organizations should commit to leadership building or skill building, even when advancement opportunities are not currently available. Job openings should be advertised internally. Policies regarding full or partial tuition reimbursement should be disclosed and, where none exist, developed. These are the low-hanging fruits, policies that any organization can undertake.

*Capitalize on front line workers' creativity.*

A large share of respondents described the satisfaction they find in the creative aspects of their jobs, such as developing curricula and troubleshooting processes. Managers should recognize and encourage front line workers' input in program design and improvement.

*Examine retention of front line workers.*

With almost half of workers indicating a likelihood of seeking a new job elsewhere in the coming year, organizations' leadership should examine and, where necessary, address retention. Good managerial practices can help to diminish turnover. Front- to mid-managers can focus on team building; improving internal communication between staff members and between programs; and empowering, recognizing, and supporting staff members. Many of these practices can be adopted without additional budgeting. Staff recognition, for example, can take non-monetary forms, such as by letter, in newsletters, and at public events. Senior management can improve retention by cultivating an organizational culture of staff development and by undertaking retention initiatives with the human resources department, if one exists.

*Recognize impact on staff of budget cuts.*

Managers need to recognize the stress that budget cuts and diminishing resources place on front line workers. Recognition, incentives, rewards, support, and team building can play a role in this effort.

*Address need for continued leadership development for managers.*

Front line workers expressed frustration with co-workers, management, and organizational operations. While such concerns will be found in any field, the respondents' comments suggest that there may be a benefit from continued leadership development at higher levels of the organization, especially as continued funding cuts faced by some organizations are likely only to exacerbate these tensions.

*Openly address staff development needs with funders.*

After assessing staff development needs and beginning to develop a plan of action, managers and senior staff should involve funders and openly discuss staff development efforts.

*Capitalize on their organization's investments in front line worker training by following through with implementation.*

After workers engage in training, managers should sit down with them to discuss how the content of the training can best be applied within their organization.

### **Front line workers**

*Map out a career plan.*

As front line workers encourage their clients in their retention activities, front line staff themselves should formulate their own career plan that maps out where they want to be in five or ten years. Plans should include what factors are important to the individual, what training and experience he or she needs to acquire or develop, and steps for steadily advancing his or her career path.

*Recognize that the benefits of training are dependent on implementation.*

After receiving training, front line workers should debrief with their supervisors about how to best incorporate new skills, practices, and ideas into their daily work.

*Consider opportunities to diversify skills to enhance job performance and long-term career potential.*

Front line workers should consider how diversifying their skill set might enrich their current position and performance, as well as allow them greater opportunities. Relevant areas to explore include, for example, financial counseling and alcohol/substance abuse counseling, both of which naturally complement workforce goals such as retention and expand a worker's ability to assist clients. Diversifying may initially involve lateral career moves within one's organization, but it could increase a worker's long-term range of options.

*Take advantage of networking opportunities.*

Front line workers should seek out networking opportunities in order to share resources and strengthen ties with peers. A recent networking event in Brooklyn for job

developers attracted about 80 participants, demonstrating the strong interest in such activities.

*Find a mentor.*

Front line workers should actively seek out a mentor to discuss their plans, brainstorm strategies, learn from their experience, and possibly build new connections. A mentor can be from workforce development or another area of the nonprofit sector. The mentor may or may not be a direct supervisor.

**Sector leaders and funders**

*Incorporate funding for training into contracts.*

Although the survey did not distinguish between public sector and private funding sources, we recognize that funders vary in their commitments to staff development. That said, both sources of support should look at ways to prioritize staff development without jeopardizing current funding. Public sector funders should add funds for staff development to contracts or create and fund some other training capacity. Private funders could increase their funding for staff development when public funding is inadequate.

*Act on this report's findings and recommendations.*

Establish a working group to discuss this report's findings and recommendations, catalogue the best organizational practices for professionalizing workforce development staff, and articulate a sector-wide commitment for implementation.

**Conclusion**

New York City's workforce development front line staff are invested in the success of their organizations' clientele. They bring dedication to their jobs, and they are eager to gain new skills and advance in their profession. With the city's stubbornly high unemployment rate, its climbing poverty rate, and the prospect of an exceptionally weak recovery, the challenges facing front line workers will not diminish any time soon. It is hoped that this report will prompt new recognition of the key role that these individuals play and generate renewed efforts to equip them to meet the ongoing challenges of their jobs. Their professional success will benefit all New Yorkers who have a stake in a strong workforce development system.



**Workforce Professionals Training Institute** ([www.workforceprofessionals.org](http://www.workforceprofessionals.org)) was founded in 2004 as a nonprofit organization focused on improving the day-to-day operations of workforce development programs and strengthening the workforce development field. WPTI provides professional development and training opportunities for program staff and managers and technical assistance and consulting services to organizations and local workforce systems. As a result, WPTI builds the skills and capacity of practitioners to help thousands of low-income and disadvantaged job seekers achieve economic independence by improving organizational capacity and performance.

Over the past seven years, WPTI has trained more than 4,000 practitioners in 300 organizations in the New York City metro area, as well as organizations in Florida, Texas, Illinois, Pennsylvania, New Jersey, California, and Washington, DC. Our clients include local community-based organizations and nonprofits, for-profits, and government agencies that provide services to hard-to-serve job seekers. We enjoy a hard-earned reputation for high-quality programming that influences the performance bottom line of organizations while also building a network for peer-to-peer learning and support among workforce development professionals.

**The Fiscal Policy Institute** ([www.fiscalspolicy.org](http://www.fiscalspolicy.org)) is an independent, nonpartisan, nonprofit research and education organization committed to improving policies and practices to better the economic and social conditions of all New Yorkers. Founded in 1991, FPI works to create a strong economy in which prosperity is broadly shared.

## Appendix: Survey

**ALL RESPONSES TO THIS SURVEY WILL BE COMPLETELY ANONYMOUS.** The survey results will be analyzed by the Fiscal Policy Institute (FPI). It will be impossible for FPI to identify the names or employers of people taking the survey. A report that will include an analysis of the survey results will be published in the fall of 2011 and will be publicly available on FPI's website.

Thank you for your input.

**1. Which of the following best describes the type of organization for which you work?**

Non-profit Community Based Organization (CBO)  
Community College  
Community Development Corporation  
Government Agency  
Other (please specify)

**2. About how many people are employed by your organization?**

1-5  
6-20  
21-50  
51 or more

**3. Does your organization engage in activities other than workforce development? Examples of other activities may include providing affordable housing, family counseling, or legal services.**

Yes  
No

**4. What is your job title?**

**5. Which of the following activities do you regularly do as part of your job?**

Recruitment  
Intake  
Assessment  
Case management

Counseling  
Job development  
Retention  
Employer outreach and/or engagement  
Soft skills training  
Hard skills training  
Other (please specify)

**6. Do you directly work with the following groups? Please indicate all that apply.**

Youth  
Adults  
Business/industry  
Ex-offenders  
People with disabilities  
Dislocated workers  
Immigrants and/or refugees  
Other (please specify)

**7. For about how many years OR months in total have you worked for your present employer? Please enter the number.**

Years  
Months

**8. Have you had your CURRENT JOB with your present employer for less than one year?**

Yes  
No

**9. For about how many years have you had your CURRENT JOB with your present employer? Please enter the number.**

**10. How many DIFFERENT positions have you had with your present employer? Please enter the number. many DIFFERENT positions have you had with your present employer? Please enter the number.**

**11. Were you ever a client of your organization before you became an employee of the organization?**

Yes  
No

**12. Was your last job before you joined your present organization also related to workforce development?**

Yes  
No

**13. In total, for approximately how many years have you worked in the workforce development field?**

**14. Overall, how satisfied are you with your present job?**

Very satisfied  
Somewhat satisfied  
Somewhat unsatisfied  
Very unsatisfied

**15. Which aspects of your job do you find most rewarding? Please feel free to be as general or specific as you want to be in answering this question.**

**16. Which aspects of your job are the most frustrating? Again, feel free to be general or specific.**

**17. During your workday, do you have enough time to do your job as well as you would like to?**

Always  
Usually  
Rarely  
Never

Workforce development organizations receive money from government agencies and/or private philanthropic foundations, both of which will be referred to as "funders." Please indicate how accurately the following statements express your views and experience.

**18. I usually have a good understanding of the funders' requirements for contracts that fund projects I am working on (for instance, requirements with respect to placement, retention, or wage levels).**  
Strongly agree

Agree somewhat  
Disagree somewhat  
Strongly disagree

**19. Complying with funders' contract requirements with respect to documentation often significantly interferes with providing the quality of service to my organization's clients that I want to provide.**

Strongly agree  
Agree somewhat  
Disagree somewhat  
Strongly disagree

**20. Funders' contract requirements (with respect to placement or retention targets, for example) are usually realistic, given the amount of time and resources I have.**

Strongly agree  
Agree somewhat  
Disagree somewhat  
Strongly disagree

**21. Funders' contract requirements (with respect to placement or retention targets, for example) are usually realistic, given the needs of my organization's clients.**

Strongly agree  
Agree somewhat  
Disagree somewhat  
Strongly disagree

**22. Funders' contract requirements (with respect to placement or retention targets, for example) are usually realistic, given the local labor market conditions.**

**23. You may have received training in a formal educational setting such as a college, at your workplace ("on-the-job" training), or from a trainer hired by your employer. Thinking back on the sum of all the education or training you have received, how adequate has it been given the demands of your job?**

Very adequate  
Somewhat adequate

Somewhat inadequate  
Very inadequate

**24. When you began your current job, did you participate in a formal training for new employees?**

Yes  
No

**25. If you did participate in a formal training for new employees when you began your current job, roughly how long was the orientation? Please indicate the approximate amount in days or hours.**

Days  
Hours

**26. When you began your current job, did you receive training from one or more experienced staff members (either as direct training or by "shadowing" a more senior staff member)?**

Yes  
No

**27. In your opinion, how high of a priority does your organization's leadership consider training for front line staff to be?**

Very high  
Fairly high  
Rather low  
Very low  
I don't know

**28. Does your organization fully or partially reimburse front line staff who take classes that are either a) related to their job or b) that count towards a degree or certification? Examples of these classes may be ones required for a Bachelor's in Social Work or classes required to be certified as an alcohol and substance abuse counselor.**

Yes  
No  
I don't know

**29. How often does your organization hold in-house trainings, either led by staff members or by people from outside the organization?**

About once a month  
A few times a year  
About once a year  
Less than once a year  
Never  
I don't know

**30. If your organization does offer in-house trainings, how useful have you found the ones you have attended in the past year?**

Very useful  
Somewhat useful  
Not very useful  
Not at all useful  
The quality of different trainings was varied

**31. How often do you participate in trainings related to your job that are held by organizations other than your employer?**

Several times a year  
About once a year  
Less than once a year  
Never  
Haven't been with organization long enough to say

**32. If you have participated in trainings related to your job that have been held by other organizations, how useful have you found the ones you have attended in the past year?**

Very useful  
Somewhat useful  
Not very useful  
Not at all useful  
The quality of different trainings was varied

**Please indicate how useful you would find training in the following topics.**

**33. Communication skills**

Very useful  
Somewhat useful

Not very useful  
Not at all useful

**34. Computer skills (such as learning how to use a new software program or learning how to use the Internet more effectively)**

Very useful  
Somewhat useful  
Not very useful  
Not at all useful

**35. Data collection and analysis and outcomes management**

Very useful  
Somewhat useful  
Not very useful  
Not at all useful

**36. Job development**

Very useful  
Somewhat useful  
Not very useful  
Not at all useful

**37. Job seeker retention**

Very useful  
Somewhat useful  
Not very useful  
Not at all useful

**38. Leadership development for front line staff who would like to become supervisors**

Very useful  
Somewhat useful  
Not very useful  
Not at all useful

**39. Marketing and messaging**

Very useful  
Somewhat useful  
Not very useful  
Not at all useful

**40. Program design**

Very useful  
Somewhat useful  
Not very useful

Not at all useful

**41. Stress management**

Very useful  
Somewhat useful  
Not very useful  
Not at all useful

**42. Time management**

Very useful  
Somewhat useful  
Not very useful  
Not at all useful

**43. Understanding the local labor market and economic and public policy trends**

Very useful  
Somewhat useful  
Not very useful  
Not at all useful

**44. Working with challenging clients and hard-to-serve populations**

Very useful  
Somewhat useful  
Not very useful  
Not at all useful

**45. In what other topics would you find it useful to receive training?**

Please indicate how accurately these statements express your views and experience.

**46. I would like to advance within my current organization into a position with greater responsibility and better pay.**

Strongly agree  
Agree somewhat  
Disagree somewhat  
Strongly disagree

**47. It is clear to me what is required for me to advance within my current organization into a position with greater responsibility and better pay.**

Strongly agree  
Agree somewhat

Disagree somewhat  
Strongly disagree

**48. While I have been employed at my current organization, I have seen other front line staff promoted into positions with greater responsibility and better pay.**

Yes, this is true  
No, this is not true

**49. My supervisor has discussed with me how front line staff members in my organization can advance into positions with greater responsibility and better pay.**

Yes, this is true  
No, this is not true

**50. New job openings within my organization are usually advertised internally so that everyone in the organization who might be interested in applying has a chance to do so.**

Yes, this is true  
No, this is not true

**51. To advance into a position with greater responsibility and better pay in my organization, it would be necessary for me to have at least a four-year college degree.**

Strongly agree  
Agree somewhat  
Disagree somewhat  
Strongly disagree

**52. To advance into a position with greater responsibility and better pay in my organization, it would be necessary to have an advanced degree such as a Master's.**

Strongly agree  
Agree somewhat  
Disagree somewhat  
Strongly disagree

**53. At your organization, is there much turnover (that is, staff quitting their jobs and new workers being hired) among front line staff members?**

There's a lot of turnover  
There's a moderate amount of turnover  
There's very little turnover  
I don't know

**54. What things do you think cause people to leave your organization? Please check all that apply.**

Stress  
Excessive overtime  
Pay and/or benefits  
Lack of opportunities to advance within the organization  
Other (please explain)

**55. Right now, about how easy would it be for you to find a job in the New York City area with another employer with approximately the same income and fringe benefits you now have?**

Very easy  
Somewhat easy  
Somewhat difficult  
Very difficult  
I don't know

**56. How likely do you think it is that you will look for another job with another organization within the next year?**

Very likely  
Somewhat likely  
Somewhat unlikely  
Very unlikely  
I don't know

**57. How likely do you think it is that you will look for another job with another organization within the next THREE years?**

Very easy  
Somewhat easy  
Somewhat difficult  
Very difficult  
I don't know

**58. What factors are most likely to determine whether or not you want to stay in your present job at your current organization for the next year?**

**59. What factors are most likely to determine whether or not you want to stay in the workforce development field (either at your present organization or at a different one) for the next THREE years?**

Some people have suggested that it would be useful for NYC workforce development front line workers to be able to get professional certification in their field. Under a certification program, workers would take a required number of classes or workshops from a local college or non-profit organization. All or most of the classes would be specifically targeted to workforce development front line workers. After successfully completing those classes or workshops, the workers would receive a certificate.

Please indicate how you feel about the following statements relating to the idea of certification in workforce development.

**60. Having the opportunity to get a certificate as an NYC workforce development worker is basically a good idea.**

Strongly agree  
Agree somewhat  
Disagree somewhat  
Strongly disagree  
I don't know

**61. Having the opportunity to learn new skills in a systematic way through a certification program would probably help me be more effective in my current job.**

Strongly agree  
Agree somewhat  
Disagree somewhat  
Strongly disagree  
I don't know

**62. Earning a certificate probably would help me advance in my present**

**organization into a job with better pay and more responsibility.**

Strongly agree  
Agree somewhat  
Disagree somewhat  
Strongly disagree  
I don't know

**63. Earning a certificate probably would help me get a job with better pay and more responsibility at a different workforce development agency.**

Strongly agree  
Agree somewhat  
Disagree somewhat  
Strongly disagree  
I don't know

**64. I like the idea of a certification program, but it would be difficult to find time during my workday to take classes or training and still keep up with the responsibilities of my job.**

Strongly agree  
Agree somewhat  
Disagree somewhat  
Strongly disagree  
I don't know

**65. I might be able to find time outside of my workday (for example, evenings or weekends) to pursue a certificate.**

Strongly agree  
Agree somewhat  
Disagree somewhat  
Strongly disagree  
I don't know

**66. How important would it be to you that the certification be recognized by government agencies and others shaping NYC workforce development policy?**

Very important  
Somewhat important  
A little important  
Not at all important

**67. Are you aware of any existing certification programs for front line workforce development workers, either in NYC or elsewhere?**

Yes  
No

**68. Please add any other thoughts you have about the subject of a certification program for NYC workforce development front line workers.**

**69. Do you receive any of the following benefits from your job?**

**Medical insurance**

Yes No I don't know

**Dental insurance**

Yes No I don't know

**Vision insurance (eye exams, eyeglasses, etc.)**

Yes No I don't know

**Pension coverage**

Yes No I don't know

**Sick leave with full pay**

Yes No I don't know

**Family leave with full pay (for example, paid leave to care for a family member)**

Yes No I don't know

**70. What is your gender?**

Female  
Male

**71. What is your age as of your most recent birthday?**

**72. What is your race-ethnicity? Please check all that apply.**

Non-Hispanic Black  
Hispanic/Latino/Latina, any race  
Non-Hispanic White  
Asian/Pacific Islander  
Native America  
Other

**73. What is the highest degree or level of school that you have completed? If you are**

**currently enrolled, please check the previous grade or highest degree received.**

Grade 1 through 12 without high school diploma or G.E.D.

High school diploma or G.E.D.

Some college units without a degree

Associate's degree

Bachelor's degree

Some graduate coursework

Graduate degree

**74. Have you received any type of professional certification, such as, for example, certification as an alcohol and substance abuse counselor?**

Yes  
No

**75. Please indicate your current annual gross salary (that is, your annual salary before taxes and other deductions) using the drop-down menu.**

\$15,000 to \$19,999

\$20,000 to \$24,999

\$25,000 to \$29,999

\$30,000 to \$34,999

\$35,000 to \$39,999

\$40,000 to \$49,999

\$50,000 to \$59,999

\$60,000 to \$74,999

\$75,000 to \$99,999

**76. Please feel free to add ANYTHING else you would like to on this page about your experience working in workforce development. And thank you very much for taking the time to complete this survey!**





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