

Employer Survey Results for April 2018 through May 2019
June 26, 2019

1. Overview and Survey Returns

This report of SCSEP employer customer satisfaction is the second analysis of the revised employer survey instrument approved by OMB in 2015. The prior version of the survey instrument had been in use since the inception of the survey in 2005. The current report is based on survey returns that sub-grantees and grantees delivered to employers and for which survey numbers were entered in SPARQ any time from April 1, 2018, to June 1, 2019.

There are several steps in completing the employer survey process, with areas of responsibility for both the grantee and the employer. The grantee must use the employer survey management report to identify qualifying employers, enter the survey number and date of delivery into SPARQ, and deliver the survey to the employer. The employer must complete and return the survey. The grantee must also keep track of the survey number to determine if the employer has returned the survey. If the employer has not returned the survey within three weeks of delivery, the grantee is required to record another survey number and deliver a second survey to the employer.

In the two tables below, the counts of the survey records in SPARQ and returned surveys are displayed to illustrate the progression associated with the survey administration. Table 1 shows surveys recorded in SPARQ, and Table 2 shows surveys returned by employers. As displayed in Table 1, there were 336 surveys properly recorded in SPARQ for employment records where the employer was not a host agency and had received a substantial service. The next column displays the count of records where the number recorded in the survey number field in SPARQ was a valid 5-digit survey number. The third column shows that 257 of those surveys with valid numbers did not have a match to any of the 128 surveys returned by employers (Table 2, first column). The fourth column in Table 1 shows that 65 recorded survey numbers were matched with one of the returned surveys shown in Table 2. The fifth column shows the number of matched surveys where there was a valid ACSI score.¹

Table 1.

	Total	With Valid Survey Number	Valid and Unmatched	Valid and Matched	Valid, Matched, and Complete
Survey Numbers in SPARQ	336	322	257	65	61

Table 2 shows that employers returned 128 surveys during the reporting period, of which 124 had usable responses. Of those 124 returned surveys, 65 matched a valid survey number entered into SPARQ. 61 of the 65 matched surveys had answers to the three questions that comprise the ACSI. The 59 returned, unmatched surveys cannot be attributed to any grantee, and there is no way to determine if they were delivered to an appropriate employer.

¹ Valid means that the respondent had given a valid answer (1-10) to each of the three questions that make up the ACSI.

Table 2.

	Total	Surveys with Responses ²	Unmatched with Responses	Matched with Responses	Matched and ACSI Score ³
Surveys Returned	128	124	59	65	61

In August 2018, responsibility for administering the employer survey was transferred from the sub-grantees to the grantees in order to increase compliance with the procedures for survey administration. Despite this change, as in previous years, the uneven returns from grantees indicate that there are still many points along the way where this process breaks down. Despite the changes in SPARQ to strengthen the consistency of reporting, the number of recorded surveys is disappointing. Because of the extremely low counts of matched surveys, no individual grantee data are presented in this report.

2. Analyses of Employer Returns

A. The ACSI

The American Customer Satisfaction Index (ACSI) provides a reliable, general measure of satisfaction that provides a standard for comparison with industries and organizations across the country. The average ACSI score for the USA across industries is 77.0, the highest score since the ACSI organization began tracking these scores in 1995. Table 3 shows that the ACSI score for SCSEP employers nationwide exceeds the cross-industry US average by over 12 points. It also significantly exceeds the ACSI scores in PY 2018 of 82.4 for SCSEP participants and host agencies. In addition, this year’s employer ACSI score exceeds last year’s employer satisfaction scores, when the nationwide ACSI was 85.5.

Table 3

	ACSI			
	Count	Mean	Minimum	Maximum
Nationwide	61	89.3	33	100

The ACSI score was so high that we questioned if it might be biased by the omission of nearly half of the surveys that had been returned but were unmatched. Given that concern, we analyzed all 124 of the completed returns recorded in Table 2. The ACSI score for the 124 returned surveys was the same as for the 65 matched surveys used in the analyses presented below. We also examined the responses for the other survey questions using all 124 returned surveys; the scores on those questions were also consistent with the responses for the smaller, matched sample.

² Four surveys mailed back were completely blank.

³ Because the ACSI (requiring a score of 1-10 on the first three questions of the survey) is a required performance measure for SCSEP, we identify these surveys as a subset of all surveys in which there were responses.

B. Staff Service to Employers

In the remaining analyses, the responses for several questions (Questions 4, 5, 6, 8 and 10) are numerically transformed so that all employer responses can be compared to each other.⁴ As a result, all of the survey questions are scored on a 1-10 scale, except for Questions 9 and 14, which are Yes/No questions.

Table 4 presents the average scores for Questions 4, 7, and 9. The average scores on Questions 4 and 7 is among the highest scores we have seen for this question on any survey. Since Question 4 is a key driver of satisfaction, this high score is clearly a component of the overall satisfaction score of 89.3.

Table 4.

	Count	Mean	Minimum	Maximum
4. The Older Worker Program staff that made the job referral(s) had a good understanding of my business needs.	59	9.2	4	10
7. The Older Worker Program staff stayed in touch with me after I hired the participant to make sure that everything was going well.	59	8.5	1	10
9. After we hired the participant with the assistance of the Older Worker Program, the staff was helpful in resolving any problems we had.	41	8.7	1	10

C. Participant Qualities

The skills participants bring to their job with an employer are a critical part of the success associated with any placement. In Table 5, the score of 8.8 on Question 5 shows that employers were generally quite satisfied with participant skills. There are some areas, however, where participants fell short according to these employers. As seen in Table 6, computer skills are those most likely to be missing. The other area where participants could be better prepared is job-specific skills. Fortunately, knowledge of job-specific skills is often most efficiently provided by the employer. Employers seemed to be most comfortable with participants' soft skills, a factor often mentioned by employers as most associated with older workers.

⁴ These transformations do not distort the original values chosen by the employer.

Table 5

	Count	Mean	Minimum	Maximum
5. The participant referred by the Older Worker Program/SCSEP had the skills necessary to start the job.	63	8.8	1	10

Table 6

		Count	Percent of all Responses
6. Would you have liked the participant to have been better prepared in any of these areas?	Computer knowledge	19	26.8%
	Basic employability skills, like how to dress, how to interact with co-workers and supervisors, and punctuality	12	16.9%
	Knowledge of what the job required	13	18.3%
	How to behave with the employer's customers or clients	13	18.3%
	Job-specific skills	14	19.7%

SCSEP is unique in the world of federal workforce programs in preparing older workers to return to the workforce. Question 10 asks employers the degree to which this special focus is valuable to them. Table 7 confirms that SCSEP’s focus on older workers is highly valued by employers. This assessment is also substantiated by many of the open-ended comments regarding what employers value most about SCSEP (see Appendix A).

Table 7.

	Count	Mean	Minimum	Maximum
10. I see the Older Worker Program as valuable for maintaining a wide range of ages in any workforce.	61	9.2	2	10

Question 11 (Table 8) lists a number of features that employers might consider attractive and allows employers to identify any and all that they value in regard to SCSEP. Even the least frequently endorsed feature (subsidized on-the-job training) is selected by half of the respondents. The proportion citing subsidized on-the-job training as a factor has gone down significantly. (It was endorsed by two-thirds of employers in the 2016-2017 report.) However, with the small numbers of respondents and only two years of data, we do not know if this lowering of interest in subsidized employment will continue. Generally, the other features are clearly endorsed as valuable features of the Older Worker Program.

Table 8

		Count
11. Which of the following factors made the Older Worker program attractive for you?	It paid the wages of the older workers for a number of weeks... through a subsidized on-the-job training program	30
	It stays in touch about my hiring needs	49
	It could fill my job openings quickly	50
	It has people with the right skills	54
	It has people with good attitudes and work habits	55
	It does a good job in screening applicants	50

Because of the advancing age of workers served by the SCSEP program, their limited incomes, and their multiple barriers to employment, there is always concern that workers might need supportive services. As evident in Table 9, 12.0 percent of employers indicated that an older worker needed supportive services, nearly the same percentage as in 2016-2017.

Table 9.

		Count	Percent
8. Did the participant hired require supportive services, such as assistance with transportation, uniforms, safety equipment, or health services?	Yes	6	12.0%
	No	43	86.0%
	Don't know	1	2.0%

The data presented above show a program that serves employers extremely well. While the number of usable, completed surveys is very small, the responses from employers are extremely positive on almost every dimension. The consistency of these findings is reinforced when you look at these results for all returned surveys, not just those that were matched. The positive responses on the above questions are also reinforced by the many compliments in the open-ended responses (see Appendix A).

The one area of relative weakness is in participant's skills to do the job. Although the score on Question 5 in Table 5 is fairly high, it is significantly lower than the scores for how staff treated the employer. As was true in the prior version of this survey, employers indicated most strongly that they would like participants to have better computer skills. Employers also indicated that participants should have more knowledge of what the job requires, more job-specific skills, and a better ability to relate to customers.

3. Survey Administration

Although the overall survey results are very positive, there are significant, ongoing weaknesses in the survey administration, despite extensive documentation and training provided by the national office.

- As noted at the beginning of this report, there were 59 surveys that were delivered without the survey number and date being recorded in SPARQ.
- Many grantees seemed to misunderstand the process for recording survey numbers. It appears that when an employer hired more than one person, the grantee sometimes recorded the survey number and date for the first participant hired and for all other participants hired by that employer, so the same survey number was recorded multiple times. Grantees also entered the same survey number for multiple different employers. The survey number is only supposed to be associated with one hire by one employer.
- Many employers that had been identified as not having received a substantial service (the grantee checked the field in SPARQ that asserted services had not been provided) nonetheless received a survey. The survey procedures provide that only employers that received a substantial service are to be surveyed.
- In addition, some employers that were identified as host agencies received a survey. Survey procedures require that host agencies not receive an employer survey.

The results from the employer surveys are clearly valuable in guiding program improvement and identifying the features of SCSEP that are most highly valued by one of its key customer groups. At the same time, hiring by employers that are not host agencies and that received a substantial service in association with the hiring process is not a frequent occurrence for most grantees. To ensure that the employer survey process contributes all it can to our overall understanding of SCSEP, we need to strengthen training for grantees in survey administration. A review of the survey process and consideration of potential modifications to that process are currently underway.

Appendix A

Table 1 presents the responses to the open-ended question in which employers were asked to identify what was most valuable about the program. The second set of comments, in Table 2, presents any suggestions for change. The most frequent value for which employers cited the program was that it provided them with the right people: SCSEP participants are seen as experienced and dedicated. Interestingly, a number of employers also noted the importance of being able to find people with a “great work ethic.”

Table 1.

Q12. What is most valuable to you about the Older Worker Program?
All workers that have been sent to our organization have either been able to successfully complete their tasks w/o guidance.
Communication & assistance in onboarding potential employees.
Employee was screened by the program and a perfect fit for my company
Ethics
getting manpower without funding it
Getting older people back in the work program.
Given another chance to return to work
Helps workers with on the job training
I just went to the career fair I learned about at another career fair. No idea you guys had other services for employers. Would love to learn more
It gives the individuals the ability to get back into the workforce. Working builds their self-esteem.
It helps identify and screen experienced older workers.
Large group of candidates willing to work.
Maturity, work ethic, safe habits, customer focused, prompt, pleasant to work with.
More people skills
Ms. Desmond
Participant with skills
Quick hiring process
Relationships with vendors that run the program.
Reliable mature workers who know the value of a job and being on time for their assignments.
Several of our desk clerks has come from SCSEP and are working out great.
She is very good for my family
Staff knowledge
That an organization exists to save that community
The hiring recruiter, R Desmond, was pleasant and professional. She did not waste my time with bad options.
The large pool of skilled job seekers
The maturity level and inherent work ethic of the participants referred.
The opportunity to hire mature and responsible caregivers to care for the vulnerable population we service.
The participants have a strong work ethic.

Q12. What is most valuable to you about the Older Worker Program?
The pay only 8.25 hr not enough pay
The program provides a stable employee that we could rely upon.
The program to help and work with seniors to go back to work and maintain work relationship.
Their experience and attitude to the work
They always find the people I need for at my store.
They are very helpful in finding people for jobs. They also are very good at checking up on the employee that they assigned for the job which they app
They are willing to learn something new.
They fit with the program mission
They have years of experience that enable them to jump right in.
This is an excellent program
This program helps the older worker not only getting a job and helps getting back the confidence of being able to be productive.
Training provided
Unfortunately, this is the first I have heard of.
Very nice person
Very professional people, great work ethics.
We love working with the older workers.
We really liked the "2 week free trial". Grace was a perfect fit for our opening. Grace has a great professional / fun attitude which fits our culture
Your program responded very quickly to our request.

It is notable how few comments there were about needed changes compared to the large number of positive comments in the Table 1 above. In fact, many of the responses that were provided to Question 13 indicated that employer did not know of any changes or did not think any changes were necessary. There were a couple of comments about computer skills that parallel the need for computer skills noted in Question 6 (Table 6).

Table 2.

Q13. Based on you experience, what changes would you recommend for the Older Worker Program?
100%
Applicants need to be better at the computer. Resumes need to be attached or scanned in. Communications through email is essential.
At least minimum wages is it 11.00 ?
Based on my experience I would not change anything.
Candidates that can work full time but we've created a part-time schedule to accommodate.
Educating employers on all the support we can tap into to help us with the new hire.
Faster timeline for people coming onboard.
I have no suggestions for changes.

Q13. Based on you experience, what changes would you recommend for the Older Worker Program?
If unable to cover/pay wages for a couple of weeks, at least offset the cost of training for the mandatory training orientation hours.
Just keep retaining qualified candidates
Larger pool of applicants
Make sure they can understand they need to follow the stores rules while working.
Making sure the participants have basic technology skills and equipment to compete in the workforce.
More awareness
No changes needed to this program
No changes, I would make everything is very good how the program works.
None
None. They followed up but not annoyingly, just right amount.
Not sure if the org does background checks, but the only workers that should be sent to a childcare facility are ones that have passed a check.
Not to discontinue it
Nothing at this time
Nothing but paying [sic] them more.
Nothing really, it's been all good
That individuals enrolled are sure they want to learn and gain actual employment.
The first person sent to us had no skills at all. The second person, whom we hired, was excellent and was ready to go to work.
The important to communication with the job.
The participant was told she would be helped with a utility bill as it would be a month before receiving a check. Three months later she has heard not
Unfortunately, we hired an unusually inappropriate candidate for this particular job. She exhibited some bizarre behaviors during the short period of
Visit employer sites to better ascertain job requirements.