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THE CENTER FOR SOCIAL POLICY



JOHN W. MCCORMACK GRADUATE SCHOOL OF POLICY AND GLOBAL STUDIES
UNIVERSITY OF MASSACHUSETTS BOSTON

ENTRY-LEVEL WORKFORCE INVESTMENT FEASIBILITY STUDY

PREPARED FOR PROJECT HOPE

MAY 2011

PROJECT
HOPE
where families move up and out of poverty



Entry-Level Workforce Investment Feasibility Study

**Prepared for Project Hope
Roxbury, MA**

**By
The Center for Social Policy
J. W. McCormack Graduate School of Policy and Global Studies
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May 2011

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PREFACE

Over the past 25 years, Project Hope has grown organically in response to the expressed needs of homeless families in the Dorchester/Roxbury area. Our mission has been to journey with these families beyond homelessness and poverty. Our programs have focused upon quality shelter for homeless families, affordable housing, education, training and workforce development, quality child care and training entrepreneurs to run child care businesses in their own homes. Our value-based process in achieving these programs is: the active participation of families, identifying solutions in collaboration with other families, providers, partners in the public and private sector, and being architects of these solutions on the ground and policy level.

Our journey as an organization can be seen in the larger context of the Dudley Street Neighborhood Initiative (DSNI), a grassroots organization focused on planning and organizing efforts in the community. They have galvanized us to reclaim and revitalize our neighborhood. We can now point to the physical signs of transformation on pieces of property which were once garbage dumps and are now affordable housing units, community centers, parks, fields, and gardens. Project Hope was a founding organizational partner of DSNI and is actively involved in all aspects of DSNI.

DSNI and Project Hope now face another chapter in their evolution; and like in the first chapter, both the focus and process of their journey is co-mingled. There are unique opportunities coming from city, state and federal levels to highlight and support these organizations. Over the past 25 years the major focus has been on education, jobs, careers, and economic development. The questions we now face are part of a human development and capacity building process. How can we as an organized neighborhood and community create quality education from birth to college for the residents of the Dudley Neighborhood? The second question is how do we connect our DSNI neighborhood and community with vibrant opportunities for jobs and careers that pay a living wage and build sustainable economic resources within the boundaries of our own neighborhood?

The opportunities that position us to realize some of these goals are: the DSNI Community has been selected as one of President Obama's Promised Neighborhoods - one of only 21 neighborhoods selected from across the country. We are one of five neighborhoods chosen to be a part of the City of Boston's Thrive in Five Initiative. We will benefit from the developments of the Fairmont Commuter Rail Line as well as being within the City of Boston's Circle of Promise.

The unfolding of the next chapter for Project Hope and DSNI is ready to happen and the Economic Feasibility Study gives a view of the steps we need to pursue to create opportunities and a pathway toward economic security for families.

Sr. Margaret Leonard
Executive Director
Project Hope

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Project Hope and the Center for Social Policy conducted an Entry-Level Workforce Investment Feasibility Study in the Spring and Summer of 2010. The primary purpose of this study is two-fold. First, the study was used to identify and target one or two industries (other than health care where Project Hope has already established employer partnerships and job training programs) which offer entry-level jobs and begin to establish relationships with potential employer partners. Second, the study synthesized existing data and research to assess the match between the characteristics, interests and skill sets of Project Hope participants and the job opportunities in the targeted industries. This report provides the main findings and initial recommendations from this analysis.

The first section, called “ECONOMIC PROFILE”, provides a brief description of the current economic climate and describes the industries, employers and jobs within the region. The sections titled “PROJECT HOPE PARTICIPANTS” and “WORKFORCE INTERESTS SURVEY” provides summary information on administrative and survey data on participants in Project Hope’s programs and community. The fourth section, “EMPLOYER PERSPECTIVES”, provides an overview of what was learned from interviews conducted with employers, in terms of specific job characteristics, as well as a review of possible next steps. Following a brief overview of Project Hope’s organizational resources, the report concludes with a section for RECOMMENDATIONS.

Economic Profile

Retail, food service and accommodation are economic sectors which provide a large base of entry-level jobs with minimal skill requirements. Although jobs in these sectors are often short term solutions for job seekers and do not provide family sustaining wages, they can be coupled with income and other work-related supports, as well as training and bridges to more desirable jobs, which help people advance out of low-wage work.

Current Economic Climate

- The *minimum* annual family income needed to live in the City of Boston for 2010 as estimated by the Mass. Index¹ ranges from \$28,717 for a single adult to \$68,235 for a family of four (2 adults and 2 children).
- Boston ranks as the 5th U.S. metro area in terms of the number of people holding a Bachelor’s degree. However, Boston (Suffolk County) more closely resembles the U.S. average in terms of the proportion of the population over the age of 25 that does not have a high school diploma or equivalent (16% for the U.S., 18% for Suffolk County).
- High unemployment has persisted in 2010. The unemployment rate in the City of Boston was 8.7% in February 2010, up from 7.2% a year earlier.

¹ Crittenton Women’s Union (2010), Massachusetts Economic Independence Index 2010, http://www.liveworkthrive.org/site/docs/Massachusetts_Economic_Independence_Index_030810.pdf, accessed March 31, 2010.

- Consistently high unemployment prevails in the neighborhoods surrounding Project Hope. For example, in 2009, the unemployment rate in Mission Hill, Roxbury, Blue Hills Corridor, and Mattapan was 19.6%.

Job Base and Opportunities

- The largest occupational category in the region is office and administrative support. Sales and related and food preparation and serving are the second and third largest and comprise 17.3% of total employment in Greater Boston.
- Food service and accommodation and retail trade reported the second and third highest number of job vacancies (10,200 and 5,300, respectively).
- Food service, accommodation, or retail occupations do not provide family sustaining wages in the long-run, but in the immediate term provide entry-level workers with an opportunity for immediate earnings, building their work experience and flexing their work hours around child care and training needs.
- These entry-level jobs allow workers to build on and demonstrate customer service and interpersonal skills, which if coupled with a high school diploma could help transition them into an entry level clerical or healthcare support position.
- One in every five establishments in Suffolk County is in retail, food service and accommodation. These industries make up 14% of total employment in the area.
- Retail, food service and accommodation industries have the lowest average annual earnings as compared to other industries. Earnings range from \$25,464 in food service and accommodation and \$30,089 in retail trade.
- Both food services and accommodation are expected to expand through 2016, adding a total of 20,050 new jobs; as are retail sales positions in building and garden supplies, clothing, and general merchandise stores.
- The largest 18 employers in the Boston area predominantly operate in health care, education, or financial services sectors. These large employers often operate in office buildings and campuses which house retail and food service operations. These work environments have the potential to connect entry-level service workers to a wider range of employment opportunities and networks in the dominant industries.
- Alternatively, large employers in retail and food services who operate multiple small establishments across the region are an important source of entry-level jobs since individual store managers may have more control over hiring and be more attuned to community interests where they are located.
- Based on this initial scan of existing workforce develop programs in Boston, there is an opportunity to better assist single parent job seekers in obtaining entry-level jobs and then transitioning to the next step in a career ladder.

Project Hope Participants

Project Hope predominantly serves low-income families in the City of Boston and the majority of new participants enrolling in Project Hope programs are single, female heads of household with one or two children. These families face a unique set of challenges in meeting their income needs to support their families.

- Project Hope served 1,061 people in 2009.

- Almost 80% of Project Hope participants are working age and almost 20% were children under the age of 16. Of the 200 children registered with Project Hope during 2009, 80% were 5 years old or younger.
- Of the new participants enrolling in Project Hope programs during 2009, 92.4% are women. Further, 73.5% of participants are female, single and head of household
- Participants are predominantly either African American or Hispanic (48.1% and 35.9%, respectively).
- Approximately 65% of participants have a high school diploma or GED and only an additional 8% have had at least some post-secondary education.
- Dominant languages are English (69.0 percent) and Spanish (24.6 percent).
- Average monthly family income reported by new Project Hope participants in 2009 was \$889.25.
- Most Project Hope participants report income that falls drastically short of what is needed to meet a basic household budget.
- 38% of Project Hope participants reported being employed and 61% reported that they were not working.
- Of those working, approximately 54% of participants were working full time and 74% held permanent positions.
- Forty-two percent of participants were looking for work and of the 176 participants who were looking for work, 63 were already employed but looking to improve their situation.
- Average monthly earnings for working participants were \$1,426.35, which translates into approximately **\$10.10 to \$11.55** per hour.

Workforce Interests Survey

A workforce interests survey was conducted to help Project Hope identify the interests of participants who were looking for work or looking to improve their work options, but did not meet the eligibility requirements of the program in health care. In general, retrieving information on the work interests of Project Hope participants and community members is an important consideration in designing a workforce program that meets the needs and aspirations of participants.

- Training programs currently being attended by Project Hope participants include GED, English for Speakers of Other Languages (ESOL), and short-term job training.
- Thirty-three percent of survey respondents reported being currently employed and about 86% reported they were looking for work and either currently unemployed or wanted to improve their current employment situation.
- Recent work experience (most relevant to job searching) has not been strong: 35% of respondents have not worked in the past 12 months, 34% have had some work and 25% have worked the entire year.
- Of those who were employed at the time of the survey, 62% are working in permanent positions, 43% are employed full-time, and 56% have been with their current employer for more than one year.
- The three job categories that constitute about half of all employment for those currently working are in food service, retail, or building services

- In terms of training interests, the most popular categories were for computer training (46.9%) and health care training (46.2%). The next groups were human service training (32.4%) and customer service training (31.0%).
- In terms of employment interests, health care and office work are the most popular choices (61% and 49%, respectively). Childcare was of interest to 26% and food service was interesting to 22%.
- Health care and office work remained the most often selected fields of interest regardless of whether or not someone had completed high school.
- Over one-half of the respondents reported that ***consistent work schedule, advancement opportunities and training offered by the employer*** were important to them when considering employment opportunities. In addition, flexibility with work schedule (49%) and access to public transportation (48%) were also highly rated.
- The labor market challenges most often reported by respondents were a need for education and training (52% and 48%, respectively).
- Child care, housing, transportation and availability issues are other challenges listed by respondents that interfere with getting a job (about 22-23% for each category).
- Only 8% of respondents reported that they did not face barriers in the labor market.
- Qualitatively, some respondents reported having to take a step back in their career paths recently to meet family responsibilities, frustration with a lack of child care choices and other resources which help mothers stay employed, and challenges in balancing their time between family, education, and work responsibilities.

Employer Perspectives

Initial interviews with employers in food service, accommodation, or retail sectors provided information regarding entry level job requirements in these sectors. These interviews also helped Project Hope staff establish a connection with employers who may be interested in partnering with a workforce development organization.

- Customer service is the most frequently mentioned skill needed to perform on the job.
- Employers required a great deal of flexibility in scheduling shifts for their workforce and shifts vary across store hours. There are opportunities to work part-time and to work shorter shifts
- Entry level job titles include crew member, cashier, sandwich maker, food packager, clerk, front desk, and wait staff.
- Interviews provided a few key learnings:
 - An improved understanding of how employers frame their workforce challenges and what expectations they hold about engaging in a workforce development partnership.
 - Employers in these sectors had experience working with workforce development programs.
 - There is a constant demand for entry-level workers in food services, accommodation and retail companies.

Recommendations

The basic strategy proposed is to operate a workforce intermediary that is able to match job seekers that come through Project Hope with viable employment opportunities in the targeted sectors.

The recommendations provided in the report build on what was learned in the assessment regarding economic opportunity, participant interests and existing organizational resources. Possible next steps and considerations are focused at a strategic level, more so than a program management and operational level.

- Assess risks with respect to a workforce development strategy which engages the sectors targeted in this study: retail, food service, and accommodation. This includes limited opportunities for advancement, low job satisfaction, and flexible work schedules.
- Define which participants make good candidates for these entry-level jobs. Good candidates are expected to be job ready and interested in entry-level work. They are ready to establish a work history and/or need immediate earnings; can see a long term payoff which aligns with their trajectory in the labor market; and then costs do not outweigh the benefits.
- Build employer engagement strategies. In addition to building on the organization's current good practices in employer engagement, ongoing contact management and relationship development with employers in these sectors is necessary.
- When engaging employers, consider what the work environment might look like. The number of employees, the attitude of the supervisor, availability of on-the-job training, openness to job-sharing and work contracts are important.
- Define the program as value-added, consider areas for staff development, coordinate and manage access to wrap-around services for participants, and track long term outcomes.

INTRODUCTION

Project Hope and the Center for Social Policy conducted an Entry-Level Workforce Investment Feasibility Study in the Spring and Summer of 2010. The primary purpose of this study is two-fold. First, the study was used to identify and target one or two industries (other than health care where Project Hope has already established employer partnerships and job training programs) which offer entry-level jobs and begin to establish relationships with potential employer partners. Secondly, the study synthesized existing data and research to assess the match between the characteristics, interests and skill sets of Project Hope participants and the likely job opportunities in the targeted industries.

Project Hope has a number of programs in the Department of Workforce Development & Employer Partnerships. For example, Project Hope has been operating a program in the healthcare sector which includes strong employer partnerships with major hospitals, a number of different training tracks for general and administrative positions in the field, assistance with job search and placement, and follow-up. Eligible participants must have a high school diploma, and they must have an established work history. In commissioning this study, Project Hope is interested in identifying employers who are interested in the employer partnerships model and that provide entry-level job opportunities with minimal skill requirements. Expanding workforce development programs and services in this manner is expected to help improve options for job seekers at Project Hope and within the community that do not meet the higher eligibility requirements of the healthcare training programs.

This report provides a feasibility assessment for developing a workforce development program that incorporates job opportunities in food service, accommodation, and retail. This type of entry-level workforce development strategy would need to address both short term and long term needs and interests of Project Hope participants. In the short term, this strategy would help participants to access entry-level jobs in the targeted sectors in order to gain immediate earnings and build current work experience. For the long term, this strategy would simultaneously provide assistance in seeking additional training which will help workers advance into jobs that interest them and support job seekers and workers in resolving labor market barriers like child care, housing, and transportation.

Research Collaboration

Project Hope is a multi-service agency at the forefront of efforts in Boston to move families beyond homelessness and poverty. It provides low-income women with children access to education, jobs, housing, and emergency services; fosters their personal transformation; and works for broader systems change. In the interest of expanding their workforce development and employer partnership programs, Project Hope engaged the **Center for Social Policy** at the University of Massachusetts Boston to help conduct the study. The Center for Social Policy provides expertise on policies and practices that reduce social and economic inequities in Massachusetts and the nation. Through active community engagement, CSP takes a critical look at the structural causes for low wages, housing affordability problems and the unequal

distribution of resources. In its family centered approach to research, CSP uses innovative and pragmatic ways to reshape policies to promote solutions that address the root causes of poverty.

In addition to providing access to administrative data on participants, Project Hope workforce development staff conducted phone interviews with a sample of potential employers in the targeted industries to learn more about the skill requirements for entry level jobs. Additionally, employer interviews explored the nature of current workforce development partnerships and assessed the employer's interest in such a connection. Project Hope staff also completed a survey of participants and neighborhood residents to learn about their employment interests and what they viewed as barriers to reaching those employment goals. In turn, the Center for Social Policy used public labor market program data to develop the local economic context within which a set of industries could be targeted for a workforce investment initiative, analyzed Project Hope administrative and survey data, and assisted Project Hope in designing data collection instruments. The Center for Social Policy has also provided Project Hope with this final written report which includes recommendations for next steps (as well as a power point presentation) that they can use to help develop their programs.

A number of people contributed to this report from both organizations. This includes Tressa Stazinski (Director of Workforce Development and Employer Partnerships), Sister Margaret Leonard (Executive Director), and Talainya Thames (Case Manager) from Project Hope. Center for Social Policy staff included Brandynn Holgate (Research Associate), Françoise Carré (Research Director), Mary Coonan (Consultant), Donna Haig Friedman (Director), and Tim Davis (Consultant).

Structure of Report

This report is divided into six main sections. The first section, called "ECONOMIC PROFILE", provides a brief description of the current economic climate and describes the industries, employers and jobs within the region. The sections titled "PROJECT HOPE PARTICIPANTS" and "WORKFORCE INTERESTS SURVEY" provides summary information on administrative and survey data on participants in Project Hope's programs and community. The fourth section, "EMPLOYER PERSPECTIVES", provides an overview of what was learned from the interviews with employers, in terms of specific job characteristics as well as a review of possible next steps. Following a brief overview of Project Hope's organizational resources, the report concludes with a section for RECOMMENDATIONS.

ECONOMIC PROFILE

This section of the report provides a brief description of the region's current economic climate and describes the job base and economic opportunities within the region. Where possible, the data are also used to describe employment conditions in the targeted industry sectors, retail, food services and accommodation. These sectors have been chosen because they provide a large base of entry-level jobs with minimal skill requirements. There are also detailed data on office and healthcare support occupations.

The purpose is to begin to assess the feasibility of targeting industry sectors in retail, food service and accommodation with the idea of developing "transitional" or "intermediate" job opportunities while Project Hope participants build their work experience, engage in training and job search activities. Many people's "first jobs" are in the retail, food service, and accommodation sectors. Although Project Hope participants may be most interested in opportunities in office administration, clerical and healthcare occupations (discussed in a later section of the report), these entry level jobs help establish a current work history and employment reference, build general customer service skills, and provide access to immediate earnings. This finding suggests that successful workforce development initiatives in this area are coupled with income and other work-related supports, as well as training and bridges to other jobs (e.g. a pathway from customer service positions in retail, food services and accommodation to entry-level clerical work), which help people advance out of low-wage work.

Overall, data for the tables presented in this section were calculated based on the geographic unit that most closely compares to the City of Boston. It is important to note that this section uses a number of different data sources to measure labor market activity. Geographic boundaries vary between data sources and it is not always possible to examine just the city of Boston, which is of primary interest to Project Hope participants. Some data sources provide detailed information about the City of Boston, while others provide information for Suffolk County or the Greater Boston metropolitan region based on census divisions. Sometimes, as is with the case of employment projections, only state level data are available. These differences among data sources have minimal impact with respect to the main purpose of the report.

Current Economic Climate

This report is focused on the City of Boston, which is known to have one of the highest costs of living as well as an increasingly large income gap between the richest and poorest residents. The report has been written during a recession which has limited job and advancement prospects for many people and especially for those who only possess entry-level job skills. Much of the economic data presented below reflect this context. Understanding cost of living, educational attainment and job availability sheds light on what it takes for workers to support themselves and their families in the City of Boston.

Cost of living

Boston is one of the most expensive U.S. cities to live. According to the 2009 Boston Indicators Report², a family of four needs \$84,173 in annual income to reach the purchasing power of 300% of federal poverty line. As well, the cost of living has continued to rise dramatically. For example, between 2003 and 2006, health care costs rose 50% and child care costs rose 20%. Today, 26% of Boston's families with children under the age of 18 have annual incomes below the federal poverty line. This percentage rises to 40% when looking just at Roxbury, Mattapan, Mission Hill and parts of Dorchester, which is the primary community Project Hope seeks to serve. These specific neighborhoods represent the area of Boston that contains the greatest concentration of children and the greatest concentration of households of color.

In addition to the federal poverty line, one measure used to assess family income needs is the Massachusetts Economic Independence Index (Mass. Index) published by the Crittenton Women's Union. The Mass. Index estimates the annual family income necessary to meet basic living expenses depending on family structure and where they live in the state. Table 1 (below) provides the *minimum* annual family income for several sample family types living in the City of Boston for 2010 as estimated by the Mass. Index. Depending on family type, the necessary annual income ranges from \$28,717 for a single adult to \$68,235 for a family of four (2 adults and 2 children).

Table 1: Massachusetts Economic Independence Index for Boston Families, 2010

Family Structure		No Children	1 Child (preschool-age)	2 Children (1 preschool-age, 1 school-age)
1 Adult	By annual household income	\$28,717	\$48,706	\$62,421
	By hourly wage per adult	\$13.60	\$23.06	\$29.56
2 Adults	By annual household income	\$36,158	\$56,458	\$68,235
	By hourly wage per adult	\$8.56	\$13.37	\$16.15

Source: Crittenton Women's Union (2010), Massachusetts Economic Independence Index 2010, http://www.liveworkthrive.org/site/docs/Massachusetts_Economic_Independence_Index_030810.pdf, accessed March 31, 2010.

Educational attainment in Boston

According to the most recent Boston Indicators Report, Boston ranks as the 5th U.S. metro area in terms of the number of people holding a Bachelor's degree. However, Boston (Suffolk County) more closely resembles the U.S. average in terms of the proportion of the population over the age of 25 that does not have a high school diploma or equivalent (16% for the U.S., 18% for Suffolk County).

The table below provides educational attainment by sex and race or ethnicity for Suffolk County residents who are over the age of 25. The racial and ethnic categories provided in

² Boston Foundation (2009), A Great Reckoning: Healing a Growing Divide, A Summary of the Boston Indicators Report.

the table were selected because they are comparable to the Project Hope administrative data (presented in a later section of this report). White, non-Hispanic men and women are the least likely to not have a high school diploma (10% and 9%, respectively); whereas, Hispanic men and women are the most likely (40% and 38%, respectively) to not hold a high school diploma. Twenty-two percent of both African American men and women do not have a high school diploma; neither do 25% and 29% of Asian men and women, respectively.

Table 2: Educational Attainment by Sex and Race or Ethnicity for Suffolk County, 2006-08 Averages

Race or Ethnicity	Sex	less than HS	HS diploma or GED	Post-secondary Schooling
<i>African-American or Black</i>	Men	22%	38%	41%
	Women	22%	31%	46%
<i>Hispanic</i>	Men	40%	34%	26%
	Women	38%	29%	33%
<i>White (Non-Hispanic)</i>	Men	10%	24%	67%
	Women	9%	24%	67%
<i>Asian</i>	Men	25%	19%	56%
	Women	29%	19%	52%
<i>Total - Suffolk County</i>	Men	18%	27%	55%
	Women	18%	26%	56%

Source: American Community Survey, 2006-2008 3-Year Estimates: Detailed Tables, http://factfinder.census.gov/servlet/DTGeoSearchByListServlet?ds_name=ACS_2008_3YR_G00_&lang=en&ts=301931686776, accessed September 7, 2010.

Labor force participation

The next table provides basic information on labor force participation by specific geographic areas (e.g. State-wide for Massachusetts, Greater Boston, Suffolk County, and the City of Boston). This allows the reader to see the difference in labor market size by each geographic unit used in this section of the report. The table also provides a comparison of unemployment rates across the different areas. Boston, Suffolk County and Greater Boston have lower unemployment rates than the state as whole, but still high unemployment has persisted in 2010. For example, the unemployment rate in the City of Boston was 8.7% in February 2010, up from 7.2% a year earlier.

Table 3: Labor Force, Employment and Unemployment in Massachusetts and Boston, February 2010

Area	Labor Force	Employment	Unemployment	Unemployment Rate (%), Feb. 2010	Unemployment Rate (%), Feb. 2009
<i>Massachusetts</i>	3,461,900	3,117,200	344,800	10	8.1
<i>Greater Boston*</i>	1,527,473	1,399,531	127,942	8.4	6.8
<i>Suffolk County</i>	368,768	335,931	32,837	8.9	7.4
<i>Boston</i>	311,027	283,947	27,080	8.7	7.2

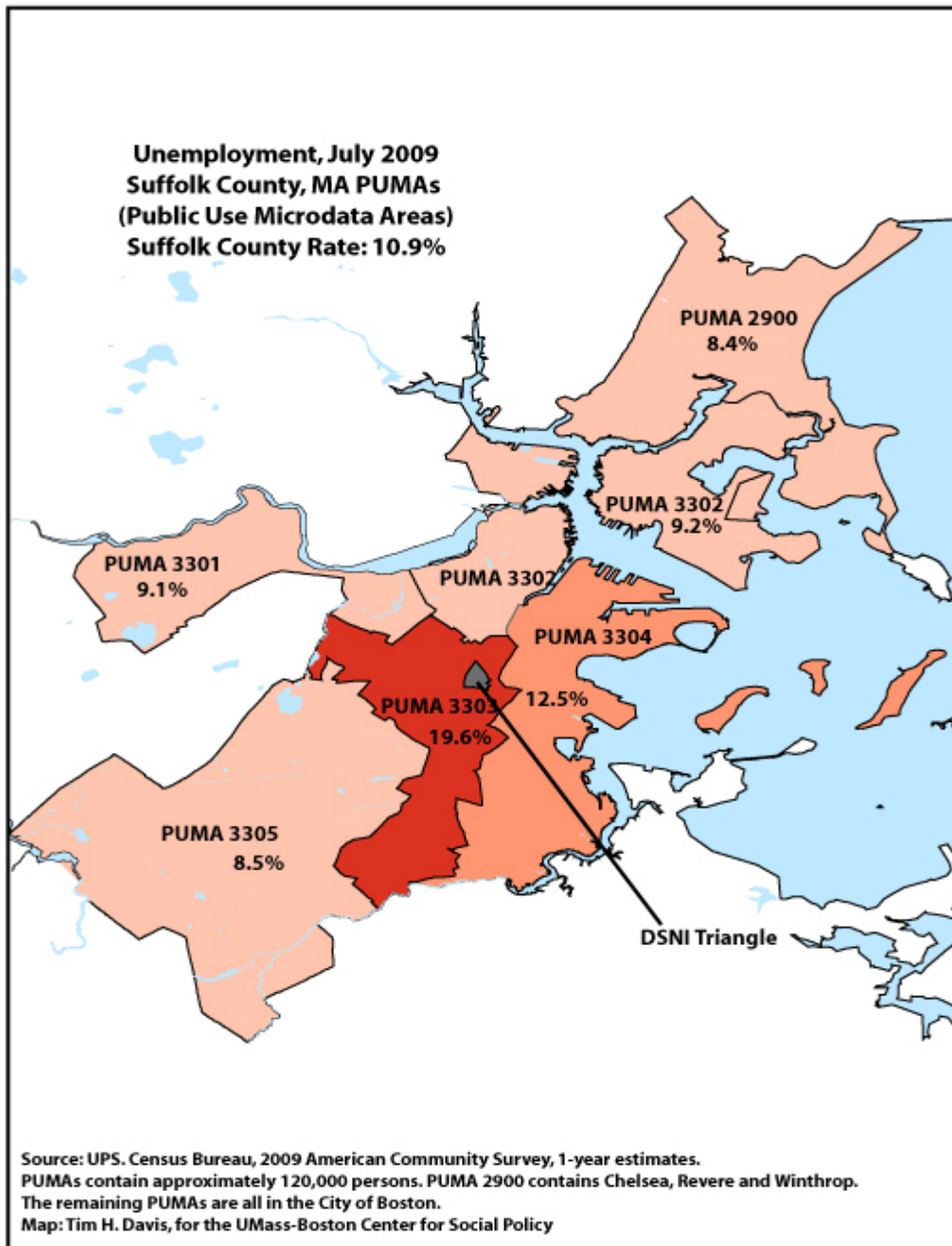
Source: Massachusetts Executive Office of Labor and Workforce Development, Division of Unemployment Assistance, http://lmi2.detma.org/Lmi/LaborArea_comparison.asp, accessed March 30, 2010.

*Greater Boston is used in this report to refer to the Boston-Cambridge-Quincy, MA Micropolitan NECTA Census Division and includes 97 cities and towns surrounding Boston

Historically, the U.S. census has shown that the residents of the Dudley Street neighborhood experience much higher rates of unemployment than other areas in the city or metropolitan region. The map below depicts the area of Mission Hill, Roxbury, Blue Hill Corridor and most of Mattapan within Suffolk County (PUMA 3303). In 2009, the unemployment rate for this area was estimated to be 19.6%, whereas the unemployment rate for Suffolk County was 10.9%.³

³ American Community Survey 1-Year Estimates (2009), Data Profiles for Suffolk County and PUMA5 03303, American Fact Finder at factfinder.census.gov/ accessed November 4, 2010.

Figure 1: Unemployment Rates for Suffolk County by Public Use Microdata Areas, 2009



Additionally, the Massachusetts Department of Workforce Development, 2nd Qtr 2009 Job Vacancy Report, which provides job vacancy information, states that the job market is still weak and that job postings have declined from the year before. At the time of the last job vacancy report there were 5.9 unemployed workers in the state for every job posting. Additionally, full-time permanent job postings had declined, while temporary/seasonal and part-time postings have increased.

Job Base and Opportunities

This section provides a detailed description of Boston's job base by drawing on a number of publicly available data programs. The main purpose is to place entry-level job opportunities within the broader context of the local economy. Specifically, this section summarizes occupational employment and entry-level job characteristics, describes industry employment dynamics, and identifies some of the largest employers in the city.

Occupational employment, wages and other job characteristics

According to the Occupational Outlook Handbook⁴, food preparation and serving, retail sales, cashiers, stock clerks and maids and housekeepers are specific examples of entry level jobs that often do not have specific education or work experience requirements. Employers may prefer to hire individuals for these jobs who are high school graduates, but they do not often require it. These jobs are likely to be part-time with flexible, long or non-standard hours. These jobs provide some on the job training and require good customer service skills. There is limited opportunity for advancement within a specific job category. However, these jobs allow workers to build on and demonstrate customer service and interpersonal skills, which if coupled with a high school diploma could help transition them into an entry level clerical or healthcare support position.

Table 4 provides relative employment and median hourly wages for major occupations in Greater Boston. The largest occupational category is office and administrative support which constitutes 17.4% of employment in the area. Sales and related and food preparation and serving are the second and third largest occupational categories, respectively. Together, these two occupational categories make up 17.3% of total employment in Greater Boston. Also highlighted in the table is building and grounds services which includes work in the accommodation sector, like housekeeping.

Median hourly wages for the occupations are shown in the right-hand column. Although many of the entry-level jobs within the highlighted occupations do not provide family sustaining wages in the long-run, these jobs may provide entry-level workers with an opportunity for immediate earnings, building their work experience and flexing their work hours around child care and training needs.

⁴ United States Department of Labor, Bureau of Labor Statistics (2010), Occupational Outlook Handbook, 2010-11 Edition, <http://www.bls.gov/oco/ocos162.htm>, accessed April 28, 2010.

Table 4: Employment and Wages by Occupation for Greater Boston, 2008

Occupation	Total Employment (Percent)	Median Hourly Wage (\$)
<i>Office and administrative support</i>	17.4%	17.81
<i>Sales and related</i>	9.7%	14.46
<i>Food preparation and serving related</i>	7.6%	10.63
<i>Business and financial operations</i>	6.7%	33.14
<i>Healthcare practitioners and technical</i>	6.7%	33.99
<i>Management</i>	6.4%	52.47
<i>Education, training, and library</i>	6.2%	25.31
<i>Computer and mathematical science</i>	4.9%	40.76
<i>Transportation and material moving</i>	4.4%	14.74
<i>Production</i>	3.7%	16.24
<i>Building and grounds cleaning and maintenance</i>	3.3%	13.33
<i>Construction and extraction</i>	2.9%	26.90
<i>Installation, maintenance, and repair</i>	2.8%	22.91
<i>Healthcare support</i>	2.6%	14.70
<i>Architecture and engineering</i>	2.6%	37.43
<i>Protective service</i>	2.3%	20.85
<i>Life, physical, and social science</i>	2.2%	32.53
<i>Arts, design, entertainment, sports, and media</i>	2.0%	24.16
<i>Community and social services</i>	1.8%	19.08
<i>Legal</i>	1.1%	41.72
<i>Farming, fishing, and forestry</i>	0.1%	10.01
<i>Personal care and service</i>	n/a	12.12
Total	100.0%	21.13

Source: Occupational Employment and Wage Estimates, May 2008, Metropolitan Area Cross-Industry estimates for Boston-Cambridge-Quincy, MA Micropolitan NECTA Division, http://www.bls.gov/oes/oes_dl.htm, accessed April 28, 2010.

The Executive Office of Labor and Workforce Development conducts a job vacancy survey twice a year in Massachusetts. Whether or not an industry is creating new jobs, some occupations have higher vacancy rates because employees turn over at a faster rate. The most recent survey results (2nd Quarter 2009) showed a 1.7% job vacancy rate in Massachusetts overall. The industry reporting the highest number of vacancies was healthcare and social assistance. This major industry group accounts for 25% of all job postings during this period (or 12,100 postings). Food service and accommodation and retail trade reported the second and third highest number of vacancies (10,200 and 5,300, respectively). Table 5 below shows some of the highest vacancy rates by selected detailed occupations in food service, accommodation and retail trade. Many of the rates are higher than the statewide average (shaded rows).

Table 5: Job Vacancies for Selected Occupations in Massachusetts, 2nd Quarter 2009

Occupational Title	# of Job Vacancies	Job Vacancy Rate
<i>Retail Salespersons</i>	2728	2.50%
<i>Waiters & Waitresses</i>	2169	3.70%
<i>Cashiers</i>	1210	1.60%
<i>Combined Food Preparation & Serving Workers</i>	1038	1.90%
<i>Landscaping & Grounds keeping Workers</i>	749	3.70%
<i>Cooks, Restaurant</i>	709	3.20%
<i>Customer Service Representatives</i>	658	1.20%
<i>Stock Clerks & Order Fillers</i>	569	1.40%
<i>Janitor & Cleaner, Ex Maids & Housekeepers</i>	541	1.00%
<i>Counter Attendants, Cafe, Food, Coffee</i>	537	3.00%
<i>Ushers, Lobby Attendants, & Ticket Takers</i>	509	16.00%
<i>Dishwashers</i>	341	2.50%
<i>Sales Managers</i>	335	3.50%
<i>Food Preparation Workers</i>	324	1.40%
<i>First-Line Supervisors/Managers of Retail Sales</i>	314	1.20%
<i>Total, All Occupations</i>	49,213	1.70%

Source: Massachusetts Executive Office of Labor and Workforce Development, Adapted from Table 7: Occupations accounting for 53 percent of the Job Vacancies, 2nd Quarter 2009.

Of particular interest, Table 6 below shows the percentage of job vacancies in the 2nd Quarter of 2009 by specific characteristics for a selected set of occupations. For example, 73% of job vacancies in food preparation and serving were part-time, 29% were temporary or seasonal, none required an Associate's degree or higher, 33% required related experience, and 17% offered health care benefits. The table also shows that jobs in food service, building and grounds cleaning and sales are some of the jobs least likely to require related work experience; whereas jobs which may be considered more desirable by Project Hope participants like office and administrative support and healthcare support (addressed in a later section of the report) are more likely to require related experience and a high school diploma.

Table 6: Type of Work, Entry Level Requirements and Benefits by Occupation

Occupational Title	Part-Time	Temporary/Seasonal	Associate's Degree or Higher	Percent Requiring Related Experience	Health Care Benefits
<i>Personal Care & Service</i>	61%	38%	4%	25%	19%
<i>Food Preparation & Serving Related</i>	73%	29%	0%	33%	17%
<i>Building & Grounds Cleaning & Maintenance</i>	60%	39%	1%	36%	29%
<i>Sales & Related</i>	53%	19%	14%	39%	38%
<i>Installation, Maintenance, & Repair</i>	7%	39%	3%	47%	47%
<i>Transportation & Material Moving</i>	44%	24%	1%	53%	53%
<i>Office & Administrative Support</i>	45%	16%	16%	61%	70%
<i>Healthcare Support</i>	55%	14%	8%	70%	73%
<i>Total, All Occupations</i>	42%	22%	41%	66%	58%

Source: Massachusetts Executive Office of Labor and Workforce Development, Adapted from Table 5: Statewide Job Vacancies by Major Occupational Group, 2nd Quarter 2009.

Industry employment concentrations and projected future growth

Table 7 (below) shows that health care, education and financial services comprise a large percentage of employment in Boston. Employment in these industries total 227,390 (or 38% of employment in Suffolk County) with average annual earnings ranging from \$59,713 (Educational Services) to \$177,938 (Finance and Insurance). The table also shows that one in every five establishments in Suffolk County is in food service, accommodation, or retail trade. These three sectors contain 14 percent of total employment in Suffolk County. These sectors also show the lowest average annual earnings from \$25,464 in food service and accommodation and \$30,089 in retail trade. These lower earnings indicate the entry-level status of many jobs in these industries as well as the likelihood of shorter weekly hours.

Table 7: Employees, Establishments and Average Annual Wages by Industry for Suffolk County, 2008

Industry	Number of Employees	Number of Establishments	Average Annual Earnings (Private Sector Only - \$)
<i>Health care and social assistance</i>	115,865	1,547	63,570
<i>Finance and insurance</i>	75,774	1,812	177,938
<i>Professional and technical services</i>	58,131	3,628	105,372
<i>Accommodation and food services</i>	49,380	2,165	25,464
<i>Public Administration</i>	40,517	368	n/a
<i>Administrative and waste services</i>	39,072	1,082	42,000
<i>Educational services</i>	35,751	367	59,713
<i>Retail trade</i>	31,093	2,293	30,089
<i>Other services, except public administration</i>	22,183	3,632	34,569
<i>Transportation and warehousing</i>	20,629	545	48,080
<i>Information</i>	15,359	526	85,432
<i>Construction</i>	12,702	953	88,897
<i>Real estate and rental and leasing</i>	11,587	1,031	80,418
<i>Manufacturing</i>	11,344	399	57,677
<i>Wholesale trade</i>	10,639	890	75,535
<i>Arts, entertainment, and recreation</i>	8,576	258	64,541
<i>Management of companies and enterprises</i>	7,145	134	137,539
<i>Utilities</i>	2,161	17	105,302
<i>Agriculture, forestry, fishing and hunting</i>	0	8	n/a
<i>Mining, quarrying, and oil and gas extraction</i>	0	2	n/a
<i>Total, all industries</i>	592,505	21,655	78,713

Source: Quarterly Census of Employment and Wages, Custom Tables for Suffolk County, <http://www.bls.gov/cew/>, accessed April 29, 2010.

In addition to examining the current job base by industry, it is also possible to look at job projections to understand opportunities in the labor market. The Executive Office of Labor and Workforce Development currently provides job projections for Massachusetts in 2016 by industry. These job projections help measure the expected growth in different sectors. Overall, the Massachusetts job base is expected to grow 6.3 percent between 2006 and 2016. This means there will be 216,650 new jobs added to the state's economy and 768,330 replacement jobs. Table 8 below shows the specific projections for food service, accommodation and retail stores. In addition, Table 8 provides job projections for health care sectors.

Table 8: Job Projections in Food Service, Accommodation, and Retail Stores for Massachusetts, 2006-2016

Industry	2006 Employment	Projected 2016 Employment	Change 2006-2016 (Number)	Change 2006-2016 (Percent)
Food Services and Drinking Places	216,300	232,750	16,450	7.6%
Accommodation	33,300	36,900	3,600	10.8%
Retail Stores	290,100	288,720	-1,380	-0.5%
<i>Furniture and Home Furnishings</i>	13,300	13,240	-60	-0.5%
<i>Electronics and Appliance</i>	13,000	11,890	-1,110	-8.5%
<i>Building Material & Garden Supply</i>	28,100	30,020	1,920	6.8%
<i>Food and Beverage</i>	88,500	87,560	-940	-1.1%
<i>Health and Personal Care</i>	26,900	28,300	1,400	5.2%
<i>Clothing and Clothing Accessories</i>	39,900	40,600	700	1.8%
<i>Sporting Goods/Hobby/Book/M usic</i>	17,600	16,070	-1,530	-8.7%
<i>General Merchandise</i>	41,900	42,620	720	1.7%
<i>Miscellaneous Retailers</i>	20,900	18,420	-2,480	-11.9%
Health Care	387,710	452,340	64,630	16.7%
<i>Ambulatory Health Care Services</i>	130,300	154,780	24,480	18.8%
<i>Hospitals, Private</i>	165,200	188,730	23,530	14.2%
<i>Nursing and Residential Care Facilities</i>	92,210	108,830	16,620	18.0%

Source: Massachusetts Executive Office of Labor and Workforce Development,
http://lmi2.detma.org/Lmi/Industry_projection_a.asp, accessed March 30, 2010.

Both food services and accommodation are expected to expand through 2016, adding a total of 20,050 new jobs. Employment in retail stores is not expected to grow, however there are a few retail subsectors that will add new jobs. Expected new job growth in retail stores is predominantly due to increasing the number of retail sales positions in building and garden supplies, clothing, and general merchandise stores. New job growth in health and personal care stores will be predominantly driven by new pharmacist and pharmacy technician positions.

Job projections for the health care sector are included because it is a large and growing sector for Massachusetts and Greater Boston. It is estimated that the health care sector in Massachusetts will add about 64,000 jobs by 2016. This is an average growth rate of 16.7%. The projections also show that there is slightly higher growth expected in ambulatory care and nursing homes than for hospitals. As this sector continues to grow, there are a number of entry level jobs which may be worth considering in an entry-level jobs strategy. Project Hope may be interested in expanding an entry-level jobs strategy to include jobs like home health aids and personal and home care aids. These are examples of jobs that the state projections estimate will expand by more than 30% by 2016.

Large employers

The largest 18 employers in the Boston area predominantly operate in health care, education, or financial services sectors and are listed in Table 9. These industries are known to represent a large share of Boston's employment and provide desirable, mid-skilled jobs in both the health care support and clerical fields. Aside from the industry within which they operate, large employers are important to consider because they may provide more opportunities for advancement and training. Large employers tend to have more resources for on the job training and they offer more formal in-house training than do small employers. Further, large employers like hospitals and universities, as well as financial services which often concentrate in large office buildings, house retail and food service operations (usually through a vendor relationship). Jobs in this kind of environment could potentially connect entry-level service workers to a wider range of employment opportunities and networks in the dominant industries.

Table 9: The 18 Largest Employers in the Boston Area

Employer	City	Number of Employees
Massachusetts General Hospital	Boston	14,000
Brigham & Women's Hospital	Boston	10,000
Harvard University	Cambridge	10,000
Laboratory For Nuclear Science	Cambridge	8,540
MIT-Research Lab-Electronics	Cambridge	8,500
MA Institute Of Technology	Cambridge	8,200
Children's Hospital Boston	Boston	8,000
Liberty Mutual Group Inc	Boston	7,000
Fidelity Investments Life Ins	Boston	6,000
Boston University	Boston	5,955
Beth Israel Deaconess Med Ctr	Boston	5,000
Deutsche Bank	Boston	5,000
John Hancock Life Ins Co	Boston	5,000
Tufts Dental Clinics	Boston	3,800
John Hancock Financial Svc Inc	Boston	3,522
State Street Corp	Boston	3,500
Boston Police Dept	Roxbury Crossing	3,000
Houghton Mifflin Harcourt Pub'g	Boston	3,000

Source: Adapted from State Profile for Largest Employers provided by Infogroup®;
<http://www.acinet.org/oview6.asp?printer=&next=oview6&id=&nodeid=12&stfips=25&group=1>, accessed April 29, 2010

Alternatively, there are some large employers that do not appear on this list. For example, CVS does not make the list of large employers because each store is individually incorporated; however there are at least 100 CVS stores within a 10 mile radius of downtown Boston. Dunkin Donuts is another example of a large employer, but because each store is franchised it does not appear on the list above. These types of retail and food service establishments are an important source of entry-level jobs since individual store managers may have more control over hiring and attuned to community interests where they are located.

Existing Workforce Development Programs

A scan of existing workforce development organizations in the City of Boston was conducted. Organizational websites were reviewed to find any programs or initiatives currently in place that helped single-parents get jobs in food service, accommodation or retail trade sectors and whether or not those programs included an advancement strategy to help workers transition out of entry-level jobs. The most relevant examples are listed in the table below.

Table 10: Workforce Development Program Examples

Workforce Development Organization	Type of Job Seeker Targeted	Program in Food Service, Accommodation, and/or Retail Sector	Long-term Career Planning and Follow-Up
<i>Brookview House</i>	Single Mothers	No	No
<i>Community Work Services</i>	General Low-Income Job Seekers	Food Services Janitorial/ Housekeeping Office/Computer	Some post-placement follow-up services
<i>Crittenton Women's Union</i>	Women, including Single Mothers	No	Economic Mobility Institute and Career Family Opportunity
<i>Jewish Vocational Services</i>	General Low-Income Job Seekers	Hospitality Career Institute	Career Advancement Services
<i>Morgan Memorial Goodwill</i>	General Low-Income Job Seekers	Retail Trade	Some post-placement follow-up services

Two of the organizations, Brookview House and Crittenton Women's Unions offer workforce development services for single mothers specifically, but neither program has a sectoral focus which combines job readiness, training and employer partnerships. Of note, however, Crittenton has developed a long term program for single parents which they are currently piloting – Career Family Opportunity. This 5-year program provides individualized career case management, but requires a high school diploma. The other three organizations are operating sectoral programs that combine job readiness, training and employer partnerships that are long standing in the community. Although these programs will serve single-parents, the organization itself is not focused explicitly on the unique needs of that group of job seekers. Therefore, based on this initial information, there may be an opportunity to better assist single parent job seekers in obtaining entry-level jobs and then transitioning to the next step in a career ladder.

PROJECT HOPE PARTICIPANTS

This section provides an overview of Project Hope program participants. We analyzed the agency's administrative data collected in 2009 for new enrollees. These participants completed an initial intake process prior to enrolling in any of Project Hope programs for the purposes of housing search, shelter, adult education, job training and employment services. Project Hope predominantly serves low-income families in the City of Boston and the majority of new participants enrolling in Project Hope programs are single, female heads of household with one or two children. These families face a unique set of challenges in meeting their income needs to support their families. Neither entry-level job wages nor federal transitional assistance is enough to meet basic living expenses for these families in Boston. Therefore this section provides the basic information describing the demographics, income, and employment status of these families.

Participant Demographics

Overall, Project Hope served 1,061 people in 2009. From the data available on all participants during this year, 19.8% are children and 0.5% are 65 years or older. Almost 80% of Project Hope participants are working age, although not all working age participants are employed or seeking employment. The age distribution for all Project Hope participants is presented in Table 11.

Table 11: Project Hope Participants by Age Range, 2009

Age (Years, n=1012)	Number of Participants	Percent
0-15	200	19.8%
16-17	0	0.0%
18-25	199	19.7%
26-35	277	27.4%
36-45	205	20.3%
46-55	106	10.5%
55-64	20	2.0%
65+	5	0.5%
Total	1012	100.0%

In 2009, 478 adults completed the initial intake process at Project Hope. This section of the report examines the intake information for these new participants, provides a snapshot of the adults who are seeking services through Project Hope, includes basic information on demographics, income, and employment status. These characteristics are relevant in understanding possible workforce development opportunities.

The next table shows the variety of programs new participants enroll in through Project Hope. Nearly one-half of participants are enrolled in housing related programs which include a variety of housing services, as well as shelter. Thirty-five percent of participants are enrolled in employment services and 13% are enrolled in adult education programs.

Further, a small percentage is using the child care services and a small percentage selected multiple program service.

Table 12: Project Hope Programs which Enrolled New Participants

Type	Program Name(s)	Number	Percent
Adult Education	Adult Education Services	51	13%
Child Care Services	Children's Center	7	2%
Employment Services	Employer Partnerships, Family Child Care Business Enterprise, Project 90, Collaborative Shelter Program	134	35%
Housing Services	Housing Services, Family Shelter	177	47%
Enrolled in Multiple Programs		9	2%
Missing		41	10%
TOTAL		419	100%

Table 13 shows 92.4% of new participants enrolling in Project Hope programs during 2009 are women. Further, 73.5% of participants are female, single and head of household. This is an important consideration in designing workforce development programs that meet the needs of women who hold primary responsibility for family care issues as well as income. With that said, Project Hope also serves men, some of whom have family responsibilities.

Table 13: Head of Household and Marital Status by Gender, 2009

	Women		Men	
	Number	% of Total Participants	Number	% of Total Participants
Participants	387	92.4%	32	7.6%
Head of Household	308	73.5%	19	4.5%
<i>Single (including separated and divorced)</i>	287	68.5%	13	3.1%
<i>Married (or Domestic Partner)</i>	21	5.0%	6	1.4%

In addition to gender, Table 14 below provides information on basic characteristics for 419 adult individuals who completed the intake process through Project Hope in 2009. Participants are predominantly either African American or Hispanic (48.1% and 35.9%, respectively), which is representative of the community Project Hope serves.

Table 14: Characteristics of New Project Hope Participants, 2009

Characteristic	Number	Percent
Gender		
Female	387	92.4%
Male	32	7.6%
Race or Ethnicity		
African-American	201	48.1%
Hispanic	150	35.9%
Other	37	8.9%
Caucasian	18	4.3%
Asian	6	1.4%
Bi-Racial	5	1.2%
Hawaiian or Pacific Islander	1	0.2%
Missing	1	0.2%
Educational Attainment		
less than HS	112	27.2%
HS diploma or GED	266	64.6%
Post-secondary Schooling	34	8.3%
Missing	7	1.7%

Educational attainment for participants is lower overall when compared to Suffolk County (presented in an earlier section). Approximately 65% of participants have a high school diploma or GED and only an additional 8% have had at least some post-secondary education. Conversely, this means about one-quarter of new program enrollees at Project Hope do not have a high school diploma or equivalent, which can pose a significant barrier in the labor market.⁵

Educational attainment can also be viewed by race or ethnicity. Table 15 shows a fairly even distribution, except for the groups where there are very few data points (e.g. Asian). African Americans have the highest rate of high school completion (68%) and Hispanic and Caucasian have the highest rates of having at least some post-secondary education (each 11%).

⁵ The administrative data used for analysis (and described earlier in the report) over-represents participants with high school diplomas.

Table 15: Educational Attainment by Race or Ethnicity, 2009

Race or Ethnicity	# /%	less than HS	HS diploma or GED	Post-secondary Schooling	Total
<i>African-American</i>	#	53	137	11	201
	%	26%	68%	6%	100%
<i>Hispanic</i>	#	42	88	16	146
	%	29%	60%	11%	100%
<i>Caucasian</i>	#	6	10	2	18
	%	33%	56%	11%	100%
<i>Asian</i>	#	6	0	0	6
	%	100%	0%	0%	100%
<i>Other</i>	#	14	22	5	35
	%	40%	63%	14%	100%

There were 11 different primary languages reported by Project Hope intake participants in 2009. The dominant languages are English (69.0 percent) and Spanish (24.6 percent). Table 16 below shows the percentage of participants by primary language.

Table 16: Primary Language of Participants, 2009

Primary Language	Number	Percent
<i>English</i>	289	69.0%
<i>Spanish</i>	103	24.6%
<i>Haitian Creole</i>	8	1.9%
<i>Cape Verdean Creole</i>	6	1.4%
<i>Somalian</i>	4	1.0%
<i>Mandarin</i>	2	0.5%
<i>Amharic</i>	2	0.5%
<i>Portuguese</i>	2	0.5%
<i>Hindi</i>	1	0.2%
<i>Cantonese</i>	1	0.2%
<i>Arabic</i>	1	0.2%
<i>Total</i>	419	100.0%

Family Income

The average monthly family income reported by new Project Hope participants in 2009 was \$889.25 (median monthly income was \$660.00). Family income is the amount of combined resources coming from wages, Transitional Aid to Families with Dependent Children, SSI/SSDI, Social Security, Child Support and/or Unemployment.

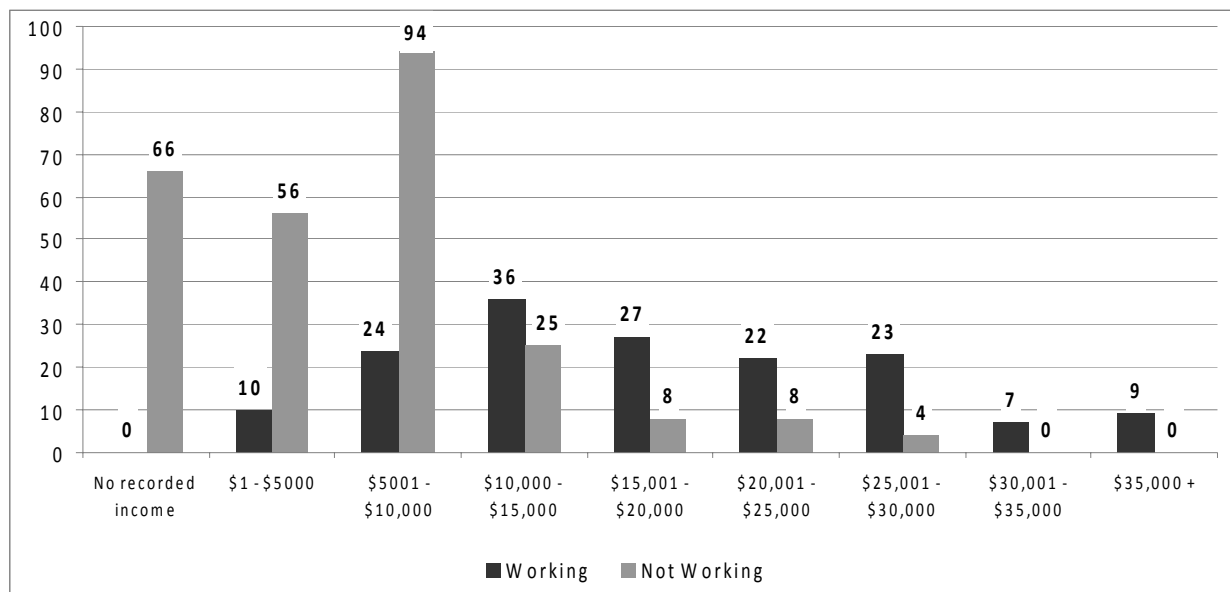
Based on reported monthly income from all sources, we estimated annual family income for new participants in 2009. Table 17 below provides the distribution of new participants by income at time of intake. The table shows that at least 80.4% of participants report a family income at or below \$30,000 per year.

Table 17: Estimated Annual Family Income for New Project Hope Participants, 2009

Income Range	Number	Percent
<i>No recorded income</i>	66	15.8%
<i>\$1 - \$5000</i>	66	15.8%
<i>\$5001 - \$10,000</i>	118	28.2%
<i>\$10,000 - \$15,000</i>	61	14.6%
<i>\$15,001 - \$20,000</i>	35	8.4%
<i>\$20,001 - \$25,000</i>	30	7.2%
<i>\$25,001 - \$30,000</i>	27	6.4%
<i>\$30,001 - \$35,000</i>	7	1.7%
<i>\$35,000 +</i>	9	2.1%
<i>Total</i>	419	100.0%

The administrative data used for this report does not provide family income by family size. However, we do know that the average family size for participants is 1 adult and 2 children. The average annual family income is \$10,671. The 2009 Federal Poverty Guidelines, which is used to set eligibility for federal aid programs, has a threshold of \$18,310 for a family of 3. Therefore, many adults are living in households well below the poverty line. With respect to family economic self-sufficiency (presented in an earlier section of the report), most Project Hope participants report income that falls drastically short of what is needed to meet a basic household budget.

Administrative data show that family income is improved when participants report being employed. The chart below shows that for participants who are working at time of intake, their annual family income is more evenly distributed in the higher income ranges (between \$10,000 and \$30,000). Whereas, those participants who report not working are concentrated in the bottom income ranges (at \$10,000 or below).

Figure 2: Annual Family Income by Employment Status of Participant, 2009

Employment Status

At the time of intake, about 38% of Project Hope participants reported being employed and 61% reported that they were not working. Table 18 also shows that 42% of participants were looking for work. Of the 176 participants who were looking for work, 63 were already employed but looking to improve their situation. Most of the participants, who reported that they both had a job and were looking for work, were currently employed in part-time, temporary or seasonal arrangements.

Table 18: Employment Status of Participants at Time of Intake, 2009

Employment Status	Number	Percent
Working	158	37.7%
Not Working	255	60.9%
Missing	6	1.4%
Total	419	100.0%
Looking for Work	176	42.0%

Participants, who were working at time of intake, reported average monthly earnings from employment. Average monthly earnings for working participants was \$1,426.35 and median monthly earnings was \$1,321. We calculated an average hourly wage by looking at monthly income of the 77 full time workers at the time of intake. Assuming these workers worked 35 to 40 hours per week; on average they earned **\$10.10 to \$11.55** per hour.

Lastly, of those who were working at time of intake, we calculated whether they were employed part-time or full-time (Figure 3) and whether their work was permanent, temporary or seasonal (Figure 4). Approximately 54% of participants were working full time and 74% held permanent positions.

Figure 3: Employment Type – Full-Time, Part-Time, and Self-Employed, 2009

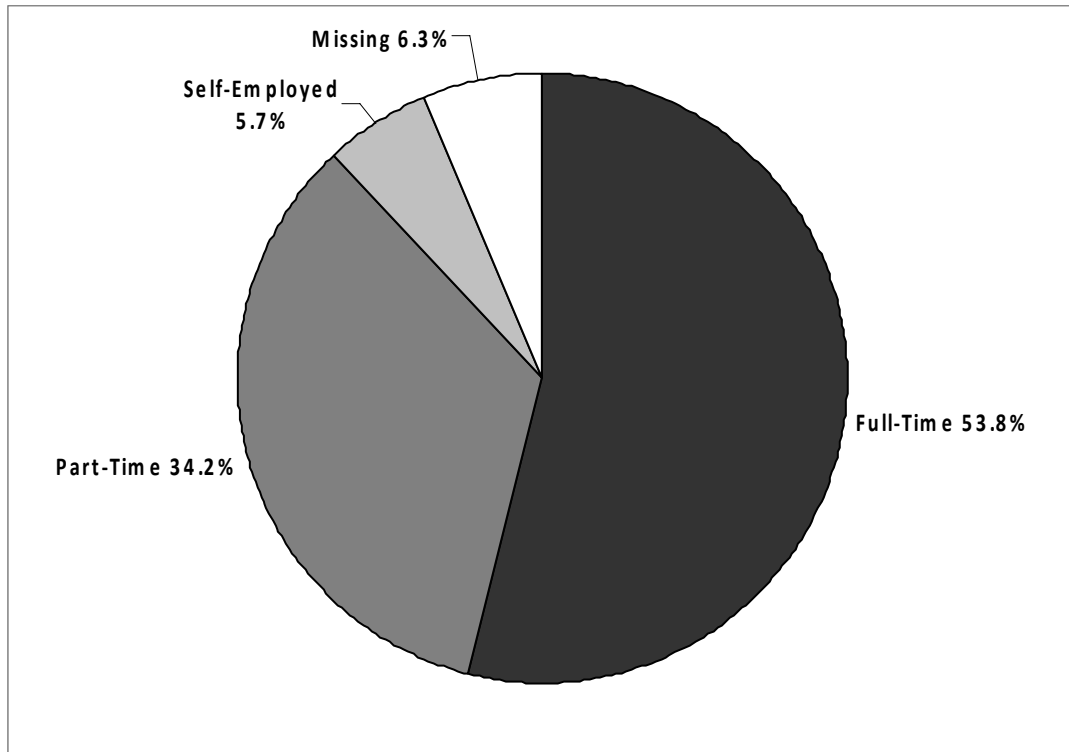
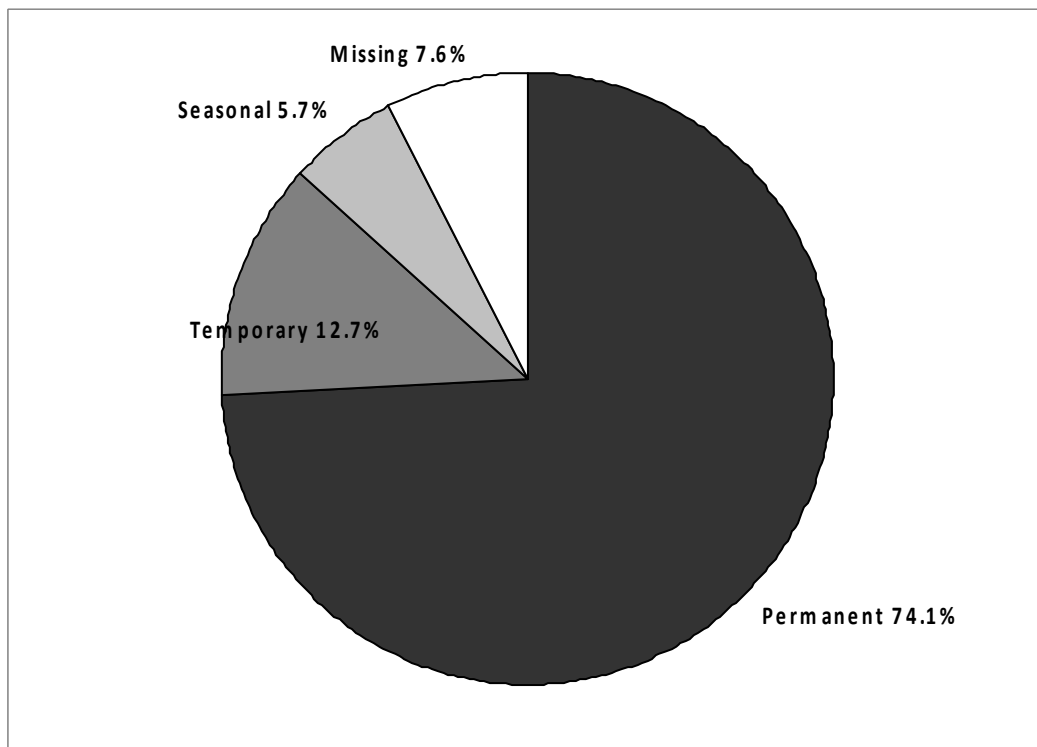


Figure 4: Employment Type – Permanent, Temporary, and Seasonal, 2009



WORKFORCE INTERESTS SURVEY

Project Hope conducted a Workforce Interests Survey which included respondents who participate in a number of their different programs. The survey was administered during the months of January and February 2010. There are 178 respondents represented in the survey results. A template of the survey is attached to this report in APPENDIX B – WORKFORCE INTERESTS SURVEY. The main purpose in conducting this survey was to help Project Hope identify the gaps between those participants looking for work or looking to improve their work options, but did not meet the eligibility requirements of the sectoral program in health care. In general, retrieving information on the work interest of Project Hope participants and community members is an important consideration in designing a workforce program that meets the needs of participants. This section contains summary tables derived from the survey data that describe participants in terms of their current education, training and work experience as well as what types of training and employment are of interest to participants and what types of barriers they report in the labor market.

Survey Respondents

The survey collected some demographic information on the respondents in terms of age and household make up. The results are very similar to the data presented in the previous section; therefore they are not covered in detail here. Overall, 178 adults completed the survey. Sixty-five percent were single heads of household. The average age of a respondent was 33 years and the average family size was 3.1. Table 19 provides a break out of respondents by the type of program they are involved with through Project Hope. This survey slightly over-represents participants engaged in employment services and under-represents those enrolled in housing services (see Table 12 in the previous section).

Table 19: Survey Respondents by Project Hope Program Type

Type	Program Name(s)	Number	Percent
<i>Adult Education</i>	Adult Education Services	35	20%
<i>Child Care Services</i>	Children's Center	6	3%
<i>Employment Services</i>	Employer Partnerships, Family Child Care Business Enterprise, Project 90, Collaborative Shelter Program	90	51%
<i>Housing Services</i>	Housing Services, Family Shelter	35	19%
<i>Community Members</i>	Open House	12	7%
TOTAL		178	100%

Education and Training

Overall, educational attainment for survey respondents was higher than what was reported in the previous section based on administrative data. The survey data shows that 76.9% of respondents have at least a high school diploma or equivalent. Table 20 below shows 51.9 percent reported at least some secondary schooling. The majority of the respondents who

reported post-secondary education had completed 1 or 2 years of college. Sixteen of the 91 respondents in this category have completed degrees at the Associate's, Bachelor's, or Master's level.

Table 20: Educational Attainment of Survey Respondents

Educational Attainment	Number	Percent
<i>Less than HS</i>	39	21.9%
<i>HS diploma or GED</i>	46	25.8%
<i>Post-secondary Schooling</i>	91	51.1%
<i>Missing</i>	2	1.1%

About one half of the survey respondents had attended some type of education or training program in the past 3 years. This included computer and job trainings and a number of certificate programs. There were 70 respondents who reported they were currently attending a program. Training programs currently being attended include GED, English for Speakers of Other Languages (ESOL), and short-term job training. Table 21 provides a break out of current training activities for the survey respondents.

Table 21: Type of Educational or Training Program Currently Attending

Type of Educational/Training Program	Number	Percent
GED program	22	31.4%
ESOL	16	22.9%
Short Term Job Training	14	20.0%
Community College	9	12.9%
4-Year College	5	7.1%
Other	4	5.7%
Total	70	100.0%

Work Experience

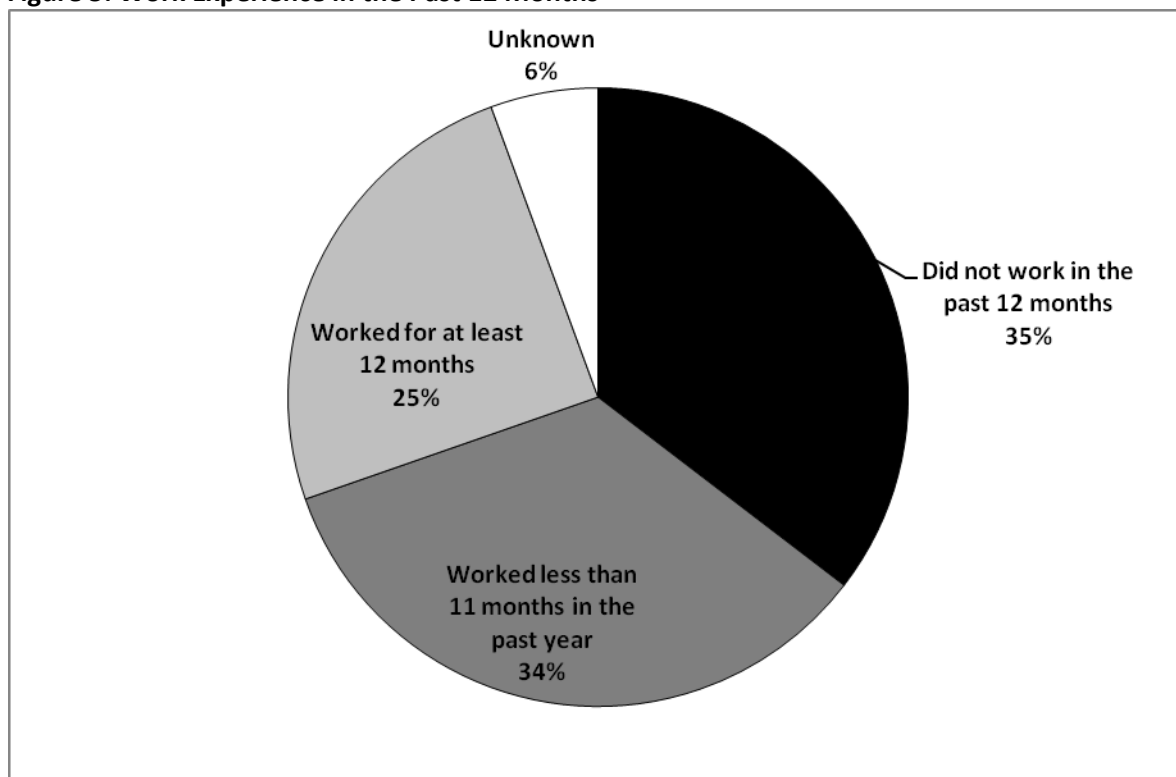
Overall, 33% of survey respondents reported being currently employed and about 86% reported they were looking for work and either currently unemployed or wanted to improve their current employment situation. Table 22 provides a detailed break out of respondent's current employment status. The high unemployment rate suggests serious challenges for Project Hope participants and neighborhood residents in attaching to the labor market. Whereas, the high proportion of respondents either looking for work or looking to improve their situation suggests a significant interest in finding ways to advance their position in the labor market.

Table 22: Employment Status of Survey Respondents

Employment Status	Percent
Employed; of whom are:	33.3%
<i>Planning to stay at current job</i>	13.8%
<i>Looking to improve employment situation</i>	86.2%
Unemployed; of whom are:	66.7%
<i>Looking for work</i>	89.7%
<i>Not looking for work</i>	10.3%
Unknown	2.2%

Ninety percent of survey respondents reported having some past paid work experience and 61% reported that their longest job was more than two years. However, recent work experience (most relevant to job searching) has not been as strong. Figure 5 below shows the percentage of respondents who have not worked in the past 12 months (35%), those that had some work (34%) and those that worked the entire year (25%).

Figure 5: Work Experience in the Past 12 Months



Job Characteristics for Those Currently Employed

The survey asked several questions about job characteristics of those currently employed (n=59). Permanent, full-time, continuous employment usually provides workers with higher and more stable earnings. There are reasons for workers to choose temporary or part-time work, like meeting family responsibilities. Our survey did not probe these

reasons. However, the survey did ask if the respondent was satisfied with their current employment situation. Overall, 52% of respondents said they were either very satisfied or satisfied with their current job. This percentage did not vary depending on whether or not the position was permanent or temporary/seasonal. However, only about 40% of respondents working part-time reported they were satisfied in their current job whereas 67% of those working full-time were. For those working one year or more with the same employer, 67% reported being satisfied or very satisfied.

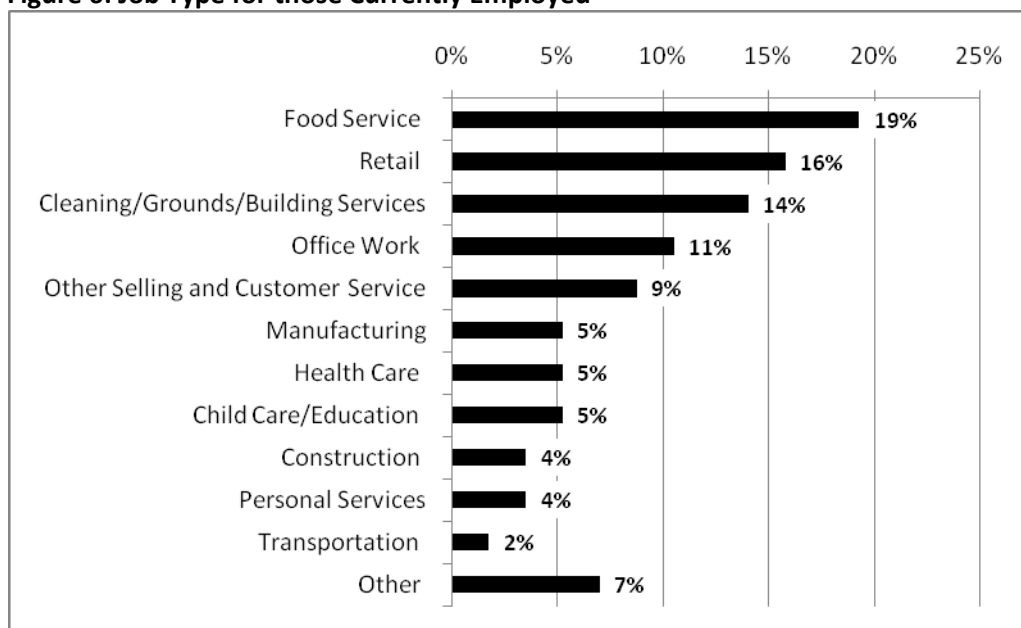
Presented in the table below is the distribution of jobs by selected characteristics. For those currently employed, 62% are working in permanent positions, 43% are employed full-time, and 56% have been with their current employer for more than one year. This implies some stability across these respondents in terms of job security and work hours.

Table 23: Job Characteristics for Currently Employed

Job Characteristics	Number	Percent
Type of Work		
<i>Permanent</i>	34	61.8%
<i>Temporary/Seasonal</i>	21	38.2%
Hours Worked Per Week		
<i>35 or more</i>	23	42.6%
<i>34 or less</i>	31	57.4%
Length of Current Employment		
<i>1 year or more</i>	32	56.1%
<i>Less than 1 year</i>	25	43.9%

The three job categories that constitute about half of all employment for those currently working are in food service, retail, or related to building services (e.g. janitorial, landscaping). Respondents also reported a number of other jobs, including office work and customer service. These jobs are shown in Figure 6 along with the proportion of respondents currently working in them.

Figure 6: Job Type for those Currently Employed



We also looked at job satisfaction by job type. This leaves us with a smaller number of observations by job type and the satisfaction ratings appeared more variable than the ratings presented previously by job characteristics. Sixty percent of food service employees reported being very satisfied or satisfied, as did 43% of people working in building related services. Only 12.5% of retail employees rated themselves as being at least satisfied with their current job. Higher levels of satisfaction were reported in office work and child care and education (75% and 100% respectively).

Training and Employment Interests

The results from the Workforce Interest Survey are essential in understanding the interests of program participants, and thereby designing a workforce development strategy that will work. This section shows that there are differences between the training and employment interests of participants versus their current employment status; there are important considerations in taking employment; and there are clear set of challenges to overcome in the labor market.

Training Interests

Survey respondents were asked to report on their interests (if any) for job training. Thirty-four respondents were not currently interested in receiving job training. Interested respondents were able to select multiple categories as applicable. Table 24 below shows the percentage of respondents (n=145) that selected each category. The most popular categories were for computer training and health care training. The next groups were human service training (32.4%) and customer service training (31.0%). Other training interests selected were in certification/vocational/trade, job search skills, childcare, and food service training.

Table 24: Current Job Training Interests of Respondents

Type Job Training	Percent of Respondents
<i>Computer Training</i>	46.9%
<i>Health Care Training</i>	46.2%
<i>Human Service Training</i>	32.4%
<i>Customer Service Training</i>	31.0%
<i>Certification / Vocational / Trade School</i>	29.0%
<i>Job Search Skills</i>	26.2%
<i>Childcare Training</i>	22.1%
<i>Food Service Training</i>	18.6%
<i>Other</i>	12.4%

Employment Interests

Next, 155 respondents reported that they were interested in improving their employment situation and 158 respondents completed the questions on work interest areas by selecting from a set list of employment fields. Table 25 shows the number and percentage of respondents that chose each field of employment. Health care and office work are the most popular choices (61% and 49%, respectively). Childcare was of interest to 26% and food service was interesting to 22%. The lowest interest was in transportation, retail, manufacturing, and construction.

Table 25: Employment Fields of Interest to Respondents

Work Interests	Number	Percent
<i>Health Care</i>	96	60.8%
<i>Office Work</i>	78	49.4%
<i>Child Care / Education</i>	41	25.9%
<i>Food Service</i>	34	21.5%
<i>Transportation</i>	18	11.4%
<i>Retail</i>	17	10.8%
<i>Manufacturing</i>	16	10.1%
<i>Construction</i>	12	7.6%

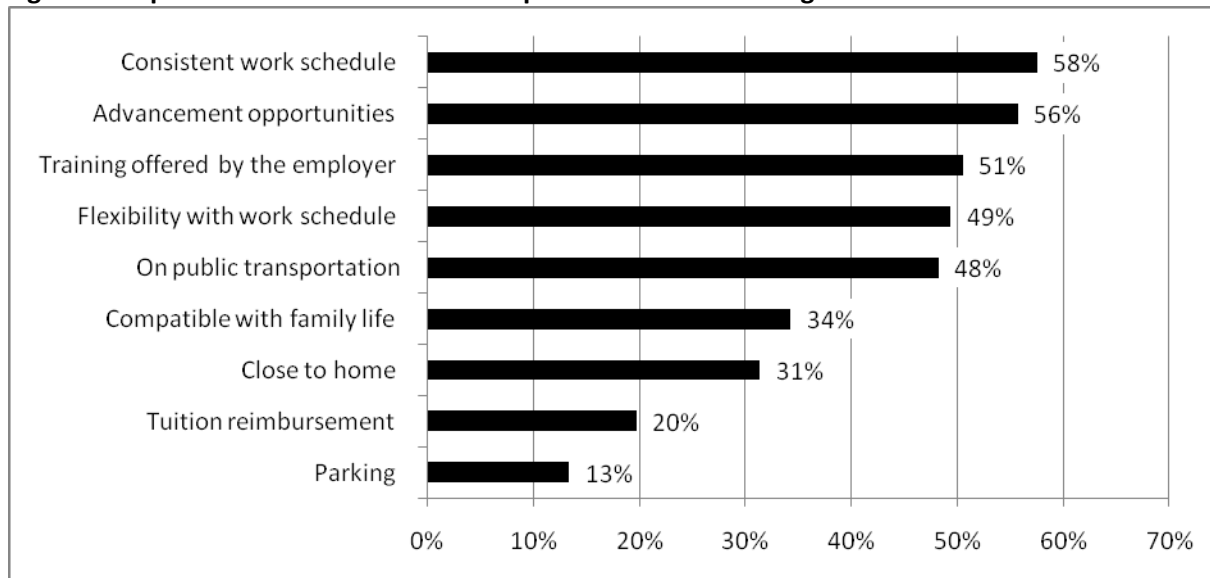
Of note, we took a closer look at work interests by skill level, namely whether or not someone had a high school diploma or equivalent. Health care and office work remained the most often selected employment field categories regardless of whether or not someone had completed high school.

Desirable job attributes

The survey asked respondents to report whether or not specific job attributes were important to them when considering a job. Most of the respondents answered these questions (n=172). Over one-half of the respondents reported that ***consistent work***

schedule, advancement opportunities and training offered by the employer were important to them when considering employment opportunities (see Figure 7). Two other important areas are flexibility with work schedule (49%) and access to public transportation (48%).

Figure 7: Important Considerations for Respondents when Looking for Work

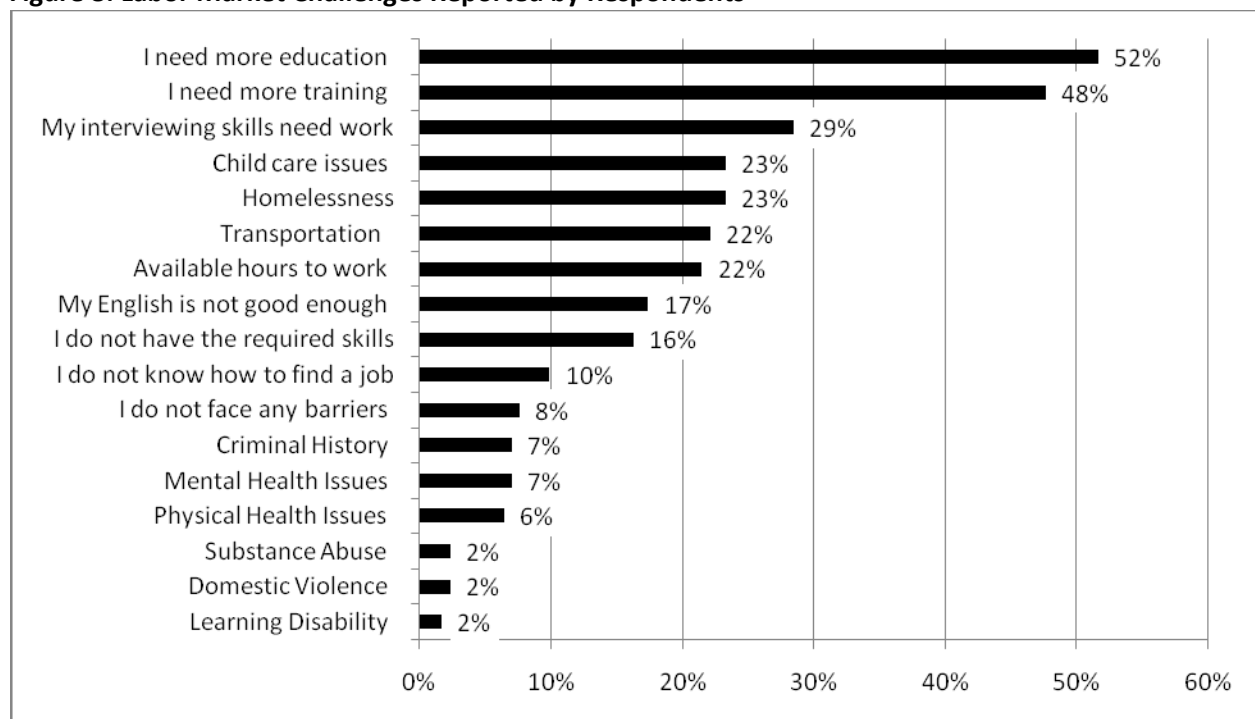


“Consistent work schedule” and “flexibility with work schedule” might appear contradictory. Desiring a consistent work schedule likely reflects a respondent who wants to know their work schedule in advance. Whereas flexibility with work schedule has more to do with whether the job seeker is able to change their hours or take time off to meet family responsibilities without penalty. In this way, “flexibility with work schedule” is likely related to “compatible with family life”.

Labor market challenges

The labor market challenges most often reported by respondents were a need for education and/or training (52% and 48%, respectively). Survey results also show that some respondents have child care, housing, transportation and availability issues that interfere with getting a job (about 22-23% for each category). On average, respondents reported 2 or 3 challenges. Only 8% of respondents reported that they did not face barriers in the labor market.

Figure 8: Labor Market Challenges Reported by Respondents



Additional comments

The survey provided space at the end for respondents to add any additional information or add comments related to their employment experience and interests. A few of the themes that emerged are summarized here. One dominant theme was a number of respondents reported having to take a step back in their career paths (e.g. from medical administrator to retail environment) or reduce their hours to achieve greater flexibility to meet family responsibilities. Respondents reported frustration with a lack of child care choices and other resources which help mothers stay employed. They reported a direct trade off between time available for education and training (which would help in accessing better employment opportunities) versus the time available for work and immediate earnings. Other issues respondents brought up include the concern that current economic conditions have made job searching harder, disappointment that homelessness or a criminal conviction has overridden strong previous work history or job training certifications, and the need for help in paying for additional education. Respondents also provided some ideas for advancing in the labor market. This included looking for work in human services or child care, going to cosmetology school, self-employment, improving language skills, finishing a GED or post-secondary degree, improving disability accommodations, and acquiring more computer skills.

EMPLOYER PERSPECTIVES

Project Hope staff conducted 12 employer interviews between April and August of 2010. The purpose of interviewing employers was to begin developing contacts in the food services, accommodation and retail sectors. These interviews were intended to help Project Hope learn about entry level job requirements in these sectors as well as establish a connection with employers who may be interested in partnering with a workforce development organization to help meet their hiring and recruitment needs.

An initial call list was generated that included about 50 employers. For the most part, the list was limited to large, multi-establishment employers whose businesses were located near the MBTA Orange and Red Line trains. In general, the list was developed through a combination of pulling together existing contacts from Project Hope's networks and by conducting company-specific research.

Project Hope staff contacted employers by phone and invited them to participate in a 10 to 15 minute interview to talk about their entry level workforce needs and contribute to the organization's planning and program assessment. The interviews were semi-structured and Project Hope provided summaries of the interviews to the Center for Social Policy for the purposes of writing up this report. This section provides an overview of what was learned from the interviews in terms of specific job characteristics as well as a review of possible next steps. The employer interview protocol and interview summary form are attached to the report in APPENDIX A – EMPLOYER INTERVIEWS. We have not used employer and company names in this report, but the tables provide a description of the employer types.

Entry-level Job Characteristics

The first table in this section provides an overview of the types of employers who were called and completed at least some of the interview questions. Interviews were conducted with 5 food service employers, 5 retailers and 2 hotels. Employers provided information on entry-level jobs. Table 26 provides a list of job titles as they were provided by the employer. Starting wages are reported in the third column. Minimum starting wages ranged from \$8-11 per hour. Two of the food service employers reported that starting wages could be higher depending on experience and position.

The table also provides some information on how employers normally recruit new employees and who has hiring control. The most popular recruiting methods include word-of-mouth and internal referral from existing employees. This reinforces the idea that developing employment partnerships requires establishing a contact within the company. However, it is not always clear who the best person is to call. For example, 3 of the retail store managers ended the interview call early or suggested that Project Hope staff direct their questions to corporate headquarters. Conversely, it may prove advantageous to call a single-unit owner of a franchise for a major food service chain because they are in charge of

hiring for their store. However, if the chain is headquartered in Massachusetts, there may be something to be gained by trying to develop a corporate contact.

Table 26: Summary of Employers Interviewed

Sector	Type of Employer	Entry-Level Job Titles	Starting Wages	Recruiting Strategies	Hiring Control
Food Services	Limited-Service Restaurant Chain (Corporate HQ: Massachusetts)	Crew Member	\$8.00	word-of-mouth/ Internal	Franchise/ Individual Store Manager
	Limited-Service Restaurant Chain	Cashier, Grill Person, and Sandwich Maker	\$8.00	Unknown	Franchise/ General Managers
	Full Service Restaurant Chain (Corporate HQ: Massachusetts)	Customer Service Representative and Made-to-Order Sandwich Maker	\$8.00	Craigslist, word-of-mouth/ Internal, Website	General Managers
	Food Services and Meal Delivery	Delivery Drivers, Packagers, and Cooks	\$9.00	Unknown	Single Establishment
	Full Service Catering	Wait Staff	\$8.00	word-of-mouth/ Internal	Single Establishment
Retail	Health and Personal Care Retail Store Chain	Cashier, Clerk, Frontend Service	Unknown	word-of-mouth/ Internal	Store Managers
	Gift, Novelty and Souvenir Retail Store (Regional Chain, Corporate HQ: Massachusetts)	Associate	Unknown	Unknown	Corporate
	Food Retailer	Customer Service Team Member	\$10.00	Job Fairs, Website	Corporate
	Discount Department Store	Cashier and Sales Members	\$9.00	Unknown	Corporate
	General Rental Center	Customer Account Representative	\$11.00	TV/radio ads	Store Managers
Accommodation	Hotel	Front Desk	\$8.00	Craigslist	Franchise/ General Manager
	Hotel	Front Desk, Housekeeping, Maintenance, Housemen, and Drivers	\$8.00	hcareers.com, word-of-mouth/ Internal, Website	General Manager

Table 27 provides a list of consolidated job titles which meet the criteria of being entry level and having basic skill requirements that match with the worker profile Project Hope seeks to serve. For these entry level jobs, customer service is the most frequently mentioned skill needed to perform on the job. Employers also need workers to communicate well, pay attention to detail and follow instructions. One employer emphasized good English skills, whereas another employer (because of the location of his store) preferred bilingual workers. One employer also mentioned a lifting requirement. In addition to these basic skills, cashier positions require the ability to handle cash and front desk positions in hotels require some computer and phone skills. One food services employer has entry level

positions for cooks and drivers and one retail employer has entry-level sales positions which require a driver's license. Those jobs are not included in the table below because they require previous job skills or a driver's license.

We found that most of the employers required a great deal of flexibility in scheduling shifts for their workforce. In food services and retail, shifts vary across store hours and schedules may not be guaranteed from week to week. There are opportunities to work part-time and to work shorter shifts (e.g. 4 or 5 hours as opposed to 8 hours). The scheduling priorities of many of the employers have the potential to conflict with the needs of Project Hope workers. Project Hope participants are likely to need work during hours when child care is available and they likely need work schedules which are predictable so they can plan ahead to meet family responsibilities. The meal service and delivery employer and the catering employer provide jobs that match with the basic skills criteria, but their scheduling needs were even more problematic than the stores. The meal service and delivery employer provided a more predictable work schedule than the stores, but required very early start hours for all employees. The catering employer did not guarantee hours or days because the business is driven by individual client needs and hours included evenings. This employer stated that the job did not work well for people with families since most of the staff was "on call". Finally, the front desk position appears to be the job that offers the most stable schedule (Table 27). Shifts are 8 hours, but part-time weeks are available. However, employers have evening and night shifts to fill. Issues related to work schedules from a worker perspective are discussed later in the report in the Workforce Interests Survey section.

Table 27: Job Titles, Skill Requirements, and Work Schedules

Sector	Job Titles	Skills	Schedules
Food Services	Crew Member	Good English, positive personality, customer service	Based on store hours; 5-8 hour shifts
	Cashier	Customer service, Lift 35lbs, stand for long periods, communication, computer skills, cash handling	Based on store hours; 5-8 hour shifts
	Sandwich Maker	Customer service, Lift 35lbs, stand for long periods, communication	Based on store hours; 5-8 hour shifts
	Food Prep and Packager	Attention to detail, follow directions	4am to 1pm
	Wait Staff	Customer Service, communication	Flexible for catering service
Retail	Cashier/Clerk / Front-end	Good English, bilingual +, customer service, multi-task, cash handling, positive attitude	Flexible, based on store need, hours not guaranteed, 6am to midnight; 4 hour shifts
Accommodation	Front desk	Customer service, phones, computer skills	8 hour shifts, shift times vary

Possible Next Steps with Employers

The next table outlines each interview call and provides information regarding possible next steps. The interviews appear to fall into 3 different groups. Group 1 represents those interviews where employers asked for or agreed to be contacted regarding potential opportunities with Project Hope. Group 2 represents the interviews which were not completed or the respondent suggested inquiring at a different level within the company. The 3rd group represents one employer who was not interested in follow up and 2 employers whose skill and schedule requirements were not a good match for an entry-level job strategy.

Overall, the interview process allowed Project Hope to make some initial contacts with employers in the food service, retail and accommodation sectors. The outcomes of the interviews are likely a good indication of the amount of effort required to develop new contacts with employers and identify prospective partners. Additionally, Project Hope staff identified a few key learnings from conducting the phone interviews. This included understanding how employers frame their workforce challenges and what expectations they hold about engaging in a workforce development partnerships. A few of the employers had experience working with workforce development programs and offered information on what worked well for them as well as what did not work. Two employers stated that past and current workforce partners had difficulty finding candidates that “fit”. Project

Hope also found that they could use the interviews to gain additional information about a company's business and corporate structure. For example, one employer was contacted because they operate two hotels in the city, but it was discovered that this employer also operates two food service operations as well.

Table 28: Possible Next Steps in Following Up on Employer Interviews

Group	Sector	Type of Employer	Entry-Level Job Titles	Possible Next Steps
1	Food Services	Full Service Restaurant Chain (Corporate HQ: Massachusetts)	Customer Service Representative and Made-to-Order Sandwich Maker	Employer wants follow up from PH, has had unsuccessful workforce partnerships in the past, partnership did not provide candidates who were a good fit, needs employees to stay with the job longer.
	Accommodation	Hotel	Front Desk	Employer wants follow up from PH, has not engaged in a workforce partnership before, interested in benefit to community.
	Food Services	Food Services and Meal Delivery	Delivery Drivers, Packagers, and Cooks	Employer wants follow up from PH, however not an immediate fit for workers with families because of schedule requirements.
	Retail	Health and Personal Care Retail Store Chain	Cashier, Clerk, Front-end Service	Employer is interested in talking to PH more, is currently partnered with other WFD organizations, PH could follow up with employer or contact employer's current partners.
2	Food Services	Limited-Service Restaurant Chain (Corporate HQ: Massachusetts)	Crew Member	Need to develop contacts with individual store owners.
	Food Services	Limited-Service Restaurant Chain	Cashier, Grill Person, and Sandwich Maker	The interview call was cut short, PH could try to call again or try calling another location.
	Retail	Gift, Novelty and Souvenir Retail Store (Regional Chain, Corporate HQ: Massachusetts)	Associate	Follow up required at corporate level.
	Retail	Food Retailer	Customer Service Team Member	Follow up required at corporate level.
	Retail	Discount Department Store	Cashier and Sales Members	Follow up required at corporate level.

Group	Sector	Type of Employer	Entry-Level Job Titles	Possible Next Steps
3	Food Services	Full Service Catering	Wait Staff	Employer did not report hiring nor recruiting challenges, has a long wait list of job seekers. Job not a good match for someone with a family, but PH could follow up if they identify a good candidate.
	Retail	General Rental Center	Customer Account Representative	Employer reported that they were always hiring. Job not an immediate match because of skill and schedule requirements, but PH could follow up if they identify a good candidate.
	Accommodation	Hotel	Front Desk, Housekeeping, Maintenance, Housemen, and Drivers	Employer was not receptive to having PH follow up with them and did not express a big need with respect to workforce development.

Who was not called?

As shown in the previous section, there is a constant demand for entry level workers in food services, accommodation and retail; either because these sectors are growing or because they experience high turnover. Therefore, there is a large pool of potential employers to contact. The employer interviews summarized in this section reflect an initial contact effort. Over a longer time frame, a larger number of employers could be called. This includes contacting university and hospital food service operations, local grocery stores, and apparel retailers. The initial interviews were also focused on the targeted sectors. But this phone interviewing strategy could be extended to talk with employers about entry level clerical jobs. As well, it may be informative to talk with employers in the field of home care.

EXISTING ORGANIZATIONAL RESOURCES

Recent research has documented the decision making process of low-income parents who are balancing family responsibilities with job searching, working and advancing in the labor market.⁶ Many of the issues uncovered in this research were highlighted in the previous section of this report. Most low-income parents would prefer to work at least part-time while raising their children as opposed to being completely reliant on government support programs to meet family needs. However, these parents must address trade-offs in terms of whether they spend time at work or with their children, whether they can afford the increased costs that come with employment (e.g. increasing child care expenses and losing public supports for housing and healthcare), and whether working conditions (e.g. lack of paid time off and employer requirements to provide flexible work hours) diminish quality of life for families.

A successful workforce strategy must align the needs of low-income parents with the requirements of entry-level jobs in sectors like retail, food services, and accommodation. Project Hope has organizational resources in place which can contribute to the development of such a strategy. This section provides a brief outline of the existing organizational resources that reside within Project Hope that are relevant to program development in this area. As a multi-service agency, this includes over 25 years of experience working with low-income and single parent families in the community and developing and supporting several workforce development initiatives including a model employer partnership in the healthcare sector.

Project Hope is a multi-service agency which offers a variety of housing, employment and support services. There is a three-pronged mission to help move families out of homelessness and poverty which focuses improving access to income supports, housing and jobs; supporting personal transformation; and advocating for system change.

- Housing services include operating shelters and collaborating with other shelter programs to provide comprehensive services to people who are currently homeless. Housing services also includes a variety of supports to keep people housed and solve related issues. Among the many benefits of these services, housing and shelter support contribute to job readiness.
- Support services include assisting with access to benefits and child care, adult education programs, a large referral system and ongoing case management as necessary. Support services are not just essential for job readiness, but they contribute to employment stability. Support services assist participants in meeting personal goals and help in achieving a balance between family, work and educational responsibilities.

⁶ See Albelda, Randy and Jennifer Shea (2010) "To Work More or Not to Work More: Difficult Choices, Complex Decision for Low-Income Parents" in *Journal of Poverty*, July 2010, Vol. 14, 3: 245-265.

- Workforce development and employer partnerships provide an array of services like job readiness training, individual job placement, advancement opportunities through employer partnerships and case management.
 - These programs recruit candidates from within Project Hope programs, across a number of agency partnerships, and through open house events for the community.
 - There are a number of collaborative workforce development programs, including the Collaborative Shelter Program and Project90. These programs customize training, job search and placement for individuals, they are coordinated across partners, and they make use of existing resources in the broader workforce development system.
 - Employer partnerships in the healthcare sector provides an established successful model for developing strong relationships with employers which allow work ready job seekers to receive training, internships and access to living wage job opportunities and, in turn, meet the needs of employers.
 - Recently, Project Hope staff have participated in the Social Innovation Forum and developed a viable prospectus for expanding the reach of their workforce programs and employer partnerships to benefit an underserved group of lower-skilled job seekers.

RECOMMENDATIONS

This section outlines some specific considerations and possible next steps for Project Hope in expanding its workforce development and employer partnerships. The recommendations that follow build on what was learned in this assessment regarding economic opportunity, participant interests and existing organizational resources. Possible next steps and considerations are focused at a strategic level, more so than a program management and operational level.

Project Hope is interested in expanding its workforce development and employer partnerships division in a meaningful and substantive way to better serve participants and community members who are job ready, but do not hold the required skills and experience to enroll in their existing training and job placement programs. In order to do this, Project Hope has been assessing the feasibility of matching qualified candidates to job opportunities for entry-level work in sectors like retail, food services and accommodation. This report has shown that devising an entry-level workforce strategy at the lower end of the labor market can provide immediate benefits in terms of earnings and the building of work experience. Furthermore, there are employers in these sectors who express an ongoing need to recruit and hire qualified candidates for jobs and an interest in partnership opportunities with workforce development programs. However, entry-level jobs in these sectors solve short-term problems and have some drawbacks over time for workers and their families.

In addition to a short term attachment strategy, a workforce development initiative targeting entry-level jobs should include other opportunities like additional training and education, expanding job searches to address participant career goals, helping workers make new contacts and building bridges to more desirable jobs. For example, Project Hope's workforce interests survey indicated that participants and neighborhood residents are currently working in retail, food service, and accommodation jobs. Indeed, these jobs were the most commonly selected employment sectors for those currently working. However, most Project Hope participants are interested in improving their situation in the labor market. Further, Project Hope participants are primarily interested in healthcare support and clerical jobs. A successful strategy would use a range of supports – many of which Project Hope already offers. This includes screening and training for job readiness, case management, relationship development and management with employers, and access to public and community based services. Therefore, a long term perspective will be necessary to translate the accumulation of job skills, new contacts and additional education from an entry-level customer service job to an office or healthcare environment.

Assessment of Risk

Before moving into a discussion on possible next steps and strategic considerations, it is important to note that there are some risks to navigate with respect to a workforce development strategy which engages the sectors targeted in this study: retail, food service,

and accommodation. These sectors predominantly provide low wage jobs which are accompanied by a number of challenges that need to be managed.

Limited opportunities for advancement: Advancement in these sectors usually means moving to a regular full-time shift or into a supervisory position. This pathway is bottlenecked; meaning that there are many more entry-level part-time positions available than there are regular full-time or supervisory positions. Although jobs in these sectors may be good “first jobs”, the best advancement strategy is most often to move out of the sector altogether. Therefore, an important consideration for Project Hope will be how an entry-level jobs program can build bridges to other sectors and develop pathways that transfers skills gained in one type of job (e.g. customer service) to a more desirable type of job (e.g. entry-level clerical work in an office setting).

Low job satisfaction: Customer service work in sectors like retail and food service is demanding, but not well compensated. The imbalance between effort and reward, coupled with the low status of the job, results in low job satisfaction and high turnover. Gaining employment in these sectors should be viewed as one part of a larger, long term trajectory for an individual in the labor market.

Flexible work schedules: Typically, employers retain control over work hours and are strongly incentivized to use flexible scheduling processes to lower labor costs. Employers often gauge worker performance on their ability to manage variable hours at work. This practice results in having to work alternating shifts from week to week and responding to on-call and over time requests. Coupled with limited benefits (e.g. paid time off), these jobs are challenging for parents with young children. Therefore, employers who are open to alternative scheduling strategies are likely good prospects for Project Hope. Alternative scheduling strategies might include job sharing (where two or more employees work together to cover the equivalent of one part-time shift) or work guarantee contracts (where Project Hope takes responsibility for a specific portion of a work site, controls the scheduling for a group of workers, and, in turn, guarantees to the employer that the contracted work is completed).

Possible Next Steps

The basic strategy proposed is to operate a workforce intermediary that is able to match job seekers that come through Project Hope with viable employment opportunities in the targeted sectors. Both the process of conducting the feasibility study and the content of this report shed some light on the type of participants who would make good candidates for such a program and a variety of strategies for engaging employers.

Participants

The purpose of the strategy is to fill an existing gap in services by providing a job placement program that serves job seekers who are work ready but do not meet the eligibility criteria for other training programs. Therefore, good candidates are expected to be job ready and interested in entry-level work. These participants may have been out of

the labor force for some time, they may be looking for their first job, their family situation may have changed, or they may want to couple additional training or education with their work schedule. This strategy is particularly suited to participants who need to establish a work history and/or need immediate earnings. The extent to which these job seekers can see a long term payoff by participating may also be important. For example, a parent's view of their trajectory in the labor market is dependent on the age of their children. There are different constraints on employment depending on whether or not young children are at home or they are attending school. Finally, depending on an individual's situation, there needs to be an immediate benefit to working in these sectors. For example, some job seekers may need to balance their time working so that earned income does not diminish their eligibility for subsidies and create a more difficult situation.

Employers

Project Hope has developed an employer partnership strategy that is successful. Employer partnerships develop overtime and are reciprocal; meaning that employers experience a benefit by engaging with Project Hope with respect to recruitment, training and workforce supports, and, in turn, Project Hope provides meaningful training and job placement opportunities for eligible workers. The employer partnership strategy may be particularly conducive to developing some of the alternative scheduling strategies suggested above to address variable work hours needed by employers. In addition to building on this practice, Project Hope can consider other engagement strategies as well. For example, this feasibility study in itself was a strategy for Project Hope to make some initial contacts with interested employers. These targeted phone calls can be part of an ongoing effort which can be expanded to other sectors and used to develop and manage employer relations. In developing these strategies, Project Hope can begin considering what an ideal work environment might look like. The number of employees, the attitude of the supervisor, and the availability of on-the-job training may be important considerations.

Program Development

In addition to building strategies which enable Project Hope to match job seekers to employment opportunities, there are a few organizational considerations which Project Hope can consider. These may be particularly helpful in addressing some of the risks discussed above.

- ✓ Define the program as **value-added** and articulate the benefits to workers, employers, and the community. For example, how do workers benefit from utilizing the service? In addition to immediate earnings and establishing a work history, Project Hope may also be able to offer workers broader access to better employment opportunities along with integrated support services. There are a number of ways to add value from an employer perspective as well. These might be offering better service than other workforce development partners by providing access to qualified candidates and providing supports which help stabilize the workforce.

- ✓ Coordinate and manage access to **wrap-around services** for participants. There are a number of support services provided by Project Hope in addition to a referral system. Organizational planning and coordination is required to link new program participants to those options and manage relations between different programs and partnerships. There may be new opportunities for Project Hope to link participants to training or educational programs as well as new ideas for building peer support. For example, some job training and placement programs have found that cohort models create an identity among program peers which keeps workers connected to peer support.
- ✓ Consider areas for **staff development**, especially as it relates to employer engagement. Both targeting entry-level jobs in retail, food service and accommodation as well as building bridges to clerical work in other environments will require developing employer contacts. Individual staff development and organizational wide trainings related to sales and customer service will help develop and build a strong employer engagement strategy.
- ✓ In addition to established workforce development **outcome measures**, consider how Project Hope may be able to track long term outcomes. Establishing measures for placement rates, number of people served, wages received and length of employment is established good practice in program development and management. However, there is an opportunity to introduce some long term measures or alternative measures, especially as they relate to the next step after the participant leaves the program and are relevant to a participant's labor market trajectory and family situation.

APPENDIX A – EMPLOYER INTERVIEWS

Employer Protocol used by Project Hope Staff for Phone Interviews

1. Please describe the entry-level jobs at [company]? (Probes for job titles, duties, skill and education requirements, schedules, and starting pay.)
2. Describe your ideal job candidate for these entry-level jobs?
3. What are your biggest challenges with entry-level jobs?
4. Overall, what do you consider your most pressing or unmet workforce needs at [company]?
5. Have you ever partnered with a community or non-profit organization? Or a training provider?
 - 5a. YES: What were those experiences like?
 How did you use those partnerships?
 How was it valuable to [company]?
 - 5b. NO: What would you do differently or what would you improve on?
 Are you interested in or have you considered such a partnership?
 Under what conditions?
 What kinds of benefits would you like to see?

[If time allowed, the interviewer asked additional questions about recruitment, hiring, and training]

- Is your business expanding? Contracting? How so?
- What kinds of recruitment strategies do you currently rely on?
- What are your primary recruiting needs? Human resource challenges?
- What is your hiring process like?
- Do you anticipate hiring for entry-level positions in the next 3, 6, or 9 months?
- Do you do any temporary hiring? If so, for what positions and under what conditions?
- About how much turnover do you experience in your entry-level workforce?
- What are the dominant reasons employees turnover?
- How satisfied are you with the turnover level?
- What kind of training do you provide for new workers?
- CORI requirements?

Summary Worksheet for Reporting Interview Results to CSP

Quality	YES	NO	UN- KNOWN
Project Hope participants can likely meet the schedule requirements			
There are adequate public transportation options to get to this employer			
The employer appears to be flexible in the way they design jobs and deal with human resource issues			
Project Hope participants can likely meet the language and education requirements			
This is a CORI friendly employer			
Project Hope participants are likely to be interested in this type of work			
There appears to be opportunity for additional training and advancement through the employer or job			

List entry-level jobs:

What were the key learning's you gained from talk with this employer?

What challenges did this employer report?

What, if anything stood out in this interview?

Is this employer a prospect? Why/why not?

If a prospect, what are possible next steps with this employer?

APPENDIX B – WORKFORCE INTERESTS SURVEY

This survey is voluntary. Thank you very much for completing the following survey. This survey asks questions about your education, current work situation, experiences, and future work interests. This information will be kept totally confidential. Your name does not appear anywhere on this survey and your answers will only be used to help us learn about your needs and to improve our programs.

Demographic Information:

- 1) Number of people in your household: _____
- 2) Number of adults (18 years and older) in your household: _____
- 3) Number of children in your household: _____
- 4) Ages of children in your household (list ages): _____
- 5) Your current zip code: _____
- 6) Your age: _____

Education: Please circle answers

- 7) Did you graduate from high school or obtain your GED?
 - a) No HS/GED, skip ahead to question 9
 - b) Yes
- 8) If yes, please circle the highest level of education completed:
 - a) Attended college for less than 1 year
 - b) Attended college for 1-2 years
 - c) Attended college for 2-4 years
 - d) Completed Associates Degree
 - e) Completed Bachelors Degree
 - f) Completed Masters Degree
 - g) Other _____
- 9) Are you currently attending school?
 - a) No, skip ahead to question 11
 - b) Yes
- 10) What type of school are you currently attending?
 - a) GED program
 - b) External Diploma Program
 - c) Community College
 - d) 4 Year College
 - e) Trade school
 - f) Other: _____

Training: Please circle answers

- 11) Have you attended any training programs in the past 3 years?
- a) No, skip ahead to question 14
 - b) Yes
- 12) How many training programs have you attended?
- a) 1 training program
 - b) 2-3 training programs
 - c) 4-5 training programs
 - d) more than 5 training programs
- 13) What type of training program(s) did you attend?
- Check all training programs attended and check box if attended and/or completed
- a) Computer training ☐ Attended ☐ Completed
 - b) Job Training (non certificate) ☐ Attended ☐ Completed
 - c) Certification / Trade School (ex: CNA, HVAC, Phlebotomy) ☐ Attended ☐ Completed
If completed please list all Certifications / Licenses obtained: _____
 - d) Other: _____ ☐ Attended ☐ Completed

Training Goals: Please circle answers

- 14) Are you interested in obtaining training within the next year?
- a) No, skip ahead to question 16
 - b) Yes
- 15) What type of skills training are you interested in? (Circle all that apply)
- a) Computer Training
 - b) Job Search Skills (ex: resume writing, interviewing skills)
 - c) Childcare Training
 - d) Health Care Training
 - e) Food Service Training
 - f) Customer Service Training
 - g) Human Service Training
 - h) Certification / Vocational / Trade School (ex: CNA, HVAC, Phlebotomy)
 - i) Other: _____

Employment: Please circle answers

- 16) As an adult, 18 years and older, have you worked?
- a) No, skip ahead to question 27
 - b) Yes - but it was not paid work - skip ahead to question 27
 - c) Yes

17) What is the longest that you have worked for the same employer?

- a) 1-3 months
- b) 4-6 months
- c) 7-9 months
- d) 9-11 months
- e) Over 1 year
- f) Over 2 years

18) Out of the past 12 months, how many of those months were you employed?

- a) I have not worked in the past 12 months
- b) 1-3 months
- c) 4-6 months
- d) 7-9 months
- e) 9-11 months
- f) Over 1 year

19) Which of the following best describes the field in which you have most worked? Food Service

- a) Transportation
- b) Manufacturing
- c) Construction
- d) Office Work
- e) Health Care
- f) Child Care / Education
- g) Retail
- h) Other: _____

20) How satisfied were you in this employment field?

- a) Very Satisfied
- b) Satisfied
- c) Somewhat Satisfied
- d) Not Satisfied
- e) Very Unsatisfied

Current Employment: Please circle answers

21) Are you currently working?

- a) No, skip ahead to question 27
- b) Yes

22) What type of employment do you have? If more than one job, answer about your main source of income

- a) Permanent
- b) Temporary

- c) Seasonal
- d) Unsure

23) On average how many hours do you work per week at this job?

- a) 40 + hours
- b) 35 – under 40 hours
- c) 30 – under 35 hours
- d) 25 – under 30 hours
- e) 20 – under 25 hours
- f) 15 – under 20 hours
- g) 10 – under 15 hours
- h) Other:_____

24) How long have you been with your current employer? 0-3 months

- a) 4-6 months
- b) 7-9 months
- c) 9-11 months
- d) Over 1 year
- e) Over 2 years

25) Which of the following best describes your current job?

- a) Food Service
- b) Transportation
- c) Manufacturing
- d) Construction
- e) Office Work
- f) Health Care
- g) Child Care / Education
- h) Retail
- i) Other:_____

26) How satisfied are you with your current employment?

- a) Very Satisfied
- b) Satisfied
- c) Somewhat Satisfied
- d) Unsatisfied
- e) Very Unsatisfied

Employment Goals: Please circle answers

27) Are you interested in improving your current employment situation?

- a) No, I am not interested in working – skip ahead to question 29
- b) No, I plan to stay at my current job– skip ahead to question 29
- c) Yes I am interested in finding other employment

28) What types of employment are you interested in? (circle all that apply) Food Service

- a) Transportation

- b) Manufacturing
- c) Construction
- d) Office Work
- e) Health Care
- f) Child Care / Education
- g) Retail
- h) Other:_____

29) What is important when you are considering an employer? (circle all that apply)

- a) On public transportation
- b) Compatible with family life
- c) Tuition reimbursement
- d) Advancement opportunities
- e) Close to home
- f) Training offered by the employer
- g) Flexibility with work schedule
- h) Consistent work schedule
- i) Parking
- j) Other:_____

Barriers to Employment: (circle all that apply)

30) What challenges do you face in reaching your employment goals? (circle all that apply)

- a) I do not face any barriers
- b) I do not have the required skills
- c) I need more education
- d) I need more training
- e) My English is not good enough
- f) My interviewing skills need work
- g) I do not know how to find a job
- h) Child care issues
- i) Transportation
- j) Available hours to work
- k) Homelessness
- l) Criminal History
- m) Substance Abuse
- n) Domestic Violence
- o) Mental Health Issues
- p) Physical Health Issues
- q) Learning Disability
- r) Other:_____

31) Please feel free to tell us anything else about your employment and training needs:

Thank you for completing this survey.

Please hand in your survey to a staff person. For completing the survey you can participate in a raffle for a Target gift card. If you are interested please put your name and phone number on a separate piece of paper for submission to the raffle.